STRATEGIC TRANSPORT PROJECTS REVIEW

PROTECTING OUR CLIMATE AND IMPROVING LIVES

Appendix I: Recommendation Appraisal Summary Tables

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1. Detailed Appraisal Summary

An 'Appendix I: Recommendation Appraisal Summary Tables (ASTs) Explanatory Note' accompanies this AST.

1.1. Recommendation 4 – Connecting towns by active travel

Recommendation Description

This recommendation would deliver short and medium-distance active travel routes linking towns on corridors where these connections are not made by the routes to be considered by the Long-distance active travel network recommendation (5). This recommendation would connect Scotland's towns for people walking, wheeling and cycling through the delivery of high-quality infrastructure on direct routes segregated from traffic, improving access between neighbouring settlements and facilitating access to key trip attractors.

Connecting towns by active travel routes would provide attractive, safe, and convenient choices for many medium-length functional and recreational journeys, enabling people to benefit from improved access to key trip attractors in neighbouring towns, using healthy and non-polluting modes.

This recommendation seeks to address active travel challenges, including providing better (including safer) active travel connections for those vulnerable to social exclusion and transport poverty, such as those without access to a car.

The implementation of these routes for people walking, wheeling and cycling between towns across Scotland has the potential to return significant benefits for community cohesion, environmental protection, physical and social mobility, road safety and employment opportunities.

New links connecting Scotland's towns would support the delivery of the routes that are already under consideration in many locations and would integrate with existing active travel networks, both urban and interurban, to provide continuous high-quality connections for journeys within urban areas and for longer-distance interurban trips. They would build on the work that local, regional and national partners have been leading on and complement other STPR2 active travel infrastructure recommendations, especially for Long-distance active travel network (5) and Village-town active travel connections (3).

1.2. Relevance

Relevant to inter-urban connections between towns across much of Scotland

The benefits of improving safe active travel links have been highlighted in the STPR2 National Case for Change report. Improving and creating active travel connections between towns is relevant to many settlements across Scotland. This recommendation would provide efficient, safe, sustainable travel choices on routes segregated from traffic, for middle-distance functional and recreational inter-urban journeys for connections that would not be made by the Long-distance active travel network (5). With increasing use of e-bikes, which are proven to be successful in enabling longer-distance cycling journeys over varying topographies[i], providing direct active travel routes to facilitate medium-distance active travel journeys is of increasing relevance.

As these connections improve access between neighbouring settlements and key trip attractors, they may be particularly beneficial for connecting more deprived communities with employment and training opportunities.

1.3. Estimated Cost

£1,001 million - £2,500 million

The capital costs associated with the provision of active travel links connecting Scotland's towns are estimated to be between £500,000 per kilometre and £1.5 million per kilometre, depending on the location, type of provision and local constraints.

A potential network of active travel routes, developed to inform this appraisal, linking towns across Scotland (that would not otherwise be connected by the long-distance network (5)) covers an estimated 2,550 kilometres, giving total capital cost estimates of between £1,275 million and £3,825 million.

Some increased revenue funding would also be required in order to maintain new infrastructure.

1.4. Position in Sustainable Investment Hierarchy

Reduces the need to travel unsustainably

The recommendation would contribute to 10 of the 12 NTS2 outcomes, as follows:

- Provide fair access to services we need;
- Be easy to use for all;
- Be affordable for all;
- Help deliver our net-zero target;
- Promote greener, cleaner choices;
- Get people and goods to where they need to get to;
- Enable us to make healthy travel choices;
- Be reliable, efficient and high quality;
- Be safe and secure for all; and
- Help make our communities great places to live.

1.5. Summary Rationale

Summary of Appraisal

	TPO					STAG					SIA				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Low Scenario	++	++	++	+	++	+	+	++	+	+++	+	++	0	+	++
High Scenario	++	++	++	+	++	+	+	++	+	+++	+	++	0	+	++

This recommendation makes a positive contribution to most of the STPR2 Transport Planning Objectives (TPOs), STAG criteria, and Statutory Impact Assessment criteria, an assessment based on a wide body of evidence from other locations in the UK and beyond where similar schemes have been implemented successfully.

Connecting towns by active travel particularly contributes to objectives for social inclusion and health, and can also assist in meeting goals for environmental improvement and inclusive economic gain.

