

# Report

Report to:	<b>Community and Enterprise Resources Committee</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>7 December 2021</b>
Report by:	<b>Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)</b>

Subject:	<b>East Kilbride Rail Enhancement Project Update</b>
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## 1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ♦ update the Committee on the East Kilbride Rail Enhancement Project

## 2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the contents of the report be noted.

## 3. Background

- 3.1. At the Executive Committee on 3 November 2021, members requested that an update report on the East Kilbride Rail Enhancement Project be submitted to the next available Community and Enterprise Resources Committee. This report addresses that request.
- 3.2. By way of background, the railway network is owned by Network Rail, which is responsible for most of the railway infrastructure across the United Kingdom. Rail services are provided under franchises awarded by government. The current holder of the Scottish franchise is Abellio ScotRail. Transport Scotland oversees the regulation of railways in Scotland and administer major rail projects.
- 3.3. Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) and the Council do not have any direct responsibility in relation to delivering rail projects, however, both organisations work closely with Transport Scotland and Network Rail to integrate our areas of responsibility for example, complementary active travel, bus and park and ride infrastructure. Where appropriate, both organisations work in close partnership with Transport Scotland and Network Rail to support investment into rail infrastructure, service improvements or complementary improvements and embed such projects or priorities within regional, local or mode specific strategies.
- 3.4. By way of further background, the Scottish Government, through Transport Scotland's publication "Scotland's Railway (Control Period 6: 2019 to 2024)" recognised the need to improve the East Kilbride to Glasgow rail service as a priority. After the publication of this document, a specific funding commitment of £24.800m was confirmed in May 2019 to allow Network Rail to progress development work required.

- 3.5. Members may recollect from the paper presented to, and approved by, Community and Enterprise Resources Committee on 4 February 2020, a range of options were to be developed to improve train capacity and frequency including:-
- ◆ electrification and zero emissions self-powered fleets
  - ◆ track dualling
  - ◆ extended station platforms
  - ◆ longer trains
- 3.6. The Council and Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) continued to work with Transport Scotland and Network Rail. In doing so, it sought to refine and further develop the East Kilbride Rail Enhancement Project to ensure that the complementary infrastructure was more defined and able to be integrated within the wider rail station, service frequency and corridor enhancement proposals being developed and progressed.
- 3.7. Through this early development work, the existing parking pressures at both East Kilbride and Hairmyres stations were noted, and it was recognised that the issues around Hairmyres Station were particularly critical. Feasibility work progressed by Network Rail considered options to relocate the existing Hairmyres station westwards and this has since been identified as the favoured option.
- 3.8. The relocated station provides the opportunity to introduce complementary infrastructure in the form of: (1) an enhanced bus/rail interchange, (2) improved active travel facilities and linkages to the cycle network, (3) electric vehicle charging hub, and (4) significant park and ride provision for current and future demands, which would be implemented on a phased basis.
- 3.9. In March 2021 Network Rail secured the final piece of land to allow the development of the enhanced bus/rail interchange, electric vehicle charging hub and park and ride facility.
- 3.10. Up until the end of September 2021, officers continued to engage with Transport Scotland, Network Rail and SPT in terms of progressing the detailed design of project and complementary measures. More recently, discussions focused on how the land acquired by Network Rail would be made available to the Council to deliver the complementary elements of the project.

#### **4. Current Position**

- 4.1. Elected members will be aware that public transport demand, across rail and bus, reduced dramatically during the pandemic and to date remains significantly lower than the original predictions which shaped the development of the original project proposals.
- 4.2. Whether passenger demand returns to pre-pandemic levels remain to be seen, however, it is expected that the development, delivery, and programming of many transport related projects across Scotland and wider United Kingdom will be influenced by such uncertainty in demand.
- 4.3. Although, during the pandemic, good progress was made in relation to the project, along with several other projects, the project still had to be considered and formally approved by Transport Scotland through internal project approval and governance processes. Neither SPT nor Council officers were party to this approval making process, which is the case with other projects.

- 4.4. A press release issued on Friday 8 October 2021 confirmed that the East Kilbride corridor had recently been given approval for single track electrification, and that further development work was required to support this.
- 4.5. The release also noted that both elements of projects were being taken forward in the face of the significant financial challenges and considering uncertain future demand. Importantly it was also confirmed, in the days that followed the press release, that the relocated and upgraded stations and wider complementary infrastructure set out at paragraph 3.7 remained part of the project proposals.
- 4.6. Transport Scotland has subsequently confirmed that the decision was supported by industry partners, and the business case was appraised in line with Scottish Government appraisal guidance and took account of ScotRail's passenger count data (pre COVID-19), anticipated demand (post COVID-19) and constraining earthworks in the area. In Transport Scotland's view these considerations identified that the single-track option to electrify the route between East Kilbride and Busby was the most optimal considering the significant financial challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 4.7. Transport Scotland has further advised that the Scottish Demand Forecasting Group (SDFG), which includes representatives from Transport Scotland, Network Rail and ScotRail, produced a strategic advice note to the Scottish Government. This provided advice on how the rail industry can manage the current unprecedented levels of uncertainty within its decision making by considering the whole-system risks. At the time of writing, this forecast information has not been shared with the Council.
- 4.8. This forecast information was used in the East Kilbride and Barrhead Enhancement Business Case. Officers have asked for this information to be shared to allow officers to better understand the decisions that have been taken. Along with partners, officers will continue to review the demand on the Scottish Rail network and ensure that the project now being taken forward is future proofed to ensure that rail capacity and frequency is able to meet the full range of predicted demands.
- 4.9. Officers further understand that Network Rail is investigating potential alterations to the network at Hairmyres. This is being explored to understand what benefit such alterations could offer regarding; regularising the current 4 trains per hour in the morning and evening peak to a standard pattern service, potentially running 4 trains per hour in the shoulder peak (period either side of the main peak hours) as well as the peak hour and strengthening operational resilience. Platform lengthening is also being considered, should additional carriages be required in future to cope with demand.
- 4.10. Officers have asked Network Rail and Transport Scotland to fully consider these predicted demands as part of the future design development and in particular the scale of park and ride that is required. It is worth noting that prior to the recent announcement, the Council was considering whether the park and ride element of the project could be delivered in phases and potentially increased as passenger demand required it.
- 4.11. Officers will continue to develop the proposals for the new bus and rail interchange on the southern side of the new Hairmyres station and a major new park and ride to the north. Both sites had the potential to provide around 1,200 spaces, however, prior to the recent announcement the scale of park and ride was being reviewed. This was considering the need for larger bays to cater for increased size of vehicles, the area

