

NORTH EAST OF SCOTLAND TRANSPORT PARTNERSHIP

Minute of Meeting of the North East Scotland Transport Partnership Board

Aberdeen, Wednesday, 12 April 2023

Present: Councillor John Crawley (Chairperson); Councillor Michael Hutchison and Dr Margaret Bochel (Vice Chairs); Councillor John Cox, Councillor Isobel Davidson, Councillor Glen Reid, Councillor Sandra Macdonald, Councillor Miranda Radley and Councillor Ian Yuill; and Colin Allanach and Gerry Donald.

In Attendance: Rab Dickson, Paul Finch, Kirsty Chalmers, Jenny Anderson, Kelly Wiltshire, Jon Barron, Adam Kench, Tricia Howden and Lucy Johnston (Nestrans); Martin Hall and Ella Stott (Aberdeenshire Council); Councillor Alex McLellan, David Dunne, Joanna Murray, Fiona Closs, Karen Allan and Mark Masson (Aberdeen City Council); Angela Pieri and Cathy Smith (Grant Thornton UK); and Duncan Cameron (First Bus).

Apologies: Alan Wood and Ewan Wallace.

Please note that if any changes are made to this minute at the point of approval, these will be outlined in the subsequent minute and this document will not be retrospectively altered.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND TRANSPARENCY STATEMENTS

1. Members were requested to intimate any declarations of interest or transparency statements in respect of the items on today's agenda, thereafter the following were intimated:-

(1) Councillor Yuill advised that he had a connection in relation to various items on the agenda by virtue of him being a member of the Automobile Association (AA) and a member of Cycling UK. He considered that the nature of his interest would not require him to leave the meeting prior to consideration of the items.

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS BOARD MEETING, 16 FEBRUARY 2023

2. The Board had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 16 February 2023 for approval.

The Board resolved:-

to approve the minute as a correct record.

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PRESENTATION BY DUNCAN CAMERON, MANAGING DIRECTOR, FIRST BUS ON TICKETING INITIATIVES IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

3. The Board received a presentation from Mr Duncan Cameron in relation to ticketing initiatives within the bus industry.

Mr Cameron (a) advised that contactless payments made buses more accessible by taking away the need for customers to carry the right change to pay for their bus ticket; (b) indicated that capping enhanced the customer experience further, by removing the need for customers to have any prior knowledge of fare structure or prices, taking away another barrier to travel, particularly for the casual traveller, and:-

- (1) allowed customers to travel all day/week and know that they won't be charged more than the capped day or week price; and
- (2) as well as being easier for customers, it could reduce dwell time at bus stops.

Mr Cameron made reference to the variable fare capping structure; boarding time improvements; deployment of tap out readers which allowed single-operator capping to be deployed by operators without flat fares; and outlined the benefits of the new tap on tap off (TOTO) initiative for customers and the fleet.

Mr Cameron referred to an Aberdeen on-street research study carried out in 2019 which revealed that:-

- most customers who chose capping had previously paid using contactless, but a significant proportion had moved away from on-bus cash payments;
- a small number of customers said they previously did not use the bus;
- the use of contactless payments overall had grown significantly where capping was introduced; and
- capping now accounted for the majority of revenue taken through contactless payments in Aberdeen.

In conclusion, Mr Cameron intimated that there were significant customer benefits of TOTO; that multi-operator tap and cap was expected in 2024; and that there was some growth in Aberdeen with customers now moving to longer term tickets.

In response to questions from members, Mr Cameron advised that an advertisement campaign including the use of social media and TV on the TOTO system would be undertaken, and indicated that there was no intention of removing cash payments, although it was noted that only 3.5% of customers now pay on board by cash.

The Board resolved:-

- (i) to note that by way of email, Mr Cameron would circulate details in terms of the proportion of short and long stage single ticket journeys, including graphical information regarding the TOTO technology which would provide customers with better value; and
- (ii) to otherwise thank Mr Cameron for his informative presentation.

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2022/23 BUDGET MATTERS

4. The Board had before it a report which provided an update on the Partnership's 2022/23 budget monitoring and forecast outturn position and sought consideration of any budget or monitoring issues that may arise.

The report recommended:-

that the Board –

- (a) note the monitoring position and forecast presented in Appendix 1;
- (b) approve the virements set out in Appendix 2;
- (c) approve the continuation of funding to next financial year to complete approved projects presented in Appendix 3;
- (d) note the update on the Pensions Discretions Policy;
- (e) note the updates on projects for which Nestrans has claimed external grant funding; and
- (f) note the Strategic Transport Fund position.

