



HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy

'Case for Change' Equalities Duties Report

On behalf of HITRANS Regional Transport Partnership



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1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

Background

- 1.1.1 HITRANS is the statutory Regional Transport Partnership (RTP) for the Highlands and Islands area of Scotland covering Eilean Siar (Western Isles), Orkney, Highland, Moray and most of the Argyll & Bute area¹. It has a range of functions including production of a Regional Transport Strategy (RTS), project development / delivery / funding and acting as a key agency in development planning, community planning and promoting economic development. The current HITRANS RTS was first published in 2008. In 2017, HITRANS prepared a refresh of the RTS, the HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy Update, covering a 20-year period. However, a changing policy environment meant that this document was never signed-off by Scottish Ministers, and thus the 2008 Strategy remains current. The RTS is now due for review and revision with work commencing on this process in March 2022.
- 1.1.2 Stantec UK Ltd, in partnership with Ecus Ltd and Eyland Skyn, has been commissioned by HITRANS to prepare the new RTS. The RTS will set out a new long-term vision for transport across the region for the next 20 years. It is intended the new RTS will set out a clear framework for how transport and mobility will be provided, developed and improved in the region to meet the aspirations for a sustainable and economically active area.
- 1.1.3 Working collaboratively with Stantec, HITRANS has produced a 'Case for Change' Report (the 'Case for Change') which seeks inputs and views from stakeholders on the type and level of change needed to the transport system in the region to inform the development of the Strategy. This builds upon and takes account of comments and information received from previous stakeholder and public consultations undertaken by HITRANS.
- 1.1.4 This Equalities Duties Report has been prepared to accompany the 'Case for Change' Report, which will underpin the development of the new RTS for the HITRANS Regional Transport Partnership. Separate reports presenting an Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and an Islands Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA) of the 'Case for Change' have also been prepared.

The Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) Process

Overview

- 1.1.5 Equalities issues are becoming increasingly prevalent in transport planning. Policy needs to recognise the different ways people interface with and experience the transport network and services. This trend towards a greater focus on inclusion is well articulated by the Scottish Government's National Transport Strategy 2 (NTS2) (2020), which targets 'reducing inequalities' as one of the four central priorities which now underpin national transport policy.
- 1.1.6 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) process is therefore being undertaken through the Strategy's development to apply relevant equalities duties and identify likely equalities impacts arising from RTS preparation. The EqIA is being undertaken in tandem with the development of the emerging RTS to allow assessment findings to influence the content of the RTS on an iterative basis.
- 1.1.7 Relevant equalities duties are being used as tools to inform and embed key equalities issues within the emerging RTS. Acting together with the SEA and ICIA being carried out for the

¹ Helensburgh and Lomond fall within the remit of Strathclyde Partnership for Transport

emerging RTS, this integrated approach allows the environmental, social and economic implications of all strategy components to be tested at the earliest opportunity and for any uncertainties or issues identified during impact assessment processes to be addressed during RTS preparation.

Relevant Equalities Duties

- 1.1.8 The equalities duties applicable to HITRANS on a statutory basis are the **Public Sector Equality Duty** (PSED) and the requirement to undertake an **Island Communities Impact Assessment** (ICIA). This EqlA also addresses the **Fairer Scotland** (FSD) and **Child Rights and Wellbeing** (CRW) duties insofar as relevant to the RTS on a voluntary basis. This report sets out the findings of the consideration of equalities issues relevant to the PSED, FSD and CRW for the RTS 'Case for Change'. An assessment of the impacts of the RTS on island communities in accordance with the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 is also being undertaken and separately reported alongside this equalities duties report.
- 1.1.9 In May 2022, an Equalities Impact Assessment Framing Document was prepared (Stantec UK, 2022) to identify an evidence-based suite of key equalities issues which should be considered in the emerging RTS and taken account of in the EqlA process. A framework was also set out explaining how each of the applicable equalities duties would be applied and reported against throughout the development of the RTS in a way which helps to address the identified key equalities issues.

RTS 'Case for Change'