Connecting towns by active travel networks are implementable from a feasibility perspective in many desired locations, albeit much detailed local engagement and design work is required to identify the most appropriate routes.

Details behind this summary are discussed in Section 3, below.

2. Context

2.1. Problems and Opportunities

This recommendation could help to tackle the following problems and opportunities:

Relevant Problem & Opportunity Themes Identified in National Case for Change
▪ **Social Isolation:** there is increasing recognition of social isolation and loneliness as major public health issues that can have significant impacts on physical and mental wellbeing. Disabled people in particular can feel trapped due to a lack of accessible transport, particularly on islands and in remote and rural areas. ▪ **Changing Travel Behaviour:** changing people's travel behaviour to use more sustainable modes would have a positive impact on the environment, as well as health and wellbeing. ▪ **Physical Activity:** the importance of active travel is becoming more evident as the consequences of physical inactivity are studied. It is recognised that one of the most effective ways to secure the required 30 minutes of moderate activity per day is to reduce reliance on motorised transport, changing the means of everyday travel to walking and cycling[ii].

2.2. Interdependencies

This recommendation has potential overlap with other STPR2 recommendations and would also complement other areas of Scottish Government activity.

Other STPR2 Recommendations
▪ Connected neighbourhoods (1); ▪ Active freeways and cycle parking hubs (2); ▪ Village-town active travel connections (3); ▪ Long-distance active travel network (5); ▪ Improving access to bikes (9); and ▪ Sustainable access to Grangemouth Investment Zone (39).
Other areas of Scottish Government activity
▪ Active Travel Framework (2020)[iii]; ▪ National Walking Strategy[iv]; ▪ Cycling Action Plan for Scotland (CAPS) (2017)[v]; and ▪ Revised Draft Fourth National Planning Framework (Revised Draft NPF4)[vi] National Development 8: National Walking, Cycling and Wheeling Network. In some instances, connecting towns by active travel may require reallocation of road space away from other modes. Where this is the case, design stages would require to balance the sometimes-conflicting aspirations for improved active travel routes with those for bus priority, local access and servicing, and aspirations to reduce traffic pollution and congestion.

3. Appraisal

This section provides an assessment of the recommendation against:

- STPR2 Transport Planning Objectives (TPOs);
- STAG criteria;
- Deliverability criteria; and
- Statutory Impact Assessment criteria.

The seven-point assessment scale has been used to indicate the impact of the recommendation when considered under the 'Low' and 'High' Transport Behaviour Scenarios (which are described in Appendix F of the Technical Report).

3.1. Transport Planning Objectives

1. A sustainable strategic transport system that contributes significantly to the Scottish Government's net-zero emissions target

Low Scenario	High Scenario
++	++

Modal shift from car to more sustainable modes of transport (including walking, wheeling and cycling) reduces levels of air pollution and greenhouse gases. This recommendation would help encourage modal shift for both functional and recreational journeys.

The usage per kilometre of the National Cycle Network (NCN) in Scotland steadily increased over the period from 2012 to 2016 for both pedestrians and cyclists, which highlights its attractiveness; 121 million trips were made on the NCN in Scotland in 2014, which was an increase of 16% on the previous year[vii]. Each year the UK NCN benefits the economy by approximately £88 million as a direct result of reduced road congestion[viii], demonstrating the role that a strategic active travel network can play in achieving modal shift from private vehicles and, in turn, generating associated environmental benefits.

This recommendation is therefore expected to have a moderate positive impact on this objective in both Low and High scenarios.

2. An inclusive strategic transport system that improves the affordability and accessibility of public transport.

Low Scenario	High Scenario
++	++

Not feeling safe on the roads is the biggest single barrier to active travel use[ix], with children and older people particularly affected. Inaccessible cycle infrastructure is the single biggest difficulty faced by disabled cyclists in the UK[x] as well as a significant barrier to users of adapted cycles. Women are under-represented in cycling[xi]. Improved

segregated provision between towns, linking into active freeway and connecting neighbourhood interventions, would help overcome these barriers, though care would be needed in route design to ensure that personal security concerns are minimised.

The CityConnect Leeds to Bradford Cycle Superhighway has made it easier and safer to get around on foot and by bike, giving residents better access to their local area, increasing travel options and reducing road congestion[xii]. The intervention has improved the prospects of Bradford's citizens through enabling affordable access to the wider range of opportunities in Leeds[xiii].

