

NORTH EAST SCOTLAND TRANSPORT PARTNERSHIP

Minute of Meeting of the North East Scotland Transport Partnership Board

Aberdeen, 20th December, 2007

Present:- Councillor Kevin Stewart (Chair), and Councillors Boulton, Ron Clark and Dean (Aberdeen City Council); Councillors Graeme Clark, Ford, Robertson and Webster (Aberdeenshire Council); and Mr. Eddie Anderson and Ms. Jennifer Craw; Mr. Iain Gabriel (Aberdeenshire Council), Advisor to the Board.

In Attendance:- Derick Murray, Rab Dickson and Jennifer Anderson, NESTRANS Office; Derek Yule, Aberdeenshire Council; and Roderick MacBeath, Aberdeen City Council.

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

1. The Board had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 17th October, 2007.

The Director raised a number of matters with the Board, noting in particular (a) that, in respect of Article 3(2) (Cross Country Rail Franchise), the peak time halt in Edinburgh on the Birmingham to Aberdeen service, which would be lost following the proposed timetable changes by Arriva, would be replaced by a halt in the new ScotRail service contained in the December, 2008, timetable following a reworking of the Fife trains schedule; (b) that, in relation to Article 7 (Timber Transport Forum – Request for Observer Status), the Forum was happy to accept an invitation to join a new freight movement group; and (c) that, in respect of Article 13 (Calendar of Meetings 2008), the meeting scheduled to be held on 3rd September would now be held on 20th August, the meeting scheduled for 15th October would now be held on 1st October and the meeting schedule for 3rd December would now be held on 10th December. Derek Yule also advised the Board that, in respect of Article 10(3) (Audit of Accounts 2006/07), the latest advice to Partnerships was that they would not be permitted to return unspent balances and there were currently no plans to draft legislation on the basis suggested in the minute.

The Board agreed:-

- (i) to approve the revised schedule of meetings for 2008;
- (ii) to note the additional information provided; and
- (iii) otherwise, to approve the minute as a correct record.

TERMS OF APPOINTMENT FOR OTHER MEMBERS

2. The Board had before it a report dated 12th December, 2007, by the Director explaining that the terms of appointment of non-councillor Board Members, identified in the regulations as Other Members, were to terminate in April, 2008, for Ms Craw, Mr. Anderson and Mr. Mair and in September, 2008, for Mr. Sullivan. Whereas the current Other Members were appointed by the Minister for Transport, future appointments would be made by Boards themselves subject to Ministerial consent,

although guidance suggesting the procedure to be adopted had been made available.

The position of Other Members had been discussed with the Scottish Government and the view was that it would be helpful if all Other Member appointments were made at the mid-way point between council elections which would meet the legislative requirement for there to be both a continuity and refreshment of Board membership when making appointments. Accordingly, achieving such a position would require the existing period of appointment to be extended by one or two years, depending upon on-going discussions on the possible extension of the terms of office of councillors in the context of the de-coupling of local government and Scottish Parliament elections.

At the liaison meeting with the Scottish Government, there was support for giving Other Members the opportunity of influencing the implementation of the Regional Transport Strategy as well as having had the opportunity of influencing its creation; also, given that, at the last local government elections, seven out of eight Council Members of the Board were new, the extension of the period of office of Other Members would undoubtedly assist in the continuity of work. Continuing the contracts of current Other Members would require the extension of those contracts and the preliminary indication from Scottish Government officials was that this was an appropriate way forward; written guidance would be provided to Partnerships following consideration of the statutory position and it may be that, as the original contracts were issued by the Scottish Government, they would have to issue any extension.

In terms of the four Other Members on the NESTRANS Board, informal discussions had shown that each would be willing to extend his or her period of service for a further two years; however, members may also wish to follow the procedure for appointing Other Members as set out in legislation which would open up the process to other individuals who wished to join the Board. Should the Board wish to follow this option, necessary advertisements would require to be made in January to allow the appointment process to be completed before April. The Director then spoke to the meeting, explaining that the Scottish Government had now provided report cards which required to be filled in, giving an assessment of the abilities and contribution of each Other Member.