The Board heard Ella Stott provide an overview of the report.

The Board resolved:-

to approve the recommendations.

2023/24 BUDGET UPDATE

5. The Board had before it a report which provided details of the funding allocations to Nestrans for 2023/24 and sought consideration of any budget issues arising from it.

The report made reference to (1) the 2023/24 Coordination and Project Development Budget; and (2) the 2023/24 Strategic Investment Programme.

The report recommended:-

that the Board –

- (a) note the funding awards to Nestrans that have been confirmed for 2023/24;
- (b) approve the virements set out in Appendix 1; and
- (c) agree to usage of any uncommitted funding within the remaining historic grant allocations held by the Council along with funds from the General Reserves to address the current shortfall in the Strategic Investment Programme that was approved in February.

The Board heard Ella Stott provide an overview of the report.

The Board resolved:-

to approve the recommendations.

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ANNUAL AUDIT PLAN 2022/23

6. The Board had before it a report which provided information on the 2022/23 Annual Audit Plan prepared by the External Auditor, Grant Thornton and set out the audit work to be undertaken to provide an opinion on the Partnership's financial statements.

The report recommended:-

that the Board note the audit plan provided by the external auditor.

The Board heard from Angela Pieri, Public Sector Audit Director, who outlined the key information from the report, making reference to the initial risk assessment which would be shared with Audit Scotland, the planned audit approach and timeline and the progress against prior year audit recommendations.

The Board resolved:-

to approve the recommendation.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

7. The Board had before it a report which provided an update on liaison with other Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs), with the Scottish Government and other organisations.

The report recommended:-

that the Board note progress on liaison arrangements with other RTPs, the Scottish Government and others and arrangements for future meetings.

The Director made reference to the following meetings held recently (1) Health and Transport Action Plan Review Workshop held in the Cowdray Hall on 28 February 2023, noting that it was anticipated that a reviewed Action Plan would be submitted to the Nestrans Board meeting and other partners' decision-makers before the end of 2023; (2) Bus Alliance Board held on 2 March 2023, noting that the draft minute of the meeting was appended to the report for members' information; and (3) Regional Transport Partnerships Chairs meeting, hosted by Nestrans, held in Inverurie on 8 March 2023.

The Board resolved:-

to approve the recommendation.

EQUALITIES OUTCOMES

8. The Board had before it a report which provided an update and information about the responsibilities being placed on Nestrans as a public body in respect of their duties in relation to the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012.

The full Equalities Outcomes 2023 report were appended to the report.

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The report recommended:-

that the Board –

- (a) note the report and the requirement for Nestrans to report on its activities and policies in respect of Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012;
- (b) approve the Equalities outcomes 2023 indicated above; and
- (c) note the Equalities Outcomes Report 2023 and the Mainstreaming Equalities 2023 Report in Appendix1.

The Board heard from Kelly Wiltshire who provided details in relation to the two Nestrans Equality Outcomes which were:-

- (1) evidence to provide a better understanding of how all people and their protected characteristics in the North of East of Scotland travel, and any inequalities they may face whilst travelling or trying to access transport; and
- (2) everyone can access transport safely with an integrated service that provide accessible information, appropriate assistance and support from transport staff.

The Board resolved:-

to approve the recommendations.

ART DETAILED OPTION APPRAISAL

9. The Board had before it a report which presented the findings of the Aberdeen Rapid Transit Detailed Options Appraisal.

The report recommended:-

that the Board –

- (a) note the contents of the ART Detailed Options Appraisal and agree that this be submitted to Transport Scotland as part of the BPF Gateway Review process, subject to agreement by Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils;
- (b) agree to work with the partners of the North East Bus Alliance to continue to develop a BSIP agreement that could support the delivery of option 3a and explore with bus operators what could be achieved through this mechanism;
- (c) in parallel to (b) above, further explore the costs and risks associated with both a BSIP and a franchise approach in order to fully understand the likely financial implications (both in terms of set up and ongoing revenue costs) and report this back to future meetings of the Nestrans Board and the two Councils for their consideration;
- (d) agree to progress the study to Outline Business Case on the above basis and to request funding from Transport Scotland, through the Bus Partnership Fund, for the following next key stages as part of that process:
 - (i) Further consideration to establish the desired routeing and interchange points for the ART corridors and services in order to inform the Outline Business Case;
 - (ii) Progression to Outline Business Case of Options 3a and 5, based on an agreed desired network;

