

**REPORT TO: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES
COMMITTEE ON 8 DECEMBER 2009**

**SUBJECT: JOINT WORKING TRANSPORT SCOTLAND AND MORAY
COUNCIL ON ELGIN TRAFFIC REVIEW**

BY: DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 The Committee is asked to note the progress of the joint working initiative between Transport Scotland and Council Transportation officers to bring forward future road improvements on the A96 in Elgin.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to the function of the Council as a Roads Authority.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **The Committee is asked to note progress of the joint working initiative between Transport Scotland and Council transportation Officers to bring forward future road improvements on the A96 in Elgin.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 A report was submitted to this Committee on 31 March 2009 entitled *Strategic Projects Review: Meeting With the Minister for Transport, (Paragraph 8 of the minute refers)*. It referred to a meeting at Holyrood on the 12 March 2009 between the Transport Minister, the Deputy Convener, Councillor Russell and senior officials, to agree a way forward for improvements on the A96 in Elgin. The Government's Strategic Transport Review (STPR) had recently been announced and the meeting with the Minister was in response to the omission of an A96 Bypass for Elgin in the Government's future plans. The meeting also provided an opportunity for the Council to stress to the Minister the importance of the A95 route to Moray's industries.
- 3.2 The Minister at that time agreed to facilitate joint working between senior officials from Transport Scotland and the Council to consider joint objectives and develop an agreed, fact - based master plan for traffic on the A96 in Elgin. At the same time he emphasised that the whole road network should be considered, as the local road improvements to be carried out by Moray Council should be an integral part of any plan. He asked that a further meeting should be held at Holyrood after the summer to examine the outcome, and that took place on 7 October 2009. The report to this Committee on 12 March agreed that a further report would be brought back after the second meeting with the Minister had taken place.
- 3.3 Consequently a series of technical meetings took place between Transport Scotland officials, their consultants Jacobs, and Council officers between

April and September this year. The process examined in some detail the issues, problems and constraints that affect the transport network in Elgin. Initially the base traffic flow information had to be agreed and then joint objectives were developed. After a considerable amount of work by Transport Scotland's consultants, a draft report was produced entitled *Elgin Traffic Review*, which identified "packages" of improvements, ranging from simple short term measures to more significant, longer term issues. The report was jointly agreed by officers, and this was used to inform the discussion with the Minister on 7 October 2009.

- 3.4 The report findings were welcomed by all parties at the meeting with the Minister, but this is only identification of the future improvements, and an acknowledgement by Transport Scotland that the short term measures should be carried out and that the longer term interventions are worthy of further detailed investigation. The more major improvements must be advanced so that they can be eligible to compete with other trunk road schemes in national works programmes which are currently committed until 2013. A number of other Local Authorities have lobbied the Minister after the STPR was announced and there is no shortcut to this process. The Minister has agreed to keep in touch with how the Elgin proposals, both on the trunk road and on the local road network, are advanced, and to meet again with Moray Members and officers if necessary.
- 3.5 The report has now been finalised and a copy of the short Executive Summary is attached as **Appendix 1**. A copy of the full report is available on the Members Information Portal and a print copy will be available from Members Support section upon request.
- 3.6 The method used to jointly identify future improvements has broadly followed the Government favoured STAG process of firstly stating objectives, then identifying options for improvement (or "interventions") and sifting these according to how well they satisfy the objectives. Those interventions that are left are then appraised against the 5 main STAG objectives i.e. *Environment, Safety, Economy, Integration and Accessibility & Social Inclusion*. Tables at the back of the consultant's report show how this was done.
- 3.7 The outcome is a series of measures, to be delivered by either Transport Scotland, The Moray Council or in some cases by developer contributions. They are presented in 3 distinct categories according to how quickly they can be delivered and the likely availability of funding:
 - Those that can be delivered in the short term through routine work and budgets already in place. On the trunk road this includes some of the improvements already promised on Alexandra Road e.g. minor changes at the A96 roundabout at Tesco's, the proposed toucan crossing at Lossie Wynd and other measures previously identified. Subject to Council approval of the proposed Elgin Road Hierarchy, which is separately reported to this meeting of the Committee, new road signs erected by both Transport Scotland and the Council could

effectively direct some A96 – A941 traffic onto designated peripheral routes, providing some relief for the A96 in the centre of Elgin.

- Those which require design work but not extensive assessment, and would have to compete for Transport Scotland funding (i.e. post 2013) or Council funding in future.
- Those which require further analysis before a specific scheme could be determined. An example of this is a heavily-trafficked section of A96 East Road including Pansport Roundabout.

3.8 It should be noted that the Minister's comments regarding improving the A96 through Elgin has contained frequent reference to the fact that there is little point in improving traffic conditions on the A96 if the necessary improvements already identified on surrounding local roads are not carried out in tandem. This is the approach taken by Transport Scotland and therefore it is expected that the Council's road infrastructure proposals contained in the Moray Development Plan will be delivered by the Council and the report indicates how this has been incorporated into the joint Elgin Traffic Review. It is acknowledged that current funding pressures and other Council priorities will inevitably affect delivery of these proposals, but the likely adverse impact of this on delivery timescales for improvements on the A96 should not be overlooked.

3.9 HITRANS have allocated funding in the current financial year to be made available to member Local Authorities to carry out early analysis or design work on transport schemes which were identified in the STPR. On the basis that the work carried out jointly by the Moray Council and Transport Scotland on the A96 in Elgin originated from the STPR's failure to include an Elgin Bypass, HITRANS have agreed to allocate £20,000 to the Moray Council to advance schemes on the A96 in Elgin. Preliminary discussions regarding how this can be used most effectively have taken place with Jacobs, the Council's new framework transportation consultants, who are the same company who have formerly advised Transport Scotland through this process.

3.10 It is intended that the funding should be used to examine some of the proposals contained in the last two bullet points in Para 3.7 of this report in more detail, so that at least some schemes can be prepared to compete effectively for inclusion in future Transport Scotland trunk road funding programmes. This element of the work will be completed by April 2010 and a further report will be brought back to this Committee after that.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Single Outcome Agreement/Service Improvement Plan

The report contributes to SOA National Outcome 1, Local Outcome 3 - Moray will benefit from an improved and safer transportation infrastructure. One of

the Key Actions is to develop an evidence base to support the case for investment in the A96 & A95.

Service Improvement Plan 2.2 - Improving the transport infrastructure.

(b) Policy and Legal

The report refers to proposed infrastructure improvements which are supplementary to the Government's Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR).

(c) Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property)

There are no additional financial implications. Provision of road signs identified in Para 3.7 will be funded from future Capital budgets *for New Road Signs & Markings* as funding becomes available. The delivery of the Council's transport improvements identified in the Moray Development Plan will be subject to future availability of capital funds.

Work on this project to date has been contained within existing staff resources. Further work requiring the use of external consultants will be funded in full by HITRANS.

There are no property implications.

(d) Consultations

Deborah Brands, Principal Accountant, has been consulted and agrees with the financial implications in the report

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The Committee is asked to note the outcome of the joint working exercise on Elgin traffic issues with Transport Scotland. Further work on selected A96 proposals will be carried by Jacobs Consultancy and funded by HITRANS. Another progress report will be submitted to this Committee when that work has been concluded.**

ITEM:

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Author of Report: Gordon Holland, Transportation Manager
Background Papers: *Elgin Traffic Review (Nov 2009)* Jacobs Consultancy
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