The Board agreed:-

that the appropriate extensions be offered to each existing Other Member in the event of Scottish Government guidance confirming that the extension of each individual contract was acceptable, whether this was done by either the Scottish Government itself or by NESTRANS.

REGIONAL TRANSPORT PARTNERSHIPS – LIAISON ARRANGEMENTS

3. With reference to Article 2 of the minute of meeting of the Board of 17th October, 2007, members had before them a report by the Director in liaison with other Regional Transport Partnerships and with the Scottish Government.

The report referred, firstly, to the publication of the Public Spending Review and the Local Government Concordat on 14th November which had implications for revenue and capital budgets for Partnerships; the revenue budget for 2008/09 was the

subject of a separate report on the agenda. In terms of capital funding, each Partnership had previously received capital grant directly from the Scottish Government; in accordance with the Scottish Government's Concordat with local authorities, this grant fell within the "un-ringfenced" monies which would, in future, be incorporated into the overall grant received by local authorities. Local authorities would now have the duty to determine their priorities for spending in accordance with Outcome Agreements they would enter into with the Scottish Government and Partnerships would have to request funding from their constituent authorities, with each authority having to determine the level of funding to allocate for Regional Transport Strategy implementation in accordance with its priorities to meet its Outcome Agreements. This matter was also the subject of a separate report on the agenda. One other relevant issue was that of Demand Responsive Transport funding, which the Government had previously indicated was to be allocated to Partnerships; this had now been incorporated into the "un-ringfenced" local authority settlement and it was expected that authorities would now continue to provide the services which they supplied previously and would also now administer the programmes previously administered by the Scottish Government itself.

A meeting of Partnership Lead Officers had been held in Edinburgh on 3rd December, 2007, and this had been followed by a meeting between the Lead Officers and Scottish Government representatives, at which each Partnership had been given an indication of its revenue budget for 2008/09. It was also announced that the transitional funding put in place to support the development of Regional Transport Strategies had been discontinued but that the travel planning allocation was to remain; the outcome of the loss of transitional funding was that the core cost allocation, which Councils must match fund, was reduced, thereby reducing the match funding requirement placed upon each Council. The Scottish Government had determined the split of funding between Partnerships based on 2006/07 allocations and this had resulted in NESTRANS receiving an increased budget. Not all Partnerships had received an increase and it was clear that they would, in future, be expecting a fairer distribution of funding based on need and on the implementational requirements of their own Strategies. Having explained the Scottish Government's rationale behind the Concordat, the report went on to address concerns on the part of the Transport Directorate that Partnerships had indicated that spending was proceeding at a slower rate than had been expected. Given the possibility that the Scottish Government may overspend this year, Partnerships had been instructed to reassess their spending outcome predictions and to reassess their spending profiles.

The report next referred to the meeting of Partnerships Chairs which had been held in Dumfries on 7th December, at which NESTRANS had been represented by Mr. Eddie Anderson. The two main items of business had been the protocol for the conduct and purpose of the Chairs meetings and on the context of the meeting with the Cabinet Secretary to be held on 11th December. In respect of the former issue, the Chairs had agreed a paper prepared by lead officers which reaffirmed the existing Memorandum of Understanding with minor amendments to clarify that, if there were no unanimity on a topic, then there would be no statement from the Chairs. The Chairs had also agreed to explore working together to seek European funding for projects. On the same date, a meeting had been held between Partnership Chairs and representatives of the Confederation of Passenger Transport which represented bus operators; the main topics of discussion were CPT support for Partnerships and the implications of the Public Spending Review announcement.