This recommendation is therefore expected to have a moderate positive impact on this objective in both Low and High scenarios.

3. A cohesive strategic transport system that enhances communities as places, supporting health and wellbeing.

Low Scenario	High Scenario
++	++

Active travel is beneficial to both physical health and mental wellbeing; 29% of adult men and 39% of adult women in Scotland do not meet minimum physical activity guidelines[xiv]. Keeping physically active can reduce the risk of heart and circulatory disease by as much as 35%, reduce risk of early death by as much as 30% and has also been shown to greatly reduce the chances of asthma, diabetes, lower blood pressure and cancer[xv]. Adults who cycle regularly can have the fitness levels of someone up to 10 years younger[xvi].

UK-wide, each traffic-free mile of the NCN is estimated to be used for 77,000 walking trips and 23,000 cycling trips per annum[xvii], giving confidence that improved interurban routes would increase physical activity. Since the implementation of the Pont y Werin Bridge, which connects Cardiff and Penarth via a shared-use bridge, active travel trips between the city and the town have increased by 86%, with 85% of users stating that the scheme had helped them increase their levels of physical activity. The health benefits arising from the intervention equate to over £4 million, contributing to a health benefit:cost ratio of 3:1[xviii].

The measures may also, by increasing the number of people out and about within their communities, make a positive contribution to places.

This recommendation is therefore expected to have a moderate positive impact on this objective in both Low and High scenarios.

4. An integrated strategic transport system that contributes towards sustainable inclusive growth in Scotland.

Low Scenario	High Scenario
+	+

By improving residents' access to key trip attractors in neighbouring towns and larger urban areas, this recommendation could enhance social mobility, uptake of employment and training opportunities, and access to goods and services[xix]. Well-designed active travel infrastructure can improve economic performance of local retail centres, with typical increases in footfall of 20-30%[xx], and can facilitate branding initiatives by raising the profile of towns and cities among consumers and businesses[xxi].

The Linking Communities schemes (an £18 million investment to better connect 35 English communities by active modes to economic opportunities), which comprise a network of traffic-free active travel routes, generated a 353% increase in commuter trips, with 30% of users reporting better access to employment[xxii]. The Gellings Greenway scheme, which connects the town of Kirkby to the Knowsley Business Park, Merseyside, via a traffic-free cycling route, increased the number of cycle trips by 126%[xxiii].

This recommendation is therefore expected to have a minor positive impact on this objective in both Low and High scenarios.

5. A reliable and resilient strategic transport system that is safe and secure for users.

Low Scenario	High Scenario
++	++

By providing more segregated / traffic-free routes, the Connecting towns active travel network would address fears around road safety, which is the most significant barrier to the uptake of active travel[xxiv]; evidence suggests that perceived safety is more influential on active travel behaviour than journey time reliability or speed[xxv]. Improved perception of safety is considered to be one of the key successes of the Cole Valley Cycle Way, which connects communities around Birmingham via segregated active travel links[xxvi].

Providing direct active travel routes, which offer uninterrupted journeys between settlements, away from busy roads, could significantly improve safety conditions and perceptions for novice cyclists and walkers, especially children and disabled people[xxvii].

This recommendation could also improve the resilience and reliability of the transport network through modal shift from car to active travel journeys, resulting in reductions in road congestion. Active travel infrastructure tends to be reliable for users, provided appropriate maintenance is undertaken: users are largely independent from the actions of others (so not subject to delays or diversions caused by operational problems on public transport or road networks).

This recommendation is therefore expected to have a moderate positive impact on this objective in both Low and High scenarios.

3.2. STAG Criteria

1. Environment

Low Scenario	High Scenario
+	+

See Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) below.

This recommendation is expected to have a minor positive impact on this criterion in both Low and High scenarios.

2. Climate Change

Low Scenario	High Scenario
+	+

This recommendation would help generate a modal shift from car to active modes for short and medium-length journeys and would thus lead to a modest reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

No impact on the Vulnerability to Effects of Climate Change or Potential to Adapt to Effects of Climate Change is anticipated.

This recommendation is expected to have a minor positive impact on this criterion in both Low and High scenarios.

