Minute of the sixteenth meeting of the North East Transport Consultative Forum

Woodhill House, Aberdeen
Thursday 9th February 2023 5.30-7.30pm

The meeting was attended by 23 individuals, comprising Forum members, officers and consultants. The purpose of the meeting was to update members on the approval of the Regional Transport Strategy to 2040, the vision for Aberdeen Rapid Transit and work underway to develop this and to stimulate discussion on the Scottish Government's target to reduce car vehicle kms by 20% in comparison to a 2019 baseline by 2030.

Rab Dickson, Director passed on apologies from Cllr John Crawley, Chair of the Nestrans and introduced the meeting. Kirsty Chalmers, Nestrans' Transport Executive (Strategy & Delivery) then gave a presentation on progress to date, including:

- The Ministerial approval and publication of the Regional Transport Strategy in November 2021;
- The six priorities within the RTS and summary of the various actions;
- Overview of the Vision for Aberdeen Rapid Transit, which is one of the RTS actions;
- Details of how the concept will be progressed using Bus Partnership Fund grant and the regulatory framework and ART options that are being assessed;
- Update on the engagement, marketing and communication that is underway; and
- Summary of the potential delivery timeframe.

Paul Finch, Nestrans Transport Strategy Manager gave an introduction to the background for the Scottish Government's target to reduce car kms by 20% by 2030 against a 2019 baseline and the purpose therefore of the Nestrans commission to develop a policy response for the region to this target. Tim Steiner and Caley McDowall of Jacobs then gave a presentation on the work to date to consider impacts due to Covid and other influences to car usage that may impact on the percentage reduction required by 2030 to meet the target, along with the type of options that are available and what they might each deliver. An overview of the consideration of possible impacts by person type and location by improving and encouraging alternatives to the car or the effects of car restraint measures were also discussed.

The presentations are available on the Nestrans website

o Discussion

Participants were then split into two groups and each group was asked to discuss what they thought about efforts to reduce car km, how a significant reduction in car-km would impact on the region (positives and negatives), which options would be most effective to influence car use and in what ways could effective measures be made publicly and politically acceptable.

A summary of the discussion within each group is provided on the following pages.

The date for the next meeting of the North East Consultative Forum will be advised in due course.

Notes from Group 1 – Committee Room 5

Facilitators Tim Steiner, Jacobs and Paul Finch, Nestrans

Other group members: Cllr George Carr (Aberdeenshire Council); Colin Allanach (Nestrans Board); Hattie James (Sestran); Daryl Mitchell (Stagecoach), Neil Innes (Grampian Cycle Partnership); Claire McArthur (Aberdeen City Council); Robert McGregor (Aberdeenshire Council); Kirsty Chalmers (Nestrans) and Jon Barron (Nestrans)

A general summary of the comments made by this group were:-

- Extremely challenging
- Exciting if prepared to be bold?
- Budget constraints
- Timescales
- Breaks in trust with public transport
- Rural areas – challenges of public transport provision and Councils do not have sufficient funds to fill gaps
- A lot currently working against this agenda
- How do we support new entrants into public transport market
- Living well locally – encouraging more local trips (although realising this is shorter trips, so less impact on overall target that has been set)
- Impact of home deliveries?

<u>Impacts</u>

- Less congestion, but risk of greater vehicle speeds
- More active population
- More viable / successful public transport
- Rural businesses/cafes might suffer if more local travel
- More attractive City Centre
- If people travel by public transport to City/town centres they may stay longer
- Attractiveness of Aberdeen City as a destination may change (people travelling further to get to other cities)

<u>Options/actions</u>

- Getting the right combination of measures
- Take on the car drivers
- Park & Ride – cost and availability of parking
- Carrot and stick
- Don’t have any meaningful carrots at present
- Active travel infrastructure requires investment
- What is in it for people – rewards?

<u>Opportunities</u>

- Coastal path networks – funding

Notes from Group 2 – Committee Room 4

Facilitators: Caley McDowall, Jacobs and Rab Dickson, Nestrans

Other group members: Cllr Sandra Macdonald (Aberdeen City Council); Cllr John Cox (Aberdeenshire Council); Cllr Trevor Mason (Aberdeenshire Council); Ryan Manson (Union Square General Manager); Gavin Clark (Aberdeen Cycle Forum); Martin Hall (Aberdeenshire Council); Iain Wallace (Aberdeenshire Council); Stanley Flett (Disability Advisory Group); Kelly Wiltshire (Nestrans) and Jennifer Anderson (Nestrans)

A general summary of the comments made by this group were:-

- The effectiveness of marketing suggested in the presentation seemed low and would hope that younger people demographic could be more positively influenced
- Travel planning role for employers and schools
- 20% car km reduction seems an overly simplistic target and need to target long distance journeys to achieve this
- Main radial routes already well served by public transport so Aberdeen Rapid Transit itself won't achieve target
- Active travel growth has to be the carrot towards target
- The 20% target is for all of Scotland but will be easier to achieve in areas where there are public transport options and 20 minute neighbourhood facilities
- Little research on traffic origin and destinations (it was noted that a comprehensive travel survey has been commissioned)
- Need to reallocate road space and introduce demand management to achieve target
- Raising costs could be difficult for some groups and inequitable
- Desire is stronger than reason and marketing could play significant role – make it aspirational. Currently car companies are very good at marketing ownership and usage
- Size of cars increasing leaving less space for cyclists and more fuel usage/damage to road surface

<u>Is 20% reduction good or bad for NE</u>

- Can't be punitive on people
- Retail relies on journeys being made, but could still visit by a different mode
- Connectivity needs enhanced to encourage people to walk and cycle
- How does the target fit with economic strategy

<u>How can measures be politically and publicly acceptable</u>

- People must be supportive – how can they be encouraged to want to do this
- Generation Z opportunity if they do not want to own a car?
- Disappointing that some benefits to travel during Covid are being lost and not capitalised upon
- Questioned whether reduction in car km would equate to a benefit in road safety (noted reduced car ownership amongst under 25s and improvements to engineering) The need for electric vehs to be heard by visually impaired was highlighted.
- The toolbox of constraints being made available at local authority level would likely have a public backlash and national direction is therefore required
- Questioned whether funding is available to help achieve the target – as well as capital funding, any revenue through demand management should be ring-fenced
- Will comparable areas be benchmarked against each other throughout Scotland?