At the meeting of Partnership Chairs with the Cabinet Secretary in Edinburgh on 11th December, consideration had been given to the benefits and added value of Partnerships and how they fitted into the Government's intention of decluttering the political landscape. Partnership Chairs had identified where Partnerships could assist in bringing together public bodies including local authorities, health boards, enterprise companies etcetera and the private and community sectors to achieve collaborative and efficient working which was necessary to achieve the Government's stated purpose in its economic strategy. In discussions, the role of Partnerships as part of the local authority family had been emphasised, together with the role of Partnerships in assisting the Government in achieving its economic strategy, in helping the shared services agenda, in improving efficient government through collaborative working and in exploring new ways of working, developing new partnerships and identifying external funding. The Scottish Government, whilst expressing support for regionally and locally approved strategies as operational documents, expressed concern about the affordability of the interventions contained in those documents and it was agreed that the Strategies required to have a pragmatic approach to delivery and that prioritisation would be reflected in the Delivery Plans which each Partnership was preparing. In the case of NESTRANS, this document would follow the agreement to prepare the four action plans which were currently being formulated.

The report concluded by noting that the next meeting of Lead Officers and between Lead Officers and representatives of the Scottish Government would be held in Edinburgh on 3rd March and that the next meeting of Partnership Chairs would be held in Inverness on 1st February.

The Board agreed:-

- (i) to note the constructive meeting with the Cabinet Minister and Transport Minister; and
- (ii) otherwise, to note the report.

CONSULTATIONS AND RECENT PUBLICATIONS

4. (1) Aberdeen City Draft Local Transport Strategy – reference was made to Article 4 of the minute of meeting of the Board of 20th June, 2007, when members approved a formal response to consultation by Aberdeen City Council on its consultative draft Local Transport Strategy.

Members now had before them a report dated 12th December, 2007, by Ben Kerfoot explaining that the City Council had now published its draft Strategy and proceeding to set Local Transport Strategies in the context of the National and Regional Transport Strategies and their linkages to other guidance. The document had been informed by discussions at officer level with both NESTRANS and Aberdeenshire Council and its publication was to be welcomed; a draft response to consultation was appended to the report.

The Board agreed:-

to approve the response to Aberdeen City Council.

(2) A90 Balmedie-Tipperty Dualling – The Board had before it a report dated 7th December, 2007, by Jennifer Anderson explaining that Transport Scotland

had published draft Road Orders and draft Compulsory Purchase Order on 1st November, 2007, to seek powers to dual the section of the A90 between Balmedie and Tippetry.

The report noted that the project was estimated to cost between £51-64m and involved the off-line construction of nine km of new dual carriageway with three grade separated junctions, one south of Balmedie, one at Rashierieve and one south of Tippetry; consultation had ended on 14th December and so officers had submitted a response by that deadline and a copy was appended to the report. NESTRANS had long supported the dualling of this section of road and it had been a component of the Modern Transport System developed by NESTRANS for the period to 2011 and it continued to be an action within the Regional Transport Strategy. Subject to the successful outcome of the statutory process, it was estimated that work would begin in 2010 and take approximately two years to complete.

In discussing the issue Councillor Graeme Clark queried the implications of this dualling for the Aberdeen-Ellon cycle route and Rab Dickson confirmed that the old A90 north would be retained for cycling, pedestrian and public transport usage.

The Board agreed:-

- (i) to homologate the action of officers in responding to Transport Scotland's consultation;
- (ii) to request the Director to ask Transport Scotland to clarify why there was not a full junction proposed at the northern end of Balmedie and to confirm what cycle facilities would be provided; and
- (iii) to request that progress as the scheme developed be reported through the Regional Transport Strategy progress report.

(3) Towards a Sustainable Transport System – Department of Transport Report – The Board had before it a report dated 7th December, 2007, by Rab Dickson advising that the Department for Transport had recently published a report entitled Towards A Sustainable Transport System : Supporting Economic Growth in a Low Carbon World.

