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A96 Corridor Review

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)Report (Draft)

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Acronyms

AST	Appraisal Summary Table
CT	Community Transport
CRWIA	Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment
DRT	Demand Responsive Transport
EHRC	Equality and Human Rights Commission
EqIA	Equality Impact Assessment
FSDA	Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment
ICE	Internal Combustion Engine
MaaS	Mobility as a Service
NaPTAT	National Public Transport Accessibility Tool
NTS2	Second National Transport Strategy
PSED	Public Sector Equality Duty
SEqIA	Social and Equality Impact Assessment
SIMD	Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation
STAG	Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance
STPR	Strategic Transport Projects Review
STPR2	Second Strategic Transport Projects Review
TPO	Transport Planning Objective

1. Introduction – A96 Corridor Review

1.1 Background

1.1.1 In August 2021, it was agreed by the Scottish Government to take forward a transport enhancements programme on the A96 corridor that improves connectivity between surrounding towns, tackles congestion and addresses safety and environmental issues.

1.1.2 Whilst the current plan is to fully dual the A96 route, it was agreed as part of this process there would be a transparent, evidence-based review of the programme, to include a climate compatibility assessment to assess direct and indirect impacts on the climate and the environment. Other statutory assessments would also be undertaken which include a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Statutory Impact Assessments (SIAs).

1.1.3 As it has already received Ministerial consent following a Public Local Inquiry, dualling of the A96 from Inverness to Nairn as well as a bypass of Nairn is separate from the wider A96 review process.

1.1.4 The A96 Corridor Review is being carried out in accordance with the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG).[i] STAG is the best practice, objective-led approach to transport appraisal. The transport appraisal has considered all relevant transport modes within the A96 corridor, including active travel, public transport, rail and roads-based transport modes. Adopting STAG also brings the review in line with the same methodology as set out in the Second Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2).

1.1.5 The A96 Corridor Review is being carried out by design consultants Jacobs AECOM acting on behalf of Transport Scotland. Jacobs AECOM supported Transport Scotland undertaking STPR2. The review considers transport problems and opportunities within the A96 corridor. It also looks at the changing policy context and other key considerations, such as development and growth aims for the corridor and surrounding area. Additionally, it considers the impact of the global climate emergency and the COVID-19 pandemic on how people work and travel within the corridor.

1.2 A96 Corridor Review Impact Assessments

1.2.1 Accompanying the A96 Corridor Review, Jacobs AECOM are undertaking a series of impact assessments on the detailed appraisal options. This includes the following:

- **Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)**
- Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA)
- Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment (FSDA).

1.2.2 In the scoping stage, EqIA reporting was combined with the CRWIA, FSDA and Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA) as an integrated Social and Equality Impact Assessment (SEqIA). An SEqIA Scoping Report was developed for the A96 Corridor Review which provided a full policy review, baseline evidence, findings from stakeholder engagement activities and set out proposed equality topics and objectives to use as a framework for the assessments. The report was distributed to consultees during February and March 2023 in order to gather views on the evidence collated, scope of the impact assessment and proposed approach. The need to undertake a full ICIA was scoped out in the scoping stage based on the geographical location of Island communities not likely to generate direct impacts of the A96 Corridor Review. At this stage of reporting, individual full impact assessments have been prepared for the EqIA, CRWIA and FSDA. This report sets out the approach and findings of the EqIA.

1.3 Purpose and Structure of EqIA Report

1.3.1 As a public body, Transport Scotland has a legal responsibility when creating new plans and policies to pay due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) included within the Equality Act 2010. The PSED aims to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equality and cohesion between different groups and advance equality of opportunity. Supplementary legislation (the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012), requires Transport Scotland to be proactive in meeting the PSED by eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality and fostering good relations.

1.3.2 This EqIA report has been prepared to determine if Full Dualling and the packages of transport intervention options being considered as part of the A96 Corridor Review might lead to any potential impacts on protected characteristic groups and helps demonstrate Transport Scotland's due regard to the PSED. Full Dualling and the transport packages are outlined in **Chapter 6** of this report.

1.3.3 The chapters within this report include:

- **Chapter 1** summarises the general background to the A96 Corridor Review and EqIA and various impact assessments required for the review.
- **Chapter 2** provides detail on the legislative context for the EqIA.
- **Chapter 3** presents a baseline summary of the key equality issues and evidence for groups with protected characteristics pertinent to the A96 Corridor Review.
- **Chapter 4** describes the approach undertaken to stakeholder engagement and consultation.
- **Chapter 5** describes the approach to assessment.
- **Chapter 6** provides the findings of the assessment of impacts for Full Dualling and by detailed appraisal transport intervention packages.
- **Chapter 7** summarises high-level conclusions and next steps.

2. Legislation and Policy Context

2.1 Legislation

2.1.1 Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty

2.1.1.1 The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination, both in the workplace and in wider society. It ensures that individuals with the following nine protected characteristics are not indirectly or directly discriminated against:

- **Age:** This refers to persons defined by either a particular age or a range of ages.
- **Disability:** A disabled person is defined as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
- **Gender Reassignment**: This refers to people who are proposing to undergo, are undergoing, or have undergone a process for the purpose of reassigning their gender identity.
- **Marriage and Civil Partnership:** Marriage can be between a man and a woman, or between two people of the same sex. Same-sex couples can also have a civil partnership, although the Civil Partnership (Scotland) Bill was introduced to the Scottish Parliament in October 2019 to extend the rights of civil partnership to mixed-sex couples (which would be in line with a Supreme Court ruling in June 2018, which stated that allowing only same-sex couples to enter a civil partnership is incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights). Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples.
- **Pregnancy and Maternity**: Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant and expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth.
- **Race**: The Equality Act 2010 defines race as encompassing colour, nationality (including citizenship) and ethnic or national origins.
- **Religion or Belief:** Religion means any religion a person follows. Belief means any religious or philosophical belief, and includes those people who have no formal religion or belief.
- **Sex:** This refers to a man or to a woman, or to a group of people of the same sex.
- **Sexual Orientation:** A person's sexual orientation relates to their emotional, physical and/or sexual attraction and the expression of that attraction.

2.1.1.2 Section 149 of the Act sets out the **Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED),** to which Transport Scotland is subject to in carrying out all its functions, including its work on the A96 Corridor Review. Those subject to the PSED must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is

prohibited by or under this Act.

2. Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
3. Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

2.1.1.3 The three aims of the duty apply to all protected characteristics provided for in Section 149. Although marriage and civil partnership is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act, it is not covered by the PSED and is therefore not considered as part of this EqIA.

2.1.1.4 The Equality Act 2010[ii] explains that having due regard to the second aim (advancing equality of opportunity) involves:

- removing or minimising disadvantages affecting people due to their protected characteristics
- taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people
- encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

2.1.1.5 The PSED requires public bodies to take proactive measures to address inequality and help contribute to the government's commitment to tackle disadvantage and discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and encourage good relations between all people.

2.1.2 Technical Guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty

2.1.2.1 To support Scottish public authorities in meeting their equality duties, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has produced a guidance document[iii] providing an authoritative, comprehensive and technical guide to the detail of the law in Scotland.

2.1.2.2 The guide provides an overview of the Public Sector Equality Duty, including the General Equality Duty, the specific duties and who they apply to. It covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty, including steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions.

2.2 National Policy Context

2.2.1 The section below provides an overview of the most relevant national policies to the A96 Corridor Review. A detailed policy context is provided in the SEqIA Scoping Report[iv].

2.2.2 **National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)**

2.2.2.1 NPF4 is a long-term plan providing the vision and spatial strategy for Scotland to 2045 and provides guidance to where development and infrastructure should be planned[v].

2.2.2.2 NPF4 identifies six overarching principles to support the delivery of future places. These are:

- Just transition
- Conserving and recycling assets;
- Local living
- Compact urban growth
- Rebalanced development
- Rural revitalisation.

2.2.2.3 Applying these spatial principles will support the delivery of:

- **Sustainable places** where we reduce emissions, restore and better connect biodiversity
- **Liveable places** where we can all live better, healthier lives
- **Productive places** where we have a greener, fairer and more inclusive wellbeing economy.

2.2.3 **National Transport Strategy 2 (NTS2)**

2.2.3.1 NTS2[vi] outlines Scotland's transport vision for the next 20 years through the following four priorities:

- reduce inequalities
- taking climate action
- delivering inclusive economic growth
- improving health and wellbeing

2.2.3.2 The following transport challenges are identified through NTS2:

- Transport can represent significant cost in terms of accessing essential services and plays a crucial part in accessing employment and preventing social isolation.
- **Productivity, labour markets, fair work and skilled workforce, and trade and**

connectivity: an efficient transport system, that is affordable, fair and inclusive for employers and the workforce will help address some of these challenges.

- **Health and active travel:** increasing the number of people walking and cycling, especially for short journeys, can have a big impact on individual health and wellbeing.

2.2.4 Strategic Transport Planning Project Review (STPR)

2.2.4.1 STPR[vii] outlines Scottish Government's 29 transport investment priorities over the period to 2032 (Transport Scotland, 2008).

2.2.4.2 The review recognises the central role of transport; "An efficient transport system is one of the key enablers for enhancing productivity and delivering faster, more sustainable economic growth".

2.2.4.3 The following objectives were identified for the corridor between Inverness and Aberdeen specifically to:

- improve connectivity, particularly by public transport between Inverness city centre and the growth area to the east including Inverness Airport
- improve journey time and increase opportunities to travel, particularly by public transport, between Aberdeen and Inverness
- reduce the accident rate and severity rate to current national average.

2.2.5 Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 (STPR2)

2.2.5.1 The Second Strategic Transport Review[viii] informs transport investment in Scotland and helps to deliver the visions, priorities and outcomes set out in the NTS2 (Transport Scotland, 2022).

2.2.5.2 STPR2 has five key objectives that it aims to address:

- taking climate action
- addressing inequalities and accessibility
- improving health and wellbeing
- supporting sustainable economic growth
- increasing safety and resilience.

2.2.5.3 Over a 20-year period (2022-2042), the SPTR2 aims to:

- enhance accessibility across Scotland for residents, visitors and businesses
- create better connectivity with sustainable, smart and cleaner transport options
- highlight the vital contribution that transport investment can play in enabling and sustaining Scotland's economic growth.

3. Baseline Summary

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The key information which supports the assessment presented in this report has been developed throughout the corridor review process with a full evidence base prepared as part of the SEqIA Scoping Report[ix].

3.1.2 The baseline includes evidence on those living, working, visiting and travelling through the area, drawing on a range of relevant data from the National Records for Scotland, 2021 Scottish Census (as the most recent available Census dataset at the time of writing), the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 2020[x] and additional sources including the Scottish Household Survey and other transport statistics from Transport Scotland research such as the Key Reported Road Casualties Scotland 2019. Where available, local area datasets have also been interrogated. It also draws on research relating to groups covered by the EqIA (for example women, disabled people and LGBT people) to identify the key issues within a transport context.

3.2 The EqIA Study Area

3.2.1 For analysis purposes, an EqIA 'study area' has been created shown in Appendix A, comprising wards that intersect with the A96 corridor[xi]. Four council areas were identified within the EqIA study area:

- Aberdeenshire Council
- Aberdeen City Council
- The Highland Council
- Moray Council.

3.2.2 The A96 Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn Bypass) scheme does not form part of the A96 Corridor Review as it has been through the statutory process and has received ministerial consent , with Made Orders published on 22 February 2024. Interventions within Nairn itself, however, have been included in the transport intervention packages in the appraisal.

3.3 Existing Transport Network and Travel Patterns

3.3.1 The entire length of the A96 Trunk Road is serviced by a bus route between Inverness and Aberdeen, with local services available in some of the larger towns along the route. Community transport and demand responsive transport services are operated within each of the local authorities, although coverage is limited, with membership often required.