- 1.1.10 The 'Case for Change' provides a consolidated evidence base to identify the main transport problems experienced within the HITRANS region and sets out a series of Transport Planning Objectives (TPOs) and RTS Objectives to underpin the development of the new RTS. In doing so, the 'Case for Change' seeks to ensure the RTS is founded on an evidence base which reflects the latest understanding of transport and accessibility problems, opportunities and issues in the region, including reflecting travel behaviour changes arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 1.1.11 As detailed further in **Section 3**, the 'Case for Change' includes the identification of relevant TPOs and associated proposed RTS Objectives. With reference to applicable equalities duties (discussed in **Section 2**), this report provides a proportionate assessment of the coverage of key equalities issues within these 'substantive components' of the emerging RTS and thus their likely equalities impacts. This forms part of a multi-stage appraisal and strategy development process which will include a future consultation on the full Draft RTS and an accompanying Equalities Duties Report and an Islands Communities Impact Assessment Report.
- 1.1.12 At this stage in development of the RTS, the 'Case for Change' does not identify individual 'options' (e.g., policies, proposals, actions, schemes and other interventions) or spatially defined schemes but rather forms the starting point for the subsequent development and appraisal of various types of options to achieve the proposed RTS Objectives. All options will be developed, sifted and appraised through Stage 2 – Preliminary Options Appraisal of the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) process. Details of options development, appraisal and how the application of relevant equalities duties has informed the selection of options (including consideration of reasonable alternatives) will then be set out in the full Draft RTS and an accompanying full version of the Equalities Duties Report in 2023.

1.2 Purpose and Objectives

- 1.2.1 This report has been prepared by Stantec to assess the extent to which the 'Case for Change' Report addresses relevant equalities considerations. This forms part of the process of discharging relevant statutory equalities duties in the preparation of the new RTS.

1.2.2 The objectives of this report are to:

- i. Assess the coverage of key equalities issues in the 'key issues' identified within the 'Case for Change' report. The key equalities issues include those previously identified in the Equalities Impact Assessment Framing Document.
- ii. Assess the extent to which the proposed RTS Objectives address identified key equalities issues by testing their compatibility with the requirements of applicable equalities duties through applying an assessment framework and associated guide questions.
- iii. Recommend changes which should be incorporated into the emerging RTS to improve the coverage of equalities issues and to enhance the ability of the document to tackle such issues.

1.3 Report Structure

1.3.1 This report is structured as follows:

- **Section 2 – Approach to Equalities Duties:** provides an overview of how applicable equalities duties are being addressed in the development of the emerging RTS, including the assessment framework and evidence base which has informed the work.
- **Section 3 – Assessment of Equalities Issues:** reports the findings of the consideration of the coverage of equalities issues within the 'Case for Change' and an initial appraisal of the compatibility of the Draft RTS Objectives against the requirements of the relevant equalities duties. This includes how the EqlA process has informed the 'Case for Change'.
- **Section 4 – Next Steps:** explains how comments received in respect of the 'Case for Change' and this Equalities Duties Report will be taken into account and how applicable equalities duties will continue to be applied in future stages of the RTS development process.

1.4 Case for Change Engagement

1.4.1 As the 'case for change' provides the basis for the RTS overall, it was important to consult on its content with stakeholders and the public at large. To this end, the 'Case for Change' Report, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equalities Duties Report and Island Communities Impact Assessment were put out to consultation between 27th March and 9th May 2023. This took the form of: an online-based consultation using ArcStory Map (with paper-based versions available at the HITRANS office) summarising the 'case for change'; publication of the four draft reports which collectively make-up the 'case for change'; and a short online survey.

1.4.2 In total, **202** responses to the survey were received, with **181** respondents identifying as a member of the public and **21** as an organisation. The survey results were analysed and have been used to inform the final package of documents which form the 'case for change'.

1.4.3 The engagement process validated the findings of the 'Case for Change' and accompanying impact assessment reports, with broad support for the RTS Strategy Objectives upon which the RTS itself will be based.

2 Approach to Equalities Duties

- 2.1.1 This section outlines the requirements of each of the three equalities duties addressed in this report and details the criteria which will be used to iteratively assess all substantive components of the emerging RTS. Taken together, these criteria comprise an Equalities Assessment Framework which will be used to test, refine and assess all substantive components of the emerging RTS in relation to likely equalities impacts. This framework aims to provide holistic coverage of all key equalities issues and priorities which should inform RTS development as well as to demonstrate compliance with applicable equalities duties.
- 2.1.2 A description of the process followed in the consideration of equalities issues at the 'Case for Change' stage is provided in Section 2.2 to guide understanding of the findings presented later in **Section 3**. Section 2.3 then sets out an overview of the principal requirements of the three equalities duties considered in this report together with a series of 'framing questions' which have been developed to support the consideration of the requirements in the emerging strategy. Finally, Section 2.4 presents a summary of the evidence base which was set out in the Equalities Impact Framing Document which has also informed the consideration of key equalities issues in the development of the RTS 'Case for Change'.