The report had been published in October, 2007, as a response to the Stern Review and Sir Rod Eddington's report on the economics of transport with the intention of beginning a process of debating how transport policy should be directed to ensure that it was both sustained and sustainable. Although the DfT had no direct responsibility for transport in Scotland, it was likely that issues identified would have a significant impact in Scotland and any proposal to change the way transport was funded would be on a UK scale. Stern had stated that whilst the costs of action to combat climate change were high, they were far lower than the costs of inaction and Eddington had suggested that sending the right price signals to users and transport providers was as important as further investment in new transport infrastructure. Accordingly, the DfT intended to maximise competitiveness and productivity, to address climate change by cutting emissions of CO₂, to protect people's safety, security and health, to improve quality of life and to promote greater equality of opportunity. The DfT report noted that 54% of UK domestic transport emissions came from cars and suggested that the Government should be considering a twenty to thirty year outlook and focussing on the most congested and crowded routes. It was intended to initiate an assessment methodology for transport schemes which would include all costs to the public sector, including DfT, local authorities and public

bodies, plus any impact on tax revenues and compare these to estimates of benefits such as carbon, risk of death or injury, noise, as well as the traditional time savings and operating costs.

In discussing the report, it was noted that new procedures would bring in the carbon assessment of projects and Derick Murray stated that this was being taken into account in the revision of the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance documentation. Iain Gabriel emphasised the importance of Regional Transport Partnerships having an input into this revision of STAG processes and Derick Murray noted that Ben Kerfoot was a member of the Review Group.

The Board agreed:-

- (i) to request the Director to seek clarification from the Scottish Government about the action it intended to undertake as a result of the publication of this DfT report, and to request that it undertake wide varying consultation on carbon accounting proposals, and to report back thereafter;
- (ii) to request that officers keep informed of developments of the appraisal methodology with a view to ensuring that transport appraisal in the North East and in Scotland remained in the forefront of such assessments; and
- (iii) otherwise, to note the publication of the DfT's report.

REGIONAL TRANSPORT STRATEGY – PROGRESS AND ACTION PLANS

5. Reference was made to Article 4(1) of the minute of meeting of the Board of 17th October, 2007, when members agreed to defer the development of the Delivery and Investment Plan, required as part of the supporting documentation for the Regional Transport Strategy, until after the completion of the four Action Plans for Buses, Freight, Health and Transport, and Rail.

The Board now had before it a report dated 10th December, 2007, by Ben Kerfoot which stated that each of the four action plans was at a different stage of production and which summarised the progress in each as follows:-

- Health and Transport Action Plan – Much of the work of the consultants JMP over the past few months had been on data analysis and accessibility mapping which had led to the production of a background briefing report, which formed the basis of a high level stakeholder workshop which had taken place on 30th November and had included representatives from NHS Grampian, both Councils, the Scottish Ambulance Service, the bus companies and the community transport sector. Following the workshop, JMP were developing a draft action plan for consideration by the stakeholders which would be submitted to this Board in February, 2008. Subject to Board approval, the draft Action Plan would be published for wider public consultation, which would include the appropriate committees of both Councils. Thereafter, the final Action Plan would be submitted to the Board for approval in April.
- Bus Action Plan – a draft brief had been developed and approved by the partners of the Local Authorities and Bus Operators Forum and it was hoped that consultants would be appointed early in the New Year to take this to the next stage. The Plan would draw on the accessibility mapping work undertaken for the Health and Transport Action Plan as well as existing data collected by the LABOF partners and, following the invitation accepted at the last meeting which saw NESTRANS join the Bus Quality Partnership, it was proposed that the action plan be developed and approved jointly by those partners.

