

Mayoral Combined Authority Board

26 July 2021

Active Travel Fund – Capital Funding

Is the paper exempt from the press and public?	No
Purpose of this report:	Funding Decision
Funding Stream:	Not applicable
Is this a Key Decision?	No
Has it been included on the Forward Plan?	Yes

Director Approving Submission of the Report:

Martin Swales, Interim Director of Transport, Housing and Infrastructure

Report Author(s):

Pete Zanzottera

Pete.zanzottera@sheffield cityregion.org.uk

Executive Summary

This paper sets out the principles of the Department for Transport (DfT) Active Travel Fund 2021/22 Capital Bid and seeks approval to proceed and submit the bid. The principles of the bid are included, and further information will be presented at the meeting, although the bid will not be submitted until the 9th August 2021.

What does this mean for businesses, people and places in South Yorkshire?

Additional investment in active travel infrastructure to be implemented by March 2023. This will increase transport choice for all journey purposes, but especially for shorter trips.

Recommendations

That the board discuss the contents and approve the submission of a bid to the DfT. Subject to approval to submit, approve delegated authority to the MCA Statutory Officers in consultation with the Mayor and Co-Chairs of the Transport and Environment Board to make final amendments to the bid.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Active Travel Implementation Plan (ATIP) approved by the MCA in June 2020 sets out the future network for 2040. The first parts of this network to be constructed have been funded by the Transforming Cities Fund, and the implementation of these schemes is picking up pace markedly in 2021.
- 1.2 In 2020, during the pandemic lockdowns, additional funding was released as part of the Active Travel Fund, with the first (Emergency) part of this concentrating on temporary measures, which were rapidly deployed. The remainder of this fund, supplemented by Gainshare and totalling £7.7m, is currently being delivered this financial year. The DfT has invited bids for a further tranche of ATF capital funding to be bid for by the 9th August. This fund includes the following characteristics:
- Capital funding to be delivered by March 2023
 - No indicative allocations for Authorities
 - Bids can include off-road measures
- Bids can also include capital grants for businesses and e-bikes for public loan
- 1.3 There would be benefit to further work on the South Yorkshire active travel scheme pipeline so that future funding needs can be assessed to inform the Spending Review in the autumn of 2021. The Commissioner has given a commitment to an annual statement of progress on the Implementation Plan. This is becoming an important need, particularly given the diversity of funds being used to deliver the plan:
- Transforming Cities Fund
 - Active Travel Fund
 - Levelling Up Fund (bid submitted)
 - Gainshare
 - Locally held monies
 - Funding held by strategic partners such as Sustrans, Living Street, Cycling UK etc.
- 1.4 By the time this report is considered by the MCA we anticipate having had formal notification of the DfT Capability Fund award of just over £1m of revenue funding. This bid was based on coupling the revenue measures to new infrastructure, particularly so that new infrastructure is successfully embedded in and used by local communities.
- 1.5 The Active Travel Fund announcement also introduces two national pilot schemes for Mini-Hollands and GP Social Prescribing. At this point these are expressions of interest and the process and timescales are unclear; an update will be provided at the meeting.
- 1.6 The Active Travel Implementation Plan (ATIP), approved by the MCA in June 2020, sets out the future Active Travel network for 2040. The first parts of this network to have been constructed using the Transforming Cities Fund and the implementation of these schemes is picking up pace markedly in 2021.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 The Capability Fund from the DfT will help build and co-ordinate the future pipeline of schemes and will be part of information submitted to the DfT as part of the bid documentation. The Capability Fund will augment the resources and capacity to develop capital schemes and alleviate some of the pressures arising from a significant scaling up of available capital funding and scheme development work.
- 2.2 The ATIP included active journeys for any purpose, and 2020 placed a greater emphasis on using local walking, running and cycling routes. 2021 is a year when our communities are going to develop new ways of working, shopping and getting about. As part of LUF the MCA has bid for £4.2m for upgrading the off-road network and focusing on the Trans-Pennine Trail – which saw an increase in usage over the pandemic (93% increase in cyclists, and 132% increase in walkers). Our proposal is to further develop the TPT, concentrating on removing barriers, and making more sections fully accessible.
- 2.3 The increase in walking for all purposes, is likely to be sustained with 20% expecting to walk more¹, and this has highlighted the need to increase progress on crossings that link pedestrian routes. Our proposal is that approximately £1m of the bid is for partner authorities to link community walking routes, especially where these link access to nature as this has both physical and mental health benefits.
- 2.4 The Active Travel Commissioner has highlighted that e-bike availability will be a key driver in broadening the demographics of those who can regularly cycle. A programme of e-bike loans in the region was oversubscribed in 2020 as was a freight-bike pilot in Sheffield. The work of the Wheels for All Co-ordinator has now led to pilot events in Rotherham, Barnsley and Doncaster to add to the Cycling for All sessions in Sheffield. We therefore propose that a further £1m of funding is allocated to provide loan bikes for all the purposes indicated above.
- 2.5 Many businesses recognise that infrastructure at work, including secure cycle parking, would enable more staff to make active travel part of their working day. We propose that the MCA takes the precedents in other CAs (e.g. Manchester and West Yorkshire) and commits £1m of funding to businesses who exhibit sufficient commitment to supporting active travel at their workplaces.