3.3.2 The rail line between Inverness and Aberdeen generally follows the alignment of the A96 and includes 12 stations, including both Aberdeen and Inverness.

3.3.3 There are several on and off-road active travel corridors in the study area, many being local networks, alongside the NCN 1 long-distance cycle route. This also connects to NCN 195 in Aberdeen and NCN 7 south of Inverness and forms part of the National Cycle Network. Traffic-free parts of the routes exist in small sections but for longer travel between settlements and towns, it is necessary to travel on-road.

3.4 Age

3.4.1 The mid-2020 population estimate for the EqIA study area totals 219, 093 persons[xii].

3.4.2 Current national population estimates reveal that 17% of the population are aged 15 and under, 64% of the population are between 16-64 and 19% of the population are 65 and over[xiii]. Recent data shows an increase in the average age of the population within the 65 years and over age bracket, growing by 33% in the period 2000 to 2021.

3.4.3 Children and Young People

3.4.3.1 While the percentage of children living in the study area is marginally lower (16.5%), the proportion of young people is slightly higher (11.0%) when compared to Scotland as a whole (16.8% and 10.4% respectively)[xiv].

3.4.3.2 Children and young people are more likely to benefit from investment in active travel and public transport interventions, especially where access to education, training and other important services is improved. In particular, availability of public transport in rural areas is a significant challenge for young people who are more dependent on public transport for accessing key services.

3.4.3.3 According to the Scottish Health Survey[xv] in 2019, 16% of children in Scotland were at risk of obesity. Access to active travel and transport systems that encourage active living and regular physical activity is an important factor in combating obesity, as well as having beneficial impacts on mental health and wellbeing.

3.4.3.4 Environmental impacts of traffic can disproportionately affect children. Traffic-related noise is correlated more broadly with lower health-related quality of life in children[xvi] and they are more vulnerable to the effects of poor air quality compared to the overall population. Children are also more vulnerable to the environmental, safety and accessibility impacts of construction activities associated with new transport infrastructure or maintenance projects.

3.4.3.5 Safety is a key issue for children with regards to transport. Children accounted for 28% of all pedestrian casualties recorded in Scotland in 2020[xvii]. Children and young people from deprived areas were found more likely to be involved in road traffic accidents, the risk being highest on main roads and on residential roads near shops and leisure services in their local areas[xviii].

3.4.4 Older people

3.4.4.1 As with Scotland as a whole, Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Highland and Moray Council areas have ageing populations. Between mid-2010 and mid-2020, the percentage of those aged 65 and over increased by 14%, 30%, 27% and 24% in Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Highland and Moray respectively, compared to 20% nationally[xix].

3.4.4.2 Older people are more likely to use public transport for journeys in comparison to other age groups and there has been a ~2% increase in the number of people aged 65+ in possession of a concessionary bus pass between 2009 and 2019[xx].

3.4.4.3 For older people, the lack of access to public transport services can act as a barrier to accessing key services including healthcare. Accessibility issues are likely to affect older people and disabled people more than other groups and can have both physical and psychological impacts. Research revealed that 50% of community transport survey respondents noted that their trip could not or would not be made without community transport[xxi].

3.4.4.4 Older people are disproportionately vulnerable to the adverse health effects of traffic-related noise and air pollution[xxii]. This group is also more vulnerable to the environmental, safety and accessibility impacts of construction activities associated with new transport infrastructure.

3.5 Disability

3.5.1 Around 19% of Scotland's population live with a long-term physical or mental condition that limits their daily life[xxiii]. Yet, those with long-term limiting illnesses, including disabled people, often experience higher levels of inequality.

3.5.2 Accessible transport is an important aspect of enabling disabled people to enjoy equal access to full citizenship. Disabled adults are more likely to use the bus than non-disabled adults (11% of journeys vs 7%)[xxiv]. In terms of requiring affordable transport options, whilst the National Concessionary Travel Scheme is available to all those who qualify, disabled people are more likely to face transportation cost issues than non-disabled people.

3.5.3 Disabled people, especially those with weak respiratory systems, may experience disproportionate impacts of traffic-related emissions and dust, as well as dust and emissions created through construction and maintenance of transport infrastructure.

3.6 Sexual Orientation

3.6.1 Sexual orientation is one of the five groups of protected characteristics covered by hate crime legislation. It is estimated that 17% of LGBT people, and one in four disabled LGBT people, experienced a hate crime in the 12 months prior to 2017, an increase from 9% in 2013[xxv]. LGBT individuals are more likely than heterosexual individuals to have encountered inappropriate sexual behaviour or hate crime while using public transport and therefore may be concerned about safety and security while using the transport network.

3.7 Gender Reassignment

3.7.1 There is limited data and evidence available on the experiences of transgender people. However, research has identified that trans people have lower income, and experience structural disadvantages in accessing employment and training opportunities, and are therefore at a higher risk of transport poverty[xxvi].

3.7.2 Transgender identity is also one of the protected characteristics covered by the hate crime legislation. Nearly half of transgender persons in Scotland experienced a transphobic hate crime or incident in the year previous to 2017, according to estimates[xxvii]. For many transgender people, concerns about discrimination and harassment are part of their day-to-day lives, and could affect their use of public transport and public transport facilities, especially at night when these may be poorly lit, for fear of harassment or discrimination.

3.8 Pregnancy and Maternity

3.8.1 Pregnant women may be mobility-restricted, particularly at later stages of pregnancy and may have concerns or issues with regards to accessibility and safety, as well as needing to access facilities whilst feeling nauseous or ill whilst travelling.

3.8.2 Pregnant women are also more vulnerable to the adverse effects of air pollution, including an increasing risk of miscarriage[xxviii] as well premature births and low birth weights.

3.9 Race

3.9.1 The majority of the population in Scotland and the EqIA study area are white according to the 2011 Census. 'African' represents the largest ethnic minority in the study area (1.0%)

3.9.2 Racial crime is the most commonly reported hate crime with 3,249 charges reported in Scotland in 2017-18[xxix]. Racial discrimination, harassment or abuse can create a barrier to travel for ethnic minority groups when accessing the transport network.

3.10 Religion

3.10.1 The majority of those who stated a religion identified with the Church of Scotland at both the national and study area level[xxx]. There are a number of other religious minorities, with Muslim being the largest at both levels.

3.10.2 Religion or belief is one of the five protected characteristic groups covered by the hate crime legislation. Roman Catholicism is the religion that was most often the subject of reported abuse, with 319 charges for 2017-18[xxxi]. Protestantism and Islam are the religions that were subject to the next highest number of aggravations in 2016-17. Therefore, these groups may have concerns about religious discrimination, assault or harassment while using the transport network.

3.10.3 Muslim adults are more likely to live in relative poverty, have lower median hourly earnings and experience a large pay gap between those with no religion[xxxii]. As such, this group might be more vulnerable to the costs of transport and face barriers in accessing employment, education, healthcare and other services as a result.

3.11 Sex

3.11.1 Women are more likely to make multi-stop and multi-purpose trips, combining travel to work with trips for other purposes such as taking children to school, looking after family members, or shopping, and are more likely to walk, be a passenger in a car, or take a bus than men[xxxiii].

3.11.2 Women's concerns when travelling on public transport largely relate to gender-based violence and assault, including sexual harassment. In comparison to males, women are more likely to be very or fairly concerned about sexual assault, and they are also less likely to feel very or fairly safe going alone at night (65% compared to 90% of men)[xxxiv].

4. Stakeholder Engagement

4.1 Overview

4.1.1 The STAG process is firmly founded on participation and consultation. Accordingly, public engagement has been pivotal to inform the A96 Corridor Review at all key stages. A comprehensive stakeholder engagement plan was developed at an early stage in the review process and has been carefully devised to ensure general inclusivity and representation of key equality groups.

4.1.2 Although there are no legal consultation requirements for EqIA, there has been engagement with the public throughout the Corridor Review in order to provide early opportunities within appropriate timeframes for opinions to be expressed on the transport intervention options for the A96 corridor as they have developed.

4.2 Public Consultation Activities

4.2.1 During the course of the A96 Corridor Review, there has been extensive public engagement. An initial four-week public consultation was held from 12 May 2022 to 10 June 2022. During this period, the public and stakeholders were invited to share insights into travel habits, general thoughts on travel and transport along the corridor and identify problems and potential opportunities along the route.

4.2.2 In total, 4,687 responses were received via the online consultation survey and email responses. A detailed overview of the findings are available in the Stakeholder and Public Engagement Consultation Report[xxxv]. A summary of the main findings are as follows:

- 96% of respondents stated that car is their primary mode of travel on the A96 corridor
- public transport is a less prevalent mode of transport with 46% of respondents indicating they do not use public transport along the route
- 88% of respondents were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with the availability of safe overtaking opportunities, 79% were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with levels of traffic congestion and 76% were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with the length of journey times
- 37% were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with the frequency of bus services, 43% were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with the availability of safe walking infrastructure, 63% were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with the cost of rail travel and 58% of respondents felt very unsafe or somewhat unsafe when using the road network.

4.2.3 The most frequently raised priority for the A96 Corridor Review, raised by 55% of respondents, was dualling the route, with only 12% of respondents opposed to full or partial dualling. Similarly, improving road safety was raised by 50% of respondents, which included general safety concerns as well as safety of driving, cycling and walking.

4.2.4 The need to improve rail services, including train connections, cost, and comfort of travel, was raised by 30% of respondents, and another 30% of respondents raised bypassing town centres. Other priorities listed by respondents include improvements to bus services (raised by 24% of respondents), general public transport improvements including public transport connectivity and integration (24% of respondents), and better road maintenance including infrastructure, surface, signage etc. (22% of respondents).

4.2.5 Section 1 of the consultation feedback form, 'About You', enabled diversity monitoring to be undertaken across a range of protected characteristics following data collection. The response rate varied across protected characteristic groups and many respondents either refused to answer or questioned the relevance of the questions. However, from the information that was provided, the following findings were identified:

- The majority of children and young people felt somewhat unsafe or very unsafe when travelling along the A96 corridor (38%) compared to somewhat safe or very safe (26%).
- A slightly higher proportion of female respondents travelled by car in the A96 corridor (66%) compared to male respondents (59%). However, a wider range of other transport modes were included in male respondents' answers, including a number of work-related vehicles.
- Very similar numbers of female (44.6%) and male (45.5%) respondents said they did not use public transport at all and reasons for this were similar. However, 12.5% of female respondents felt dissatisfied or very dissatisfied at bus stops and train stations, compared with only 7.9% of male respondents.
- A higher proportion of those reporting no health conditions (47%) did not use public transport than those respondents who did report a disability or health condition lasting more than 12 months (41%).
- Respondents who did report a disability or health condition lasting more than 12 months, were much more likely to be dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with accessibility on buses (16%) and trains (14%) than those who reported no condition (7%).

4.3 Stakeholder Engagement Activities

4.3.1 As part of the ongoing engagement with stakeholders, a series of stakeholder engagement sessions were held via an online collaboration platform to understand the views of different stakeholder groupings throughout the corridor. All sessions were attended by Jacobs AECOM representatives and split by the below stakeholder groupings:

- representatives from the four local authorities and Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership (HITRANS)
- environmental stakeholders, including local authority Environmental Planners
- North East Scotland Transport Partnership (Nestrans) and Aberdeenshire Council
- representatives from statutory environmental groups
- representatives from active travel and accessibility stakeholders
- representatives from business and business organisation stakeholders
- representatives from Stagecoach
- representatives from Police Scotland.

4.3.2 Across these sessions, consistent problems, opportunities and suggestions were provided on the topics outlined in Table 4-1.