- Freight Action Plan – An initial meeting had been held on 11th December with economic development organisations, business leaders and other relevant stakeholders towards securing agreement on what was needed to take forward consideration of freight matters; the key role of the movement of goods within the region was acknowledged and a series of considerations towards identifying objectives for a freight plan identified, together with a number of possible actions and priorities. It was expected that further progress would be developed by this group and reported to future Board meetings.
- Rail Action Plan – Initial meetings had been held with Transport Scotland, ScotRail and Network Rail to secure agreement on which local priorities could be supported nationally and this would then be fed into national programmes and strategic documentation and taken forward through the Strategic Transport Projects Review. A meeting had been arranged with Network Rail on 19th December to further explore rail issues affecting the North East and how these could be developed to maximise the use of the railway. The report reiterated that the rail industry was a complicated one with difficult procedures and emphasised that it was only possible to take projects forward with the full support of the industry; it had proven to be very difficult in the past to gain access to the right people and information to develop schemes and NESTRANS and both Councils had tried to enlist appropriate expertise from consultants but this could be expensive and difficult to manage, particularly when the consultants and the industry were both located in the central belt. HITRANS had appointed an individual with excellent knowledge of the industry who was well regarded by that industry and informal approaches to HITRANS had indicated that that Partnership would be keen to enter into discussions about sharing this expertise; from the perspective of NESTRANS, access to this individual would assist considerably in future discussions with Network Rail, First ScotRail and Transport Scotland and the indications from Network Rail were such that the collaboration with HITRANS would be well received by them.

The Director then reported on the meeting held the day previously with Network Rail representatives, which he described as being a positive one. Mr. Murray then spoke on the individual employed by HITRANS to whom the report referred and Councillor Ford confirmed that the individual in question was very well regarded. Turning to progress on the reopening of Kintore Station, the Director confirmed that the case had been presented to Transport Scotland, who had accepted that the cost case had been made. NESTRANS officials had also requested that the same consideration be given to Kintore Station as had been given to Laurencekirk Station in respect of funding; this had been acknowledged and a formal response was awaited. Confirmation was also awaited from First ScotRail to ascertain if stops at Kintore Station could be incorporated into the December, 2008, timetable recasting. Network Rail had, however, suggested that there may be operating difficulties as Kintore would be a single platform station and a difficulty had arisen in view of the proximity of the level crossing.

The Board agreed:-

- (i) to note the progress in the development of the four Action Plans;
- (ii) to authorise officers to discuss the sharing of rail expertise with HITRANS; and
- (iii) to note that the opportunity to include Kintore Station in the December, 2008, timetable recasting was at a critical stage and to encourage officers to seek a supportive response from First ScotRail.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The Chair declared an interest in the following item to the extent that he was one of the local members for the Middlefield area of Aberdeen, the regeneration of which was linked closely to the scheme for improving the Haudagain roundabout.

REGIONAL TRANSPORT STRATEGY PROJECTS

6. (1) Progress Report – With reference to Article 9(1) of the minute of meeting of the Board of 17th October, 2007, members had before them a progress chart summarising the work on the three sub-strategies of the Regional Transport Strategy as at 13th December, 2007.

Councillor Webster sought clarification of the current position in respect of the Haudagain roundabout and the Director explained that remodelling had been undertaken without the third Don crossing which had shown a significant increase in traffic at the roundabout, as a result of which the options considered previously no longer worked. These options would now be amended so that they could run acceptably and a further report was expected in January with testing to end in March, 2008. In respect of freight matters, Mr. Anderson noted that the Raith's Farm development was now complete, that the first trial halting of a train at Craiginches had occurred successfully earlier this day, and that he would shortly be leaving the meeting to attend another meeting with developers about a possible development in Aberdeenshire.

(2) Northern Isles Ferry Consultation – Tier 2 – Reference was made to Article 5(1) of the minute of meeting of the Board of 17th October, 2007, when members noted, in connection with the officer meeting with representatives of ZETTRANS, that HITRANS was administering Tier 2 of the Ferry Users Consultation, which was part of the work of the Public Transport Users Committee for Scotland and was the level at which NESTRANS would be involved, but that no meeting had yet been called.

Members now had before them a report dated 11th December, 2007, by Rab Dickson which explained that NESTRANS had been invited to the inaugural Tier 2 meeting in Kirkwall on 15th November and that the author had attended given the unavailability of the Chair and the Depute Chairs. The report explained firstly the three tiered process. Tier 1 meetings with ferry users took place in each Island Group, Tier 2 meetings took place with Regional Transport Partnerships and, potentially, Tier 3 meetings would be held at a national level if required. Tier 1 meetings should deal with specific operational matters, Tier 2 meetings with long-term planning including route development and unresolved Tier 1 matters, and matters of national concern or ones which could not be resolved at Tier 2 level would be considered at a Tier 3 meeting.

