

Midlothian Local Transport Strategy (LTS) – ‘Case for Change’ survey

Report by Anna Herriman, Strategic Transport Planning Manager

Report for Decision

1 Recommendations

1.1 It is recommended that Council:

- a) Agrees to a six-week long public survey commencing in April 2024, to help conclude Stages one and two (referred to as the ‘Case for Change’ stage) of the Local Transport Strategy (LTS), and
- b) Notes that the results of the survey will be used to help finalise the Stages one and two report and help inform the development of ‘options’ for the final Local Transport Strategy document, also
- c) Notes that a fuller 12-week long public consultation exercise will be held over July, August, and September, on the draft final Local Transport Strategy.

2 Purpose of Report/Executive Summary

This report informs Council of the policy context guiding the development of a new Midlothian Local Transport Strategy (LTS) and seeks agreement to commence a short survey in April. This is needed to help ensure transport problems are fully identified, and thus conclude the early stages of the LTS development.

The report explains the role and purpose of the LTS in Midlothian, in helping shape future transport related decisions, in a period of rapid growth.

The report outlines the stages of preparing the LTS – which follows Transport Scotland’s 2023 guidance on local transport strategies. Stages One and Two (referred to often as Case for Change Stage) will be concluded after the short survey, before developing options and then drafting of a new LTS.

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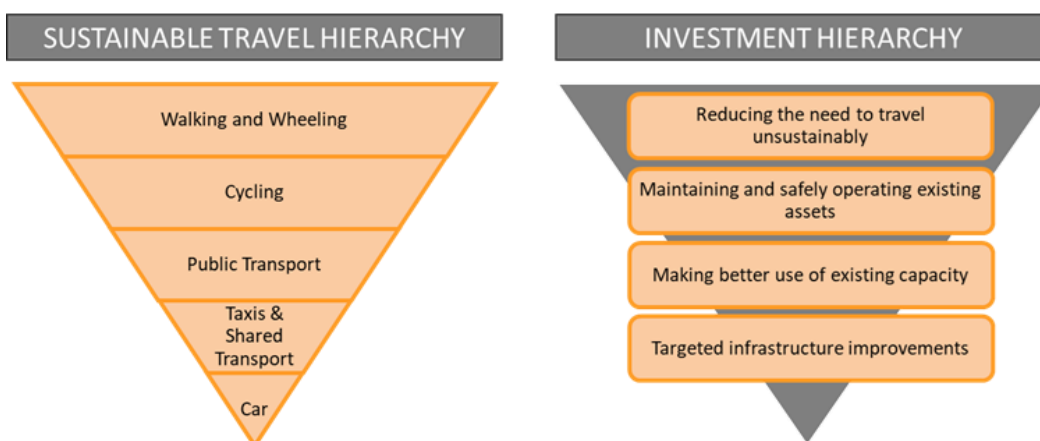
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Background

Strategic Context

- 3.1** There has been a distinct shift in national transport and planning policy, legislation, and funding towards the delivery of a more sustainable and equitable transport future in Scotland. This requires co-ordinated delivery at all levels of government. Current National and Regional Strategies seek to address a lack of access to the transport network (a major barrier to financial, social inclusion) and promote sustainable transport options that are accessible, safe, and help reduce car dependency. Appendix 1 sets out policies that relate to a new Midlothian LTS.
- 3.2** The [Climate Change \(Emissions Reduction Targets\) \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#) established Scotland's emissions reduction target of net zero by 2045 which applies to all levels of government. The [Climate Change Plan \(Update\) 2020](#) set an interim target of a 20% reduction in car kilometres by 2030. The Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 has introduced new powers for local government, in relation to decriminalisation of certain parking infringements, and in relation to provision of local bus services to try and stem a decline in bus use.
- 3.3** The [National Transport Strategy \(NTS2\)](#), published in 2020, set out four holistic priorities for transport action – reduce inequalities; take climate action; support inclusive economic growth and improve health and well-being. These are aligned closely to the policies within the [National Planning Framework 4 \(NPF4\)](#). More pertinently, with regards to transport funding, NTS2 also introduced new hierarchies that guide investment in transport interventions and infrastructure at all levels, as follows:

Figure 1: Sustainable Travel and Investment Hierarchies of NTS2



- 3.4** Transport Scotland's draft [guidance for the development of local transport strategies](#), produced in March 2023, emphasises the need to align with wider policy landscape and integrate transport and land use planning at the local level. It sets out a five stage LTS development process.