2.2 Overall Approach

- 2.2.1 The approach to the consideration of equalities issues, and the key requirements of the three relevant duties, has involved:
- Liaison between the transport planning, environmental assessment and equalities assessment teams through the **preparation and appraisal of the 'Case for Change'**.
 - **Initial review of the draft 'Case for Change'** document to identify the extent of coverage of equalities issues and to **feed back findings and recommendations** to the transport planning team for incorporation in the updated 'Case for Change'. This review included the baseline documentation and analysis of transport issues and problems as well as the draft transport planning objectives (TPOs) and Draft RTS Strategic Objectives.
 - **Initial assessment of the substantial elements of the updated 'Case for Change' document** through consideration of the compatibility of the proposed RTS Strategic Objectives with the equalities assessment framework.
 - **Reporting of further recommendations in relation to equalities issues** as the RTS process continues through the options development and assessment at the next key stage in RTS development.

2.3 Equalities Assessment Framework

Public Sector Equality Duty

- 2.3.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 sets out a 'Public Sector Equality Duty' (PSED). This requires public authorities to have due regard to the need to: eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations between those with a protected characteristic and those without. The duty covers the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The PSED also covers marriage and civil partnerships, with regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination in employment.
- 2.3.2 The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 require listed authorities to undertake an impact assessment in relation to the needs outlined in section 149(1) of the Act and take account of the results of the assessment in development of the policy. The approach to the assessment has been informed by reference to the Scottish Government's

general guidance on the PSED (Scottish Government, 2016) and guidance on application of the duty in Scotland (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2016).

- 2.3.3 The following guide questions have been designed to allow for testing the implementation of the PSED. They provide a transparent framework to assess the extent to which emerging RTS components promote equality of opportunity, including the removal of physical and cultural and informational barriers to accessing and benefiting from the transport system.

Assessment Framework: Public Sector Equality Duty

Will the emerging RTS and its associated delivery mechanisms...

- *Result in any likely different or disproportionate effects on persons with protected characteristics as specified in the Equality Act 2010?*
- *Result in any unintended consequences for protected characteristics groups?*
- *Promote social cohesion and integration between people with different protected characteristics?*
- *Advance the HITRANS equalities outcomes?*
- *Provide equal access to employment opportunities, social and cultural activities, and public services and amenities for all?*
- *Promote public realm and design choices that provide a safe, secure, and accessible environment for all?*
- *Promote better health outcomes by facilitating active travel?*
- *Support the removal of barriers to travel and the improvement of equal access to travel?*
- *Contribute to the achievement of the Duty's aims and desired outcomes?*

The framing questions will be applied in relation to the three key parts of the Duty:

- *Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation*
- *Advancing equality of opportunity*
- *Fostering good relations*

The second of these aims 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*

Fairer Scotland Duty

- 2.3.4 The Fairer Scotland Duty (FSD) places a legal responsibility on public bodies in Scotland to actively consider how they can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage. This differs from the Public Sector Equality Duty which considers only reducing inequalities of opportunity. The Duty seeks to tackle socio-economic disadvantage and reduce the inequalities associated with being disadvantaged. It is closely related to issues of poverty which may affect outcomes across health, housing, education and training and employment prospects.

- 2.3.5 The FSD identifies a need to consider both 'communities of place' and 'communities of interest' in terms of people who share an experience and are particularly impacted by socio-economic disadvantage (Scottish Government, 2021a). Demographic groups who share one or more of the protected characteristics listed in Section 4 of the Equality Act 2010 can be considered 'communities of interest', meaning there is a direct link between the Fairer Scotland Duty and the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 2.3.6 The following criteria will be applied to testing the performance of the emerging RTS in relation to implementing the FSD. This provides a transparent framework to assess the extent to which emerging RTS components reduce inequalities of outcome resulting from low income, low wealth, and multiple deprivation.

Assessment Framework: Fairer Scotland Duty

Will the emerging RTS and its associated delivery mechanisms...

- *Help to reduce levels of absolute and relative income poverty, inequality in the distribution of household wealth, and levels of multiple deprivation affecting communities?*
- *Reduce physical and informational barriers to accessing and using all transport modes?*
- *Reduce cost related barriers to accessing and use of all transport modes?*
- *Reduce unequal access to employment opportunities, social and cultural activities, and public services and amenities for all?*
- *Improve accessibility to open spaces, and sports facilities for physical recreation, in particular for those facing socio-economic disadvantage?*
- *Promote good local access to existing facilities, services, and employment, in particular for those facing socio-economic disadvantage?*
- *Contribute to the achievement of the Duty's aims and desired outcomes?*

The framing questions will be applied in relation to the two key parts of the Duty:

- *socio-economic disadvantage (influenced by income, wealth, material and area deprivation and socio-economic background); and*
- *inequality of outcome (including education, skills, employment, health and wellbeing, living standards and poverty).*

Child Rights and Wellbeing Duties

- 2.3.7 The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 requires public bodies to consider whether existing and emerging legislation, policy and guidance have an impact on children and young people and to assess what further action is required to ensure compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). There are four general principles of the UNCRC:
- Apply rights without discrimination (Article 2)
 - Best interests of the child to be a principal consideration (Article 3)
 - Right to life, survival and development (Article 6)
 - Right to express and view and have that view taken into account (Article 12)
- 2.3.8 These articles underpin all other rights in the Convention and will be considered in the CRWIA. The assessment will also review the other articles of the UNCRC and include any considered to be relevant.