The report proceeded to summarise the outcomes of the meeting, referring to the huge growth in passenger numbers on Northlink ferries in the past three years and the question of the need for competing subsidised services given a new operator in the Pentland Firth offering direct services to Orkney which may lead to Northlink concentrating on Aberdeen services; a forthcoming paper on the future of the Northlink franchise (although vessels were committed until 2017, there was a very

long lead-in time if new ships were required); the ZetTrans origin and destination survey on which NESTRANS had been consulted; an investigation by the Scottish Government Transport Committee into island ferry services across Scotland, European rules and their impact upon fares, (particularly small numbers of animals) and concerns over arrangements for diversion on occasions when Aberdeen was unusable because of high seas (although this had only happened twice in five years and Aberdeen Harbour Board had plans to address the issue by doubling channel width and deepening it by 33%).

The report acknowledged that major issues were most likely to involve the islands authorities but confirmed that NESTRANS would wish to retain an interest and involvement in the Tier 2 meetings, indeed there was probably a legislative obligation for NESTRANS to be involved. Nevertheless, key considerations such as reletting the ferry franchise, the recommissioning of ships or consideration of routing would be crucial to the North East and it was proposed that NESTRANS retain a watching brief, attend Tier 2 meetings and report back on any substantive issues.

Arising from this, members proceeded to discuss more general ferry issues and particularly the opportunities which various EU projects offered; in this regard, the Director noted that the Strathclyde Partnership for Transport had employed an individual to consider the opportunities arising from projects. Members also discussed the possibility of NESTRANS becoming involved in the Motorways of the Sea project and closer links with HITRANS.

The Board agreed:-

- (i) to approve the continued involvement of NESTRANS in Tier 2 meetings;
- (ii) to request officers to report back on any matters of substance; and
- (iii) to authorise the Chair and Councillor Robertson, with Messrs. Murray and Dickson, to meet Iain Gabriel's staff involved in the Motorways of the Sea project to take forward any opportunities for NESTRANS to become involved.

NORTH EAST TRANSPORT CONSULTATIVE FORUM – NOTE OF MEETING OF 20TH NOVEMBER, 2007

7. The Board had before it the Note of the Ninth Meeting of the North East Transport Consultative Forum of 28th November, 2007, appended to which were notes of three workshops groups held that evening.

The Board agreed:-

to note the Note of Meeting.

EQUALITIES SCHEMES

8. With reference to Article 8 of the minute of meeting of the Board of 17th October, 2007, members now had before them a further report dated 12th December, 2007, by Ben Kerfoot to which was appended a draft Equalities Scheme for approval.

The report reminded members of the statutory duty upon NESTRANS to produce equality schemes for disability, gender and race and that, in common with the approach taken by other Regional Transport Partnerships and because of the scale

of NESTRANS activities, it had been decided to produce a single equality scheme which met the requirements of the three duties. The Scheme appended to the report set out the responsibilities placed upon NESTRANS and explained how the Partnership would promote inclusion and equality and contained a detailed action plan. The report emphasised that the scheme only related to the functions that NESTRANS exercised and its role as an employer, although its role in influencing others was recognised fully. The North East Transport Consultative Forum, which included a range of representative groups, had been involved in shaping the development of the scheme at its recent meeting on 28th November and the NESTRANS Personnel Adviser had also been consulted. Progress on the scheme required to be reported annually and the scheme itself reviewed every three years.

The Board agreed:-

to approve the draft Equalities Scheme and to authorise its submission to the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

BUDGET MATTERS

9. (1) Revenue Budget 2007/08 - With reference to Article 10(1) of the minute of meeting of the Board of 17th October, 2007, members had before them a report dated 5th December, 2007, by Tom Buchan of Aberdeenshire Council on revenue budget matters. Circulated this day as an updated appendix was a statement of expenditure for 2007/08 as at 20th December, 2007, which showed expenditure to be broadly in line with the profile.