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- (iii) Further testing in ASAM 19 'without policy scenario' of options 3a and 5 under the preferred network and services;
 - (iv) Further investigation and quantification of the wider economic and social benefits that ART may bring to the region;
 - (v) More detailed financial analysis of operating costs and revenues to firm up on the level of commercial viability and risk associated with both a BSIP and franchising approach;
 - (vi) Recruitment of a BSIP / franchise manager in order to ensure the resources and expertise are available to progress these options within the timescales set out in the Vision document and BPF bid; and
 - (vii) Continued funding for engagement, marketing and communications workstreams as an integral part of delivering ART; and
- (e) refer this report to the two Councils for their consideration.

The Board heard from Kirsty Chalmers who outlined the key information from the report, making reference to the background, vision including key features for ART; the development and appraisal of ART options; the Bus Service Improvement Partnership; franchising and appraisal outcomes; and stakeholder engagement and a summary of the next steps.

It was noted that the two options highlighted within the report were:-

Option 3A - This option looked at improvement to existing services on the ART corridors to provide the ART network and in addition considered wider stop spacing (with the significant journey time benefits this brings), and benefits from new ART 'platforms' as well as ART branded vehicles, significantly improving the quality of travel by public transport and differentiating ART from the existing bus network. The option also identified the need to integrate the underlying bus network with ART, to avoid duplication of service on ART corridors and to create a coherent and robust city-wide public transport network. This option had the potential to achieve benefits in terms of journey time reductions, modal shift, improved perceptions of public transport quality, increased park and ride use, equality, accessibility and overall public transport benefits. The report concluded that this option could be delivered through a BSIP agreement with local bus operators; and

Option 5 - Included the introduction of new bespoke cross-city ART service and the integration of the wider bus network into the ART network. This option had the potential to achieve significant benefits in terms of public transport journey time reductions, modal shift, improved perceptions of public transport quality, increased Park and Ride use, equality, accessibility and overall public transport benefits. It had the potential to provide Aberdeen with a world-class public transport option but came with potentially significant additional costs and risk to the public sector. The report concluded that this option would most effectively be delivered through a franchise arrangement.

Kirsty Chalmers responded to questions from members in relation to technical connectivity with Firstbus' tap on tap off scheme and proposed ticketing arrangements, the difference between the various options outlined within the report, the impact on ART in terms of existing traffic and parking along the ART corridors and engagement and interaction with Transport Scotland, major employees and colleagues from the Belfast Glider project.

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The Board resolved:-

to approve the recommendations.

ABERDEEN TO LAURENCEKIRK MULTI-MODAL CORRIDOR UPDATE

10. The Board had before it a report which (1) provided an update on the future planned progression of work on the Aberdeen to Laurencekirk Multi-Modal Corridor Study; and (2) advised that following discussion with Transport Scotland, it was proposed that this work would encompass the remaining requirements of the Local Rail Development Fund brief (Preliminary and Detailed Options Appraisal), but also incorporate the Bus Partnership Fund requirements between Aberdeen and Stonehaven.

The report recommended:-

that the Board –

- (a) note the progress on the Local Rail Development Fund (LRDF) Aberdeen to Laurencekirk Multi Modal Corridor Study so far, including the Case for Change Report;
- (b) agree that:
 - (i) The Local Rail Development Fund Aberdeen to Laurencekirk study is progressed to its conclusion via Preliminary and Detailed Options Appraisal;
 - (ii) The Multi-Modal Corridor requirements of Bus Partnership Fund (BPF) Aberdeen to Stonehaven study are now incorporated into this study;
 - (iii) The work continues to consider rail, active travel, and bus priorities, but be extended to include the most appropriate routeing choice on the corridor for ART/buses, and consideration of a southern park and ride facility;
 - (iv) The work takes full account of the findings of previously completed and ongoing work on the corridor including Wellington Road; and
 - (v) Due to the regional and cross-boundary significance of the work, it should continue to be managed by Nestrans, with client team input from officers of Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils;
- (c) agree that the existing contractual arrangements for the delivery of this study are extended to accommodate these changes, including additional fee requirement of £63,593; and
- (d) instruct the Director to pursue grant funding support for the continuation of the study, commensurate with levels of support provided by the LRDF fund and BPF award.

Paul Finch provided a summary of the report, making reference to the Regional Transport Strategy, the LRDF, the BPF, the various proposals and the procurement and financial implications associated with the study.