3. Options Considered and Recommended Proposal

3.1 Option 1

Option 1 is to continue delivering the current schemes in hand and not to bid for this short-term funding that might place additional strain on the delivery systems.

3.4 Option 1 Risks and Mitigations

One key risk to this approach is that the MCA has already exhibited ambition, and that continued ambition is important to maintain the MCA status as an Active Travel leader. A further risk is that the approach outlined above has brought new areas of capital delivery that would not be possible if the bid is not progressed.

¹ <https://www.creds.ac.uk/publications/report-at-a-crossroads-travel-adaptations-during-covid-19-restrictions-and-where-next/>

3.5 **Option 2**

This option is to progress and submit a bid as outlined in Section 2. This would combine the following:

- Deliverable on road schemes that local partners have capacity to implement by March 2023
- Deliverable TPT upgrades that can be implemented by March 2023
- A programme of pedestrian crossings
- Business Grants
- E-bike loans for the public, including Wheels for All projects.

As details of the bid are currently being brought together, more detail on this option will be presented at the meeting.

3.8 **Option 2 Risks and Mitigations**

The key risk is that existing resources are pulled from delivering schemes in hand to deliver this programme. This has been mitigated by making this programme more diverse with elements that will utilise other proven delivery systems. However, some systems will be placed under additional strain from this bid, such as the MCA resources to assure and manage the additional work. As part of the bid, the MCA will include a top slice to fund this additional work

3.9 **Option 3**

A third option is to lower the bid amount to contain only those elements which place the least demand on MCA and district resources, such as;

- A programme of pedestrian crossings
- Business Grants
- E-bike loans for the public, including Wheels for All projects

3.12 **Option 3 Risks and Mitigations**

The risk with this option is two-fold. Firstly, it would not show the ambition that the Mayor and Commissioner have signalled in the ATIP and public comment. Secondly, the schemes in option 2 have been worked through with partners and have been adjudged by them as deliverable in addition to continuing commitments. This would risk omitting deliverable projects.

3.13 **Recommended Option**

The recommendation is that Option 2 is progressed as partners have already been engaged to bring forward schemes that they judge are deliverable. To deliver the ATIP and associated net zero plans, active travel needs to become a travel choice for as many in the region as possible and this requires an accelerated delivery of infrastructure.

4. **Consultation on Proposal**

4.1 The Active Travel Implementation Plan was developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders and residents including through the SCR Active Travel map.

4.2 The proposed way forward has also been tested with Local Authority Partner Highways staff who helped shape Option 2

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision:

- 5.1 This decision would lead to submission of an Active Travel Fund 2021/22 Capital Fund Bid, by the deadline on August 9th 2021. Any grant offered would come back to the MCA for grant acceptance in the autumn.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications and Advice

- 6.1 This report proposes a bid into government for up to £10m of funding to support the MCA's Active Travel aspirations. This funding would complement existing Active Travel funding, the region's Transforming Cities Fund proposals, and the resource the region is committing via gainshare.
- 6.2 Whilst new funding opportunities are welcome, the tight timescales for delivery of this activity risk displacing focus from existing activity, and risk exacerbating existing and known delivery capacity problems across South Yorkshire.
- 6.3 This funding comes with an expiry date of March 2023, which means that the funding pressures will coalesce with those of the TCF programme and the Getting Building Programme, and pressures around the Brownfield programme and any successful Levelling Up Fund bid.
- 6.4 In line with the MCA's embedded policies, the costs incurred in assurance, monitoring and evaluation, audit, and programme management, as required by the conditions of funding and the MCA's Assurance Framework, will be met from a top-slice of the grant.

7. Legal Implications and Advice

- 7.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. If successful any grants will be awarded on appropriate terms.

8. Human Resources Implications and Advice

- 8.1 Although there are no direct HR implication from bidding for capital, overall there are posts in the business plan, funded by the DfT, that will further resource Active Travel pipeline development and how delivery is co-ordinated. One post is to co-ordinate the Active Travel pipeline of infrastructure.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications and Advice

- 9.1 The ATIP details the overall implications of active travel on equality and diversity. This bid will extend travel choice, particularly those with an impairment who use a mobility aid.

10. Climate Change Implications and Advice

- 10.1 This bid will increase travel choice, especially for local journeys, to include non-motorised means and therefore reduce transport emissions. The construction of the routes will have a negative impact on overall carbon, but all of the individual projects will be part of the MCA assurance and programme management systems.

11. Information and Communication Technology Implications and Advice

11.1 N/A

12. Communications and Marketing Implications and Advice

12.1 There is likely to be significant public interest in the MCA's decision, and further interest if the funding is secured. All activity should communicate the tangible changes that communities can expect to see as well as the benefits of walking and cycling in creating better neighbourhoods, in reducing congestion and carbon emissions and improving air quality. Work should be undertaken to communicate the MCA's decision in these terms.

List of Appendices Included

None

Background Papers

None