required for electric vehicles hubs and revised layouts associated with rerouting of the watercourse on the northern site.

- 4.12. Elected members should be assured that officers will work with Transport Scotland and Network Rail to ensure that any joint decisions taken on the final scale of the park and ride will be able to meet the full range of predicted passenger and user demands.
- 4.13. Notwithstanding the above, the recently announced changes to the project, have been raised directly with Transport Scotland by the Leader of the Council. Specifically, Transport Scotland have been asked to further consider the scope of project and to provide a reassurance that the final scheme will fulfil the needs of commuters in South Lanarkshire and meet the Council's own ambitions in relation to climate change. At the time of writing, officers are unaware of any response received to the Council Leader's letter.

## **5. Project Agreements**

- 5.1. The key partners in this project consist of the statutory transport bodies of the Council, Network Rail, Transport Scotland, and Strathclyde Partnership for Transport, each having a wide range of duties and powers. As outlined in the report to and approved by Community and Enterprise Resources Committee on 4 February 2020, there is a need for the agencies to work in partnership to ensure that they deliver benefits to the local communities.
- 5.2. In these circumstances, and with a view to formalising the shared commitment of the partners to successfully deliver the project, it remains appropriate to set out a framework to formalise the commitments of the partners via a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) or similar agreement.
- 5.3. While discussions continued and the project developed during the pandemic, the MoU has not yet been concluded. Certain elements of the project, for example the land purchase, were progressed by Network Rail in the absence of the MoU.
- 5.4. Discussions are ongoing with Network Rail and Transport Scotland in relation to how the purchased land will be made available to the Council and SPT, for example land transfer or long lease. This will allow both parties to commit funding to deliver the complementary infrastructure, subject to the development and approval of the necessary final business case.
- 5.5. A review is now underway in relation to the need for and, if still felt necessary, the form that any MoU or similar agreement will take.
- 5.6. Finally, the Council owns and operates the land at the existing Hairmyres station and on the basis that the new station and associated park and ride are delivered, the future use of the existing site will require to be considered. Options will require to be assessed and any future use or disposal would be subject of a future Committee report for consideration and approval.

## **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1. Whilst the commitment to the electrification of the East Kilbride line, the relocation of Hairmyres Station and complementary park and ride facilities is significant and welcomed by the Council, the decision in relation to the dualling of the track is nonetheless disappointing. The Council Leader and officers have shared that sense of disappointment with colleagues in Transport Scotland.

6.2. Officers from the Council and SPT are, however, continuing to work with Network Rail and Transport Scotland to develop the proposals as outlined above and will continue to press for the greatest investment possible for East Kilbride and South Lanarkshire in both the short and long term.

6.3. Network Rail and Transport Scotland are now developing and refining the project, and this is expected to lead to revised timescales for delivery of the project. A further report will be presented to this Committee at future date once this information is known.

## **7. Employee Implications**

7.1. There are no significant employee implications at this stage.

## **8. Financial Implications**

8.1. Funding of approximately £3.750m is expected to be made available from the Glasgow City Region City Deal and developer contributions. In addition, subject to approval, a further similar sum is expected from Strathclyde Partnership for Transport.

8.2. It is noted that within the approved Outline Business Case for the East Kilbride Community Growth Area that principle of supporting park and ride expansion has already been established.

## **9. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications**

9.1. This project is consistent with the wider need to decarbonise the transport sector and meet the Council's own climate change and sustainability objectives and outcomes.

## **10. Other Implications**

10.1. There are no other implications.

## **11. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements**

11.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function, or strategy and, therefore, no impact assessment is required

11.2. There is no requirement to undertake any consultation at this time in terms of the information contained in this report. However, as detailed proposals are developed these will be subject to appropriate consultation arrangements.

**Michael McGlynn**

**Executive Director ( Community and Enterprise Resources)**

11 November 2021

## **Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives**

- ◆ Improve the quality of life of everyone in South Lanarkshire.
- ◆ Improve health, care and wellbeing.
- ◆ Make communities safer, stronger and more sustainable.
- ◆ Work with communities and partners to promote high quality thriving and sustainable communities.
- ◆ Improve the road network, influence improvements in public transport and encourage active travel.

**Previous References**

- ◆ South Lanarkshire Park and Ride Strategy, Community and Enterprise Resources Committee - 30 October 2018
- ◆ Update Paper, Community and Enterprise Resources Committee – 4 February 2020

**List of Background Papers**

None

**Contact for Further Information**

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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