Table 4-1: Summary of Stakeholder Engagement Responses

Topic	Problems	Opportunities	Suggestions/ interventions
Active travel	Lack of appropriate active travel infrastructure, especially concerning safety while cycling and walking	Inclusivity and connectivity of active travel throughout the A96 corridor	Sustainable and safe active travel provision
Public transport	Low public transport uptake due to slow journey times, high travel costs and frequency of services	Reliable and sustainable public transport infrastructure improvements, including Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) and Community Transport (CT) links	Improvement to public transport services, including Park and Ride facilities, multi-modal transport hubs and interchanges between active travel and public transport
Road network	Lack of road safety and slow journey times	Sustainable travel and green infrastructure improvements to enhance connectivity	Sustainable road safety travel improvements with connectivity to public transport
Environment	Lack of green infrastructure and traffic emissions within towns along the route	Decarbonisation strategies, including electric vehicle charging infrastructure and sustainable travel infrastructure	Increase in green infrastructure

4.4 SEqIA Stakeholder Workshop

4.4.1 An online consultation workshop was held to present the SEqIA Scoping Report on 14 March 2023. Prior to this, the SEqIA Scoping Report was issued to 31 organisations (see Appendix B) representing equalities groups, socio-economically disadvantaged groups and islands communities, along with an invitation to attend the workshop.

4.4.2 Representatives from Jacobs AECOM were present and provided stakeholders with a comprehensive overview of the A96 Corridor Review process to date and the initial requirements of Transport Scotland in its duties to prepare an EqIA, CRWIA and FSDA.

4.4.3 The key feedback from these sessions included:

- the need to consider the significant overlaps across the various social and equality impact topic areas and to consider intersectionality as part of the assessment

- That where possible the assessments should refer to evidence provided by those with lived experience
- the need to incorporate impacts on health into the assessments.

4.4.4 In addition, all attendees agreed they were content with scoping out an Islands and Communities Impact Assessment for the review.

5. Approach to the EqIA

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 The EqIA and other impact assessments have aligned with each STAG stage, in order to maximise influence of impact assessment work in the overall assessment process. Table 5-1 sets out how the EqIA process aligns with STAG's four-stage assessment process throughout the A96 Corridor Review.

Table 5-1: EqIA Stages of Assessment

Initial Appraisal: Case for Change **Transport Planning Objectives (TPOs)**
An impact assessment team set out the evidence base for problems and opportunities linked to the transport network for all modes within the study area to influence the development of TPOs that align closely with STPR2. TPOs represent the positive outcomes sought for the corridor and provide the basis for the appraisal of alternative options. The EqIA aligns in particular with: TPO2 - An inclusive strategic transport corridor that improves the accessibility of public transport in rural areas for access to healthcare, employment and education.
Preliminary Appraisal
A multi-criterion sifting approach of shortlisted transport intervention options was undertaken, considering a matrix-based assessment in the context of likely disproportionate or differential effects on people with characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010. Commentary has been provided to justify the rating and consider relevant likely significant effects, mitigation, risk and uncertainty.
Detailed Appraisal
A more detailed assessment of Full Dualling and sifted transport packages against aligned STAG topics and equalities-related considerations. The assessment utilises a matrix approach for Full Dualling and each of the transport packages as show in **Table 5-2** which aligns with a seven-point rating system as shown in **Table 5-3**. The commentary justifies the rating and considers relevant likely significant effects, mitigation, assumptions and uncertainties where relevant.

5.2 Assessment of impacts

5.2.1 This EqIA presents an assessment of the potential impacts on protected characteristic groups for Full Dualling and six transport intervention packages that were developed in the detailed appraisal stage from the sifted options identified through the initial appraisal. The current Scottish Government commitment, the A96 Full Dualling (from Hardmuir to Craibstone) has also been appraised as part of the Detailed Appraisal, in order to assess its performance against current appraisal criteria, and this also forms part of the EqIA.

5.3 Assessment framework: matrix approach

5.3.1 The EqIA process assesses the contribution of Full Dualling and each package to meeting the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

5.3.2 The assessment of equality impacts used a matrix-based approach, with a qualitative rating system to identify likely impacts on protected characteristic groups. Impacts for each of the assessments have been determined against two assessment criteria: magnitude and sensitivity. These consist of:

Magnitude of impact: the extent to which protected characteristic groups would be impacted (positively or negatively) by Full Dualling or the package considering the numbers or proportion that would experience the impact.

Sensitivity of impact: this considers how those impacted might respond; whether they are able to adapt to Full Dualling or the package (where negatively impacted). If the impacted group has no alternatives and, as such, will be greatly impacted, then it is considered to be highly sensitive to the change. Where they are able to continue to function as normal, sensitivity would be low.

5.3.3 The identification of likely significant impacts has involved combining the sensitivity of those affected with the predicted magnitude of impact (change) using the assessment matrix provided in **Table 5-2**.

Table 5-2: Impact Rating Matrix

Sensitivity of impact	Magnitude of impact No change	Magnitude of impact Low	Magnitude of impact Medium	Magnitude of impact High
High	Neutral	Minor or Moderate	Moderate or Major	Major
Medium	Neutral	Minor	Moderate	Moderate or Major
Low	Neutral	Neutral or Minor	Minor or Moderate	Minor or Moderate

5.3.4 Where two significance categories are shown in the matrix, professional judgement has been used to select the appropriate category of significance. Evidence and rationale are provided for the selection of category.

5.3.5 The seven-point rating system describing the assessment of equality effects is outlined in Table 5-3.

Table 5-3: EqIA Rating System

Major positive impact
The proposed option provides a major contribution to the achievement of the Public Sector Equality Duty.
Moderate positive impact
The proposed option contributes significantly to the achievement of the Public Sector Equality Duty.
Minor positive impact
The proposed option contributes to the achievement of the Public Sector Equality Duty, but not significantly.
Neutral impact
The proposed option is related to, but does not have any impact on, the achievement of the Public Sector Equality Duty.
Minor negative impact
The proposed option detracts from the achievement of the Public Sector Equality Duty, but not significantly.
Moderate negative impact
The proposed option detracts significantly from the achievement of the Public Sector Equality Duty. Mitigation is therefore required.
Major negative impact
The proposed option results in a major detraction from the achievement of the Public Sector Equality Duty. An alternative option or significant mitigation is therefore required.

5.3.6 Following each stage of assessment, any potentially negative impacts identified have been discussed with the project team to consider reasonable alternatives, effective mitigation and enhancement recommendations.

5.3.7 The key relevant findings and recommendations of the detailed appraisal options are recorded in Chapter 6 of this report, with overall assessment ratings for the EqIA.

6. Assessment of Impacts

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 This chapter provides a high-level assessment of the potential impacts of Full Dualling and the packages of transport intervention options that are being considered as part of the A96 Corridor Review on protected characteristic groups.

6.1.2 The assessment is based on the rating criteria set out in Section 5.3 and takes into account wider appraisal work and baseline evidence on the protected characteristic groups.

6.1.3 For the purposes of the A96 Corridor Review, the 'With Policy' and 'Without Policy' scenarios developed as part of the scenario planning undertaken for STPR2, are used in the Detailed Appraisal of Full Dualling and each package. These scenarios were developed to consider the risk associated with future uncertainties. The following two scenarios with their inherent variants of transport behaviour were considered:

- 'With Policy Scenario' - captures policy ambitions including 20% reduction (from 2019 levels) in car kilometres travelled by 2030, and assumptions to significantly reduce levels of commuting/business journeys to reflect post COVID-19 working behaviours, leading to low levels of motorised traffic demand and emissions.
- 'Without Policy Scenario' - no policy ambitions are captured, and less significant reductions to levels of commuting/business journeys, leading to higher levels of motorised traffic demand and emissions.

6.2 Transport Intervention Packages

6.2.1 Full package descriptions and detailed appraisal summaries are included within the 'Strategic Business Case – Transport Appraisal Report' published alongside this EqIA. However, Table 6-1 provides a summary of the transport interventions included within each package. It should be noted that the A96 Dualling Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn Bypass) scheme does not form part of the A96 Corridor Review as it has successfully progressed through a Public Local Inquiry and has Ministerial consent. Interventions within Nairn itself, similar to those proposed within the other bypassed towns, however, have been included within the packages for appraisal purposes.

Table 6-1: Interventions Within Each Detailed Appraisal Package

Option	Package 1	Package 2	Package 3	Package 4	Package 5	Refined Package
Active Communities	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Active Connections			✓	✓	✓	
Bus Priority Measures and Park and Ride	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Improved Public Transport Passenger Interchange Facilities	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Investment in DRT and MaaS	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Introduction of Rail Freight Terminals				✓	✓	
Linespeed, Passenger and Freight Capacity Improvements on the Aberdeen to Inverness Railway Line	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Targeted Road Safety Improvements		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Elgin Bypass	✓				✓	✓
Keith Bypass	✓				✓	✓
Inverurie Bypass	✓				✓	
Forres Bypass	✓				✓	
A96 Electric Corridor	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

6.3 A96 Full Dualling – Potential Impacts

6.3.1 The A96 Full Dualling from Hardmuir (approximately 5 miles east of Nairn) to Craibstone (approximately 6 miles west of Aberdeen city centre), hereafter referred to as the A96 Full Dualling option is the current Scottish Government commitment and focuses on improving the trunk road network in the north-east of Scotland to address road safety concerns and provide resilience and reliability improvements for a key connection between Inverness and Aberdeen. The location of the option is illustrated in Figure 6-1.

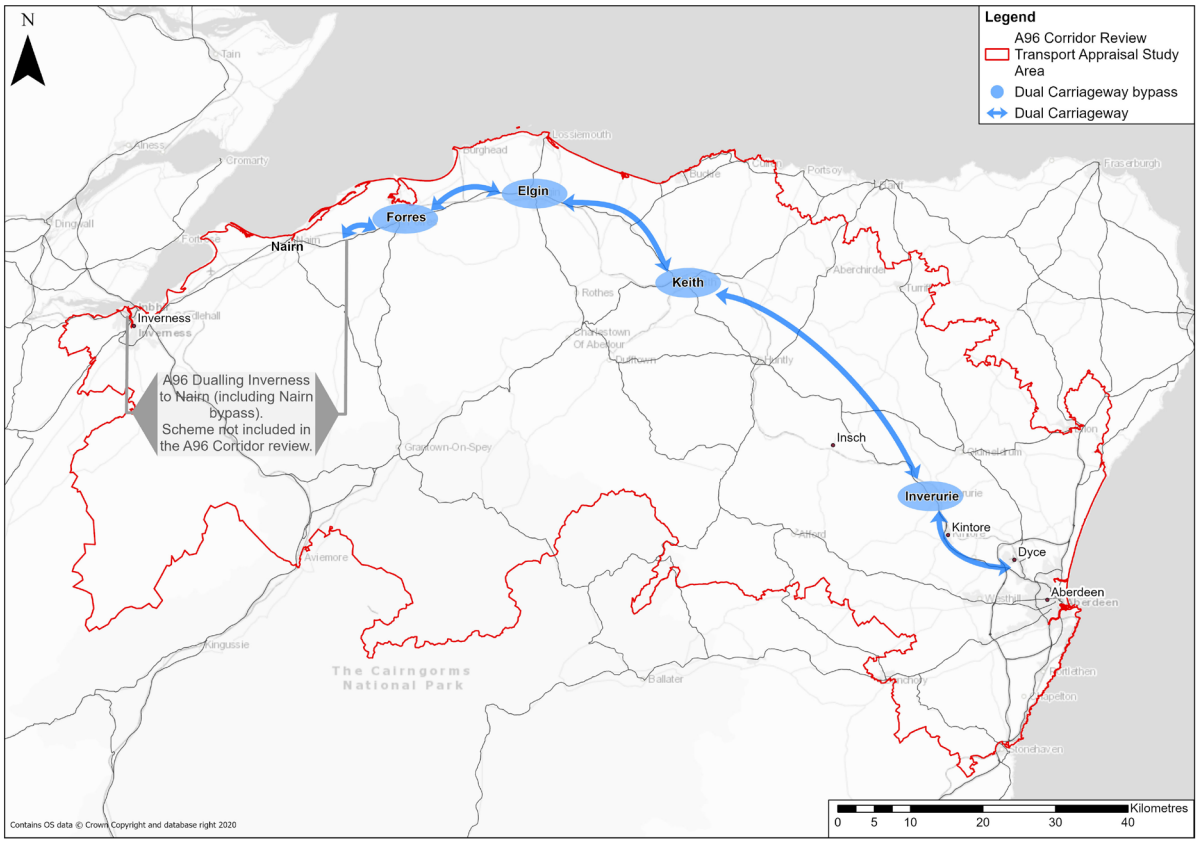

Figure 6-1: A96 Full Dualling Hardmuir to Craibstone Extent

6.3.2 The provision of full dualling between Hardmuir and Craibstone could improve access to employment, educational, health, and open space and leisure facilities for those in protected characteristic groups, particularly in areas where there is a high dependency on private vehicles. There is also likely to be safety benefits for drivers along the route.