3. Health, Safety and Wellbeing

Low Scenario	High Scenario
++	++

The importance of safety for people travelling actively was highlighted in the STPR2 Case for Change. By providing more segregated / traffic-free routes, the Connecting towns active travel network would address fears around road safety, which is the most significant barrier to the uptake of active travel[xxviii]; evidence suggests that perceived safety is more influential on active travel behaviour than journey time reliability or speed[xxix]. Improved perception of safety is considered to be one of the key successes of the Cole Valley Cycle Way, which connects communities around Birmingham via segregated active travel links[xxx].

The resulting increase in rates of active travel would improve health and could improve access to health and wellbeing infrastructure, as well as improving personal security because of increased natural surveillance. Some negative impacts on visual amenity where new paths are constructed in rural areas could be anticipated.

This recommendation is expected to have a moderate positive impact on this criterion in both Low and High scenarios.

4. Economy

Low Scenario	High Scenario
+	+

By improving residents' access to key trip attractors in neighbouring towns and larger urban areas, this recommendation could enhance social mobility, uptake of employment and training opportunities, and access to goods and services[xxxi]. Well-designed active travel infrastructure can improve economic performance of local retail centres, with typical increases in footfall of 20-30%[xxxii], and can facilitate branding initiatives by raising the profile of towns and cities among consumers and businesses[xxxiii].

The Linking Communities schemes (an £18 million investment to better connect 35 English communities by active modes to economic opportunities), which comprise a network of traffic-free active travel routes, generated a 353% increase in commuter trips, with 30% of users reporting better access to employment[xxxiv]. The Gellings Greenway scheme, which connects the town of Kirkby to the Knowsley Business Park, Merseyside, via a traffic-free cycling route, increased the number of cycle trips by 126%[xxxv].

No significant impact on Transport Economic Efficiency is anticipated.

This recommendation is expected to have a minor positive impact on this criterion in both Low and High scenarios.

5. Equality and Accessibility

Low Scenario	High Scenario
+++	+++

Perceived road danger is the biggest single barrier to active travel use[xxxvi], with children and older people particularly affected. Inaccessible cycle infrastructure is the single biggest difficulty faced by disabled cyclists in the UK[xxxvii] and women are under-represented in cycling[xxxviii]. Given the aspiration of the Connecting towns routes is to provide safe, segregated / traffic-free provision, this recommendation would improve transport inclusivity for commonly disadvantaged groups by providing safe and low-cost transport choices.

The CityConnect Leeds to Bradford Cycle Superhighway has made it easier and safer to get around on foot and by bike, giving residents better access to their local area, increasing travel options and reducing road congestion[xxxix]. The intervention has improved the economic prospects of Bradford's citizens through enabling affordable access to the larger economy of Leeds[xl].

Research indicates that a multi-level approach of involving communities in the design process and incorporating education initiatives around the socio-economic and environmental policies of active travel is effective in encouraging walking and cycling in disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, such as deprived communities[xli] and children[xlii].

Also refer to EqIA/ICIA/FSDA/CRWIA Assessment overleaf.

This recommendation is expected to have a major positive impact on this criterion in both Low and High scenarios.

3.3. Deliverability

1. Feasibility
This recommendation can build on the existing NCN, which is located in close proximity to a large proportion of the population of Scotland, and the efforts of many local authorities and partners to improve interurban active travel routes. These demonstrate that high quality segregated active travel networks connecting towns are feasible in many locations across Scotland. However, much detailed development work, including community engagement, is required to identify the most appropriate routes and preferred fit with their local environments. Local authority support would be required in most cases.

2. Affordability
Given the scale of investment required to deliver all potential town – town active travel links (estimated to be £1,275 million - £3,825 million), this recommendation would likely be phased over a number of years and would require further assessment to determine the most appropriate prioritisation approach. There are also likely to be some revenue costs to ensure that routes are maintained and enforced.

3. Public Acceptability
Over 25% of Scottish adults are 'looking to change' towards increased rates of active travel[xliii] and 33% of Scottish adults would likely consider more active pursuits, such as walking and cycling, when the COVID-19 lockdown is eased[xliv]. Across the UK, post-COVID recovery polling[xlv] indicates that a substantial majority of the public want the government to focus on improving health and wellbeing over economic growth. In Scotland, evidence suggests there is strong public support for investing in high-quality on and off-road active travel links, with 65% of survey respondents supporting interventions that protect cyclists and pedestrians from cars, including reallocation of road space[xlvi].There is a clear appetite for more traffic-free routes: of the 6,000 NCN users surveyed as part of the 2018 Sustrans' review of the NCN, 81% wanted to see "*more traffic-free routes where everyone feels safe to get around'.* Furthermore, 62% wanted to see "*a network of routes that connect to towns, cities and the countryside''*[xlvii]*.* Increased investment in active travel was the most commonly-cited request in response to survey work undertaken for STPR2. However, whilst experience suggests that active travel network interventions are very popular post-implementation, some pre- and post-implementation challenges are expected from a number of people that feel they would be adversely affected, typically because of anticipated worsening of traffic congestion.

