

# Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal Joint Committee

**10am, Friday 3 September 2021**

## **A720 Sheriffhall Roundabout**

**Item number 5.3**

### **Executive Summary**

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The Edinburgh and South East Scotland (ESES) City Region Deal includes the following commitment – *“The Scottish Government is committed to investing £140m on strategic transport improvements as part of the City Region deal. This specifically includes up to £120m to support improvements to the A720 City Bypass for the grade separation of Sheriffhall Roundabout.”*

The proposed scheme is a grade-separated junction arrangement, which separates local traffic from the strategic traffic on the A720, that will provide high quality active travel facilities to address severance challenges and deliver a step change in accessibility for walking and cycling. It will also improve road safety, and will relieve the significant congestion, as well as journey times and journey time reliability for all road users.

At its meeting on 4 June 2021, the Joint Committee asked the Transport Appraisal Board (TAB) to review technical information in relation to the A720 Sheriffhall Roundabout Scheme and to report back regarding outstanding issues that may require to be addressed. In response, a special meeting of TAB was convened on 23 June 2021. Key issues discussed at the meeting are covered in this report which also sets out the TAB recommendations for consideration by the Joint Committee.

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## A720 Sheriffhall Roundabout

### 1. Recommendations

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- 1.1 The Joint Committee is asked:
  - 1.1.1 to note the high-quality active travel facilities associated with the Sheriffhall design which will address severance challenges and deliver a step change in accessibility for walking and cycling;
  - 1.1.2 to note the scheme will significantly enhance community connectivity;
  - 1.1.3 to note that the scheme will improve road safety;
  - 1.1.4 to note that the scheme will facilitate development, relieve significant congestion as well as improve journey times and journey time reliability for all road users;
  - 1.1.5 to note that partners, including SEStran and Transport Scotland, are committed to monitoring the impacts of the proposed scheme and to work together to address any unforeseen impacts on the local road network that can specifically be attributed to the Sheriffhall scheme;
  - 1.1.6 to note that partners will work together to seek to address cross-boundary issues, including on this key route in the region, in line with the NTS2 sustainable travel and investment hierarchies. Partners will do so through the emerging Regional Transport Strategy, STPR2 (including progressing the Phase 1 recommendation on Edinburgh Mass Transit), the Bus Partnership Fund, West Edinburgh sustainable transport improvements and other mechanisms as appropriate;
  - 1.1.7 to note that the scheme will provide opportunities for greater levels of movement by public transport, complemented by wider proposals being progressed by partners through the emerging Bus Service Improvement Partnership for the region and work to be progressed through the Scottish Government's Bus Partnership Funding award to the region;
  - 1.1.8 to note that the scheme provides additional ducting to facilitate future full signalisation and enable the future deployment of bus priority signal systems;
  - 1.1.9 to agree, following the further technical information provided and scrutiny of the A720 Sheriffhall scheme by the Transport Appraisal Board (TAB), to ratify

its support for the scheme as published in advance of progressing to any necessary Public Local Inquiry stage.

## 2. Background

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- 2.1 The A720 Sheriffhall roundabout is currently the only junction on the Edinburgh City Bypass that is not grade-separated, which means the City Bypass is at the same level as the A7 and A6106 local approach roads. This at-grade, six-way junction, often experiences significant queuing, especially during peak hours.
- 2.2 The Edinburgh and South East Scotland (ESES) City Region Deal includes the following commitment – *“The Scottish Government is committed to investing £140m on strategic transport improvements as part of the City Region deal. This specifically includes up to £120m to support improvements to the A720 City Bypass for the grade separation of Sheriffhall Roundabout.”*
- 2.3 At the meeting of the Joint Committee meeting on the 4 June 2021 the TAB was asked by the Committee to review technical information in relation to the A720 Sheriffhall Roundabout scheme and to report back regarding outstanding issues that may require to be addressed. In response, a special meeting of TAB was convened on 23 June 2021. Key issues discussed at the meeting are covered in this report which also sets out the TAB recommendations for consideration by the Joint Committee.

