

Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal Joint Committee

10am, Friday 24 June 2022

A720 Sheriffhall Roundabout: Background Summary Report and Progress Update

Item number 6.1

Executive Summary

The Joint Committee has asked that Transport Scotland (TS) provide a background summary report and progress update for the A720 Sheriffhall Roundabout project, which is being delivered as part of the Edinburgh and South East Scotland (ESES) City Region Deal, to inform the members of the Joint Committee of the progress and current status of the project.

The 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.

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A720 Sheriffhall Roundabout

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 Note progress of the proposed Scheme as detailed in this background summary report and progress update.

2. Background

- 2.1 The existing 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 purpose of the proposed Scheme is to separate local traffic from strategic traffic on the bypass, thus improving traffic flow journey times, journey time reliability and safety for all users. The upgrading of the Sheriffhall Roundabout will remove a barrier to both local and strategic movements and provide benefits for businesses, travellers and local communities, as well as reducing severance across the junction for all travellers including those travelling by bus, walking and cycling. Additionally, grade separating the Junction will provide a continuous uninterrupted dual carriageway along the Edinburgh City Bypass, providing consistency with the other junctions which are all grade separated.
- 2.3 The proposed Scheme is being delivered as part of the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal (ESESCRD) signed in 2018, which includes Scottish Government funding for strategic transport improvements in the next 15 years, including up to £120 million specifically to support improvements for the grade separation of Sheriffhall Roundabout. The ESESCRD Joint Committee ratified their support for the proposed Sheriffhall Roundabout Scheme at their meeting on 3 September 2021.

3. Main report

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 proposed Scheme also facilitates planned development in the ESES region.

- 3.2 Improved operating conditions at the junction will 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 Modelling the effects of the proposed Scheme indicates a reduction in average journey times, for all road traffic including buses, on the local roads passing through the roundabout at year of opening, compared to the “no-scheme” scenario, by a:
 - 30% decrease on the A7 northbound (from 8.8 minutes to 6.2 minutes)
 - 23% decrease on the A7 southbound (from 7.3 minutes to 5.6 minutes)
 - 8% decrease on the A6106 northbound (from 2.8 minutes to 2.6 minutes)
 - 72% decrease on the A6106 southbound (from 9.7 minutes to 2.7 minutes)
- 3.4 Further to a request from City Region Deal partners, Transport Scotland undertook a [review of the public transport and active travel elements](#), which was published in December 2020 and 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.
- 3.5 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

- 3.6 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.
- 3.7 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.
- 3.8 Transport Scotland is also taking forward the second Strategic Transport Projects Review.
- 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.

Next Steps/Timetable

- 3.10 The draft Orders and Environmental Statement for the proposed Scheme were published on 5 December 2019. On closure of the statutory consultation period on 31 January 2020, there were 2,771 objections to the draft Orders.

- 3.11 In recognition of the high number and the “climate change” content of representations received, it was agreed with City Region Deal partners that the proposed Scheme would be reviewed to ascertain whether further improvements to active travel and public transport facilities would be feasible – this is the review referenced above under point 3.4.
- 3.12 Following a period of extensive consideration of the points raised in objection, Transport Scotland has now concluded the process of issuing formal responses to all those who submitted an objection.
- 3.13 Transport Scotland remains of the view that the proposed Scheme is justified and forms a balanced component of the Scottish Government’s transport plan, sitting alongside its carbon reduction aspirations, in improving local and regional traffic movements and supporting economic growth. Whilst Transport Scotland shall continue to engage with objectors, given the nature and volume of the objections, it is unlikely that any further objections will be resolved without recourse to a Public Local Inquiry (PLI). Transport Scotland is also of the view that a PLI is the most expedient method of moving the proposed Scheme forward. Excessive time spent in pre-inquiry negotiations will unnecessarily prolong the statutory processes necessary to deliver and construct the proposed Scheme.
- 3.14 Consequently, Transport Scotland, on 28 March 2022, commenced the process to seek Ministerial approval and make arrangements with the Planning and Environmental Appeals Division (DPEA) for a PLI to be held. On 26 May 2022 the DPEA has appointed a Reporter to take forward the PLI for the proposed Scheme.
- 3.15 Timescales for the prospective PLI are now outwith the control of Transport Scotland, and shall be set by the independent Reporter appointed by the DPEA, however it is expected that the PLI will be held later this year.
- 3.16 Delivery of the proposed Scheme can only commence if approved under the relevant statutory procedures. Only following completion of statutory consents can a programme be set for delivery of the proposed Scheme.

4. Financial impact

- 4.1 The [City Region Deal](#), signed in August 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

- 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

- 6.1 Further background/reading includes the following:
 - 6.1.1 [City Region Deal Document](#), August 2018
 - 6.1.2 [Draft Orders and Environmental Statement - A720 Sheriffhall Roundabout scheme](#), Transport Scotland, December 2019
 - 6.1.3 [A720 Sheriffhall - Public Transport & Active Travel Review Report](#), Transport Scotland, December 2020

7. Appendices

None.