

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE – 14 DECEMBER 2004**

#### **WESTRANS FUNDING FOR ENHANCED PEDESTRIAN ACCESS TO PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN RURAL AREAS**

##### **Report by Executive Director of Development & Property Services**

### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1** The purpose of the report is to request Committee approval to allocate £120K of additional WESTRANS funding for pedestrian access enhancements in rural communities.

### **2. WESTRANS FUNDING**

- 2.1** The Scottish Executive has provided WESTRANS and SPT with additional funding for transportation improvements in the West of Scotland. East Ayrshire Council has been granted an allocation of £120K to enhance pedestrian access to public transport in rural areas from this funding.

- 2.2** Work is currently progressing on footways improvements from this allocation as follows :-

- (i) A70 Cumnock to Dumfries House – work on the footway alongside the A70 is nearing completion, which consists of cutting back vegetation, clearing debris and resurfacing as necessary along a length of approximately 2 kilometres.
- (ii) Pennylands Road, Auchinleck - A new length of footway, approximately 120 metres, which will help complete a pedestrian route in conjunction with footways being constructed by housing developers. This work will be completed within the current financial year.

- 2.3** It is now proposed to utilize the remainder of the WESTRANS funding to enhance bus facilities and improve public transport access in communities where existing Public Transport Funding is unavailable.

### **3. EXISTING & PROPOSED QUALITY BUS CORRIDORS**

- 3.1** Work to date on implementing Quality Bus Corridor (QBC) infrastructure improvements in the Council area has been possible following successful bids to the Scottish Executive's Public Transport Fund. The Kilmarnock QBC works were completed in 2003. Currently, QBC projects are ongoing in the communities on the A71 Irvine Valley Corridor and the A76 corridor between Kilmarnock and Cumnock. This work will be completed during the 2005/06 financial year.

- 3.2** It was the intention to extend the QBC concept to the other bus corridors in East Ayrshire. However, the Scottish Executive has now stated that there will be no further awards from the Public Transport Fund. Alternative sources of funding will therefore be required before QBC measures can be introduced on bus routes in the following areas: A713 Doon Valley corridor; A70 corridor (including Drongan & Rankinston); A735 Kilmarnock to Dunlop corridor; and other predominantly rural locations not on major bus corridors.

- 3.3** The 2003 Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) report identified that many of the communities in the Coalfield SIP are among the most deprived in Scotland in terms of geographical access to services because of the road distance to health facilities, shops and supermarkets, schools and other essential community facilities. The public transport infrastructure improvements will enhance access to public transport for the most vulnerable users such as young people under the age of 25, the elderly and disabled people. As a result of improved lighting and better information many people, particularly women, will feel more secure using public transport in the hours of darkness.
- 3.4** The proposed infrastructure measures will help to make public transport more accessible. If successful in securing infrastructure improvements, the Council will seek to work in partnership with the bus operators to improve the quality of buses and to improve the frequency of services.
- 3.5** The Roads Division has recently submitted an expression of interest for funding from the Community Regeneration Fund for QBC measures on bus routes in a number of communities which are within the worst 15% and 15-30% SIMD categories. Many of the areas within the CRF expression of interest are in the A713 and A70 bus corridors. The outcome of the CRF bid is currently uncertain and significant funding will be required to cover all of the most deprived areas in EAC. It is therefore proposed to target the WESTRANS funding at beginning to implement public transport infrastructure improvements in Muirkirk and New Cumnock, two of the largest disadvantaged communities in the Council area which have not been subject to Public Transport Fund improvements. The improvements in these communities and other deprived rural areas will be completed if sufficient further funding is made available from the Community Regeneration Fund.
- 3.6** The current A76 QBC terminates in Cumnock and Logan. An extension of the current infrastructure improvements to Muirkirk and New Cumnock would strengthen the existing bus links between these communities and Cumnock.

#### **4. PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS**

- 4.1** Generally, the measures to be provided will include the following: -
- new bus shelters at the busier bus stops;
  - raised height boarding kerbs to improve access to buses, particularly for the elderly, infirm and carers with children;
  - improved timetable information at bus stops to encourage use of buses
  - improved lighting at bus stops to improve personal safety and security
  - improved footway links and better pedestrian crossing opportunities to improve safety and to enhance access to bus services
- 4.2** An assessment of the existing bus stop locations in Lugar, Muirkirk and New Cumnock has been undertaken to identify potential infrastructure improvement measures and to assess the suitability of bus stops for improvement. Preliminary discussions have been held with Stagecoach to ascertain the busier bus stops.

- 4.3** It will not be possible to provide all of the above measures at all bus stops in these communities due to budget restrictions. It will therefore be necessary to prioritise improvements and priority will be given to the busier bus stops and locations where there is an elderly population or carers with children.
- 4.4** Many of the bus stops in New Cumnock lie on the A76 trunk road and the agreement of the Scottish Executive will be required before upgrading at these locations can take place. It is considered that priority in the first instance should be given to suitable locations in the residential area.
- 4.5** Because of the limited timescale, it will not be possible to fully consult the Community Councils and the local committees. It is proposed, therefore, that before any works are finalised and implemented, local consultation will take place on the proposed improvements with the local Members, chairs of the Local Committees, SPT, Police and frontagers.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1** The works will be funded from an additional capital grant of £120K from WESTRANS and will be completed by the end of March 2005.

## **6. RECOMMENDATION**

- 6.1** It is recommended that the Committee: -
- (a) agrees to allocate additional WESTRANS funding to bus stop and pedestrian infrastructure improvements in Muirkirk, Lugar and New Cumnock; and
  - (b) agrees to the accelerated programme of consultation set out in paragraph 4.5 above.

**James Lavery**  
**Executive Director of Development and Property Services**  
**25 November 2004**  
**FV**

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**NIL**

**For further information please contact Keith Orton on 01563 555714**

**Implementation Officer: Keith Orton**