6.3.3 The provision of a dual carriageway could potentially result in adverse health outcomes for some protected groups as a result of adverse impacts on air quality and noise levels due to an increase in motorised vehicles along the A96 Trunk Road as well as construction impacts on local communities. Air quality modelling forecasts show that as a result of increased traffic flows and an attraction of traffic to the corridor, nitrogen dioxides (NOx) and particulate matter (PM) 2.5 emissions are predicted to increase over the 60-year appraisal period for both the 'With Policy' and 'Without Policy' scenarios.

6.3.4 However, the provision of full dualling within the corridor is likely to require towns to be bypassed. Traffic modelling forecasts predict that traffic would divert away from Elgin, Keith and Inverurie as a result of full dualling in both the 'With Policy' and 'Without Policy' scenarios. Therefore, bypassed towns could experience air quality improvements as traffic volumes reduce, and resultant benefits in relation to noise and vibration and visual amenity within these settlements. Children, older people, pregnant women, and disabled people are more vulnerable to the adverse health effects of traffic-related emissions and noise and are all therefore likely to benefit from this option. Furthermore, the provision of bypasses as part of this option would reduce severance impacts, providing benefits from reduced social exclusion. There could also be benefits for certain groups who rely on private vehicle use to access key services due to mobility reasons, such as disabled people and older people or those who make complex journeys involving 'trip chaining' such as women and carers. For example, these groups could experience an improvement in journey times and more reliable journey times both locally and when travelling to key services such as employment, education, and healthcare.

6.3.5 However, this option could potentially result in negative impacts during both construction and operation stages for children, older people, disabled people, and pregnant women living in local communities along the corridor. This includes noise, vibration and air quality impacts during construction and potential severance, noise, air quality and traffic impacts during operation. However, the level of direct impact will be dependent on the alignment of the route and the types of communities affected. More detailed assessment would be required to understand the extent of these impacts and the appropriate mitigation to reduce any negative effects and enhance benefits for protected characteristic groups.

6.3.6 Overall, this option is expected to have a **minor positive** impact on this criterion under both the 'With Policy' and 'Without Policy' scenarios.

6.4 Package 1 – Potential Impacts

6.4.1 This package is focused on primarily delivering transport network improvements to key towns along the A96 corridor, namely Nairn, Forres, Elgin, Keith and Inverurie, by providing enhancements which would aim to encourage a shift to sustainable modes, increasing opportunities for residents and businesses and improving road safety.

6.4.2 The location of the settlements concerned in relation to the wider A96 Corridor Review transport appraisal study area is illustrated in Figure 6-2. Whilst this package is primarily targeted at the aforementioned settlements, it also includes corridor-wide interventions which are anticipated to result in benefits to other areas within the corridor.

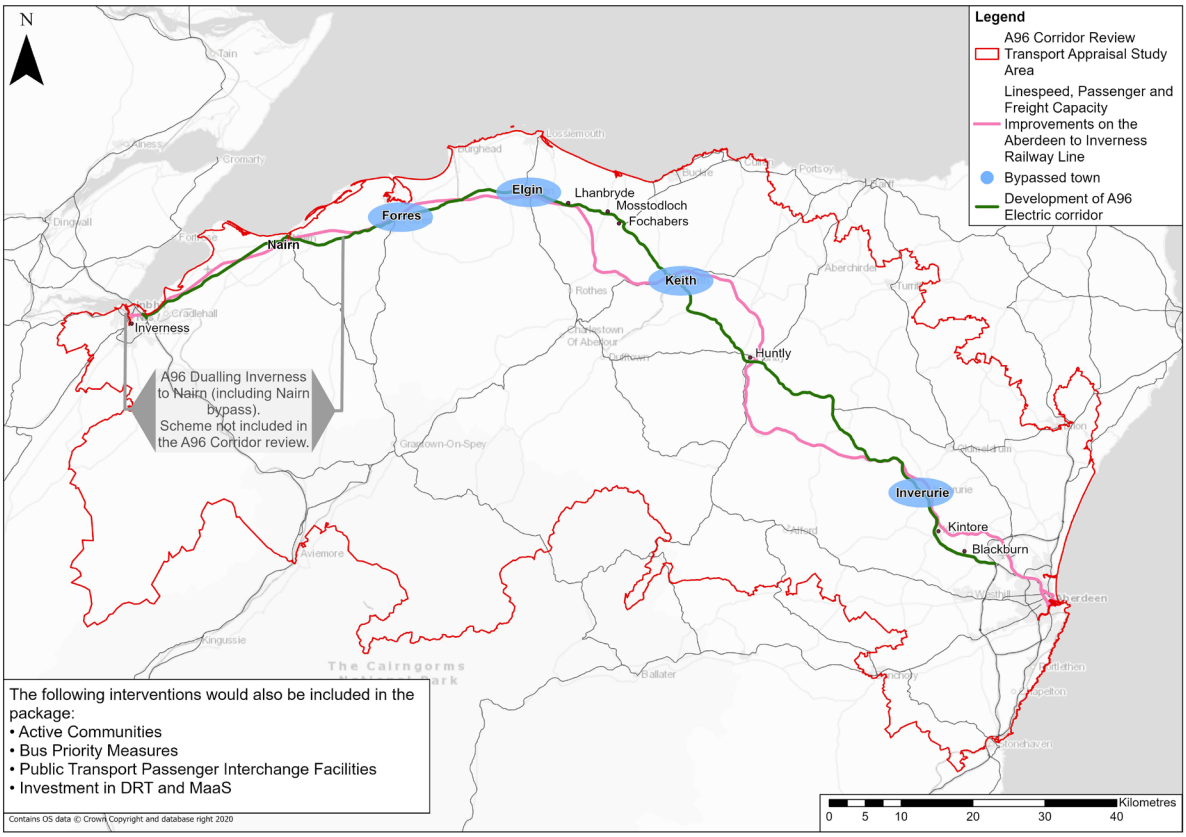

Figure 6-2: Package 1 Extents

6.4.3 Modelling undertaken using Jacob's National Public Transport Accessibility Tool (NapTAT) suggests that this package would improve the access to key destinations in the study area such as employment and health and education sites, especially for groups who may otherwise be socially excluded by limited transport options including children, young people, women, disabled people and older people. Public transport interventions such as step-free access at stations would improve transport choices for people who are currently excluded, and improved facilities may also benefit those with impaired vision or hearing and those who are neurodivergent.

6.4.4 While most accessibility benefits are concentrated around settlements with rail stations and access to bus provision, journey time improvements are also anticipated in areas where bus priority measures and public transport interchange improvements can be introduced. These interventions would improve connections between settlements without rail stations and limited bus provision to those that do have a station or greater bus provision, such as areas around Inverurie including Kemnay located approximately six miles to the south-west of the town. Thus, increasing the connectivity and inclusion of public transport and reducing the overall journey time across the corridor.

6.4.5 NaPTAT modelling observed the largest journey time reductions to hospital emergency departments of the destinations considered in the assessment and study area, whereby it is anticipated an additional 14,900 people aged 16 and over would be able to access the nearest site within approximately 30 minutes by public transport. This journey time accessibility improvement would also benefit groups of people who may be more reliant on public transport to access health services, including 4,000 people aged 65 and over as well as 3,400 people across all age groups with a long-term health problem or disability whose day-to-day activities are limited.

6.4.6 Improved journey time accessibility would also be shown in travelling to higher education sites across the study area using public transport and would be anticipated to generate benefits for a wide range of protected characteristic groups. The package would enable an additional 9,700 people aged 16 and over to access the nearest higher education site within approximately 60 minutes by public transport across the study area. This would impact the following groups: 1,100 young people aged 16-24, 4,900 females, 250 from non-white ethnic groups, and 1,300 people across all age groups with a long-term health problem or disability whose day-to-day activities are limited.

6.4.7 Investment in Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) and Mobility as a Service (MaaS) in particular could provide benefits for protected characteristic groups due to more flexible public transport options helping improve connectivity to key services, including children, young people, women, disabled people and older people. There could also be a beneficial impact in terms of reduced barriers to travel for those with reduced mobility if improvements in public transport connectivity reduces walking distance in order to use a service. However, MaaS could exclude certain groups without access to relevant technology, bank accounts or the appropriate level of support to apply for entitlement schemes, and as such, these groups would need to be considered in the design of the schemes to ensure that they benefit from the interventions.

6.4.8 Through the reallocation of road space and improved surfaces and crossing points for active travel, the infrastructure installed could be designed to incorporate adapted cycles and, as such, address mobility issues experienced by commonly disadvantaged groups, such as women, disabled people and older people. Crossing points may also become more accessible for pedestrians through the use of tactile paving. However, the reallocation of road space could also have potential adverse effects on certain groups, such as disabled people who rely on parking spaces close to essential services.

6.4.9 While air quality modelling forecasts that this package would result in adverse air quality emissions over the 60-year appraisal period, there is potential for improvements in air quality in bypassed towns. Traffic modelling forecasts predict that traffic would divert away from Forres, Elgin, Keith and Inverurie as a result of the proposed scheme in both the 'With Policy' and 'Without Policy' scenarios. Therefore, bypassed towns may potentially experience a range of benefits for groups with protected characteristics. A reduction in traffic could result in improved local air quality within the towns which would be a particular benefit to those groups who are more vulnerable to the adverse health effects of traffic-related emissions such as older people, disabled people, children and pregnant women. Reduced through traffic could also help address local severance issues, reduce road safety concerns and improve the active travel environment.

6.4.10 In particular, a reduction of through traffic and the inclusion of Active Communities could result in an increase in active travel. For example, in Elgin, walking to work levels comprise approximately 18% of all trips [xxxvi]. This package could provide an opportunity to build on this propensity to walk to work by decreasing traffic through Elgin and reducing road safety concerns for those groups who are less likely to travel by car. This may improve physical and mental health wellbeing outcomes and is also likely to enhance the aforementioned air quality improvements if the increased active travel usage is a result of mode shift from private vehicle use.

6.4.11 An increase in the use of alternative fuels by vehicles along the A96 corridor due to the electric corridor could also improve local air quality. In turn, this could have positive effects on those groups who are more vulnerable to the adverse health effects of traffic-related emissions.

6.4.12 This package could also result in benefits for certain groups who rely on private vehicle use to access key services due to mobility reasons such as disabled people and older people, or those who make complex journeys involving 'trip chaining' such as women and carers. For example, these groups could experience an improvement in journey times and more reliable journey times, both locally and when travelling to key services such as employment, education, healthcare and shopping in the bypassed towns and the surrounding area.

