

**UPDATE TO CITY OF INVERNESS AREA COMMITTEE MEMBERS
ACCESSING INVERNESS PROJECT**

10 April 2019

Background

Accessing Inverness is a HITRANS-led project in partnership with The Highland Council to develop outline design proposals for improving walking and cycle routes linking Inverness Railway Station to other parts of the city centre. The current cost estimate for delivering the entire package of proposed improvements is roughly £7.2M. There is potential for significant funding towards the works from Scottish Government and Transport Scotland through Sustrans' new "Places for Everyone" grant programme.

This note updates Members on action to progress the project since the City of Inverness Area Committee meeting on 21 February 2019 when Members considered and commented on the project, including community/stakeholder engagement and the public consultation process that closed on 1 February 2019. The Committee:

- *AGREED that the outcome of this be reported back as swiftly as possible to Committee Members and the public on a 'You said, we did basis' along with an Equalities Impact Assessment; and*
- *AGREED that a Special meeting of the Committee be arranged prior to the funding deadline to consider the aforementioned information.*

Consultation feedback

Council and HITRANS officers have summarised consultation feedback and have prepared the Council's draft response for Committee Members to consider and comment on. To recap, over 200 comments were received from 50 organisations/individuals, including detailed feedback on design issues and options. The draft response will show how concerns will be addressed during future phases of the project, including ongoing consultation with key stakeholders such as representatives of disabled people's groups and the city centre business community. In preparing the Council's draft response, officers are currently discussing recommendations with internal stakeholders including colleagues in Community Services, and the Equalities Officer. The top 8 responses are provided below, and the full consultation response will be provided alongside the committee paper:

<u>"They Said"</u>	<u>"We Did or Will do"</u>
Traffic modelling needs carried out to better understand traffic flow and capacity for bus movements	Traffic volume, flow and capacity will be understood further during traffic modelling, which will form part of detailed design phase. This will also look at the changes to traffic from removal of filter lanes as part of scheme. Bus operators have already been consulted and will be key stakeholders throughout the project.
Taxi, Loading and Disabled Parking must be accommodated	At present the scheme has only highlighted taxi provision at the top end of Academy Street, which has 3 spaces less than is current. Engagement will continue with BID and taxi alliance to make sure the current provision of city centre rank spaces is maintained.
Absence of Controlled Crossings is not acceptable	The absence of controlled crossings is noted, and through further preliminary work we will look to address this, looking at key locations where they can be placed into the scheme to meet the needs of all users, while also being looked at in tandem with how this links with traffic modelling. We will continue to engage with stakeholders.
Materials used should be of highest quality but ensure safe in wet / icy conditions	Use of materials will be considered during future design phases and in consultation with colleagues across different services. Maintenance considerations will also form part of any discussions.
No to shared space and kerb heights must be appropriate	We are not promoting shared space, the proposed kerb height was adjusted to 60mm through consultation with local access panel, while flat surfaces to enable wheelchairs other mobility restrictions must be provided. Key details on this will be worked on through further preliminary design.
Connections to wider cycle / walking network to be considered	The scope of Accessing Inverness is to improve the walking and cycling environment between the rail station, bus station and Rose Street Car park. However connections with the wider network will be considered during the next design phase.
Will The Highland Council or the Common Good Fund be required to pay some of the cost?	The next stage of preliminary and detailed design could be 100% funded via Sustrans Scotland through an application process, however options for any construction need further discussion.
Opportunity to move bus station to the Royal Mail site and create the attractive park that the city centre desperately needs	While opportunities may arise in the longer term to relocate or reconfigure and improve bus station facilities, the priority for this project is to improve current pedestrian and cycling links from the Rail Station to the Bus Station and Rose Street Car park.

Equalities Impact Assessment

Officers are finalising the Equalities Impact Assessment, which reports feedback to date from disabled people's groups, records positive impact and identifies ways of mitigating negative impact, including ongoing consultation with disabled community representatives. Officers are also in dialogue with Transport Scotland's accessibility and road safety team, who are keen to explore options to support and advise this project to promote best practice in meeting the needs of all users in a city centre context.

Sustrans Scotland Grant Programme

On Friday 1 March, Sustrans Scotland confirmed they will be inviting applications for their next round of grant funding between 13 March and 1 May (i.e. almost three weeks later than expected). This followed a meeting between representatives of Sustrans Scotland and Council/HITRANS officers, which confirmed that:

- Sustrans is supportive of Accessing Inverness work to date, in particular the robust consultation process and the range and extent of feedback secured.
- The forthcoming funding round is expected to be their most competitive yet, with bids expected to exceed the available budget.
- Sustrans' criteria for awarding grant have been updated which may compromise our ability to secure funding for proposed Academy Street improvements. Projects will be scored according to the priority given to walking and cycling over private car use. The current concept for Academy Street, which does not create a segregated cycle route due to the width of the carriageway, may not score as strongly as other street improvement projects where road space can be reallocated as one-way, or private vehicles can be restricted.
- The Council could bid for 100% funding to progress the project to detail design stage, which would include further public and stakeholder consultation. Our application would have to explain how proposals recently put forward for public consultation will be adjusted to address priorities identified in consultation feedback including further refinement, as necessary, as part of the detail design process. The application must be accompanied by an Equalities Impact Assessment.