



Report of the Director of Development

Executive Board

Date: 20 September 2006

Subject: A65 QUALITY BUS INITIATIVE

Electoral Wards Affected:

Hyde Park and Woodhouse
Kirkstall
City and Hunslet

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity
Community and Cohesion
Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call In

Not Eligible for Call In

(Details contained in the report)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. On the 6 July the Secretary of State for Transport announced that the A65 Quality Bus Initiative had been granted "programme entry" to the LTP major schemes programme as part of the first round of Regional Funding Allocation approvals.
2. This report seeks approval to progress the detailed development of the A65 QBI scheme through design and statutory procedures to final procurement.
3. The proposed scheme will provide the following:
 - 4 kilometres of new bus lane
 - Improvements and bus priority measures at two major junctions and bus priority pre-signals at the exit points from the new bus lanes
 - New pedestrian and cycle facilities including cycle lanes
 - Improvements to bus passenger and information facilities along the route
4. Benefits from the scheme include:
 - Bus passenger journey time improvements of 4-6 minutes in the peak periods and up to 3 minutes in the off-peak periods
 - A projected increase of 9% in bus patronage
5. The Department for Transport has approved the scheme at a total cost of £20.746 million excluding project design and development costs.
6. Approval is sought to fund the detailed design at a cost of £834,000 from the Local Transport Plan programme, a proportion of which may be recouped from the DfT

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

- 1.1 This report updates Members on the current status of this project and seeks approval to progress the detailed development of a scheme for the A65 Quality Bus Initiative.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 The A65 Quality Bus Initiative scheme is part of a comprehensive project to establish the A65 route as a Quality Bus Corridor serving the North West of the Leeds District.
- 2.2 The Quality Bus Corridor is divided into three sections, covering the A65 corridor from Leeds city centre to Aireborough as follows:
- A65 QBI – Inner Ring Road to Kirkstall Lane (the subject of this report)
 - Abbey Road bus priority scheme – Kirkstall Lane to A6120 Horsforth Roundabout. Scheme and funding of £1.5 million previously approved by Executive Board and currently on site for completion by 31 March 2007.
 - A65 Rawdon Road scheme – A6120 Horsforth Roundabout to Guiseley. Proposals deferred subject to finalisation of the strategy for the A6120 and options for highway links to the airport. Further detailed evaluation of the options for providing improved bus priority to be evaluated.
- 2.3 A scheme for the A65 QBI was submitted to the Government as part of the Local Transport Plan 2001-06 submission and was Provisionally Approved in December 2001. Subsequent discussions with the Department for Transport (DfT) led to the submission of a revised scheme proposal which was developed to take on board the emerging redevelopment proposals for the Kirkstall Road corridor and further minimise the need for future land acquisition.
- 2.4 This revised scheme was remitted for regional advice on transport priorities by the DfT in December 2004 and subsequently was identified as a priority in the Regional Transport Board's submission to the Secretary of State in January 2005.
- 2.5 The proposed scheme is illustrated on the attached plan, the main elements of which are as follows:
- A total of 4 km of new bus lanes covering inbound and outbound journeys
 - Bus priority signal arrangements at two major junctions
 - Provision of additional pedestrian and cycle crossing facilities and cycle lanes
 - Pre-signal arrangements to give buses priority at the exits from the bus lanes
 - Improvements to bus passenger facilities including new shelters and information displays (in real time at the busiest stops)
- 2.6 Scheme benefits predicted for bus and other users are as follows:
- Reductions in bus journey times in the order of 6 minutes in the morning peak; 4 minutes in the evening peak and 3 minutes in the off-peak periods.
 - A forecast increase of 9% in bus patronage
 - Improvements in the safety and movement of pedestrians, cyclists and traffic

3.0 Main Issues

- 3.1 On 6 July the Secretary of State announced the details of the first round of schemes approved under the Regional Funding Allocation process and confirmed the granting of “Programme Entry” status for the A65 QBI scheme.
- 3.2 Programme Entry signifies the first step in the three stage process of Government approval for Local Transport Plan major schemes and indicates the DfT’s present intention to provide funding towards the cost of a scheme subject to the satisfactory development of the scheme, completion of statutory processes and confirmation of final costs. At this stage it is not however a firm commitment to provide the funding.
- 3.3 Subsequent stages of the Government approval process are as follows:
- Conditional Approval – this will be granted once the scheme development process is complete and all statutory approvals have been granted, including securing any necessary planning consents, and confirmation of the estimated scheme cost.
 - Full Approval – is granted on completion of the scheme procurement process and submission of the preferred bidder and final tender offer details to the DfT.
- 3.4 This report is seeking approval to commence the detailed development of the scheme in order that Full Approval can be sought and ultimately construction can be progressed.
- 3.5 As this report indicates the scheme has had a protracted gestation period during which the proposals have had to be modified in order to achieve a scheme with the necessary adaptability to meet the emerging redevelopment of sites along the Kirkstall road corridor. At the same time the Government developed and introduced new arrangements for consultation and review at the regional level including the appointment of a new Regional Transport Board, which has again had an impact on the development of this scheme.
- 3.6 The scheme approval has been based on the financial position submitted to the DfT in the autumn of 2005 and is based on an out-turn position assuming a start of the project development in the spring of 2006. This approach was taken in the absence of any firm advice from the Government in terms of a timetable for determining the outcome of the Regional Funding Allocation bids. The draft programme for delivery of the scheme therefore assumes a start of construction works in the later half of the 2008-09 financial year. At present the works are expected to take between 2 and 3 years to complete, but this will be subject to more detailed review as the project is progressed and the procurement arrangements are finalised.
- 3.7 A key consideration in taking the scheme forward will be the rate at which redevelopment of the Kirkstall Road corridor progresses. A land use planning brief has been prepared for this area which identifies an aspiration for the creation of a “boulevard” as part of the overall vision for future development. Whilst the A65 QBI will provide a dual carriageway layout with the flexibility to establish this, the DfT approved project budget cannot meet the costs for the full upgrade that will be needed to both deliver this aspiration and meet the likely future requirements for access to the new developments as they emerge through the planning process.
- 3.8 The processes for managing the project are set out in the following sections.

