

TRANSPORT BOARD

25/10/19

SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL ACCESS FUND PROGRAMME 2020-21 EXTENSION

Purpose of Report

To seek approval for continuation of current STAF activities for 2020-21, utilising extended funding from DfT.

Thematic Priority

5. Develop the SCR skills base, labour mobility and education performance.

Freedom of Information

This paper does not have any exemptions under [Part II of the Freedom of Information Act 2000](#).

Recommendations

Transport Board are asked to approve the continuation of the current projects in the priority order as detailed in paragraph 2.6 subject to sufficient allocation being granted by DfT.

1. Introduction

- 1.1** At the May 22nd 2019 TEB a paper was presented outlining the implications of the current Sustainable Travel Access Fund (STAF) allocation coming to an end in March 2020. At this stage no successor funding opportunity had been offered by DfT and there were no other known sources of revenue funding to continue this scale of cycling, walking, communication, passenger transport and employment connection activity. This presented several issues for Active Travel within the City Region including, but not limited to; loss of skills and knowledge as staff contracts expired, compromising the strength of the Transforming Cities Fund Bid and contradicting the message on how important Active Travel is to the region.
- 1.2** The recommendation of May's paper was that Executive Board agree the need for continuation of an active travel revenue-based programme, to support the escalation of this need and to support the sourcing of alternative funding. This issue was then included in the paper on Centrally Managed Local Programmes presented to Transport Board on July 19th.
- 1.3** In September and October the DfT Active Travel Programme Management Office have written to advise of their plans to extend the STAF programme for a further twelve months to cover 2020-21. The latest email sent on 1st October advises:

"Our proposal for the continuation of the Access Fund in 2020/21 was agreed at the Cycling & Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS) Programme Board yesterday. In short, we

intend to roll over your 2019/20 allocations on a pro-rata basis, subject to i) Ministerial approval and ii) receiving a suitably robust high-level business case. We aim to reduce burdens on you by only asking for additional detail where your programme of interventions will significantly change in comparison to your initial Access Fund proposals, to ensure value for money is no lower than the original bid”.

This paper is asking Board to approve a proposal to use this new allocation to continue Access Fund activities. This proposal has been presented to Transport Executive Board on Monday 14th and was recommended for approval.

- 1.4** The current STAF award for Sheffield City Region is £2.5m per year, if DfT are able to roll over the programme at current levels this figure should be continued for 2020-21.

2. Proposal and justification

- 2.1** The proposal is that, subject to confirmation of allocation levels and grant conditions, activities from within the current STAF programme are continued for another year, to the end of 2020-21. Each individual current project allocation has been categorised as either High, Medium or Low priority for continuation and these should be supported on an incremental scale dependent on the total allocation secured.
- 2.2** If there is enough funding awarded to support all the high priorities these should be committed to. Then if there is sufficient funding to support the medium priorities these should also be committed to. Any further funding awarded could then be considered for continuation of the lower priorities. However at this largest award level consideration could also be given to alternative allocations, either increasing support for existing projects or identifying new activity for addition into the programme.
- 2.3** The process to allocate priority levels has been led by the LTP Central Team in consultation with Strategic Transport Group and project leads. This has considered the impact of no further funding award, potential options for alternative funding and scalability to see how flexible the profile could be in response to a variation in any future settlement.
- 2.4** As part of the programme management regime a monitoring programme has been produced for STAF which is used to measure individual projects annually against the multiple targets set when developing the activities. Performance against these targets has also been used to inform the prioritisation process along with the narrative on expected activity for the remainder of this financial year. This collated information has been applied to define the priority level for each project.
- 2.5** The current allocations, including the over-programming element, have been used as a benchmark for proposing an indicative allocation programme continuation. All the details resulting from this review, including each project's priority status and the rationale for this are listed in Appendix A.
- 2.6** The specific recommendation being made to Board is therefore that if SCRCA secures an award of at least £1.68m for 2020-21 the high priority allocations are continued, if a further £810k is secured the medium priority allocations are continued and if there is any funding above this the low priorities are reviewed and considered for continuation. At this time increased amounts for high or medium priorities and new programme activities can also be considered as alternative options for allocation.
- 2.7** If an award of less than £1.6m is granted the high priorities will all be assessed again and a new proposed programme will be defined in line with the settlement value. This will then be re-submitted to Transport Executive Board.

- 2.8** Committing to the high priority schemes before considering other options will enable us to secure the continuation of the most important activities and mitigate the primary risks that termination of funding creates. Allocations which directly support existing staff are covered by the high priorities so this will help prevent the loss of experience and skills which have been established over the course of the regional sustainable travel programmes.
- 2.9** The proposal to only consider new activities as an alternative to the low priorities is driven by the timescales of the new funding offer and the DfT advice on submission processes. The funding extension is only for one year which significantly restricts the capacity to develop and establish new projects and the requirement to have a programme ready for delivery within less than six months further reduces the suitability of large-scale changes. The DfT email referenced in paragraph 1.3 also implies that the scale of their submission process will be smaller where there is less significant variation from current activity.
- 2.10** It should be noted that the allocations listed in Appendix A should only be considered indicative, specific project allocations may be subject to variation as the detailed profiles are finalised. Any proposed allocation changes that result from this will be presented back to Transport Executive Board prior to the programme period commencing.

3. Consideration of alternative approaches

- 3.1** Instead of identifying activities for continuation a complete new programme could be developed. This would have the advantage of allowing the activities to be designed specifically to align with the Mayoral Commitments and updated SCR Transport Strategy which were not in existence when the current STAF programme was developed.
- 3.2** This approach however is not considered to be appropriate due to the limited funding extension period and the short time before the new programme will need to start. The paper presented to Transport Executive Board on May 22nd also identified the strong contribution the current programme already makes to the Mayoral Commitments and Transport Strategy.
- 3.3** Another option could be to not submit a response to the funding opportunity, this may suggest that there would then be resources available to commit to other activities. It is not recommended that this approach is taken as the STAF funding provides a considerable proportion of the resources required to deliver the programme, without future funding these resources will be lost so any capacity released would be minimal.
- 3.4** Not submitting a response would also contradict the importance that has been placed on Active Travel within the region, bring an end to the majority of benefits being realised through SAF and significantly compromise the added benefits through capital investments, e.g. Transforming Cities Fund.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial

SCRMCA will need to formally accept any funding award once notified by DfT.

4.2 Legal

The existing SCRCA Funding Agreements for each recipient of STAF will need to be reviewed and either extended or replaced with new agreements.

4.3 Risk Management

The recommendation for continuation of activity is based on the DfT emails however to date there has been no formal confirmation of funding levels or grant conditions. The proposals in this paper will have to be reviewed if any subsequent confirmation identifies funding lower than the level stated in paragraph 2.6 or has conditions which may make some of the planned actions ineligible. In these circumstances an updated report will be brought back to Board.

4.4 Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion

No direct impact relating to legislation, but some of the current programme activities do support and enhance equality and inclusion.

5. Communications

5.1 No current impact or requirement.

6. Appendices/Annexes

6.1 Appendix A – STAF Programme Future Funding Priority Options

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Background papers used in the preparation of this report are available for inspection at: 11 Broad Street West, Sheffield S1 2BQ

Other sources and references:

*Thematic Priorities

1. Ensure new businesses receive the support they need to flourish.
2. Facilitate and proactively support growth amongst existing firms.
3. Attract investment from other parts of the UK and overseas, and improve our brand.
4. Increase sales of SCR's goods and services to other parts of the UK and abroad.
5. Develop the SCR skills base, labour mobility and education performance.
6. Secure investment in infrastructure where it will do most to support growth.