6.4.13 Construction activities associated with the bypass elements of this package may result in negative impacts for local communities during both construction and operational stages. The construction of bypasses may adversely impact on groups who are more vulnerable to noise, vibration, and air quality such as children, older people, disabled people, and pregnant women. Furthermore, during operation, the new bypasses could create potential new severance, noise, air quality and traffic impacts for dwellings along the new alignment. However, the level of direct impact would be dependent on the route alignment selected for the bypass and the types of communities affected. More detailed assessment would be required to understand the extent of these impacts and the appropriate mitigation to reduce any negative effects and enhance benefits for protected characteristic groups.

6.4.14 In addition, the extent of benefit arising from the active and sustainable travel aspects of this package would depend on the location and routeing of travel networks and facilities, their proximity to local services and the ability for people to access the network.

6.4.15 Overall, this package is expected to have a moderate positive impact under both the 'With Policy' and 'Without Policy' scenarios on addressing this criterion for protected characteristic groups living along the A96 through the bypassed towns, especially for those who are dependent on private vehicle use.

6.5 Package 2 – Potential Impacts

6.5.1 This package of interventions is targeted at providing network improvements to some of the less populated settlements along the A96 corridor, that are not suggested to be bypassed within Package 1. The package would provide enhancements which would aim to encourage a shift to sustainable modes, increase opportunities for residents and businesses and improve road safety.

6.5.2 The specific settlements considered in this package are Lhanbryde, Mosstodloch, Fochabers, Huntly, Kintore and Blackburn and are shown within the context of the wider A96 Corridor Review transport appraisal study area in Figure 6-3. This package focuses on delivering transport network improvements within the vicinity of these towns, aiming to encourage a transfer to sustainable modes and improve road safety. Whilst this package is primarily targeted at the aforementioned settlements, the package also includes corridor-wide interventions which are anticipated to result in benefits to other areas within the corridor.

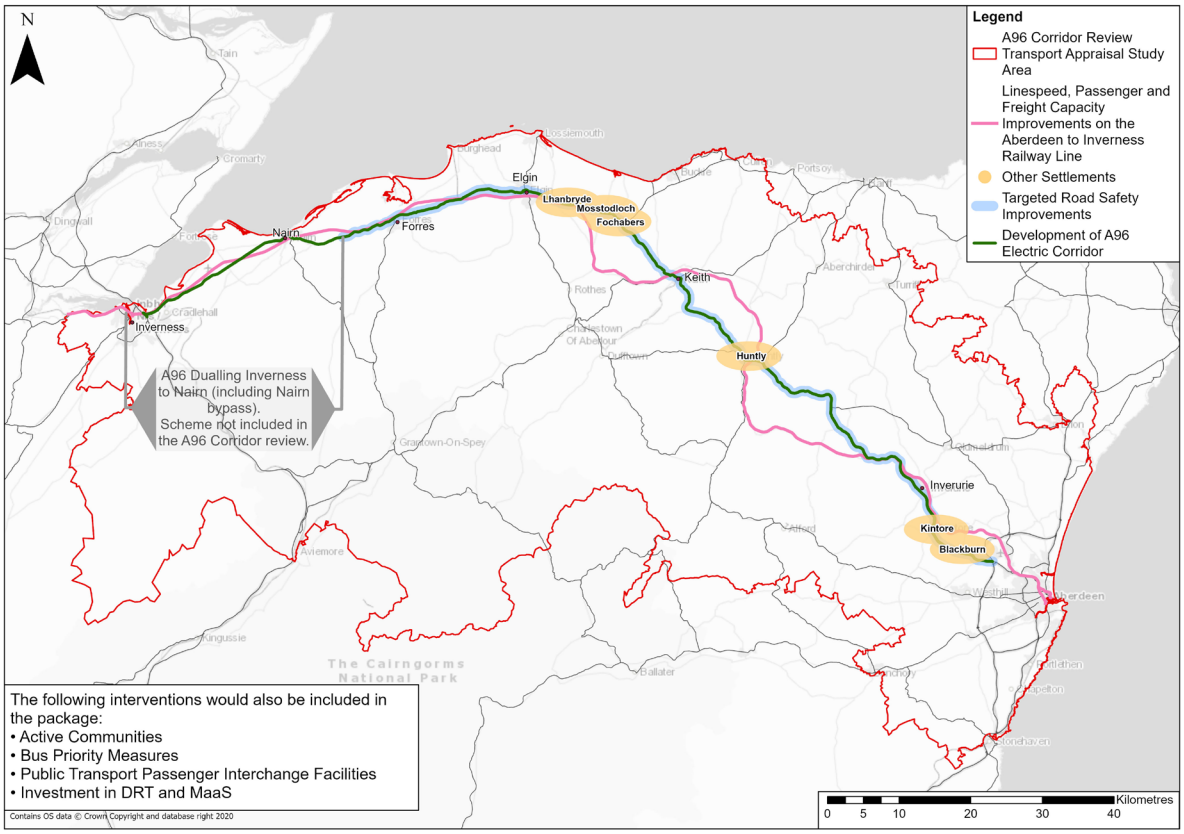

Figure 6-3: Package 2 Extents

6.5.3 Modelling undertaken using NaPTAT suggests that this package would improve the access to key destinations in the study area such as employment, health and education sites, especially for groups who may otherwise be socially excluded by limited transport options including children, young people, women, disabled people and older people. Public transport interventions such as step-free access at stations would improve transport choices for people who are currently excluded, and improved facilities may also benefit those with impaired vision or hearing and those who are neurodivergent.

6.5.4 While most accessibility benefits would be concentrated around settlements with rail stations and access to bus provision, journey time improvements would also be anticipated in areas where bus priority measures and public transport interchange improvements could be introduced. These interventions would improve connections between settlements without rail stations and limited bus provision to those that do have a station or greater bus provision, such as areas around Inverurie including Kemnay, thus increasing the connectivity and inclusion of public transport and reducing the overall journey time across the corridor.

6.5.5 NaPTAT modelling observed the largest journey time reductions to hospital emergency departments of the destinations considered in the assessment and study area, whereby it is anticipated an additional 12,200 people aged 16 and over would be able to access the nearest site within approximately 30 minutes or less by public transport. This accessibility benefit is observed for groups who may be more reliant on public transport to access health services, including over 3,100 people aged 65 and over, and over 2,500 people across all age groups with a long-term health problem or disability whose day-to-day activities are limited.

6.5.6 The observed journey time benefits in rural settlements such as Inverurie and Kemnay would likely be linked to bus network improvements. As a result of more public transport provision being available in the towns and services directly serving essential destinations such as emergency department hospitals, socially excluded groups within the settlements are expected to benefit from reduced journey times.

6.5.7 Improved journey time accessibility in travelling to higher education sites using public transport would also be observed across the study area and would be anticipated to generate benefits for a wide range of protected characteristic groups. The package would enable an additional 8,200 people aged 16 and over to access the nearest higher education site within approximately 60 minutes by public transport across the study area. This would impact the following groups: 900 young people aged 16-24, 4,200 females, 200 from non-white ethnic groups, and 1,200 people across all age groups with a long-term health problem or disability whose day-to-day activities are limited.

6.5.8 Investment in DRT and MaaS in particular could provide benefits for these groups due to more flexible public transport options helping improve connectivity to key services. There could also be a beneficial impact in terms of reduced barriers to travel for those with reduced mobility if improvements in public transport connectivity reduces walking distance in order to use a service. However, MaaS could exclude certain groups without access to relevant technology, bank accounts or the appropriate level of support to apply for entitlement schemes, and as such, these groups would need to be considered in the design of the schemes to ensure that they benefit.

6.5.9 Interventions that improve active travel provision, such as improved surfaces and crossing points would allow for infrastructure to be designed to incorporate adapted cycles and, as such, address mobility issues experienced by commonly disadvantaged groups, such as women, disabled people and older people. Crossing points may also become more accessible for pedestrians through the use of tactile paving. Targeted safety interventions would also reduce road and personal safety concerns for active travel users, including children. However, the reallocation of road space could also have potential adverse effects on certain groups, such as disabled people who rely on parking spaces close to essential services.

6.5.10 An uptake in active travel may additionally improve physical and mental health wellbeing outcomes and is also likely to lead to air quality improvements if the uptake is matched by a reduction in private vehicle use and traffic congestion. Air quality modelling forecasts show that as a result of reduced traffic flows and an attraction of traffic away from key communities, NOx emissions are predicted to decrease in 2030 and 2045 across the 'With Policy' and 'Without Policy' scenarios. 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, pregnant women and disabled people. An increase in the use of alternative fuels by vehicles along the A96 corridor due to the electric corridor could also contribute to improved local air quality. In turn, this could have positive effects on those groups who are more vulnerable to the adverse health effects of traffic-related emissions.

6.5.11 Construction activities associated with this package may result in negative impacts for local communities during both construction and operational stages. Construction may adversely impact on groups who are more vulnerable to noise, vibration, and air quality such as children, older people, disabled people, and pregnant women. The level of direct impact would be dependent on the types of communities affected. More detailed assessment would be required to understand the extent of these impacts and the appropriate mitigation to reduce any negative effects and enhance benefits for protected characteristic groups.

6.5.12 However, the extent to which groups with protected characteristics would benefit from the interventions would depend on the extent to which all listed interventions can be adopted, as it is noted that this would depend on local circumstances within each key community. In addition, the extent of benefit would depend on the location and routeing of active and sustainable travel networks and facilities, their proximity to local services and the ability for people to access the network.

6.5.13 The package focuses on six key settlements that have a small population in the context of the wider corridor. Though some interventions, such as rail improvements, would be delivered corridor-wide and benefit users on a wider scale, the impacts would predominantly be felt locally. This limits the potential benefits on equality due to the relatively small number of people in relation to the wider A96 corridor it is anticipated to impact directly upon.

6.5.14 Overall, this package is expected to have a **minor positive** impact on addressing this criterion in both 'With Policy' and 'Without Policy' scenarios.

6.6 Package 3 – Potential Impacts

6.6.1 This package is focused primarily on delivering transport network improvements to rural sections along the A96 corridor by providing enhancements which would aim to encourage a shift to sustainable modes, increase active travel and public transport options and improve road safety.

6.6.2 The location of the settlements concerned in relation to the wider A96 Corridor Review transport appraisal study area is illustrated in Figure 6-4. Whilst this package is primarily targeted at rural sections, it also includes corridor-wide interventions which are anticipated to result in benefits to other areas across the corridor.