4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance

- 4.1 The A65 QBI scheme proposal is an integral part of the Local Transport Plan programme which contributes to the delivery of the Council's corporate objectives for transport and those of the Vision for Leeds. The scheme, as the main component of the larger package of measures for the A65 Quality Bus Corridor, will make a major contribution to improving the attractiveness and quality of bus travel and will significantly increase bus patronage and public transport mode share.
- 4.2 Progress will be reported to the Executive Board at the key stages in the delivery process. Oversight of the scheme will be provided by a Project Board chaired by the Director of Development and including Government Office, Metro and public transport operator representatives.
- 4.3 An initial briefing for Ward Members was held on 8 September and further briefings will be undertaken as the project is progressed.

5.0 Legal And Resource Implications

- 5.1 As part of the detailed development of the scheme a full evaluation of the necessary statutory requirements will be made. This will review the requirements for planning consents, processes needed to acquire any third party land and the highways and traffic Orders necessary to construct and implement the scheme.
- 5.2 The scheme business case submitted to the DfT set out the estimated costs of the proposal as follows:
- | | |
|--|-------------|
| Construction works and site supervision fees | £20,746,000 |
| Design fees and procurement costs | £834,000 |
- 5.3 As referred to in Section 2 of this report, the DfT no longer automatically fund the design and preparatory costs of major schemes. In the first instance it will therefore be necessary for the Council to meet the estimated £834,000 development costs needed to develop the scheme to the final procurement stage. This report proposes that these costs are met from the Local Transport Plan Integrated Transport scheme 99609 within the approved capital programme.
- 5.4 There is a limited opportunity to recover a proportion of the scheme development costs from the DfT, however in the case of this scheme which has been approved under the existing major scheme funding rules (rather than the revised rules now being drafted by the DfT) such a contribution would be entirely on merit at the DfT's discretion and in any event cannot exceed a maximum 60% of the eligible costs. An indication of any intention to reclaim future preparatory costs was requested as part of the scheme approval and the DfT has been advised that the Council would wish to seek repayment of a proportion of its preparatory costs at a future date.
- 5.5 Cost along with the completion of the necessary statutory processes represent a key area of risk for this project. The proposals for project management and governance have been set out in Section 4 of the report and robust risk management processes will be incorporated into these arrangements. The approved scheme costs set out above were calculated to out-turn years for the expected construction programme at the time of the Regional Transport Board's submission to the Government.

5.6 The report also notes in Section 3 that during the project development period very significant redevelopment proposals are likely to emerge through the planning process for sites adjacent to the section of Kirkstall Road extending from the Inner Ring Road to Canal Road. It is the intention that the scheme will be developed in conjunction with the developers and landowners to offer the necessary flexibility to meet their needs as they emerge through the planning process and associated agreements and obligations. This process will also need to have regard to the fact that the budget for the A65 QBI is essentially a fixed sum and that costs associated from slippage cannot be expected to be borne by the Department for Transport.

6.0 Conclusions

6.1 The A65 QBI is the major component of the package of measures required to deliver a comprehensive Quality Bus Corridor for the A65. Approval to the “programme entry” stage by DfT marks the first formal step in the process of delivering this scheme. As this report has set out, the Council is required to fund the development costs for the scheme to the point where a final tender offer is agreed. Although there is some potential to recover a proportion of these costs from the DfT, this is not guaranteed.

6.2 This report has set out the proposed arrangements for progressing the scheme’s development to tender and the Final Approval stage. A robust process of project and risk management is being put in place to support this. A major consideration in the detailed development of the proposals is the redevelopment proposals which are continuing to emerge and take shape for major sites along the Kirkstall Road. The scheme proposals have been designed with the flexibility to accommodate the changes that may be required to facilitate these developments as their details are finalised.

6.3 Approval is therefore sought to progress the scheme and fund the development costs.

7.0 Recommendations

7.1 Members of the Executive Board are requested to:

- i. Note the contents of this report and the Government’s decision to grant “programme entry” status to the A65 Quality Bus Initiative scheme.
- ii. Give approval to commence the development of the scheme, including detailed design, statutory procedures and procurement planning.
- iii. Approve scheme development costs of £834,000 to cover detailed design fees and the preparation and consultation costs necessary to secure the statutory approvals for the scheme.
- iv. Agree the submission of a further progress report once scheme development has progressed.