- 2.3.9 The following criteria will be applied to test and confirm the implementation of relevant Scottish Ministers' duties under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and the UNCRC in the emerging RTS. They have been formulated with reference to the approach recommended within the Scottish Government's Child Rights and Wellbeing (CRW) Impact Assessment Guidance (Scottish Government, 2021b).

Assessment Framework: Child Rights and Wellbeing Duties

- *Which UNCRC Articles are relevant to the assessment?*
- *How does the intervention relate to, promote, or inhibit the provisions of the UNCRC, other relevant international treaties and standards, or domestic law?*
- *What impact might the intervention have on the rights of children and young people?*
- *Will the rights of one group of children in particular be affected, and to what extent?*
- *Are there competing interests between the groups of children, or between children and other groups, who would be affected by the intervention?*
- *Will the intervention protect and enhance access to high quality community facilities, public services and key amenities for children and young people?*
- *Will the intervention improve access using active travel and public transport to educational, social, and economic opportunities for children and young people?*
- *How will the RTS support or otherwise affect the implementation of relevant UNCRC Articles?*
- *The overall question to be answered in relation to the UNCRC is: to what extent does the policy help progress the realisation of children's rights, and safeguard support and promote the wellbeing of children and young people?*

The framing questions will be applied in relation to the UNCRC articles and taking account of the Scottish Government's wellbeing indicators developed for the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach to children's services provision in Scotland. These are: safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible & included.

2.4 Summary of the Equalities Evidence Base

- 2.4.1 This section sets out a summary of the evidence base on equalities issues relevant to the development of transport strategies which was presented in the Equalities Assessment Framing Document. The evidence is set out here to align specifically with the process of reviewing and assessing the 'Case for Change'. Relevant literature and information identified as RTS development progresses will be added to the evidence base as appropriate and captured in the reporting of the detailed equalities assessment of the RTS at a later stage.
- 2.4.2 HITRANS has established a set of equalities outcomes (HITRANS, 2021a) which also provide an important context for the consideration of equalities issues in the RTS. The outcomes are considered by HITRANS to enable them to better perform the general equality duty which was established by The Equality Act 2010. The organisation's equality outcomes and relevant inequalities are set out in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 HITRANS Equalities Outcomes

Equality Outcome	Inequality
Promote transport accessibility in the HITRANS region by supporting accessible and accurate information on public transport.	<p>People can have trouble accessing the transport network because of safety, comfort, availability, connectivity, information, and assistance.</p> <p>Consideration of the communication needs of different protected characteristics to ensure people have the information required to plan and undertake their journey.</p>
Gather evidence to provide better understanding of transport inequalities.	Limited information available at a regional level on protected characteristics views and use of transport.
Support the sustainability of regional transport networks.	Protected characteristic groups are more likely to use public transport, but regional transport networks are at risk.
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.
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.

2.4.3 Table 2.2 sets out a summary of key evidence base issues and findings which have been distilled to inform the consideration of equalities issues and potential impacts in the coverage of the 'Case for Change' and its preliminary equalities assessment. The table structures the summary for each of the three separate equalities duties, but it is recognised there are considerable overlaps in the evidence between them.

Table 2.2 Summary of Equalities Evidence Base

Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)	<p>People in protected characteristics groups typically face a range of issues in accessing and using transport which may affect the extent to which they experience discrimination and disadvantage. Key points from the evidence base are summarised here.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Age: access to transport can act as a significant barrier to some groups, particularly for elderly people, which acts to disadvantage them in terms of reaching essential facilities such as social services and healthcare. Some older people are also disadvantaged through lack of access to, or skills and confidence to use, transport information in digital formats². ▪ With approximately 24% of the region's population aged 65 and over, compared with 19% in Scotland, there are particular challenges associated with an ageing population in the Highlands and Islands. ▪ Disability: disabled people are less likely to live in households with access to a car. They experience a range of difficulties in accessing and using public transport which vary significantly by the groups affected and include difficulties with journey planning. In the HITRANS region lower levels of satisfaction with public transport were recorded amongst disabled respondents to the survey with key barriers reported to be a lack of transport with disability access and difficulty accessing the nearest bus stop or railway station. ▪ Gender reassignment: Transgender people are likely to have lower incomes and therefore, are at a higher risk of transport poverty. They typically experience hate crimes more regularly than non-protected groups and may have concerns about using public transport or public transport facilities due to fear of harassment or discrimination.
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² The prevalence of this issue is likely to reduce somewhat over time

