HITRANS Equalities Outcomes Report

Introduction

The Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership (HITRANS) is the statutory Regional Transport Partnership covering most of the Highlands and Islands (Highland Council; Moray Council; Orkney Islands Council; Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and parts of Argyll and Bute). HITRANS works in partnership with these five partner Councils, the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland, and other stakeholders to improve transport services and infrastructure in the north of Scotland and on routes to the Highlands and Islands.

This report defines a set of Equalities Outcomes which we consider will enable us to better perform the general equality duty. The report sets out a range of equalities issues facing the HITRANS region, descriptions of the outcomes set, and actions required to meet those outcomes.

Evidence Gathering

Various sources of information have been analysed to inform the setting of HITRANS Equalities Outcomes. A survey launched by HITRANS in 2021 has been used as the basis for some of these learnings, in addition to other reports and statistics including the HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) 2008-2022 & Refresh 2018, HITRANS Annual Business Plan, RTS Monitoring Report, National Transport Strategy 2 (NTS2), the Transport and Travel Survey 2020, HIE reports (including the recently published My Life in the Highlands and Islands) and research from a variety of HITRANS project work. In addition, the announcement in February 2022 by the Scottish Transport Minister to investigate women's safety on public transport has led to new research on this topic, with the findings reflected in this report.

Regional Profile

The **2018 HITRANS RTS Update** identified people hardest hit by access deprivation as young people, the elderly, those with a disability, and those living in communities with limited public transport or community transport provision. The result of this access deprivation can be social isolation and loneliness, with a consequent negative impact on health and wellbeing.

The region also suffers from an ageing population with **24% aged over 65** compared to 20% in Scotland. Some areas have a particularly high proportion of older populations, with Argyll & Bute Council at 26% aged 65+ and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar at 27% aged 65+ (shown in Table 1 below).

Using the most recent population figures from mid-2021, **HITRANS region population is 451,680** and grew by 3,427 (0.8%) since the last Equalities update using mid-2019 figures. However, the majority of this has been driven by an increase in the 65+ age category and a decrease in the under 15 category – matching the forecasted trends of an increasingly older demographic across remote and rural areas.

Table 1: Age Structure in the HITRANS Region

	Total	Aged 0-15		Aged 16-64		Aged 65+	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Highland	238,060	38,130	16%	144,706	61%	55,224	23%
Moray	96,410	15,941	17%	58,935	61%	21,534	22%
A&B*	68,030	9,652	14%	40,405	59%	17,973	26%
CnES	26,640	4,060	15%	15,508	58%	7,072	27%
Orkney	22,540	3,553	16%	13,447	60%	5,540	25%
HITRANS	**451,680**	**71,336**	**16%**	**273,001**	**60%**	**107,343**	**24%**
Scotland	*5,479,900*	*911,522*	*17%*	*3,494,517*	*64%*	*1,073,861*	*20%*

Source: National Records of Scotland Mid-2021 Small Area Population Estimates

*Excluding Helensburgh and Lomond

Covid-19 also created significant implications for transport – not only vehicle and capacity changes, but also attitudinal change towards using public transport with the fear of infection arising in the context of shared mobility modes. This will likely result in increased private car use in areas already suffering from high rural fuel costs and further isolate those without access to a car. In addition, bus services in rural and islands communities are experiencing a sharp decline in use, heightened by the impacts of Covid-19. Bus usage in the HITRANS area has fallen significantly in recent years compared to Scotland (20% vs. 8%). Similarly, rail passenger journeys have reduced in the HITRANS area compared to Scotland.

Large parts of the HITRANS region also experience a **lack of affordable transport** options to reach essential services (transport poverty). In the Highlands & Islands, 58% of data zones in the region are classed as being high risk for transport poverty compared to Scotland's average of 38%. In addition, on a typical weekday, the majority of the HITRANS region cannot access a key employment centre within 2 hours travel time on public transport.

'My Life in the Highlands and Islands' research conducted by HIE found that 87% of respondents own at least one car, rising to 92% in accessible or remote rural areas. 44% own two or more cars, rising to 56% in accessible rural and 51% in remote rural areas. For islanders, 68% rely on ferry services and 36% rely on air services, with feelings that increased numbers of tourists have made it more difficult for local people to access these services. Findings in relation to electric vehicles show that 7% have purchased or leased an EV, and 6% are planning to do so in the next 2-3 years. Access to EVs is disproportionate, with the highest earning households being more likely to have purchased/leased an EV and the key barrier to EV ownership being that it is too expensive. Out of the top 10 priorities for communities to thrive in the future, transport was noted twice – improve transport connections with other parts of Scotland, and improved transport connections within the local area.

HITRANS Transport Equality Survey

HITRANS **Transport Equality Survey 2021** was launched to gather views on transport across the Highlands and Islands, identify key issues that could help to develop equalities outcomes, and support wider decision making on policies and processes.

Steps were taken to involve protected characteristics by sharing the survey to Access Panels in the HITRANS area, in addition to promoting widely using online platforms. Participants were also offered the option to complete the survey by paper or phone if preferable. As with any online public survey, results were overrepresented by some demographics and underrepresented by others. It's estimated that around one fifth of Scotland's population define themselves as disabled – our survey captured 13% of respondents who consider themselves to have a disability. 72% of survey respondents were

aged 16-64 compared to 60% of the population, and 60% of our respondents were female compared to 51% of Scotland's population.

Key findings from the survey included:
- Main modes of transport pre-Covid-19 and during Covid were almost identical, except for a small reduction in bus, train, and ferry usage (expected due to Covid-19 travel restrictions and service changes at the time)
- Respondents between the ages of under 18-54 were disproportionately dissatisfied with public transport in their area (respondents who selected a rating of 1 or 2 stars out of 5 for satisfaction with public transport in their area)
- Respondents with a disability were disproportionately dissatisfied with public transportation
- Respondents who identified as female or non-binary were disproportionately dissatisfied with public transportation
- Respondents with mixed race ethnicities or who identified as "other" ethnicities were disproportionately dissatisfied with public transportation

Transport Usage

Pre-Covid-19, the most popular modes of travel were car/van as driver followed by walking, bicycle, and car/van as passenger. This order closely matches the 2019 Scottish Household Survey which ranked the order as car/van as driver, walking, car/van as passenger and bus. The main differences are that bicycle scored higher in our survey as a more popular mode of transport, and bus scored lower than the Scotland survey. There's a distinct lack of car club usage or car sharing, even pre-Covid-19 restrictions on shared transport.
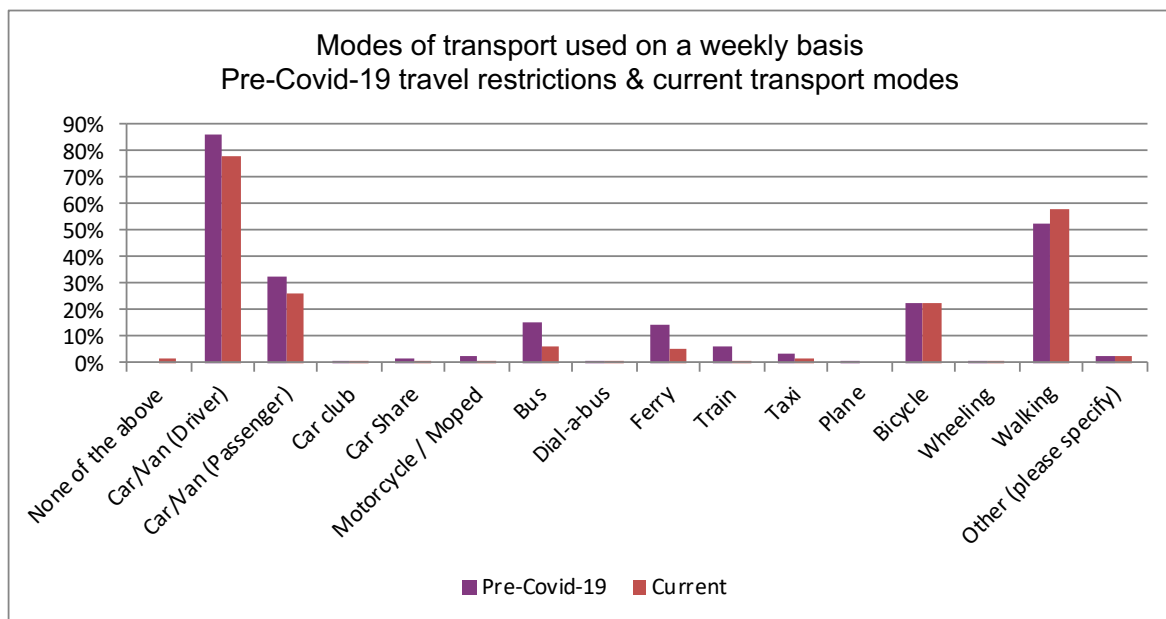
Transport Influences

The most popular reason for selecting certain modes of transport was ease and convenience (77%), with price placing low in comparison (16%). It's encouraging to see a total of 54% prioritising health and fitness reasons, and accessibility plays a large role in many respondent choices of transport modes (26%). This question was aimed at travel prior to Covid-19 and travelling with others only amounted to 9% of responses why someone would choose a particular transport mode. This highlights the need for marketing of car sharing services – something that is being expanded through our work on Mobility

as a Service (GO-HI) and the eHUBS project. The majority of respondents who selected 'other' (20%) listed a lack of alternative as their reason – either because of their location (e.g. island travel requiring a ferry), or because there is no viable public transport nearby.
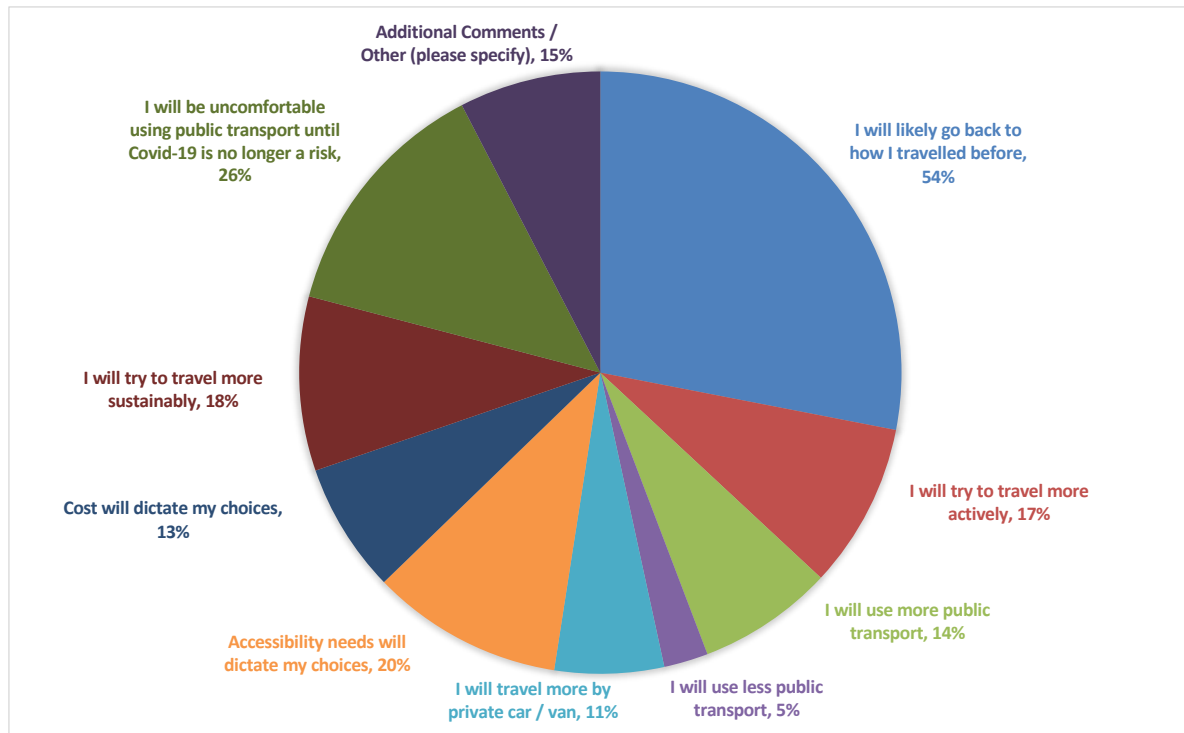
NB: respondents were invited to select all options that applied so responses do not total 100%.

General Feedback

Where respondents included comments, several noted the benefits of walking and wishing to maintain this level of active travel going forward. Several respondents noted they had an electric car for travel or would consider one in the future.

Additional Findings

Additional key statistics captured from the survey include:

- 94% of respondents have access to at least one car/van as either a driver or passenger, aligning with the 2019 Scottish Household Survey of 96% in accessible rural areas having access to one or more cars, suggesting that further promotion of liftsharing or car club platforms could encourage sustainable travel – however, 12% of respondents who consider themselves to have a disability have no access to a car/van

- The weighted average for satisfaction of public transport in the area was 2.65 out of 5 stars, with the majority (38%) selecting a 1- or 2-star rating

- The top 5 reasons for not using public transport are listed below, with many comments stating a lack of joined up services as reason not to travel by public transport:
    1. Public transportation too infrequent (57% of respondents)
    2. Public transportation doesn't run early or late enough (34% of respondents)
    3. Journeys not direct / too many changes (27% of respondents)
    4. Journeys take too long (26% of respondents)

5. No public transport available near me (19% of respondents)

- 36% of respondents are not aware of any of the below transport schemes, with the percentage aware listed beside each scheme:
  - Thistle Assistance Card (6% of respondents aware of the scheme)
  - National Entitlement Card (36% aware)
  - Young Scot National Entitlement Card (46% aware)
  - HItravel Liftshare (3% aware)

- Of the respondents who consider themselves to have a disability:
  - Prior to Covid-19, 27% used the bus on a weekly basis compared to 15% of all survey respondents
  - Accessibility reasons dictate travel choices for 56% of respondents
  - 45% selected 1 or 2 stars for satisfaction of public transport out of a 5-star rating, compared to 38% of all respondents
  - For reasons not to use public transport, results are comparable to those reported above for all adults, with more emphasis on lack of disabled accessible transport (30% of respondents selecting this option) and difficulty accessing nearest bus stop/train station (22% of respondents)
  - Only 5% of respondents who consider themselves to have a disability are aware of the Thistle Assistance Card

Scotland Transport Statistics

The **2022 Scottish Transport Statistics** were impacted by Covid-19 and subsequent travel restrictions, and therefore comparison with the previous year should be treated with caution. Changes over a 5-year period are more reliable, showing a 40% decrease in bus passengers and 50% decrease in ScotRail passengers.

Results from the **2020 Scottish Household Survey** on Transport and Travel in Scotland were also taken during Covid restrictions, therefore statistics aren't comparable with earlier years but provide a snapshot of people's transport views, experiences, and habits during the Covid-19 pandemic. Most people who responded worked from home, and for those who did not work from home, 74% usually travelled to work by car or van. Wealthier people were more likely to drive and less likely to walk or take the bus than those on lower incomes (see figure below).
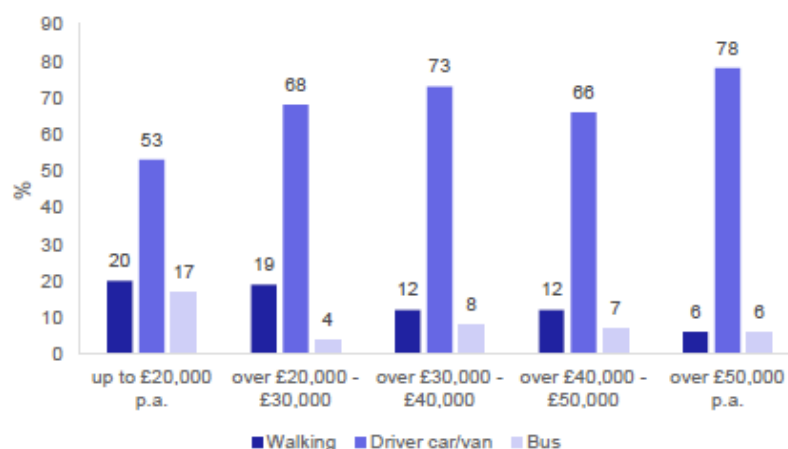
Transport mode to work by household income (2020)

People in rural areas are more likely to have driving licences compared to urban areas (87% vs. 70% respectively). Also, driving licence possession alters by ethnic group, gender, and household income. 80% of men aged over 17 hold driving licences compared to 72% of women, however the gap has narrowed significantly since 1999. White other British (81%) and White Scottish (72%) are more likely to hold a driving licence than other ethnic groups (54%) and driving licence possession increases with increased net annual household income. 57% of adults in households with less than £10,000 net annual income will have a driving licence compared to 91% in households with incomes of over £50,000. These statistics are of relevance to the HITRANS region with its geography and public transport service availability resulting in high car dependency.

As most of the findings from the 2020 survey are not true to a typical year (such as travel by public transport), most figures below are taken from the 2019 Scottish Household Survey.

The 2019 survey reported that journeys to work between men and women were almost equal (65% for men and 62% for women), with women being more likely to walk to work than men, and men more likely to cycle to work.

Train use increases in higher income households – 43% of those interviewed with a household income of over £50,000 had used the train in the last month compared to 21-23% of those with up to £20,000 household income. Results are similar for bike access that increases with household income and size (62% had access to bikes with incomes over £50,000 compared to 18% with incomes up to £15,000).

In terms of bus use in Scotland, 39% of 2019 survey respondents had used a bus in the previous month, and 8% had used a bus every day or almost every day. These are the lowest figures since comparable records began in 2002. Women tend to use buses more frequently than men, and buses are used more frequently in urban areas compared to small remote towns (54% vs. 19% respectively).

Respondents were asked what their use had been of local bus and train services in the past month, with the table below comparing results from all adults and from those permanently sick or disabled. Results highlight that permanently sick or disabled adults are more likely to travel by bus (19% travelling 2 or 3 times per week compared to 9% of all adults). Also, permanently sick or disabled adults are less likely to travel by train compared to all adults. In 2021, Transport Scotland released an initial publication that summarised findings relating to disability and transport from the Scottish Household Survey, with findings showing that disabled adults tend to travel more frequently during the day than at peak times, and disabled adults are far more likely to use the bus rather than travel by car or by train.

	Every day, or almost every day		2 or 3 times per week		About once a week		About once a fortnight, or about once a month		Not used in past month	
	Bus	Train	Bus	Train	Bus	Train	Bus	Train	Bus	Train
All adults	8%	2%	9%	3%	7%	4%	14%	21%	62%	70%
Permanently sick or disabled	6%	0%	19%	1%	8%	1%	11%	11%	56%	87%

The accessibility of bus services in Scotland was analysed in 2019 through the **Scottish Access to Bus Indicator** (SABI) that assigned a score for each data zone to provide an objective measure of public transport accessibility by bus in Scotland. The results in the tables below highlight the inequalities across Scotland: 45% of all data zones in large urban areas are in the quintile with the highest access to bus, compared to 0% in remote rural areas. In addition, 84% of remote rural areas are in the lowest access quintile. Results are similar for weekends and highlight the disparities across Scotland. These

are important statistics for the HITRANS region with most of the area being classified as remote rural by the Scottish Government's Urban Rural 6-fold Classification.

SABI table 3: Weekday scores (quintiles)

	Least accessible	2	3	4	Most accessible
Large urban areas	4.8%	9.3%	16.7%	24.3%	45.0%
Other urban	10.8%	21.6%	26.8%	27.6%	13.2%
Small accessible towns	21.8%	35.0%	27.3%	13.1%	2.8%
Small remote towns	28.4%	41.6%	24.5%	5.5%	0.0%
Accessible rural	56.7%	30.4%	10.1%	2.7%	0.1%
Remote rural	84.1%	14.5%	1.2%	0.2%	0.0%

SABI table 4: Weekend scores (quintiles)

	Least accessible	2	3	4	Most accessible
Large urban areas	4.5%	8.3%	14.3%	25.3%	47.6%
Other urban	10.8%	22.0%	28.8%	27.4%	11.1%
Small accessible towns	23.2%	35.1%	29.2%	10.7%	1.8%
Small remote towns	31.5%	41.3%	21.8%	5.5%	0.0%
Accessible rural	54.9%	32.6%	9.6%	2.5%	0.5%
Remote rural	85.0%	13.4%	1.6%	0.0%	0.0%

highest row percentage

Bus accessibility in Scotland (SABI Indicator)

Through European project INCLUSION (funded through Horizon 2020), HITRANS conducted research on the awareness of the **Thistle Assistance Card** following a promotional campaign funded through the project and Paths for All Smarter Choices Smarter Places. The research was undertaken to address any improvements required in accessing public transport information.

A Scotpulse survey was commissioned, and results showed that there was little awareness of the Thistle Assistance Card in comparison to other similar services that benefit public transport users (e.g. the National Entitlement Card and the Young Scot National Entitlement card). To increase awareness of the Thistle Assistance Card and associated app, a television advert was run from November 2019 until the end of January 2020. This enhanced Thistle Assistance Card marketing was successful in driving traffic to the Thistle Assistance website (www.thistleassistance.com) and direct request for new cards and App downloads (over 10,000 and 250 respectively). Results noted above from the HITRANS Transport Equality Survey further emphasise the need to market this scheme with only 5% of respondents who consider themselves to have a disability aware of the Thistle Assistance Card, and 6% of all survey respondents aware of the scheme. On the back of this, The Thistle Assistance Card has had a revamp with HITRANS providing feedback along with other RTPs through its development.

The Transport Scotland 2022 research into **Women's and girls' views** and experiences of personal safety when using public transport found that women take a number of precautions when using public transport. Women and girls use mainly bus and train to travel, and all felt safer travelling in the day rather than at night or in the dark. There were mixed views on the safety of different modes, with some feeling safer on buses (due to the accessibility of the driver and the potential to alight at regular intervals), and others felt safer on trains (due to their direct route and the presence of staff other than the driver). While there were fewer in the sample who regularly used ferries or domestic flights, these were seen as safe for the most part.

The risk of delays and cancellations, specifically with buses and trains, explicitly put some women off using public transport at night as the risk of waiting alone in the dark was considered too great. This is especially important for remote and rural areas where access to other services will be limited, and the time between bus or train services will be much greater. Women and girls travelled by taxi instead at night, creating an inequality where women and girls will spend more on transport due to safety

reasons. The reliability of services and availability of information is therefore critical in helping to address concerns within our region.

Recommendations include raising awareness of the technology that is currently available to assist women and girls and explore means of making this more accessible to all. For HITRANS, further promotion of GO-HI could help through its offering of booking and paying for multiple transport modes in one place, and tracking journeys in real time.

Monitoring Methods

HITRANS produces an Annual Business Plan which provides a yearly account of our work. In addition, a monitoring and evaluation framework has been developed. This is used on an ongoing basis to measure the contribution that our activities are making to achievement of the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) objectives.

The key aims of the monitoring and evaluation framework are:
- To determine the extent to which RTS objectives have been met, and if not met, why
- To provide evidence on overall performance and to assess the net additional value obtained from RTS actions
- To diagnose where under or over performance has taken place and to identify and assess the causes
- To provide a link between transport planning and wider community planning across the HITRANS area and to demonstrate the contribution of transport to the Community Planning Partnerships' own agendas

HITRANS conducted an RTS Monitoring Report in 2019 that used 35 transport indicators to provide information and data on progress against the six transport objectives from our RTS. HITRANS continues to update on performance against targets to the Partnership Board, with further enhancement of this process taking place annually.

Equality Outcomes

To ensure that equality issues are addressed, the following list has been prepared identifying outcomes acknowledged during the analysis of our functions and working environment, and subsequently how these outcomes will be achieved and measured.

Equality Outcome	Inequality	General Equality Duty	Activities	Link to Strategic Priority	Measuring Progress
Promote transport accessibility in the HITRANS area by supporting accessible and accurate information on public transport	People can have trouble accessing the transport network because of safety, comfort, availability, connectivity, information, and assistance Consideration of communication needs of different protected characteristics to ensure people have the information required to plan and undertake their journey	Eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not Eliminate discrimination in the planning and delivery of transport services	• Engage with stakeholder groups to understand information gaps • Conduct surveys to improve understanding of transport information needs • Further promote the Thistle Assistance Card and other travel accessibility schemes • Further improve real time passenger information • Ensure communications and language is accessible • Consider projects that deliver improvements to public transport information • Review HITRANS website for accessibility and begin the process of building a new website	NTS2: Reduce inequalities, help to deliver inclusive economic growth and promote greener, cleaner choices RTS: Improve the quality and accessibility (availability, affordability, information, and integration) of travel	Real time information software will inform accuracy of transport information and steps required to make changes. Action any requests if received on accessibility of information. Review success of project initiatives on public transport information improvements. Review success of Thistle Assistance Card marketing campaigns. Review HITRANS website and consider changes.

Gather evidence to provide better understanding of transport inequalities	Limited information available at a regional level on protected characteristics views and use of transport	Gather information and data to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not Take steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people	• Gather views from analysing relevant sources & reports available at a regional level • Conduct transport surveys and engagement activities to better understand views that represent the diversity of our people and communities and help to address any key issues • Use this information to implement support or changes that are within HITRANS remit • Further research & targeted measures on the protected characteristics shown to be disproportionately dissatisfied with public transport in the area from our survey (disability, age, gender, ethnicity)	NTS2: Reduce inequalities RTS: Reduce barriers to participating in employment, learning, social, leisure, health, and cultural activities through the region	The baseline survey was launched February 2021. These baseline figures will be monitored regularly through research and engagement, and activities will change as appropriate. Develop further surveys and participate in European-wide research projects.
Support the sustainability of regional transport networks	Protected characteristic groups are more likely to use public transport, but regional transport networks are at risk	Advance equality of opportunity in the planning and delivery of transport services	• Seek to ensure that communities with poor access to employment by public transport and low car ownership / high deprivation will be the subject of targeted measures to address this • Work with stakeholders to protect key transport links • Take steps to deliver a more flexible, demand-responsive transport network so that services can be accessed when	NTS2: Reduce inequalities, help to deliver inclusive economic growth, improve health and wellbeing, and get people where they need to get to	HITRANS has developed an accessibility tool to assist each member Council in monitoring the level of access to public transport across their area and provided training to Council employees on its use.

			required – developed through numerous DRT pilot projects • Further work on the CivTech technology solution to gather data on transport across the area, vehicle capacity and service gaps • Promote lift sharing and sustainable transport modes • Participate in projects with a focus on sustainable rural transport networks (e.g. SATE, RURALITIES). • Further advancement of our GO-HI Mobility as a Service platform	RTS: Reduce barriers to participating in employment, learning, social, leisure, health, and cultural activities through the region	The data gathered through HITRANS CivTech solution will aim to support the sustainability of regional transport networks. Pilot projects focusing on sustainable rural transport are regularly monitored and evaluated.
Improved access to public transport for those with mobility problems	People can have trouble accessing the transport network because of safety, comfort, availability, connectivity, information, and assistance	Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics Encourage people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where participation is disproportionately low	• HITRANS will seek to ensure that people who have difficulties in using conventional public transport due to disability will be the subject of targeted measures to address this • Expand on findings from the Transport Equality Survey on accessibility issues being a reason to not use public transport • Develop projects with accessibility in mind	NTS2: Reduce inequalities, ensuring fair access to services we need that are easy to use for all RTS: Improve safety of transport and travel, improve the quality and accessibility of travel	HITRANS officers work closely with health, Council and voluntary sector to improve integration of specialist transport services

| Perform equalities audits, assessment of project activities and a forum for consultation | Limited information available at a regional level on protected characteristics views and use of transport | Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not | • Equalities is included as part of HITRANS Annual Report
• Equalities items are included on agendas of all Advisors Meetings and Equalities impacts are considered within all Partnership meeting and reports
• Councils report back to HITRANS on transport equality issues raised in their Forums, facilitated through the Partnership Advisors Group | NTS2: Reduce inequalities and help make our communities great places to live

RTS: Improve the quality and accessibility of travel | It was agreed that a regional forum was likely to be ineffective due to the size of the area and that each Council should consider transport agencies through their individual forums and report back through the PAs any issues identified. |