## 3. Main report

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### Overview of the A720 Sheriffhall Roundabout Scheme

- 3.1 The proposed scheme is a grade-separated junction arrangement providing new high-quality grade-separated active travel routes across the junction for all approach roads that connect with the wider network. It separates local traffic from the strategic traffic on the A720, relieving the significant congestion at this location, improving road safety, journey times and journey time reliability for all road users. The scheme also facilitates planned development in the ESES region.
- 3.2 Improved operating conditions at the junction provide significant improvements in bus journey time and also reliability compared to the present, providing opportunities for operators to plan for improved services. The proposed scheme also provides additional ducting to facilitate future full signalisation and enable the future deployment of bus priority signal systems should partners desire.
- 3.3 Further to a request from partners, Transport Scotland undertook a review of the public transport and active travel elements with City Region Deal partners which confirmed that every practical opportunity had been taken to maximise the benefits of these elements within the proposed scheme whilst not creating additional impacts for local landowners, residents and business.
- 3.4 The active travel elements in the proposed scheme will provide high quality facilities to address severance challenges and deliver a step change in accessibility for walking and cycling.

## **National and Regional Context**

- 3.5 Sheriffhall is an important part of the transport network in the South East of Scotland and sits within a wider national and regional context, as outlined below.
- 3.6 The grade-separation of Sheriffhall formed one of a number of recommendations of the first Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR1) within the ESES region which together provided a multi-modal package of rail, park and ride and other interventions. The Forth Replacement Crossing was also brought forward, a key component of which was the Forth Replacement Crossing Public Transport Strategy with the Forth Road Bridge now providing a dedicated public transport corridor.
- 3.7 Transport Scotland is also taking forward the second Strategic Transport Projects Review which included Edinburgh Mass Transit as a recommendation in Phase 1 and separately provision of an Actively Managed Hard Shoulder for bus only over a section of the M8 and M9 motorways. Further detail on these can be found in Appendix A.
- 3.8 In addition, there are also on-going CRD and related regionally important activities as outlined below, further detail on which can be found in Appendix A:
- SEStran Regional Transport Strategy;
  - Bus Partnership Fund;
  - West Edinburgh Transport Improvement Project;
  - Easter Bush Roads proposals, including a sustainable transport corridor; and
  - Queen Margaret University (QMU)/Craighall Junction.
- 3.9 It is within this wider national and regional multi-modal package of interventions to enhance the operation and safety of the strategic and regional transport networks that the grade-separation of Sheriffhall is being taken forward to address issues on a key route in the region, supporting the communities and economies served by the A720.

### **Considerations discussed, recommendations and other planned actions to note**

#### Considerations 1 - Interaction with Easter Bush Transport Proposals (A701 Relief Road and A702 Link Road)

- 3.10 Following the approval of the Easter Bush Business Case at the Joint Committee, Midlothian Council is currently considering potential impacts on the trunk road network arising from the A701 relief road and A702 link road.
- 3.11 There is a need to ensure that work on-going in relation to the A701 relief road takes into account the interaction between local and trunk road traffic in the vicinity of Straiton junction. This is to include consideration of the current and future knock on effects of queuing on the bypass from Straiton that impact the A720 Sheriffhall roundabout scheme.

- 3.12 Midlothian Council will continue to engage with Transport Scotland as the Council progresses their work on the A701 Relief Road and A702 Link Road to understand the implications for the trunk road network, including impacts on the A720 at the A720 Straiton junction arising from the relief/link road proposals which will include consideration of the A720 Sheriffhall grade-separation as a committed scheme.

#### Consideration 2 - Local Network Impact

- 3.13 The proposed scheme is expected to deliver significant benefits by providing high-quality active travel facilities to address severance challenges and deliver a step change in accessibility for walking and cycling. It will also improve road safety and will relieve the significant congestion as well as journey times and journey time reliability for all road users (including bus services) due to the improved traffic conditions on local roads resulting from the separation between strategic and local traffic.
- 3.14 Overall the proposed scheme is expected to reduce journey times and improve journey time reliability for A7 and A6106 traffic together with the A720. The design of the proposed scheme, together with the wider active travel and public transport benefits, should not lead to significant additional congestion on the local road network. The traffic model indicates there could be a 6% increase in traffic flows on A7 Old Dalkeith Road, north of B701, into Edinburgh which would be balanced by a decrease in traffic flows on the adjacent CEC routes. Partners, including SEStran and Transport Scotland, will monitor the impacts of the proposed scheme. Transport Scotland will do this in line with Scottish Trunk Road Infrastructure Project Evaluation Guidance.