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pregnancy and maternity: pregnant women and people travelling on public transport with pushchairs and children often have complex journey patterns and may experience difficulties in accessing and using services. ▪ Race: people in minority ethnic groups typically take fewer walking and cycling trips than other groups and are often more reliant on public transport, but potentially at greater risk of disadvantage where services are reduced or become more expensive. Some groups are also more likely to experience hate crimes and discrimination creating a social barrier to transport. ▪ Religion or belief: Discrimination, assault or harassment of the basis of religious identity may affect people of certain religious groups more than others, and this may affect their choice to use public transport and public transport facilities. ▪ Sex: women are typically more dependent on public transport than men (for a diversity of journey purposes), need to make multi-purpose trips, and are more likely to be subject to harassment or assault, or the fear of these occurring. ▪ Sexual orientation: People in this group may be concerned about being able to access public transport and public transport facilities, especially at night when these may be poorly lit, for fear of harassment or discrimination.
<p>Fairer Scotland Duty (FSD)</p>	<p>The requirements of this duty link with those of the PSED since communities of interest considered under the FSD cover those groups with protected characteristics considered under the Equalities Act. Key issues from the evidence include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The evidence indicates clear links between access to, and affordability of, public transport and household income with poorer areas more dependent on bus services but typically less well served. In many parts of the HITRANS region, there can no bus service at all, leading to a degree of 'forced car or second car ownership. ▪ Transport poverty occurs where a lack of affordable travel options restricts access to employment and services with relatively higher transport costs for people living in areas of high multiple deprivation (often in rural and island areas) compounding socio-economic disadvantage and outcomes. ▪ Public transport costs can be significant for those on low incomes and particularly for people in rural areas who travel longer distances and face higher costs. People in low-income households are often excluded from maintaining social connections or accessing employment and training opportunities due to the affordability and availability of transport options. ▪ Whilst car ownership levels in the HITRANS region are higher than for Scotland as a whole, between 18% and 24% of households do not have access to a car / van. For these groups, the level of public transport provision, cost and connectivity issues can increase economic disadvantage (and social isolation) including from difficulty accessing suitable employment, education and training opportunities. ▪ In the HITRANS region on a typical weekday, the majority of the people in the region cannot access a key employment centre within 2 hours travel time on public transport³. There are limited bus service frequencies away from the main transport corridors in the region which severely limits opportunities for commuting or other time critical trips. ▪ These issues give rise to a lack of affordable transport options for some communities, with 58% of data zones in the region classed as being at high risk for transport poverty, compared with 38% for Scotland as a whole. ▪ The effects are often more severe in island communities where longer commuting distances and costs of additional trips to the mainland are among key issues contributing to the increased costs of living in the isles. ▪ People in groups with protected characteristics (communities of interest) such as elderly or disabled people are also likely to experience inequalities of outcome through the relatively high costs of transport in relation to socio-economic disadvantage.
	<p>There are clear overlaps between the requirements of this duty and the issues considered under part of the protected characteristic for 'age' under the PSED.</p>

³ Source: HITRANS Equalities Outcomes Report

Child Rights and Wellbeing (CRW) Equality Duty	<p>Other points from the evidence base which have been used to inform the Duty assessment are summarised here.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Key factors affecting the ability of children to access transport are their socio-economic background, geographic location and the accessibility and safety of public transport available.▪ The ability to access safe, convenient and cost-effective transport has an impact on the ability of children and young people to access education (over 16s cohort), public services and economic opportunities, particularly for low-income households.▪ Children and young people in rural areas and island communities are typically more dependent on public transport, particularly for accessing education and training, than other age groups. The availability of public transport in rural areas and island communities is a significant challenge for young people.▪ The cost of transport can act as a barrier to accessing employment and education. Young people can be particularly affected by the cost of travelling to college or work, especially if they have to travel some distance or are only earning the lower minimum wage for young people.▪ In a 2018 study by HIE, around a third (31%) of young people in the region identified lack of transport (or affordable transport) as a barrier to study and 12% as a barrier to employment.▪ In the HITRANS region, younger people are particularly likely to be affected by access deprivation associated with public transport availability and costs. Public transport timetables were identified as a particular frustration for young people, including integration between different services and modes.▪ Younger people may have a more local focus than the population as a whole suggesting young people from deprived areas may only look for jobs and training in their local area or where easily accessible by public transport.▪ Children and young people are more vulnerable than other age groups to the adverse effects on health of traffic related noise and air pollution. Safety is also a key issue for children with child pedestrian casualties in Scotland in 2019 accounting for 44% of all pedestrian casualties.
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2.4.4 The complete evidence base, structured by the three duties, will be set out with all relevant data sources and citations in the report of the equalities assessment of the Draft RTS in 2023.