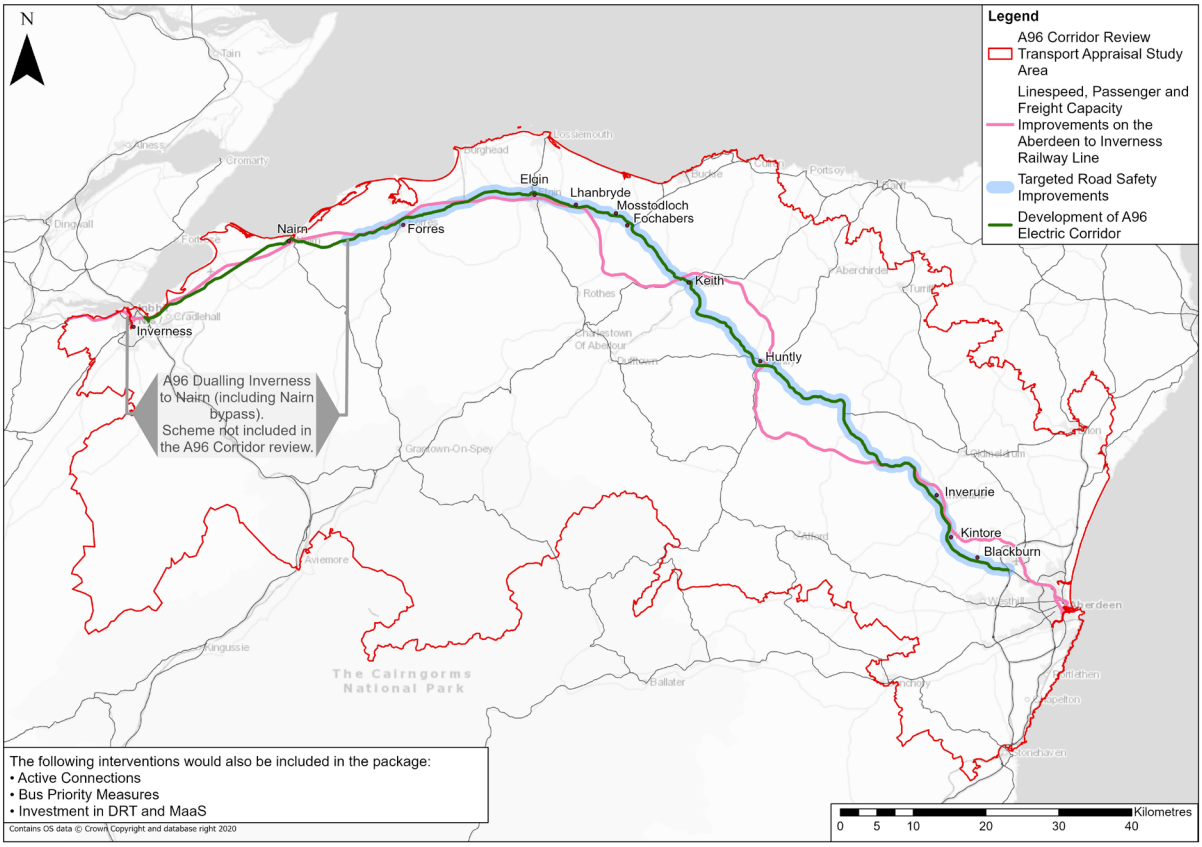

Figure 6-4: Package 3 Extents

6.6.3 Modelling undertaken using NaPTAT suggests that this package would improve the access to key destinations in the study area such as employment and health and education sites, especially for groups who may otherwise be socially excluded by limited transport options including children, young people, women, disabled people and older people.

6.6.4 While most accessibility benefits are concentrated around settlements with rail stations and access to bus provision, journey time improvements are also anticipated in areas where bus priority measures could be introduced. These interventions would improve connections between settlements without rail stations and limited bus provision, such as Huntly, to those that do have a station or greater bus provision, thus increasing the connectivity and inclusion of public transport and reducing the overall journey time across the corridor.

6.6.5 NaPTAT modelling observed the largest journey time reductions to higher education sites of the destinations considered in the assessment and study area, whereby it is anticipated an additional 7,200 people aged 16 and over would be able to access the nearest site within approximately 60 minutes by public transport. This journey time accessibility benefit would impact the following groups of people 750 additional young people aged 16-24, 3,700 females, and 1,000 people across all age groups with a long-term health problem or disability whose day-to-day activities are limited. These journey time accessibility benefits would particularly be predicted in Inverurie and Kemnay. Further journey time reductions to the nearest higher education site would be observed in rural settlements within Aberdeenshire, such as in Insch (located approximately 12 miles to the north-west of Inverurie) and parts of Kintore with travel time being reduced by up to seven minutes.

6.6.6 The modelling also showed an improvement in access to hospital emergency departments across the study area, with it anticipated an additional 5,900 people aged 16 and over would be able to access the nearest site within approximately 45 minutes by public transport. Of these estimated journey time accessibility benefits, 1,300 people identified as aged 65 and over and 850 people across all age groups with a long-term health problem or disability whose day-to-day activities are limited.

6.6.7 Investment in DRT and MaaS in particular could provide benefits for the aforementioned groups due to more flexible public transport options, helping improve connectivity to key services in rural areas. There could also be a beneficial impact in terms of reduced barriers to travel for those with reduced mobility if improvements in public transport connectivity reduces the required walking distance to access services. However, MaaS could exclude certain groups without access to relevant technology, bank accounts or the appropriate level of support to apply for entitlement schemes, and as such, these groups would need to be considered in the design of the schemes to ensure that they benefit.

6.6.8 Interventions that improve active travel provision, such as improved surfaces and crossing points would allow for infrastructure to be designed to incorporate adapted cycles and, as such, address mobility issues experienced by commonly disadvantaged groups, such as women, disabled people and older people. Improved safety measures would also reduce road and personal safety concerns for active travel users, including children.

6.6.9 An uptake in active travel may additionally improve physical health and mental wellbeing outcomes and is also likely to lead to air quality improvements if the uptake is matched by a reduction in private vehicle use and traffic congestion. Air quality modelling forecasts show that as a result of reduced traffic flows due to modal shift, NOx emissions are predicted to decrease in 2030 and 2045 across the 'With Policy' and 'Without Policy' scenarios. 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, pregnant women and disabled people. An increase in the use of alternative fuels by vehicles along the A96 corridor due to the electric corridor could also improve local air quality. In turn, this could have positive effects on those groups who are more vulnerable to the adverse health effects of traffic-related emissions.

6.6.10 Construction activities associated with this package may result in negative impacts for local communities during both construction and operational stages. Construction may adversely impact on groups who are more vulnerable to noise, vibration, and air quality such as children, older people, disabled people, and pregnant women. The level of direct impact would be dependent on the types of communities affected. More detailed assessment would be required to understand the extent of these impacts and the appropriate mitigation to reduce any negative effects and enhance benefits for protected characteristic groups.

6.6.11 However, the extent to which groups with protected characteristics would benefit from the measures would depend on the extent to which all listed interventions can be adopted, as it is noted that this would depend on local circumstances and the uptake in rural areas. In addition, the extent of benefit would depend on the location and routeing of active travel networks and facilities, their proximity to local services and the ability for people in rural areas to access the network.

6.6.12 Overall, this package is expected to have a minor positive impact on addressing this criterion in both 'With Policy; and 'Without Policy' scenarios.

6.7 Package 4 – Potential Impacts

6.7.1 This package of interventions is targeted at longer distance journeys along the A96 corridor, with a focus on delivering transport network improvements aiming to encourage a shift to sustainable modes and improve road safety. The options considered under Package 4 are shown in Figure 6-5.

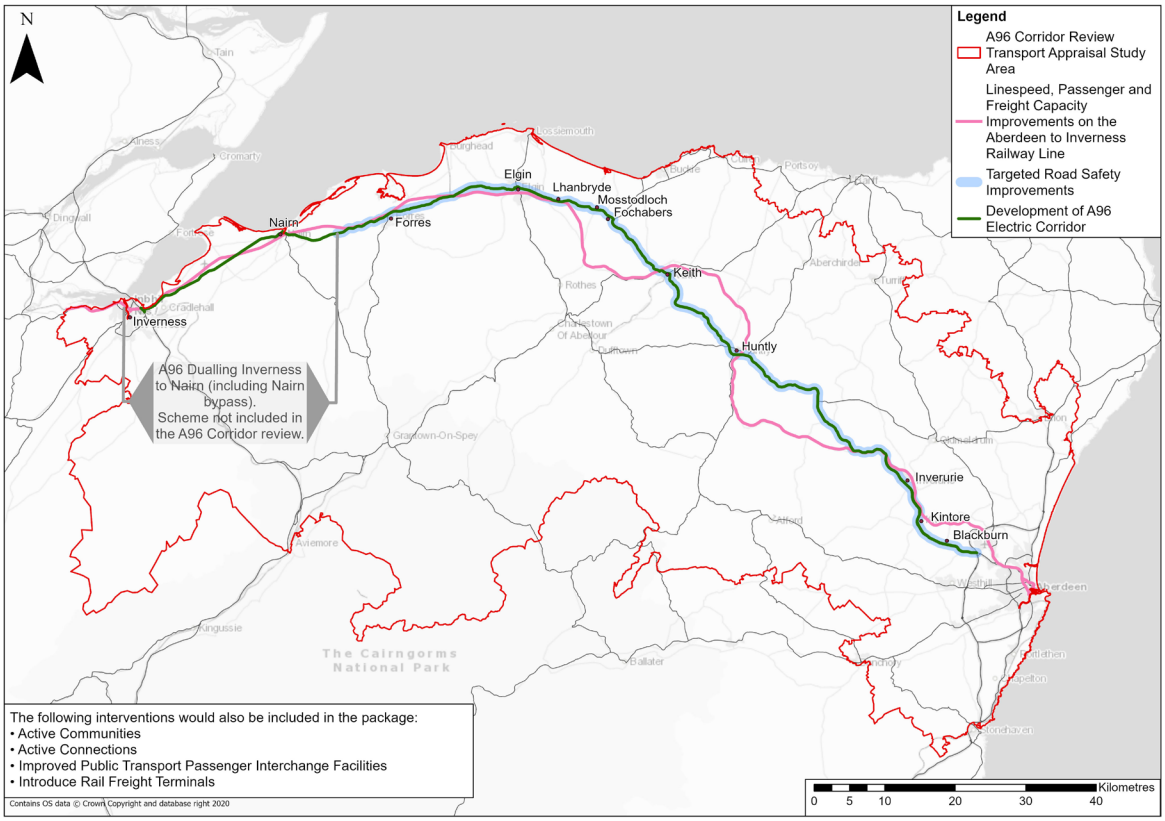

Figure 6-5: Package 4 Extents

6.7.2 Modelling undertaken using NaPTAT suggests that this package would improve the access to key destinations in the study area such as employment and health and education sites, especially for groups who may otherwise be socially excluded by limited transport options including children, young people, women, disabled people and older people. Public transport interventions such as step-free access at stations would improve transport choices for people who are currently excluded, and improved facilities may also benefit those with impaired vision or hearing and those who are neurodivergent.

6.7.3 While most accessibility benefits would be concentrated around settlements with rail stations, further benefits are provided by the improvements to public transport interchange resulting in better connecting public transport services.

6.7.4 NaPTAT modelling observed the largest journey time reductions to higher education sites of the destinations considered in the assessment and study area, whereby it is anticipated an additional 6,500 people aged 16 and over would be able to access the nearest site within approximately 60 minutes by public transport. This journey time accessibility benefit would impact the following groups of people: 700 young people aged 16-24, 3,300 females, 200 people from non-white ethnic groups and 850 people across all age groups with a long-term health problem or disability whose day-to-day activities are limited. These journey time accessibility benefits would be particularly observed in Inverurie and Kemnay. Further journey time reductions to the nearest higher education site would be observed in rural settlements within Aberdeenshire, including Insch and Huntly with a journey time reduction of eight and two minutes, respectively.

6.7.5 Improved journey time accessibility in travelling to major shopping centres using public transport would also be observed across the study area, which would benefit protected characteristic groups. The package would enable an additional 500 young people (aged 16 to 24), 2,600 females, 150 people from non-white ethnic groups, and 1,100 people across all age groups with a long-term health problem or disability (whose day-to-day activities are limited), in being able to access the nearest major shopping centres within approximately 60 minutes by public transport.

6.7.6 Through the reallocation of road space and improved surfaces and crossing points for active travel, the infrastructure installed could be designed to incorporate adapted cycles and, as such, address mobility issues experienced by commonly disadvantaged groups, such as women, disabled people and older people. Improved safety measures would also reduce road and personal safety concerns for active travel users, including children. However, the reallocation of road space could also have potential adverse effects on certain groups, such as disabled people who rely on parking spaces close to essential services.

6.7.7 An uptake in active travel may additionally improve physical health and mental wellbeing outcomes and is also likely to lead to air quality improvements if the uptake is matched by a reduction in private vehicle use and traffic congestion. Air quality modelling forecasts show that as a result of reduced traffic flows as a result of modal shift, NOx and PM2.5 emissions are predicted to decrease over the 60-year appraisal period across the 'With Policy' and 'Without Policy' scenarios. 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.

