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**OVERVIEW OF TRANSPORT PORTFOLIO**

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**Purpose of Report**

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work that have been undertaken under the Transport Portfolio.

**Network Management Schemes**

2. The following schemes are being delivered through Local Sustainable Transport funding:-
  - (a) **Haughton Road Cycleway/Footway Link** - A scheme to improve the footway linking Haughton Road with Hutton Avenue, via the Hutton Avenue bridge was completed in February 2013. The Hutton Avenue bridge was opened in November 2012.
  - (b) **Skerne Park Bus Stop Improvements** - A scheme to install five new bus stops with raised platforms and provide three existing stops with raised platforms is now complete. The bus service 14 has been registered to stop at the stops. The service has previously operated on a hail and ride basis. A series of dropped crossing points are currently under construction to enable residents with mobility issues and parents with pushchairs to access buses via the raised platforms.
  - (c) **A67 Footway Improvement** - Work has commenced to widen and resurface the footway on the north side of A67 between the A66 and Middleton St George.

**Highway Maintenance Schemes**

3. Recently Completed Schemes - Feethams – carriageway deep patching.
4. On-going Schemes - Annual Carriageway Slurry Sealing Programme.
5. Schemes Due to Commence – 2013/14 programme of works currently being produced, to commence April 2013.

**School Travel Plans**

6. Around 20 schools are looking to gain an award through the Modeshift STARS accreditation scheme this year. Those schools that are involved have been working with members of the Local Motion team to ensure that they have all of the information that they need to gain an award. Final submissions will be made at the

end of the school year.

### **Workplace Travel Plans**

7. The Local Motion team has been working with the NHS Local Area Team to write a travel plan for its move to the former BT Exchange building on Barnard Street. Once the team has moved to this location further information sessions will be held with the staff. Plans are in place to engage with businesses on travel issues and bring together businesses that have had an interest in this in the past.

### **Town Centre Buses, Coaches and Parking**

8. Further research work is being undertaken into how people use local buses, coaches and car parks in the town centre, as part of the development of a masterplan for the Town Centre (Cabinet Report 4 December 2012 refers). This research will add detail to that already collected in 2012 which is set out in the December report.
9. Work to date has included:
  - (a) engagement sessions with the public during January 2013;
  - (b) surveys of bus and coach users;
  - (c) meetings with local bus operators;
  - (d) discussions with local businesses;
  - (e) technical work to assess the feasibility of a multi-story car park in the Feethams area;
  - (f) surveys of people parking on street in the town centre and in adjacent resident parking zones; and
  - (g) a survey of a sample of residents living in the adjacent resident parking zones.
10. The high level findings from the various research streams should be known this month. Members of Place Scrutiny and stakeholders will have the opportunity to respond to the evidence and provide input to the draft masterplan for the Town Centre which will be considered by Cabinet at its May meeting.

### **Third Local Transport Plan**

11. Cabinet considered at its special meeting the release of funding for the remainder of Third Local Transport Plan (LTP). The funding largely focuses on the agreed maintenance priorities with approximately 80 per cent of the spend allocated to this activity. The ability to improve the network is mainly limited to the Tees Valley Bus Network Improvement scheme with major junction improvements to Stone Bridge/ Yarm Road roundabout being programmed for 2014/15.

### **Local Sustainable Transport Fund**

12. The pedestrian/cycle route linking Teesside University to Yarm Road (and beyond to Bank Top Station) has received planning permission and work has started on site. The route will continue through the university and college sites to Haughton Road using existing links. The entire route will be signed for pedestrians and

cyclists and the 3 metre wide route across Central Park will be lit.