3 Assessment of Equalities Issues

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 This section sets out the findings of the initial assessment of the equalities implications of the RTS 'Case for Change'. The results of the consideration of the coverage of equalities issues in the draft 'Case for Change' document, and how these were addressed are set out in Section 3.2. The key issues from the initial compatibility assessments of the 'Case for Change' strategic objectives are presented in Section 3.3. A summary of the main findings of the equalities duties assessment at this stage and how they have informed the development of the 'Case for Change' is then presented in Section 3.4.

3.2 Equalities Issues Coverage in the 'Case for Change'

Structure of the 'Case for Change'

- 3.2.1 The Draft 'Case for Change' report sets out a comprehensive collation and review of transport-related problems, issues, constraints and opportunities in the HITRANS region. It provides an analysis of the problems with respect to their travel behaviour and transport consequences and defines a series of transport planning objectives (TPOs) then a draft set of Strategy Objectives. The 'Case for Change' is the first in a three-stage process for RTS development.
- 3.2.2 Following an introduction, the 'Case for Change' document provides a demographic and socio-economic context (chapter 2), a review of relevant transport policy (chapter 3) and an overview of the transport network, services and their use (chapter 4). The projected future transport and land use context is presented in chapter 5.
- 3.2.3 Chapter 6 then sets out the substantial elements of the initial appraisal which comprise problems analysis from the evidence reviewed and derivation of transport planning objectives (TPOs) and RTS Strategy Objectives. The 'Case for Change' is centred around an extensive set of 'problems' which the new RTS should respond to, grouped and analysed by transport mode. These specific transport problems were identified through extensive engagement, desk-based research and project team analysis in the development of the 'Case for Change'. The TPOs were then derived through consideration of the transport and societal consequences of the problems which in turn informed the definition of six proposed RTS Strategy Objectives.
- 3.2.4 Adequate recognition and coverage of identified key equalities issues in the suite of problems which are defined in the 'Case for Change' to underpin RTS development is therefore essential to ensure that all equalities issues and potential impacts are appropriately considered at each stage of RTS development. It also ensures that the problems and associated TPOs respond to a broad range of equalities issues.

Review of Equalities in the 'Case for Change'

- 3.2.5 The review of the Draft 'Case for Change' Report was undertaken to help ensure appropriate coverage of equalities issues in the developing evidence base for the RTS. Whilst this was an iterative process (and will continue to evolve), a summary of the key issues identified from the review and how these have been accommodated in the updated 'Case for Change' is set out in Error! Reference source not found. to provide a context for discussion of the coverage of equalities issues in the document.
- 3.2.6 The review process identified the strongly integrated nature of socio-economic and equalities issues in the evidence base and the analysis of problems for transport in the HITRANS region. The dependency and strength of the economy and quality of life in rural areas and on the

islands draws particularly closely on an efficient, reliable, accessible and affordable transport system.

Table 3.1 Review of Equalities Issues identified in the Draft RTS Case for Change

Section of Draft Case for Change	Equalities Recommendation / Comment	How the EqIA Influenced the Case for Change
Chapter 2 (The HITRANS Region – Background and Context)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minor comments and edits proposed to ensure equalities issues are reflected comprehensively through the narrative of the chapter. ▪ It is suggested that the analysis of travel to work and commuting could include some consideration of the availability and accessibility of public transport and active travel in locations where there is more pronounced in/out commuting. ▪ The section on healthcare would benefit from some commentary on issues associated with accessing health (and social care) facilities particularly by public transport and implications of this for the affected groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All comments and suggested edits have been accepted. ▪ Commentary on the availability and accessibility of public transport and active travel is included in Chapter 4, <i>Transport in the HITRANS Region</i>. With regards to specific locations, a balance has been struck between detail and length. ▪ New section added on the issues with accessing health (and social care) facilities, particularly by public transport and the implications for affected groups. This incorporates some examples.
Chapter 3 (Policy Review)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minor comments made on equalities related issues for the section addressing Scotland’s Accessible Travel Framework. ▪ Editorial amendments proposed to the section dealing with the Equalities Act and assessment duties. ▪ Recommended that the HITRANS regional policy section includes reference to HITRANS Equalities Outcomes document to demonstrate integration of equalities themes with the transport planning context. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All comments and suggested edits have been accepted. ▪ The chapter has been slimmed to focus on national policy as that which guides the RTS.
Chapter 4 (Transport in HITRANS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minor comments and edits proposed to ensure equalities issues are reflected comprehensively through the narrative of the chapter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All comments and suggested edits have been accepted.
Chapter 5 (Future Context)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minor comments suggested to develop the text in a few places in relation to equalities issues for future land-use and transport developments and innovation. ▪ Suggested that commentary is added on the post COVID-19 implications of reduced bus patronage for future public transport provision. ▪ Text added to suggest that shared mobility schemes have potential for beneficial equalities impacts where they offer affordable and enhanced accessibility for groups such as non-car owners and communities with poor access to public transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All comments and suggested edits have been accepted. ▪ Commentary has been added on the post-COVID-19 implications of reduced bus patronage. This has been expanded to cover wider issues affecting the bus industry at present, including labour shortages and driver demographics. ▪ Accepted added text in relation to the potential beneficial impacts of shared mobility on equalities.
Chapter 6 (Developing RTS Objectives) Section 6.2 (Establish and populate transport problems framework)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some suggested minor elaboration of the problem checklist criteria to increase reference to equalities issues for protected groups and those with socio-economic disadvantage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All changes to the problems checklist criteria accepted.

