# Aberdeen rapid transit plan cost doubles to £323 million amid fierce local opposition



City officials in Aberdeen are grappling with a controversial £323 million proposal for a rapid transit bus system that critics claim is “dead in the water.” The latest developments reveal a stark increase from the initial estimate of £150 million, raising questions about the project's viability and its potential impact on the city’s economy. The council has been working on the project for over three years, with plans that echo the Belfast Glider system, which has seen a positive uptick in public transport usage since its launch in 2018. The proposed routes aim to connect key areas, including Blackdog to Westhill and Craibstone to Portlethen, with the hope of boosting local services.

However, the rapidly escalating costs and the ten-year timeline for project implementation have cast a shadow over its future. The increase in estimated expenditure has coincided with community resistance to certain traffic initiatives in the city centre. The implementation of bus gates on Guild Street, Market Street, and Bridge Street—designed to reduce congestion and facilitate the ART scheme—has been roundly opposed by business owners and residents alike. Planning officials insist these restrictions are crucial for securing £150 million in grants aimed at funding the ART initiative, yet they have faced persistent backlash, leading to a campaign raising funds to challenge these measures in court.

Tory group leader Richard Brooks has been vocal in his opposition, claiming that the council's leadership has sacrificed the interests of local businesses for what he describes as a “farcical” project. He articulated a sentiment echoed by many in the community: “Our city is in tatters under this SNP/Lib Dem anti-car directive... I have yet to find one person who believes the bus gates were ever a good idea.” Brooks argues that the bus gates have impoverished the high street, transforming it into a “ghost town,” and he urges a reassessment of the entire rapid transit plan.

The council's programme manager, Kirsty Chalmers, has countered that the proposed bus priority route could effectively reverse a 20-year decline in bus passenger numbers. She highlighted plans for 24-hour bus lanes intended to expedite journeys, which would involve constructing 30 miles of roadway and integrating 70 junctions. The ART initiative aligns with broader efforts in the region to enhance public transport accessibility and appeal, aiming to reduce the carbon footprint and stimulate economic activity.

In contrasting views, some proponents within the ruling coalition maintain that the rapid transit project is a necessary leap into modern public transport infrastructure. SNP transport vice-convener Miranda Radley argued that the success of the Belfast system provides a model for what could be achieved in Aberdeen, stating, “The Aberdeen Rapid Transit could bring our city centre and public transport network into the 21st century.”

Despite the divided opinions, clarity on the local authority's stance is expected soon as council leaders convene next week to formally discuss the ART plans.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/aberdeen-aberdeenshire/6773475/aberdeen-bus-gates-rapid-transit-plan/), [[2]](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/aberdeen-aberdeenshire/6773475/aberdeen-bus-gates-rapid-transit-plan/), [[4]](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/transport/6510675/aberdeen-rapid-transit-route/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/aberdeen-aberdeenshire/6773475/aberdeen-bus-gates-rapid-transit-plan/), [[5]](https://www.grampianonline.co.uk/news/nestrans-board-considering-next-steps-for-aberdeen-rapid-tra-309422/), [[6]](https://www.intelligenttransport.com/transport-news/145734/scottish-government-awards-200000-for-aberdeen-bus-infrastructure/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://news.stv.tv/north/aberdeen-rapid-transit-plans-tabled-for-significantly-enhanced-bus-travel-in-north-east), [[6]](https://www.intelligenttransport.com/transport-news/145734/scottish-government-awards-200000-for-aberdeen-bus-infrastructure/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/aberdeen-aberdeenshire/6773475/aberdeen-bus-gates-rapid-transit-plan/), [[2]](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/aberdeen-aberdeenshire/6773475/aberdeen-bus-gates-rapid-transit-plan/), [[5]](https://www.grampianonline.co.uk/news/nestrans-board-considering-next-steps-for-aberdeen-rapid-tra-309422/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/aberdeen-aberdeenshire/6773475/aberdeen-bus-gates-rapid-transit-plan/), [[3]](https://news.stv.tv/north/aberdeen-rapid-transit-plans-tabled-for-significantly-enhanced-bus-travel-in-north-east)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/aberdeen-aberdeenshire/6773475/aberdeen-bus-gates-rapid-transit-plan/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/aberdeen-aberdeenshire/6773475/aberdeen-bus-gates-rapid-transit-plan/> - The article discusses the Aberdeen Rapid Transit (ART) project, highlighting a significant cost increase from the initial £150 million estimate to £323 million. The project aims to introduce tram-style buses across the city, connecting areas like Blackdog to Westhill and Craibstone to Portlethen, similar to Belfast's Glider system. Despite the ambitious plans, concerns have been raised about the project's viability and its impact on local businesses, especially with the implementation of bus gates in the city centre intended to reduce traffic and support the ART scheme.
3. <https://news.stv.tv/north/aberdeen-rapid-transit-plans-tabled-for-significantly-enhanced-bus-travel-in-north-east> - Plans have been proposed for the Aberdeen Rapid Transit (ART) system, aiming to enhance bus travel in the north-east of Scotland. The initiative seeks to develop a high-quality public transport system with frequent and reliable services, dedicated bus lanes, and off-board fare collection to reduce queuing. The project is a collaboration between Nestrans, Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, and local operators, aiming to make buses more attractive, accessible, and easy to use, thereby reducing the region's carbon footprint.
4. <https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/transport/6510675/aberdeen-rapid-transit-route/> - The article outlines the approved routes for Aberdeen's Rapid Transit (ART) system, detailing two main corridors: one from Blackdog to Westhill and another from Craibstone to Portlethen, intersecting in the city centre. The routes aim to connect key destinations such as Aberdeen University, Foresterhill Health Campus, and Union Square. The project is compared to Belfast's Glider system, which has seen increased public transport use since its launch in 2018. The ART system is designed to provide an efficient and attractive alternative to car travel.
5. <https://www.grampianonline.co.uk/news/nestrans-board-considering-next-steps-for-aberdeen-rapid-tra-309422/> - The Nestrans Board is set to discuss advancing efforts to deliver a significant improvement in public transport for the north-east, focusing on the Aberdeen Rapid Transit (ART) system. Technical work has been ongoing to develop a detailed appraisal of options for ART, funded by Transport Scotland’s Bus Partnership Fund. The findings will be presented in a report to Nestrans’ Board, aiming to develop the business case for ART and identify the most effective delivery methods.
6. <https://www.intelligenttransport.com/transport-news/145734/scottish-government-awards-200000-for-aberdeen-bus-infrastructure/> - The Scottish government has awarded £200,000 to the North East Bus Alliance through the Bus Partnership Fund to improve bus infrastructure in Aberdeen. The funding will deliver bus priority infrastructure on Market Street, Guild Street, and Bridge Street in the city centre, aiming to reduce congestion and enhance punctuality for passengers. Bus lanes and gates are expected to be operational by the end of summer 2023, coinciding with improvements at South College Street, funded by the Scottish Government and Aberdeen City Council.
7. <https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/news/public-consultation-start-ellon-garthdee-transport-connections> - Aberdeen City Council is initiating a public consultation for potential options to improve transport connections from the Park and Ride in Ellon to the Garthdee Road corridor in Aberdeen. The consultation focuses on active travel and public transport connections, examining both northbound and southbound movements to identify beneficial interventions. The study, funded through the Scottish Government’s Bus Partnership Fund, aligns with ongoing efforts to develop the Aberdeen Rapid Transit (ART) system, aiming to enhance transport infrastructure in the region.