3.4. Statutory Impact Assessment Criteria

1. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Low Scenario	High Scenario
+	+

This recommendation is likely to result in positive effects on SEA objectives related to greenhouse gas reduction (Objective 1) and air quality (Objective 3), as it seeks to encourage a modal shift to more sustainable modes of travel, and, as a result, would reduce transport related air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, and improving the quality of places. The recommendation would also have a positive effect on the sustainable use of the transport network (Objective 8) and four SEA Objectives that fall under the population and human health SEA topic. These objectives are related to quality of life and sustainable accessibility, noise and vibration, the public realm and safety (Objectives 4 to 7). The positive scores are derived from the aims of this recommendation to expand the existing active travel network, providing more active travel options, safer routes and helping to reduce noise and vibration in both more urban and rural locations.

There is an uncertain relationship between the proposed recommendation and the water environment, biodiversity, soil, cultural heritage and landscape and visual amenity (Objectives 10 to 14), for example due to the environmental effects that could arise from constructing new active travel routes. Further assessment should be undertaken to identify these potential effects once the location of interventions is being considered.

Negligible effects are predicted for the remaining SEA objectives as there is unlikely to be a significant influence on these receptors.

Overall, this recommendation is expected to have a minor positive effect on this criterion in both the Low and High scenarios.

2. Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Low Scenario	High Scenario
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This recommendation would potentially provide safer and affordable access to services. This includes access to employment, education, health facilities and other transport services which are important to many groups with protected characteristics. The infrastructure installed to create the routes would be designed to incorporate adapted cycles and address mobility issues experienced by groups such as disabled people and older people as well as those who are more likely to lack confidence or are underrepresented, such as women. The targeted safety measures in regard to segregation from traffic would also reduce road safety concerns for active travel users, including children. An uptake in active travel may additionally improve health outcomes through physical fitness and would potentially lead to air quality improvements if an uptake in active travel is matched by a reduction in private vehicle use and traffic congestion. Improved health outcomes as a result of better air quality are of particular benefit to those who are more vulnerable to air pollution, including children, older people and disabled people. However, the extent to which groups with protected characteristics would benefit from this recommendation would depend on the location of routes, proximity to deprived areas and required services, and the ability for certain groups to access routes.

This recommendation is expected to have a moderate positive impact on this criterion in both Low and High scenarios.

3. Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA)

Low Scenario	High Scenario
0	0

This recommendation is not considered directly or indirectly relevant to island communities. Active travel route improvements on islands are addressed through other STPR2 recommendations, most notably through Connected neighbourhoods (1) and Village-town active travel connections (3).

This recommendation is expected to have a neutral impact on this criterion in both Low and High scenarios.

4. Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA)

Low Scenario	High Scenario
+	+

This recommendation could lead to improvements for children due to a reduction in the perceived danger of road accidents and casualties; improved air quality if the uptake in active travel is accompanied by a decrease in private vehicle use; better and less costly access to education and other services; and the consequential effects of improved access to services for the whole community (such as parent and carer access to employment).

This recommendation is expected to have a minor positive impact on this criterion in both Low and High scenarios.

5. Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment (FSDA)

Low Scenario	High Scenario
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Beneficiaries of this recommendation could potentially include accessibility for deprived rural communities, including deprived and disadvantaged communities. As well as benefitting these 'communities of place', the recommendation could potentially improve access to services for 'communities of interest', including those with lower access to private vehicle use (such as women, young people and low-income households) and others who may benefit from less costly travel options. However, the extent to which this recommendation would reduce inequalities of outcome would depend on the location of routes, proximity to deprived areas and required services, and the ability for those from deprived and disadvantaged communities to access the routes.

This recommendation is expected to have a minor positive impact on this criterion in both Low and High scenarios.

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