Section of Draft Case for Change	Equalities Recommendation / Comment	How the EqIA Influenced the Case for Change
Section 6.3 (Steps 2-4: Supply side causes, and travel and societal consequence)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A range of equalities issues are mapped from the transport problems, ordered by mode. Some additional equalities issues and considerations have been highlighted to strengthen links from the problem framework to potential equalities impacts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All additional equalities issues and considerations suggested have been incorporated.
Section 6.4 (Define Transport Planning Objectives)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proposed transport planning objectives (TPOs) are derived from the preceding analysis of problems and their consequences. There is good recognition and inclusion of references to equalities issues in the TPOs with some further wording suggestions provided by the equalities assessment team to ensure a comprehensive framework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All suggested changes / additional wording in relation to the TPOs has been accepted.
Section 6.5 (Step 6: RTS Objectives)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Six strategic objectives are set out for the RTS which encompass the range of desired outcomes provided by the set of TPOs. The objectives integrate well with the range of equalities issues expressed through the three relevant duties. The review has identified some proposed wording changes to two of the objectives and some additional wording for the narratives underpinning each objective. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All suggested changes / additional wording in relation to the TPOs has been accepted.

- 3.2.7 Equalities issues are well integrated into the Draft 'Case for Change' and the review process has sought to identify opportunities in some parts of the document to make these more explicit and strengthen connections between equalities outcomes and consideration of transport issues.
- 3.2.8 The findings of the equalities-based review of the Draft 'Case for Change' were incorporated within the document and commentary on the equalities content of the settled version is set out in the following paragraphs.
- 3.2.9 The early chapters of the 'Case for Change' set out an extensive socio-economic and transport baseline. The focus of this information review is to identify key themes, problems, opportunities and issues to underpin the development of objectives to guide and frame the RTS. As a transport baseline therefore, the focus is not specifically on equalities issues – however a number of themes are evident from the document which have clear implications for equalities. These include:
- **High levels of car ownership** across the region (compared with the Scottish average) reflect the predominantly rural character of the region and the dependence of many people on private road transport. The 16% of people without access to a car in the region are likely to experience greater difficulties in accessing jobs and services and areas with the highest levels of non-car ownership are typically co-incident with higher levels of deprivation (and with denser urban centres). Moreover, in certain parts of the region, even households with one car may suffer from connectivity issues if one household member takes the car for the day for e.g., travel to work, potentially leaving other household members with little to no connectivity
 - Forecast **demographic change** with fewer people of working age in future, which might disadvantage the HITRANS region and its communities through constraints in its labour supply and economic productivity. Indeed, this is already prevalent in some areas and sectors, where labour shortages are commonplace
 - Access to **healthcare** is often dependent on car travel or requires very long journeys by public transport (where this is possible), particularly for people living outwith the Inner Moray Firth.
 - The policy review presented in chapter 3 includes reference to Scotland's Accessible Travel Framework which provides a national plan to **improve accessibility to public transport** for disabled people focusing on national guidance and standards, information and customer service and engagement and participation. It also references the Equality Act and the requirement for assessments under the relevant equalities frameworks for the RTS.
 - **Reductions in levels of public transport (and reliability / capacity of some ferry services)** discussed in chapter 4 have implications for equalities including for people with socio-economic disadvantage. Equalities impacts may also arise for groups with protected characteristics which have greater dependency on public transport to access employment and services and in more dispersed rural locations including the islands and peninsular areas served by ferry services.
 - In the discussion on the future transport context, chapter 5 recognises the **challenges of introduction of electric vehicles for some groups**, particularly for people with socio-economic disadvantage due to their high purchase price compared to fossil fuel powered vehicles. Other approaches such as shared mobility (including car/bike/scooter sharing, community and demand responsive transport) offer potentially more equitable means of transport for key equalities groups for some journeys including elderly and disabled people, depending on how these are implemented.
 - **Future transport, land-use planning and economic development** including the rapidly changing role of technology offer some potential opportunities for beneficial equalities impacts in the longer term (e.g., improved access to services through increased use of active travel or shared mobility services).