6.7.8 The provision and improvement of rail freight terminals provides a minor positive impact to individuals in terms of equalities. Encouraging modal shift from road freight to rail may contribute to a reduction in harmful transport emissions and improved local air quality. This would benefit public health, particularly for vulnerable groups such as children, disabled people, older people and pregnant women. However, new rail freight terminals could also lead to increased traffic within their vicinity and the impact on protected characteristic groups should be considered when siting.

6.7.9 Construction activities associated with this package may result in negative impacts for local communities during both construction and operational stages. Construction may adversely impact on groups who are more vulnerable to noise, vibration, and air quality such as children, older people, disabled people, and pregnant women. The level of direct impact would be dependent on the types of communities affected. More detailed assessment would be required to understand the extent of these impacts and the appropriate mitigation to reduce any negative effects and enhance benefits for protected characteristic groups.

6.7.10 The extent to which groups with protected characteristics would benefit from the measures in this package would depend on the extent to which all listed interventions can be adopted, as it is noted that this would depend on local circumstances within each key community. In addition, the extent of benefit would depend on the location and routeing of active travel networks and facilities, their proximity to local services and the ability for people to access the network. As this package does not remove through traffic from communities, the potential benefits resulting from active travel interventions may be more difficult to fully realise.

6.7.11 Overall, this package is expected to have a minor positive impact on this criterion in both 'With Policy' and 'Without Policy' scenarios.

6.8 Package 5 – Potential Impacts

6.8.1 This package is focused on delivering transport network improvements to settlements and rural sections across the A96 corridor, which would aim to encourage a shift to sustainable modes, increase opportunities for residents and businesses and improve road safety. The options considered under Package 5 are shown in Figure 6-6.

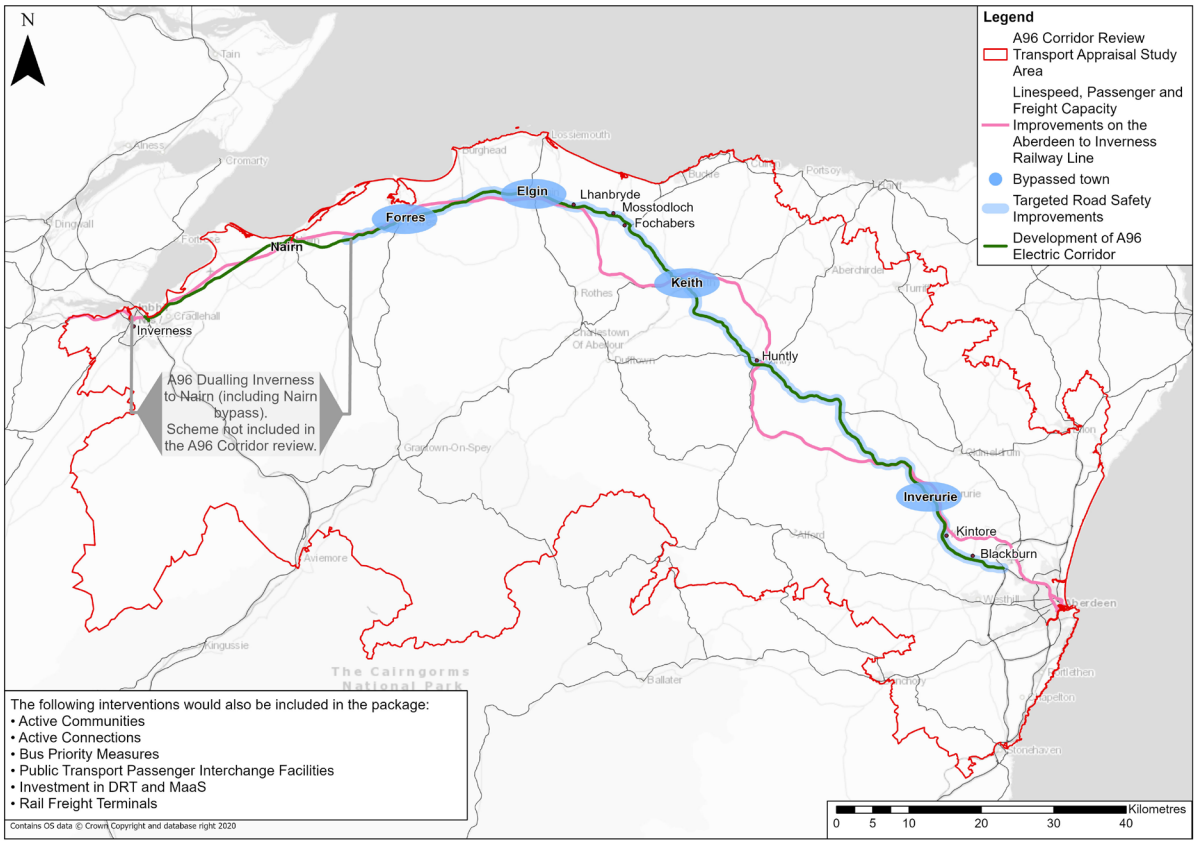

Figure 6-6: Package 5 Extents

6.8.2 Modelling undertaken using NaPTAT suggests that this package would improve the access to key destinations in the study area such as employment and health and education sites, especially for groups who may otherwise be socially excluded by limited transport options including children, young people, women, disabled people and older people. Public transport interventions such as step-free access at stations would improve transport choices for people who are currently excluded, and improved facilities may also benefit those with impaired vision or hearing and those who are neurodivergent.

6.8.3 While most benefits are concentrated around settlements with rail stations and access to bus provision, journey time improvements are also anticipated in areas where bus priority measures and public transport interchange improvements can be introduced. These interventions would improve connections between settlements without rail stations and limited bus provision, such as areas around Insch and Huntly, to those that do have a station or greater bus provision, thereby increasing the connectivity and inclusion of public transport and reducing the overall journey time across the corridor.

6.8.4 NaPTAT modelling observed that the largest journey time reductions to hospital emergency departments of the destinations considered in the assessment and study area, whereby it is anticipated an additional 14,900 people aged 16 and over would be able to access the nearest site within approximately 30 minutes by public transport. This journey time accessibility improvement would also benefit groups of people who may be more reliant on public transport to access health services, including 4,000 people aged 65 and over as well as 3,400 people across all age groups with a long-term health problem or disability whose day-to-day activities are limited.

6.8.5 Improved journey time accessibility in travelling to higher education sites using public transport would also be observed across the study area and would be anticipated to generate benefits for a wide range of protected characteristic groups. The package would enable an additional 9,700 people aged 16 and over to access the nearest higher education site within approximately 60 minutes by public transport across the study area. This would impact the following groups of people: 1,100 young people aged 16-24, 4,900 females, 250 from non-white ethnic groups, and 1,300 people across all age groups with a long-term health problem or disability whose day-to-day activities are limited.

6.8.6 While air quality modelling forecasts that this package would result in adverse air quality emissions over the 60-year appraisal period, there is potential for likely improvements in air quality in bypassed towns through a reduction of through traffic and an uptake of active travel. Traffic modelling forecasts predict that traffic would divert away from the bypassed towns of Forres, Elgin, Keith and Inverurie, potentially creating a range of benefits for groups with protected characteristics. Traffic reduction could result in improved local air quality within the towns which would be of particular benefit to those groups who are more vulnerable to the adverse health effects of traffic-related emissions such as older people, disabled people, children and pregnant women. Reduced through traffic could also help address local severance issues, reduce road safety concerns and improve the active travel environment.

6.8.7 In particular, a reduction of through traffic and the inclusion of active travel infrastructure could result in an increase in active travel. For example, in Elgin, walking to work levels comprise approximately 18% of all trips[xxxvii]. This package could provide an opportunity to build on this propensity to walk to work by decreasing traffic through Elgin and reducing road safety concerns for those groups who are less likely to travel by car. This may improve physical and mental health wellbeing outcomes and is also likely to enhance the aforementioned air quality improvements if the increased active travel usage is a result of mode shift from private vehicle use.

6.8.8 An increase in the use of alternative fuels by vehicles along the A96 corridor due to the electric corridor could also improve local air quality. In turn, this could have positive effects on those groups who are more vulnerable to the adverse health effects of traffic-related emissions.

6.8.9 Investment in DRT and MaaS in particular, could provide benefits for protected characteristic groups due to more flexible public transport options helping improve connectivity to key services, including children, young people, women, disabled people and older people. There could also be a beneficial impact in terms of reduced barriers to travel for those with reduced mobility if improvements in public transport connectivity reduces walking distance in order to use a service. However, MaaS could exclude certain groups without access to relevant technology, bank accounts or the appropriate level of support to apply for entitlement schemes, and as such, these groups would need to be considered in the design of the schemes to ensure that they benefit.

6.8.10 Through the reallocation of road space and improved surfaces and crossing points for active travel, the infrastructure installed could be designed to incorporate adapted cycles and, as such, address mobility issues experienced by commonly disadvantaged groups, such as women, disabled people and older people. Improved safety measures would also reduce road and personal safety concerns for active travel users, including children. However, the reallocation of road space could also have potential adverse effects on certain groups, such as disabled people who rely on parking spaces close to essential services.

6.8.11 This package could also result in benefits for certain groups who rely on private vehicle use to access key services due to mobility reasons such as disabled people and older people, or those who make complex journeys involving 'trip chaining' such as women and carers. For example, these groups could experience an improvement in journey times and more reliable journey times, both locally and when travelling to key services such as employment, education, healthcare and shopping in the bypassed towns and the surrounding area.

6.8.12 The provision and improvement of rail freight terminals provides a minor positive impact to individuals in terms of equalities. Encouraging a modal shift from road freight to rail may contribute to a reduction in harmful transport emissions and improved local air quality. This would benefit public health, particularly for vulnerable groups such as children, disabled people, older people and pregnant women. However, new rail freight terminals could also lead to increased traffic within their vicinity and the impact on protected characteristic groups should be considered when siting.

6.8.13 Construction activities associated with the bypass elements of this package may result in negative impacts for local communities during both construction and operational stages. The construction of bypasses may adversely impact on groups who are more vulnerable to noise, vibration, and air quality such as children, older people, disabled people, and pregnant women. Furthermore, during operation, the new bypasses could create potential new severance, noise, air quality and traffic impacts for dwellings along the new alignment. However, the level of direct impact would be dependent on the route alignment selected for the bypass and the types of communities affected. More detailed assessment would be required to understand the extent of these impacts and the appropriate mitigation to reduce any negative effects and enhance benefits for protected characteristic groups.

6.8.14 In addition, the extent of benefit arising from the active and sustainable travel aspects of this package would depend on the location and routeing of travel networks and facilities, their proximity to local services and the ability for people to access the network.

6.8.15 Overall, this package is expected to have a **moderate positive** impact under both the 'With Policy' and 'Without Policy' scenarios on addressing this criterion.

6.9 Refined Package – Potential Impacts

6.9.1 The Refined Package is focused on primarily delivering transport network improvements to both settlements and rural sections throughout the A96 corridor, by providing enhancements which would aim to encourage a shift to sustainable modes, increasing opportunities for residents and businesses and improving road safety.