The Board agreed:-

to note the 2007/08 revenue budget monitoring report as at 20th December, 2007.

(2) Budgets 2008/09 – The Board had before it a report dated 12th December, 2007, by the Director with proposed draft revenue and capital budgets for 2008/09 which reminded members that, whereas previously the NESTRANS capital budget grant came to NESTRANS directly from the Scottish Government, the Public Spending Review and the Government's Concordat with local authorities had altered these arrangements so that funds for the development and implementation of Regional Transport Strategies would be "un-ringfenced" and incorporated into the local authority settlement. However, Government officials had confirmed that the grant for next year would be the same as for 2007/08 and would be divided appropriately between Councils. As local authorities were now setting their own priorities for spending in accordance with the Outcome Agreements that each authority would agree with the Government, Partnerships had been advised to begin discussing the implementation of Regional Transport Strategy measures with Councils as they developed such agreements.

Addressing the draft revenue budget first, the report explained that, in overall terms, the budget had been reduced as the transitional support for Partnerships in the production of their Strategies had been removed. However, there had been some anomaly in the distribution of funding in 2007/08 and so the Government had reverted to the split of funding which existed in 2006/07 and had divided the 2008/09 allocation on that basis. This had resulted in a reduced element for core costs, with NESTRANS having been allocated £300,000 for core costs in 2008/09 which would result in a reduction of required match funding from Councils, from £175,000 down to

£150,000 each. This total for core costs of £600,000 was supplemented by a non-core allocation of £620,000 and, although not part of the indicative note from the Scottish Government, lead officers had been told that the travel planning budget had been maintained for next year and that preliminary budget setting should assume that similar funding levels (amounting to £65,00 for NESTRANS) would be maintained for the coming year. Accordingly, NESTRANS would have an increased budget for 2008/09 of £1,285,000, as shown in appendix 1 to the report.

Turning to the capital budget, the report noted that both Councils, when considering the priorities in each of their areas, would be mindful of work by the Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Forum which identified quality of life and the implementation of an integrated transport strategy as the highest priorities for unlocking the Region's economic growth potential as well as the Government's purpose set out in its economic strategy of increasing economic sustainable growth. Of the Government's fifteen Outcomes, delivery of the Regional Transport Strategy would have a direct impact on seven and an indirect impact on two, and it would be a direct influence on five and an indirect influence on ten of the forty-five national indicators and targets, and these were illustrated in tabulated form. In taking account of these outcomes and indicators, each Council would wish an indication of the Board's view of what it would like to achieve in the coming year. The Government had indicated that the total for transport funding had not changed within their notional funding for each Council and as budgets for 2008/09 were likely to be set without having the Outcome Agreements completed and agreed it seemed reasonable for the Board to request that the Councils allocate funding to the implementation of the Regional Transport Strategy at the same level as in previous years which would result in NESTRANS requesting that each Council consider allocating £1.5m of capital funding to NESTRANS for the implementation of Strategy projects.

The Board agreed:-

- (i) to note the indicative revenue budget for 2008/09 and to advise Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils of the reduced requirement for revenue funding; and
- (ii) to request both Councils to consider continuing capital funding for implementation of the Regional Transport Strategy at the same levels as in 2007/08.

CONFERENCES AND PRESENTATIONS

10. The Board had before it a report dated 7th December, 2007, by the Director summarising recent and forthcoming conferences of interest to the Partnership along with presentations by NESTRANS and its partners.

The Board agreed:-

- (i) to authorise the Chair or his nominee and one officer to attend the Conference on Scotland's Current and Future Rail System to be held in Edinburgh on 18th February, 2008, at a cost of £265 each inclusive of travel and subsistence; and
- (ii) otherwise, to note the report.

PENDING BUSINESS AND REPORTS TO FUTURE MEETINGS

11. The Board had before it a report dated 12th December, 2007, by the Director on pending business and on major reports to be submitted to future Board meetings.

The Board agreed:-

to note the report.