13. The cycle route from Harrowgate Hill to the Borough boundary at junction 59 A1(M) is complete. This route now provides a continuous route from Darlington to Newton Aycliffe.
14. The cycle network is being extended from Morton Palms to Middleton St George with an off road cycle route from the existing route at the A66 roundabout provided by the Highways Agency to the outskirts of Middleton St George. This will provide a continuous route from Middleton St George to Darlington town centre and will also incorporate a new stretch of cycle route provided as part of the Torrington site development on Yarm Road.
15. Groundwork has started the Community Audits with the first one in Park East. The aim is to encourage more people to walk more in their local area, accessing local shops and facilities and increasing levels of exercise. Small local improvements will be implemented both by the community and the Council and Groundwork will organise local walks and activities to help people help explore their local area.
16. The Local Motion Travel Advisors have begun the 2013 Individualised Travel Marketing programme. The full team received training at the beginning of March and will be working across Lingfield, Central, North Road, Harrowgate Hill and Sadberge and Whessoe wards this year as well as Newton Aycliffe and Shildon.
17. MEGA Friday walks have taken place at St Augustine's school in February and Mount Pleasant Primary in March. The walk at St Augustine's was led by Fireman Sam and Sir Winston Churchill lead the way to Mount Pleasant accompanied by children dressed in second world war outfits. Schools across Darlington are continuing to encourage children to travel sustainably to school every Friday and pupils are recording the data on the MegaMotion website each week. The MegaMotion campaign website enables staff, parents and pupils to keep up with the activities of Max and SAM across Darlington and South Durham.
18. The Pink Bus was formally launched on 8 February 2013. Grant funding was awarded to eVOLution following a successful bid for Darlington Council's LSTF and Community Transport funding. The bid was developed in a partnership between eVOLution and the West End Partnership and the new community bus service is operated as Service 16 by Scarlet Band. It provides a service to residents in the West End as well as operating up North Road to provide a service to residents in the Glebe Road area.

### **Tees Valley Metro**

19. The first phase of improvements will take place at Dinsdale Station in May 2013 to coincide with an enhancement to the service frequency. From 12 May trains will operate every half hour between Dinsdale and Darlington Bank Top Station as well as Darlington to Middlesbrough and beyond. The new Public Address system has been installed providing clear announcements on both platforms. In May Northern Rail's contractors will provide new shelters, CCTV, electronic screens displaying the next train and next departures and improved signs. The second

stage of work will take place in October 2013.

### **Strategic Rail Issues**

20. The Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive and other officers have been involved in ongoing discussions about future investment in the East Coast Main Line and how best to provide local train services in the north east. These discussions have included other local authorities, the rail industry, the Department for Transport and other organisations.

### **East Coast Main Line**

21. The Council is working with other Councils along the route of the East Coast Main Line (ECML) to make the case for further investment in the ECML to Government and the rail industry. Such investment is seen as essential to improve journey times, service reliability, service frequency and the line capacity needed to facilitate the movement of people and freight to support the economic future of Darlington and the Tees Valley, as set out in Darlington's Economic Strategy and the Tees Valley Statement of Ambition.
22. A draft business case is being prepared before the re-letting of the ECML train franchise, with the following aims:-
  - (a) to articulate a shared view of the greater potential for economic growth provided by an improved ECML route;
  - (b) to raise awareness of the outcomes for the ECML to deliver growth and the investment priorities to realise them;
  - (c) to ensure the voice of local government heard by decision makers;
  - (d) to have a strong partnership with the rail industry, to create the vision for and the strategic development of the ECML both for passengers and freight (the vision will include connecting services and routes).
23. The Government has announced investment funding worth £240m in the period 2014 to 2019. One of the contending schemes for funding is Darlington Station. The proposals for the Station include a new fully accessible footbridge, new platforms for main line and local trains as well as a new passenger concourse. Ideally, these improvements would be made before the introduction of new trains built by Hitachi under the InterCity Express Project in 2018/19. Any improvements to main line platforms would need to be capable of accommodating trains using the forthcoming High Speed 2 route and the final design also needs to improve travel conditions for local train users; both using Darlington Station and passing through it.

### **Rail Devolution**

24. The Council is working with fellow transport authorities throughout the north east to influence how local train services are provided in the future. This follows the publication of a Command Paper by Government in 2012 setting out the potential benefits of devolving local train franchising to sub-national organisations. One of the options is whether an invitation to join a consortium created by the Passenger

Transport Executive's for Leeds, Manchester and Sheffield is in the best interests of the north east. The consortium, currently known as the Rail in the North Executive (RiNE), have proposed a special purpose vehicle organisation that would take on the responsibility for franchising train services in the Northern and TransPennine franchises. It is keen for the north east to participate in the proposal and work is ongoing to more fully understand the benefits and risks of doing so.

25. The RiNE propose that Government must fund baseline rail services and provide the ability for these to be increased as demand requires. It also proposes key franchise outputs that would:
  - (a) provide a baseline set of services similar to those currently provided;
  - (b) support the economic objectives of the north, increase electrified routes and other improvements;
  - (c) have the ability to accommodate growth in passenger numbers;
  - (d) provide a smart ticketing system for use both on trains and other types of public transport;
  - (e) provide new and refurbished trains to replace life expired trains currently in use; and
  - (f) provide improved facilities at stations such as greater passenger security and information provision.
  
26. Work on assessing the options is ongoing.

**Councillor David Lyonette**  
**Transport Portfolio**