

**REPORT TO: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES
COMMITTEE ON 24 AUGUST 2010**

**SUBJECT: ELGIN TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME -
WESTERN DISTRIBUTOR ROAD - STAGE 1 REPORT**

BY: DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

1 REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Committee of the current progress on the proposed Western Distributor Road (WDR) option appraisal and to seek approval for the process to continue.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to dealing with the preparation and implementation of traffic management schemes.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee scrutinise the Main Issues Report and approve the continuation of the Option Appraisal process.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Reference is made to the report to this Committee on 15 June 2010 (Para 4 of minute refers) where the timetable for the Western Distributor Road option appraisal was agreed.
- 3.2 As advised at that Committee, the option appraisal comprises of four scenarios:
- Do-nothing;
 - Existing Network Enhancements (Do-minimum);
 - Urban (Inner) Corridor Option (previously Option A);
 - Rural (Outer) Corridor Option (previously Option B).
- 3.3 The Stage 1 report has been completed and the options are summarised below and supported by the consultant's Main Issues Report which can be found on the Elected Members Information Portal and appended as **Appendices A-F**.
- 3.4 It should be noted that these options are being considered as broad corridors at this time rather than as specific schemes.
- 3.5 The comparative benefits and costs for each of the improvement options are given later in this section.

3.6 The Committee is reminded that the Western Distributor Road forms only part of the overall Elgin Traffic Management Plan. There are other locations around Elgin where further road network improvements may be required to meet the objectives of the Plan, for example the various TSP sites within the Local Plan. Some of these improvements may be provided either by developers or with the aid of developer contributions.

3.7 Do-Nothing Scenario

3.7.1 This option assumes no further road network improvements beyond those already planned and includes the proposed extension of Edgar Road and access to the affordable housing site at Bilbohall.

3.7.2 It is acknowledged that should further major development, requiring road network interventions, be approved during the option appraisal time scale, this base line scenario may have to be re-assessed. This is particularly relevant in the area around the junction of A941, New Elgin Road / Linkwood Road / Edgar Road. Some major development proposals are in the early stages of assessment and further more detailed analysis of these may have a significant impact on the evaluation any or all of the options under consideration.

3.7.3 The Do-Nothing scenario is not assessed against the criteria, as the objectives of the study are based on identification of issues and problems that require interventions. It is however important to understand the implications of adopting a Do-Nothing position as a baseline.

3.7.4 This would fail against all three key parts of the overall objective for ETM in that it would not provide a “quicker, safer, more reliable transport system”. Rather, it would see growth in traffic demand on the network leading to an increase in journey times and congestion as well as a corresponding impact on future economic growth in Elgin.

3.8 Existing Network Enhancements

3.8.1 This option is being considered to establish the extent to which the existing road network is capable of being adapted to reduce journey times and congestion.

3.8.2 The measures proposed result from a review of a number of previous studies and reports with some measures requiring land acquisition and the promotion of statutory Orders.

3.8.3 The recommendations of the Elgin Traffic Review, undertaken jointly with Transport Scotland, is seen as a crucial input to this option.

3.8.4 The additional measures beyond the do-nothing scenario are:

- A linked signalised arrangement at the A941 / Edgar Road and A941 / Station Road junctions;

- Signalisation of the Mayne Road / Bilbohall railway underbridge to provide a controlled single lane traffic crossing over the railway line with pedestrian crossing facilities;
- Signalisation of the Moray Street / A941 Hay Street junction, relocating the existing controlled pedestrian facilities to align with pedestrian desire lines.
- Amendments to South Street to provide a one-way westbound route from Hay Street to West Road;
- Geometric Improvements to Dr Gray's Roundabout and amendments to accommodate the one-way arrangement on South Street.
- Re-design of the Tesco Roundabout to three arm with alternate access provisions to Tesco;
- Duelling of A96 Alexandra Road between the Tesco and Halfords Roundabouts providing a 3.0m shared surface footway cycleway along this link which requires widening and possibly closure of the existing underpass; and
- Roundabout at Wittet Drive to improve access to and from the A96 and provide improved access to the South Elgin.

3.8.5 During the Stage 2 process, these measures will be subject to further investigation and analysis to establish both their individual and cumulative effectiveness. It is expected that some of these individual measures will prove more effective than others and may result in some being dismissed during Stage 2.

3.8.6 This option consists of on-line improvements and does not provide any relief in terms of traffic volumes using the A96 nor does it provide any distributor road function in the south-west of Elgin.