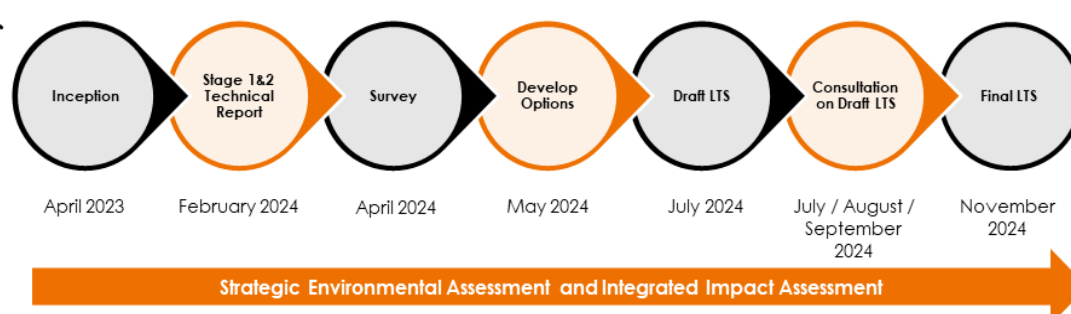
Rationale for a new Midlothian LTS

- 3.5** A Local Transport Strategy (LTS) is needed to provide a framework for delivering sustainable transport options in Midlothian. As the fastest growing Scottish local authority, with extraordinary population growth in the last decade, and similar levels expected going forward, Midlothian faces a unique and urgent set of transport pressures. These mainly derive from new areas of housing exerting new demands onto the existing, constrained network, but the impacts of trunk roads on local and cross boundary journeys, and gaps in public transport provision are also creating significant and unique pressures.
- 3.6** The most recent LTS for Midlothian expired in 2010, therefore, a strategic view of local transport priorities is now needed. The new LTS will identify opportunities to integrate sustainable travel with land use planning and highlight where transport interventions can support high quality places and support the new Local Development Plan (MLDP2). Additionally, the LTS will identify opportunities to work collaboratively with other Councils and partners on transport challenges that affect travel and logistics across the entire region.
- 3.7** Whilst an LTS isn't a statutory requirement, there are certain discretionary powers that a Council may only exercise if it has an LTS that supports such activities, including using bus powers available from the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 – for example, running bus services to better meet the needs of the area to complement and improve access to the wider public transport network.
- 3.8** The LTS will also support proposals to attract investment from Scottish or UK Governments or other funders. It will help guide agreements on developer contributions by evidencing the need for appraised transport interventions. Ultimately, the LTS will help direct resource towards delivery of policies and transport solutions that contribute to the outcomes and vision of the [Midlothian Single Plan](#).

Process of developing the new LTS

- 3.9** The LTS is being developed by consultants, Stantec, on behalf of the Council. The process for Midlothian underway follows the approach outlined in Transport Scotland's 2023 guidance on Local Transport Strategies, as follows:

Figure 2: Midlothian LTS Development Process



- 3.10** In parallel with the development of the LTS, a Midlothian Council Integrated Impact Assessment is being carried out. Additionally, the required multi-stage Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is being undertaken in accordance with the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act (2005).
- 3.11** Stantec has now produced a draft Stage 1 and 2 Technical Report (Appendix C) which gives detailed analysis of all available evidence around the challenges of moving people and goods in and through Midlothian and uses this evidence to identify transport challenges (problems) for people who live in Midlothian's settlements as well as a set of draft outcomes, that explain what the LTS will seek to achieve. As not all the available data is recent, with some dating back to Census 2011, there is a need to conduct a short survey to ensure all current transport problems are identified.

Public survey at Stage 1 and 2 – Survey of transport problems (or opportunities)

- 3.12** The proposed survey will help conclude the first two stages of the LTS. The purpose is to ensure the full range of transport problems and constraints relating to the transport system in Midlothian are captured, and to gather public view on these and early-stage transport planning objectives. It should be noted that problems may sometimes be expressed as opportunities. The input of key stakeholder organisations (including Transport Scotland, SEStran or neighbouring Councils) is necessary at this early stage, to ensure good alignment of the emerging LTS with neighbouring plans.
- 3.13** As the public are invited to take part in the Stage 1 and 2 Survey, it will be available both online and in libraries, and it will be easy to use, provided in clear and simple, non-technical language. All the information needed to take part will be provided as part of the survey, with easy-to-understand summary information from the technical report provided. However, if any partner organisation, transport provider or member of the public wishes to review the Stage 1 and 2 Technical Report in more detail, a link to it (and a hard copy in libraries) will be provided. The survey period will run for 6 weeks.
- 3.14** Given that settlements can face quite local challenges, the Survey will ensure all communities are able to feed in locally specific issues as well as general concerns. The Survey will be available online through the Council's consultation hub, as well as through printed out hard copies in each community library. Once the survey is complete and findings analysed, the 'Case for Change' stage of the LTS will be concluded, and 'options' (solutions to problems) will be developed
- 3.15** Later in 2024, when the final Local Transport Strategy has been drafted, a 12-week long public consultation exercise will take place. This longer public consultation gives people the opportunity to consider the options or policies which are proposed to address Midlothian's transport issues, as well as allowing sufficient time for members of the public, community councils and local groups to consider the LTS document and comment on it.
- 3.16** There is some unavoidable overlap with the consultation period for "On the Move Midlothian: Active Travel Strategy". During that time, a note on both surveys will make clear that there is an interrelationship between surveys, but

that each has a different focus. Officers are finalising survey questions to ensure both exercises are complementary and to avoid duplication. An addition to the privacy notice within both exercises will confirm that completely anonymised responses will be shared with other transport strategies and work under development, to help avoid duplication and consultation fatigue. Data protection guidance has been sought on this matter.

4 Report Implications (Resource, Digital and Risk)

4.1 Resource

As reported to Council on 28 June 2022, a budget of £92,500 was agreed within the Place Directorate; and Stantec were appointed in September 2022 to develop the LTS at a final cost of £91,612.50. The contract with Stantec includes carrying out consultations; this includes preparation of online survey materials, analysis of survey responses and completion of the final stages of the LTS.

4.2 Digital

The Survey will be available from the Council's consultation hub.

4.3 Risk

Because the Technical Report is heavily data and analysis-led, summary information will be provided as part of the survey, and language in the questions will be more simply phrased. An 'any other issues' question field will be provided – should this elicit operational concerns, these will be shared with relevant colleagues.

4.4 Ensuring Equalities (if required a separate IIA must be completed)

An ongoing integrated impact assessment is underway recognising that a lack of transport, or the way it is provided, can disproportionately affect people with one or more protected characteristic. The IIA Scoping and Evaluation Materials will be available for inspection once a draft LTS is available later this year.

4.5 Additional Considerations

Whilst not a direct consequence of this report, or equalities considerations, it should be noted that relative transport poverty is an issue across Midlothian, deriving from factors, of a combination of factors, such as: -

- remoteness
- lack of access to the transport network
- disability or other protected characteristics
- household income,
- car dependency
- type of employment (frontline, shift work, for example)

For some people, driving, or taxi use is unavoidable and is the only practical means of travel due to lack of public transport or other options, despite the

high costs. Remoteness or topographic barriers that exist in Midlothian can intensify a lack of transport equity. For example, concessionary travel – a bus pass - is only beneficial if there is a regular bus service, or you can get to it.

Appendices

Appendix A – Additional Report Implications

Appendix B – Local Transport Strategy - Strategic Landscape

Appendix C – Midlothian Stages 1 and 2 Technical Report (Draft)

APPENDIX A – Report Implications

A.1 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

The completion of the LTS will confirm priority projects that can attract funds to Midlothian, to deliver **safe** routes that support physical activity – supporting a preventative approach to **healthy** individuals and a **well-being economy**.

The LTS will focus on access for all transport users, helping improve **access to work** for those that can't afford a car, supporting **employability, connectivity** and **reducing poverty**. Increasing sustainable travel options for individuals and communities reduces levels of car dependency and road congestion, this has significant **health and environmental benefits**, and supports a **greener** Midlothian.

A.2 Key Drivers for Change

Key drivers addressed in this report:

- Holistic Working
- Hub and Spoke
- Modern
- Sustainable
- Transformational
- Preventative
- Asset-based
- Continuous Improvement
- One size fits one
- None of the above

A.3 Key Delivery Streams

Key delivery streams addressed in this report:

- One Council Working with you, for you
- Preventative and Sustainable
- Efficient and Modern
- Innovative and Ambitious
- None of the above

A.4 Delivering Best Value

The report does not directly impact on Delivering Best Value

A.5 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

The creation of the STPO post will help involve relevant community groups and interested stakeholders in key projects and strategies.

A.6 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The report contributes to a wide range of policy outcomes, outlined in A.1

A.7 Adopting a Preventative Approach

Not applicable to the content of this report.

A.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

The LTS is intrinsically linked with the development of MLDP2 and focussed on sustainable development.

APPENDIX B –Local Transport Strategy – Strategic Landscape