#### Consideration 3 - Bus Priority at Sheriffhall

- 3.15 Specific consideration was given to bus priority through the Sheriffhall junction. However, improved operating conditions at the junction provide significant improvements in bus journey time and reliability, up to a seven-minute journey time saving depending on the route.
- 3.16 When there is no congestion on the proposed circulatory carriageway, there is no significant queuing on the approach roads and consequently the provision of bus only lanes would not offer additional operational benefits.
- 3.17 When congestion occurs on the proposed circulatory carriageway, providing a bus lane on the entries to the roundabout reduces the capacity for general traffic. This causes general traffic to queue back to the extent that it could result in buses that are queued beyond the limits of the bus lane on the approach road experiencing additional delays. The traffic models indicate this could occur in the PM peak period in 2024.
- 3.18 The proposed scheme includes traffic signals on the A720 off-slips to manage conflicting movements with traffic on the circulatory carriageway. The traffic modelling indicates that traffic signals are not required on the local road approaches to the roundabout based on predicted levels of demand.

- 3.19 Queuing on the A720 can extend through the proposed Sheriffhall roundabout. This is due to downstream congestion at A720 junctions to the west of Sheriffhall (not as a result of the proposed scheme itself), therefore full signalisation does not provide operational benefits to address this congestion.
- 3.20 The Public Transport and Active Travel Review noted that the junction structures are designed to accommodate future potential bus priority or tram provision within the extents of the proposed Scheme.
- 3.21 City Region Deal Partners and SEStran will consider regional bus priority through the Bus Priority Fund and emerging Bus Service Improvement Partnership(s) alongside other sustainable transport options including funding opportunities as they arise.

### **Next Steps/Timetable**

3.22 Key next steps include:

- Transport Scotland will continue to progress work to look at the wider benefits of the proposed scheme.
- Transport Scotland will continue to respond to representations made to the draft Orders and Environmental Statement.

3.23 Key milestones are anticipated, at this time, as follows:

- **Public Local Inquiry:** Early 2022, subject to ongoing negotiation with objectors and ratification of City Region Deal Partners' support for the scheme
- **Ministerial Decision:** Late 2022.
- **Tender Period commences:** Spring/Summer 2024 (subject to completing the necessary statutory procedures).
- **Contract Awarded:** Spring 2025.
- **Construction Commences:** Summer 2025.
- **Scheme open:** Late 2027.

## **4. Financial impact**

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4.1 The City Region Deal, signed in 2018, includes a commitment by the Scottish Government of up to £120m to support improvements to the A720 City Bypass for the grade separation of Sheriffhall Roundabout. Any financial risk to deliver the project sits with Scottish Ministers and not the City Deal partners.

## **5. Alignment with Sustainable, Inclusive Growth Ambitions**

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5.1 The proposed A720 Sheriffhall scheme will provide a significant strategic contribution to the City Region Deal Themes 1 (Accelerating inclusive growth), 2 (Removing the physical barriers to growth) and 4 (Targeted employability and skills interventions).

5.2 It will also provide opportunities for greater levels of movement by public transport, complemented by wider proposals being progressed by partners through the

emerging Bus Service Improvement Partnership for the region and work to be progressed through the Scottish Government's Bus Partnership Funding award to the region.

- 5.3 The multi-modal design of the proposed scheme will also help facilitate the delivery of future transport projects such as the proposed Orbital Bus route (east/west along the A720 and currently part of a bid to the Bus Partnership Fund, October 2021) and the potential south-east extension of the Edinburgh tram network to Dalkeith.
- 5.4 In addition, during the construction phase, the community benefit arrangements will provide opportunities for local employment and training.
- 5.5 An environmental assessment was undertaken and an Environmental Statement published by Transport Scotland in December 2019 for formal comment.