The Board resolved:-

to approve the recommendations.

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PROGRESS REPORT

11. The Board had before it a report which provided details in relation to the format of the 'Progress Report' given previous comments by Board Members and sought agreement on the format of information to be presented in future.

The report recommended:-

that the Board –

- (a) note the purpose and format of the Progress Report as outlined above and presented in the appendix;
- (b) advise on any amendment to this format, if required, for future Board meetings.

The Board heard from Jenny Anderson who provided a summary of the report and responded to questions regarding formatting, information and timelines.

In relation to the Progress Report, members received feedback in relation to the Inverurie to Aberdeen City Centre Cycle Path, the Cross Aberdeen Local Rail Corridor (Montrose-Aberdeen-Inverurie) and the Inch Station Accessibility Study.

The Board resolved:-

- (i) to note that the Director and Jenny Anderson would liaise with Colin Allanach further in relation to the information to be included within future Progress Reports, specifically around start and completion dates for each project/scheme;
- (ii) to update the Progress Report in terms of the 'Future Actions' column; and
- (iii) to note that the Director would consider providing a summary covering report for the Progress Report.

PUBLICATIONS AND CONSULTATIONS

12. The Board had before it a report which provided information on recent publications and consultation responses.

The report recommended:-

that the Board –

- (a) note the publication of the documents outlined in the report; and
- (b) authorise officers to continue to engage with partner organisations as these policy documents develop.

The Board heard Paul Finch provide a summary of the report making reference to the following:-

- Sustrans: Public Health Benefits of Sustainable Travel to Railway Stations;
- Transport Scotland: High Level Output Statement for Scotland's Railway;
- Transport Scotland: Women and Girls' Safety on Public Transport;
- Transport Scotland: Active Travel Strategy Guidance;
- Transport Scotland: Draft Local Transport Strategy Guidance;

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- Aberdeen City Council: Draft Aberdeen Planning Guidance and Supplementary Guidance 2023;
- Moray Regional Spatial Strategy and Local Development Plan – Call for Ideas;
- The Confederation of Passenger Transport Scotland: Bus and Coach – the Route to Net Zero in Scotland;
- Public Bodies and Climate Change Duties; and
- Department for Transport – Transport Data Strategy: innovation through data.

The Board resolved:-

to approve the recommendations.

TRANSPARENCY STATEMENT

During consideration of the below item of business, specifically relating to the NHS Grampian Workplace Engagement Officer post, Councillor Yuill advised that he had a connection by virtue of him being an NHS Grampian Board Member. Having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest and would not be withdrawing from the meeting.

INFORMATION BULLETIN

13. The Board had before it a report which provided information and updates on a number of matters not requiring decisions.

The report recommended that the Board note the contents of the report.

The Board heard Jon Barron make reference to the following:-

- Getabout;
- Women in Transport – Scotland Hub Event;
- Comprehensive Travel Study;
- e-Cargo bikes;
- HNS Grampian Engagement Officer; and
- Aberdeen University MSc Sustainability Transitions Course – Project Support.

During discussion, it was noted that a report relating to the outcome of the Travel Study would be presented to the Board by the end of the year.

The Board resolved:-

to approve the recommendation.

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CONFERENCES AND PRESENTATIONS

14. The Board had before it a report which provided an update on conferences, training and presentations which may be of interest to Board members or for members to seek feedback on events which had been held and presented in Appendix 1.

The report recommended:-
that the Board note the contents of Appendix 1.

The Director made reference to the SCDI event which was scheduled to be held on 26 April 2023, and advised that the newly appointed Minister of Transport, Mr Kevin Stewart MSP would not be available to attend on that date, therefore the SCDI would be looking to reschedule the event, with clarification in this regard being provided in due course.

The Board resolved:-
(i) to note the information; and
(ii) to otherwise approve the recommendation.

PENDING BUSINESS AND REPORTS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

15. The Board had before it a report which provided a progress update on pending business requested by the Board and major reports scheduled for forthcoming Board meetings and provided the opportunity for members to add to or amend the scheduling.

The report recommended:-
that the Board note the report on pending business.

The Director sought approval to contact the office for the Minister of Transport to invite Mr Kevin Stewart MSP to attend a future meeting of the Board.

The Board resolved:-
(i) to agree that the Director contact the office for the Minister of Transport to invite Mr Kevin Stewart MSP to attend a future meeting of the Board.
(ii) to otherwise approve the recommendation.
- **COUNCILLOR JOHN CRAWLEY, Chairperson**