6.9.2 The options considered under the Refined Package are shown in Figure 6-7.

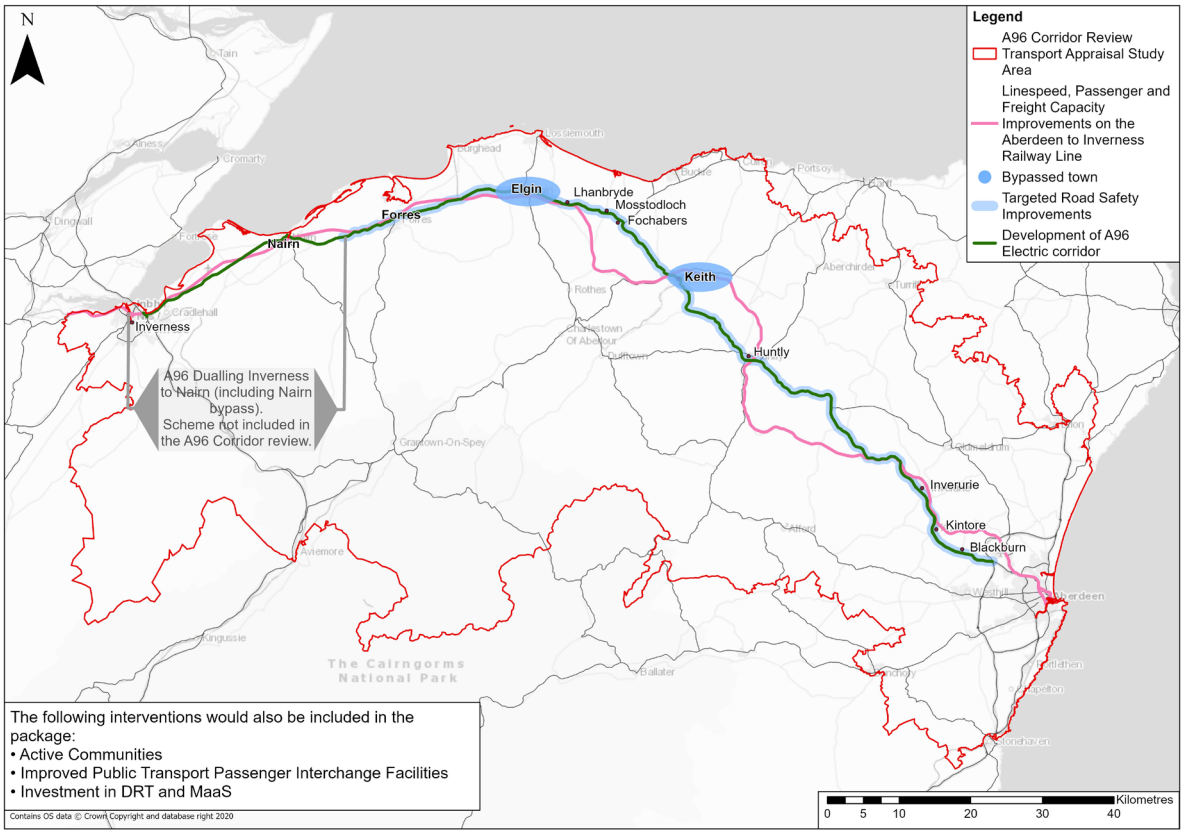

Figure 6-7: Refined Package Extents

6.9.3 Modelling undertaken using NaPTAT suggests that this package would improve the access to key destinations in the study area such as employment and health and education sites, especially for groups who may otherwise be socially excluded by limited transport options including children, young people, women, disabled people and older people. Public transport interventions such as step-free access at stations would improve transport choices for people who are currently excluded, and improved facilities may also benefit those with impaired vision or hearing and those who are neurodivergent.

6.9.4 NaPTAT modelling observed that the largest change in population accessibility is travel to hospital emergency departments, whereby an additional 8,100 people aged 16 and over would be able to access the nearest site within approximately 30 minutes by public transport. This accessibility benefit would be observed for groups who may be more reliant on public transport for accessing such health services, including 2,100 people aged 65 and over, and 1,900 people across all age groups with long-term health problems or disability, whose day-to-day activities are limited.

6.9.5 Improved journey time accessibility would also be shown in travelling to higher education sites across the study area using public transport and would be anticipated to generate benefits for a wide range of protected characteristic groups. The package would enable an additional 4,500 people aged 16 and over to access the nearest higher education site within approximately 60 minutes by public transport. This would impact the following groups: 550 young people aged 16-24, 2,300 females, 100 people from non-white ethnic groups, and 800 people across all age groups with long-term health problems or disability whose day-to-day activities are limited.

6.9.6 In terms of public transport, the majority of benefits are achieved from the inclusion of rail improvements. The package would in particular reduce the journey times to the major cities of Inverness and Aberdeen, as well as Elgin, with benefits experienced in settlements with access to rail stations. For example, over 8,700 additional people would be able to access Aberdeen from Elgin within two hours.

6.9.7 Investment in DRT and MaaS in particular could provide benefits for protected characteristic groups due to more flexible public transport options helping improve connectivity to key services, including children, young people, women, disabled people and older people. There could also be a beneficial impact in terms of reduced barriers to travel for those with reduced mobility if improvements in public transport connectivity reduces walking distance in order to use a service. However, MaaS could exclude certain groups without access to relevant technology, bank accounts or the appropriate level of support to apply for entitlement schemes, and as such, these groups would need to be considered in the design of the schemes to ensure that they benefit.

6.9.8 Through the reallocation of road space and improved surfaces and crossing points for active travel, the infrastructure installed could be designed to incorporate adapted cycles and, as such, address mobility issues experienced by commonly disadvantaged groups, such as women, disabled people and older people. Improved safety measures would also reduce road and personal safety concerns for active travel users, including children. However, the reallocation of road space could also have potential adverse effects on certain groups, such as disabled people who rely on parking spaces close to essential services.

6.9.9 Traffic modelling forecasts predict that traffic would divert away from the bypassed towns of Elgin and Keith as a result of the proposed scheme in both the 'With Policy' and 'Without Policy' scenarios. Therefore, bypassed towns may potentially create a range of benefits for groups with protected characteristics. A reduction in traffic could result in improved local air quality within these towns which would be a particular benefit to those groups who are more vulnerable to the adverse health effects of traffic-related emissions such as older people, disabled people, children and pregnant women. Reduced through traffic could also help address local severance issues, reduce road safety concerns and improve the active travel environment.

6.9.10 In particular, a reduction of through traffic and the inclusion of Active Communities could result in an increase in active travel. For example, in Elgin, walking to work levels comprise approximately 18% of all trips [xxxviii]. This package could provide an opportunity to build on this propensity to walk to work by decreasing traffic through Elgin and reducing road safety concerns for those groups who are less likely to travel by car. This may improve physical and mental health wellbeing outcomes and is also likely to enhance the aforementioned air quality improvements if the increased active travel usage is a result of modal shift from private vehicle use.

6.9.11 An increase in the use of alternative fuels by vehicles along the A96 corridor due to the electric corridor could also improve local air quality. Air quality modelling forecasts show that as a result of increasing low emission kilometres travelled along the network, NOx emissions are predicted to decrease between opening year, 2030, and 2045 for the 'With Policy' scenario. In turn, this could have positive short-term effects on those groups who are more vulnerable to the adverse health effects of traffic-related emissions. However, the attraction of traffic to the network as a result of the wider interventions is predicted to increase total emissions across the appraisal period and could therefore negate this impact.

6.9.12 There could also be benefits for certain groups who rely on private vehicle use to access key services due to mobility reasons such as disabled people and older people, or those who make complex journeys involving 'trip chaining' such as women and carers. For example, these groups could experience an improvement in journey times and more reliable journey times, both locally and when travelling to key services such as employment, education, healthcare and shopping in the bypassed towns and the surrounding area.

6.9.13 The construction activities associated with bypassing Elgin and Keith may result in negative impacts for these communities during both construction and operational stages. The construction of bypasses may adversely impact local groups who are more vulnerable to noise, vibration, and air quality such as children, older people, disabled people, and pregnant women. Furthermore, during operation, the new bypasses could create potential new severance, noise, air quality and traffic impacts for dwellings along the new alignment. However, the level of direct impact would be dependent on the route alignment selected for the bypass and the types of communities affected. More detailed assessment would be required to understand the extent of these impacts and the appropriate mitigation to reduce any negative effects and enhance benefits for protected characteristic groups.

6.9.14 The extent to which groups with protected characteristics would benefit from the measures in this package would depend on the extent to which all listed interventions can be adopted, as it is noted that this would depend on local circumstances within each key community. In addition, the extent of benefit would depend on the location and routeing of active travel networks and facilities, their proximity to local services and the ability for people to access the network.

6.9.15 This package is expected to have a moderate positive impact on this objective under both the 'With Policy' and 'Without Policy' scenarios.

7. Conclusions and Next Steps

7.1 Conclusions

7.1.1 This report sets out the approach undertaken in the assessment of equality impacts and demonstrates Transport Scotland's due regard to the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty throughout the A96 Corridor Review process. It identifies the potential equality impacts associated with Full Dualling and the A96 packages. The feedback received in relation to the SEqIA Scoping Report consultation has been reviewed and used to inform the EqIA Report.

7.1.2 This EqIA has outlined the key evidence and issues relating to protected characteristic groups. It has identified both positive and negative impacts relating to Full Dualling and the transport intervention packages assessed as part of the A96 Corridor Review. Overall, there is likely to be a minor or moderate positive impact on protected characteristic groups with Full Dualling and the transport intervention packages contributing to improving outcomes by increasing accessibility to a range of transport options and enabling improved access to key educational and other destinations along the corridor.

7.1.3 The EqIA process started at early stages of transport intervention development to ensure intervention options maximise positive outcomes and, where possible, include appropriate engagement with organisations representing protected characteristic groups to understand specific requirements.

7.1.4 There are a number of factors outside the scope of the A96 Corridor Review that could have an impact on protected characteristic groups with regards to the interventions. For example:

- Public transport fares and costs associated with bike ownership or hire could be a barrier for some protected groups who are disproportionally represented in low income households.
- Enhancing the benefits of community transport (CT) for socio-economically disadvantaged groups may require overcoming the technology barriers that some groups may face.
- There is a range of diverse needs which should be considered to ensure safety and accessibility across different protected characteristic groups with regards to walking and cycling infrastructure and activities.

7.1.5 Furthermore, it is important to recognise local circumstances within each settlement or rural community impacted by the transport intervention options. Therefore, while this impact assessment provides a high-level assessment of impacts for Full Dualling and the six proposed transport packages, further detailed assessment would be required for Full Dualling or any of the transport interventions that are taken forward. This should include engagement and consultation with those within protected characteristic groups to enhance positive impacts and reduce negative impacts.

7.1.6 More detailed EqIA work should also include appropriate mitigation measures to reduce negative health impacts associated with construction specifically considering the impacts on disabled people, pregnant women, children and older people.

7.2 Next Steps

7.2.1 The feedback received in relation to the EqIA Report consultation will be reviewed and used to inform the finalised version of the EqIA Report.

7.2.2 The key EqIA milestones are as follows:

- Consultation on the public consultation version of the EqIA; and
- Finalisation of the EqIA Report following consultation.

Appendices

Appendix A. EqIA Study Area

Appendix B. Scoping Report Consultees

Consultee Organisation
Aberdeen City Council
Aberdeenshire Council
Age Scotland
Article 12 Scotland - Travelling and Gypsy Representation
Bureau of Ethnic Minorities in Scotland (BEMIS)
CEMVO - Strategic Partner of the Scottish Government Equality Unit
Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) Scotland
Citizens Advice Scotland
Community Transport Association
Cycling UK
Disability Agenda Scotland
Disability Equality Scotland
Equality and Human Rights Commission in Scotland (EHRC)
HITRANS
Improvement Service
Inclusion Scotland
Joseph Rowntree Foundation
Living Streets
Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS)
Moray Council
Nestrans
People First Scotland
Poverty and Inequality Commission
Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)
Scottish Accessible Transport Alliance
Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC)
Scottish Islands Federation
Scottish Refugee Council
Scottish Rural Action
Scottish Rural Network
Sustrans
The Highland Council
The Poverty Alliance

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