## 6. Background reading/external references

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- 6.1 Further background/reading includes the following:
  - 6.1.1 [City Region Deal: Accelerating Growth Agreement](#), August 2018
  - 6.1.2 [A720 Sheriffhall Roundabout Junction Upgrade Scheme Joint Committee Paper](#), 6 March 2020
  - 6.1.3 [Draft Orders and Environmental Statement - A720 Sheriffhall Roundabout scheme](#), Transport Scotland, December 2019
  - 6.1.4 [A720 Sheriffhall - Public Transport & Active Travel Review Report](#), Transport Scotland, December 2020
  - 6.1.5 [Second Strategic Transport Projects Review \(STPR2\)](#), Transport Scotland
  - 6.1.6 [Consultation on Actively Managed Hard Shoulder and Speed Limit Regulations 2021 - Consultation Report](#), Transport Scotland, March 2021
  - 6.1.7 [Scottish Trunk Road Infrastructure Project Evaluation](#), Transport Scotland

## 7. Appendices

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### Appendix A – National and Regional Context – Additional Information

#### National Context Additional Information

- 7.1 **Actively Managed Hard shoulder on the M8 and M9** - Transport Scotland has also consulted on the provision of an Actively Managed Hard Shoulder for bus only over a section of the M8 and M9 motorways. This is expected to reduce bus journey times and improve reliability, particularly at Claylands (Junction 2 M8) and on approach to Hermiston Gait (Junction 1 M8).
- 7.2 **Second Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2) and Phase 1 Edinburgh Mass Transit** - Transport Scotland is also taking forward STPR2 which will inform transport investment in Scotland for the next 20 years. Phase 1 recommendations, published in February 2021, focussed on sustainable travel and included specific reference to Edinburgh Mass Transit and continued engagement on this as proposals progress. STPR2 Phase 2 will be published for consultation later this

year. Regional Partners are engaged through the ESES Regional Transport Working Group and also represented on the Regional Reference Group.

### **Regional Context Additional Information**

- 7.3 **SEStran Regional Transport Strategy (RTS)** - The RTS provides the statutory and strategic framework for local transport plans, setting out an integrated regional vision for transport. A new RTS 2022-35 is currently under development. It will support interventions that continue to meet policy requirements, such as public transport priority and access.
- 7.4 **Bus Partnership Fund** – The ESES City Deal, has recently been awarded £3.03m of Bus Partnership Funding (and this is fully covered in a separate paper to this Committee in agenda item 5.2). The award will allow two key streams of bus work to be advanced. Firstly, £1.45m of Quick Win infrastructure projects across the region which are aimed at improving bus journey times. Secondly, advancement of a region wide Strategic Appraisal and Outline Business Cases (£1.4m) which will include further work on the Scottish Borders/Midlothian and East Lothian corridors.
- 7.5 **West Edinburgh Transport Improvement Project (WETIP)** – This project aims to maximise mode shift to sustainable forms of travel through the implementation of cycling, walking and public transport infrastructure projects. It specifically focuses the A8 corridor and cross-boundary connectivity to the west.
- 7.6 **Easter Bush** – The A701/A702 road proposals are part of a wider package aimed at facilitating planned development. They include a sustainable transport corridor along the existing A701 and new and reconfigured junctions on the A702/Bush Loan, A703 and the A720/Straiton, connecting the local and trunk road networks and facilitating improved accessibility between Midlothian, Edinburgh and other destinations across southeast Scotland. These proposals in tandem with Sheriffhall will represent a significant opportunity to develop a more sustainable transport network and influence more sustainable travel choices and future policy initiatives.
- 7.7 **Queen Margaret University (QMU)/Craighall Junction** – The proposed Scheme involves the construction of a full grade-separated junction that will provide access to the City Deal’s Edinburgh Innovation Park project, QMU campus and facilitate development to the south. The proposals also include for the provision of walking and cycle paths. The Scheme will remove the need for northbound traffic to travel southbound to u-turn at the A720 Old Craighall/A1 junction upstream of Sheriffhall.