3.8.7 The estimated cost of these measures, at current rates, is **£5.1M**. This includes preparatory costs, utilities, works costs and risk allowance. This can be reduced by including developer contributions or by Transport Scotland sharing the costs.

3.9 Urban (Inner) Corridor Option

3.9.1 Whilst this option provides a reduction in congestion and journey times, work carried out so far indicates that limited traffic volumes would be removed from the A96 and A941.

3.9.2 The estimated cost of these measures, at current rates, is **£12.7M**. This includes preparatory costs, utilities, works costs and risk allowance.

3.9.3 This option has the potential for a phased delivery with the access road to Bilbohall being one of the phases.

3.9.4 During the Stage 2 process variants for the junctions with the A96 and with Pluscarden Road will be investigated.

3.10 Rural (Outer) Corridor Option

3.10.1 This option is considered to have a greater environmental impact than the others due to both a greater impact of construction as well as affecting a largely undeveloped area.

3.10.2 Whilst this option provides a reduction in congestion and journey times, only limited traffic volumes would be removed from the A96 and A941 and it is predicted that this distributor road would carry a relatively low volume of traffic.

3.10.3 As the route crosses the River Lossie floodplain it has the potential to reduce the flood storage capacity without the adoption of a viaduct crossing and/or other compensatory measures. The scheme will have to be developed in a manner to avoid any potential impact on the proposed Elgin Flood Alleviation Scheme and downstream flood risk.

3.10.4 The estimated cost of these measures, at current rates, is **£74.4M**. This includes preparatory costs, utilities, works costs and risk allowance. The significantly greater cost of this option is associated with the structural works required, including three river crossings, a viaduct structure over the flood plain and a railway crossing.

3.10.5 There is little opportunity for a phased delivery of this option.

3.10.6 During the Stage 2 process this option will be subject to a Value engineering exercise to establish the extent to which significant cost reductions can be achieved.

3.11 Economic Performance

3.11.1 The economic performance of each option is summarised below in terms of Net Present Value of Benefits (NPVB), Net Present Value of Costs (NPVC) and Benefit to Cost Ratio (BCR):

Option	Capital Cost	NPVB	NPVC	BCR
Existing Network Enhancements	£5.1M	£7.77M	£3.08M	2.52
Urban (Inner) Route	£12.7M	£9.75M	£7.79M	1.25
Rural (Outer) Route	£74.4M	£8.48M	£44.95M	0.19

It should be noted that the above figures are likely to change during the subsequent stages of the option appraisal process as operational performance becomes better defined and optimism bias reduces.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Single Outcome Agreement/Service Improvement Plan:

- (i) This report is in line with National Outcome 1 and Local Outcome 3: “Moray will benefit from an improved and safer transportation infrastructure”.**
- (ii) Service Priority 2 (Elgin Traffic Management Plan) of the Service Improvement Plan.**

(b) Policy and Legal

Not at this stage.

(c) Financial Implications

Capital budget for 2010/11 has been approved however specific budget requirements for subsequent years will only be determined at the end of the option appraisal process.

These will be considered as part of the financial planning process.

(d) Risk Implications

The risk of “doing nothing” is outlined in section 3 above.

(e) Staffing Implications

None.

(f) Property

Not relevant at this stage.

(g) Equalities

There are no issues in this case.

(h) Consultations

Lorraine Paisey, Principal Accountant has been consulted on this report and is in agreement.

The Elgin South West Working Group met on 29 July 2010 to note the progress on the option appraisal process and its proposed timetable as well as discuss the consultant's Main Issues Report.

5. CONCLUSION

- (i) This is an interim stage in the process to consider options and report impartially on the costs and benefits associated with each.**
- (ii) It is important to note that some of the key findings of the WDR option appraisal may change during the process and in particular, as the options are looked at in more detail, the scheme costs and benefits may vary.**
- (iii) Consultation with Groups and the public will follow the next reporting stage and is currently planned for early 2011.**
- (iv) The option appraisal process is continuing and a draft Stage 2 report is expected to be reported to Committee in December 2010.**
- (v) The final Stage 2 report is expected to be presented to Committee in late March or early April 2011. This final stage will report on the technical aspects and outcome of the public consultation, with a preferred option identified for consideration.**

Author of Report: Frank Knight, Senior Engineer (Consultancy)

Background Papers:

Ref: