

Item:  
**16**



## **Report to Partnership Meeting Meeting 24 November 2017**

### **RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY**

#### **West Highland Enhancements**

##### **Purpose of Report**

To inform Members on some work that HITRANS may wish to undertake on the West Highland Railway Line.

##### **Background**

The West Highland Lines covering Glasgow-Oban, Fort William, Mallaig provide lifeline services to regionally significant towns, islands via ferries and remote communities. Network Rail's Scotland Route Study examined forecast growth to 2043 and found no case for enhancing the infrastructure.

This year the route shared a £26m radio signalling upgrade with lines north of Inverness and in December 2018 the route will receive the Scenic Trains branding which will see enhanced catering and Tourism Ambassadors. New Serco Caledonian Sleeper vehicles will also appear in 2018.

HITRANS' Cycle Capacity Study, including on-train surveys carried out in the summer, is currently being finalised.

##### **Oban**

HITRANS' involvement in recent years has resulted in extending the summer Sunday operating period to match Calmac timetables, the commencement of the Arrochar commuter service and doubling of rail services to Oban.

ScotRail have asked HITRANS and Argyll and Bute Council to be involved in a study to identify impact since the students started to use rail to access Oban High School by establishing whether students have been using the passes during the holidays; how it has influenced how their family travel; and whether leavers use rail more than their peers in previous years.

HITRANS has also devoted some resource to the Oban Hub project and will be consulting with stakeholders in the New Year.

##### **Fort William/Mallaig**

The Fort William service has currently the lowest frequency on ScotRail with only 3 ScotRail services per day (supplemented Mon-Fri by the sleeper making local calls). The first arrival in the Central Belt is not until 1130, meaning less than 7 hours can be spent in Glasgow (less than 5 hours in Edinburgh) for community that is only 104 miles distant.

From May 19 the West Highland trains will be dedicated to the route, no longer being shared with Glasgow local services, so there will be an opportunity to look at the service pattern, providing an opportunity to see if timetable changes and additional services to Fort William/Mallaig can meet the needs of tourists and locals including travel for education and work. The new jobs created in Fort William by the revival of the smelter under the GFG Alliance will drive an increase in transport demand.

## **Proposal**

It is proposed that HITRANS:

1. Works with ScotRail and Argyll and Bute Council to identify the impact of scholars' travel.
2. Develops a brief for timetabling work/resource allocation on the route to improve services on Fort William/Mallaig including Sundays.

## **RISK REGISTER**

### RTS Delivery

Impact - Positive

### Policy

Impact - Positive

### Financial

Impact – Will require funding from HITRANS, ScotRail and potentially other partners

### Equality

Impact – Neutral

## **Recommendations**

1. Members and Advisors are asked to approve the report and its two proposals.

**Report by:** Frank Roach  
**Designation:** Partnership Manager, HITRANS

**Date:**

13 November 2017