

**REPORT TO: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 17 JUNE 2008**

**SUBJECT: A96 BYPASSES STUDY REPORT**

**BY: DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES**

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1 The Committee is asked to note the findings of a joint Hitrans and HIE funded study into the potential economic benefits of constructing A96 bypasses at Elgin, Keith and Nairn.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to the functions of the Council as Roads Authority

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 **Committee is asked to note the findings of a joint Hitrans/HIE study into the potential economic benefits of constructing A96 bypasses at Elgin, Keith and Nairn.**
- 2.2 **Committee is asked to agree that a letter should be sent to the Scottish Government Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change, to draw to his attention to the conclusions of this study.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Following on from the previous Aberdeen to Inverness Transport Corridor Study which was carried out on behalf of the Scottish Government and examined both road and rail links, a study was commissioned jointly by the Regional Transport Partnership Hitrans and Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) to specifically evaluate the economic benefits of A96 road bypasses at Elgin, Keith and Nairn.
- 3.2 The work was carried out by Scott Wilson, transportation consultants, and the final report was approved at a meeting of the Hitrans Board on 6 June 2008. A copy of the Executive Summary of the report is contained in **Appendix 1** and a copy of the full report is available on the Members portal.

- 3.3 For each of the three communities the potential economic benefits identified in the study are from a number of sources. The potential reductions in journey time and improvements to journey time reliability for both local traffic and through traffic are considerable and this would benefit businesses and the wider communities. It is expected that the bypasses would result in business efficiencies in terms of improved access to both customers and suppliers. In addition, the study has also examined the potential benefits of the opening up of land for development, the resultant employment impacts and the influence of new land use opportunities on traffic growth and transport patterns. This is particularly significant in Elgin and Nairn where relatively large numbers of new houses are proposed.
- 3.4 The conclusions of the study are that there are likely to be significant economic and social benefits to result from the implementation of bypasses at Elgin, Keith and Nairn, the last three significant settlements on the A96 where long-distance traffic still passes through town centres, bisecting communities and impeding the efficient circulation of local traffic.
- 3.5 As well as all the social advantages that this Council and the public of Moray, through the work of the Elgin Bypass Campaign Steering Group, has previously brought to the attention of the Government, this report provides an independent evaluation of how the economies of each of these three communities could be improved with the bypassing of Trunk Road traffic. The Government and Transport Scotland are nearing completion of the Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR) which will determine the major transport priorities in Scotland for funding from 2012 - 2022. It is vital that this further evidence is highlighted to the Minister, and possibly other MSP's who have previously been supportive of Elgin and Keith bypasses, with the aim of positively influencing the outcome of the STPR to include bypasses on the A96 in Moray.
- 3.6 In order to achieve this, Hitrans has already sent copies of the report to the Minister and to the appropriate lead official in Transport Scotland as soon as they were available, urging them to include all three A96 bypasses in the STPR. It may be beneficial if the Council also writes to the Minister and provides copies of the report to other local MSP's.
- 3.7 A separate study into the potential benefits of dualling the A9 between Inverness and Perth was also commissioned by Hitrans and HIE and the findings of this exercise has also been submitted to the Government at the start of this month. Rather than recommend dualling the full length of the route at once, the study has identified those lengths of the A9 which would provide the greatest economic benefit from this standard of improvement. It concluded that the construction of a dual carriageway road on the section between Aviemore and Kingussie would create the greatest economic benefits. Clearly this is another issue which, if accepted by the Government for improvement in the next round of transport spending, would have a significant impact on road transport links to the South for Moray communities and the businesses which support them.

#### 4. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

(a) **Corporate Development Plan/Community Plan/Service Improvement Plan**

The report contributes to the Local Transport Strategy,

(b) **Policy and Legal**

The report contributes to one of the main aims of the Local Transport Strategy, to encourage the Government to provide an A96 bypass of Elgin.

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

There are no resource implications.

(d) **Consultations**

David Duncan, Principal Planning Officer has been consulted. Any comments he has will be tabled at the meeting.

#### 5. **CONCLUSION**

##### 5.1 **Members are asked to**

5.1.1 **Note the findings of a joint Hitrans/HIE study into the potential economic benefits of constructing A96 bypasses at Elgin, Keith and Nairn.**

5.1.2 **Agree that a letter should be sent to the Scottish Government Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change, to draw to his attention the conclusions of this study.**

Author of Report: Gordon Holland, Transportation Manager

Background Papers: Hitrans & HIE Report "*Economic Appraisal of the proposed A96 Bypasses*"

Ref: GRH/PA