3.2.10 These themes are developed in chapter 6 which sets out a framework of transport problems, characterising them by mode and travel aspects, and supported by data from relevant parts of the evidence base to inform identification of their causes. The transport and societal consequences associated with each problem are then interrogated with reference to transport supply-side causes for each key transport mode. The analysis has taken into account a range of impacts on socio-economic and equalities issues. The key strands include:

- Development and analysis of the problem framework with reference to societal impacts of the travel behaviours being affected by transport problems. These have considered consequences and impacts on groups with protected characteristics (including age and disability), cost, health and affordability issues which impact on socio-economic disadvantage. These issues underpin the principles in each of the duties assessments considered for this equalities impact assessment.
- Integration of equalities issues within the problem analysis informed the development of a set of transport planning objectives (TPOs) which articulate the desired outcomes for future transport in the HITRANS region. These objectives and the subsequent set of six RTS Strategy Objectives reflect key socio-economic and equalities themes. The narratives underpinning each objective all make clear reference to relevant equalities issues and frameworks.

3.2.11 Equalities issues have been shown to be integral to many of the problems and issues considered in the 'Case for Change' and in the subsequent derivation of TPOs and RTS objectives. The closely integrated nature of transport with social and economic wellbeing in the HITRANS region is evident from the baseline data and analysis prepared and equalities issues have been addressed consistently across the transport problems considered. It will be important that the development and testing of options and policies in the next stage of RTS development continues to adopt this integrated and broad-based approach to equalities assessment and feedback from consultation with relevant equalities groups is taken into account.

3.3 Assessment of RTS Objective

Strategy Objectives

3.3.1 Section 6 of the 'Case for Change' brings together the transport problems and their associated TPOs, and the policy environment for the Strategy, to derive six proposed Strategy Objectives for the RTS. Following input from the equalities review of the draft document, the proposed objectives are:

- To make a just transition to a post-carbon and more environmentally sustainable transport network.
- To transform and provide safe and accessible connections between and within our city, towns and villages, to enable walking, wheeling and cycling for all.
- To widen access to public and shared transport and improve connectivity within and from / to the region.
- To improve the quality and integration of public and shared transport within and from / to the region.
- To ensure reliable, resilient, affordable and sustainable connectivity for all from / to our island, peninsular and remote communities.
- To improve the efficiency, safety and resilience of our transport networks for people and freight, and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

3.3.2 Subject to feedback from public and stakeholder consultation on the 'Case for Change' (and accompanying SEA, EqIA and ICIA assessments), these Strategy Objectives will be taken

forward to underpin the generation of a long list of options and a subsequent appraisal of these options at the next stage of RTS development (see **Section 4**).

Compatibility Assessment Findings

- 3.3.3 A summary of the appraisal of the compatibility of the proposed RTS Objectives with the equalities assessment framework has been undertaken as part of this 'Case for Change' equalities assessment. This was completed through application at a strategic level of the question set and criteria in the equalities framework presented in **Section 2** of this report to the emerging RTS Strategy Objectives to ensure the proposed objectives fully incorporate equalities considerations and to identify any potential gaps or issues for further consideration in the next stage of the RTS.
- 3.3.4 The findings of the compatibility assessment are presented in **Table 3.2** overleaf. Generally, the objectives perform well against the equalities assessment frameworks as they encompass a range of cost, affordability, environmental, health and socio-economic issues which are likely to have beneficial equalities impacts. Each objective has some level of compatibility with one or more of the sets of equalities requirements under the three main duties being considered. None of the objectives has been appraised as being incompatible or inconsistent with any of the duties.
- 3.3.5 Each objective (including the updated accompanying narratives) includes specific reference to social groups, protected characteristics and/or young people. This will help to ensure that the different needs of these groups will be considered through the future options generation and appraisal process of the Strategy's development. It is recommended that, at the next stage of RTS development, a set of clear outcomes is developed to support and underpin the achievement of each objective. These would be drawn from analysis of the themes from each relevant group of TPOs and would help to articulate the key intentions of each objective, including incorporation of relevant equalities considerations.
- 3.3.6 The emerging RTS would also benefit from the development of an over-arching holistic 'Vision' to bring together the objectives and clarify the outcomes that the RTS seeks to achieve. This would help to ensure that any subsequent options developed mainly to address one RTS Strategy Objective either contribute to or at least avoid adverse effects on the other Strategic Objectives.
- 3.3.7 The high-level assessment provided in **Error! Reference source not found.** demonstrates that in general the proposed RTS Strategy Objectives provide an appropriate high-level platform from which to develop later stages of the RTS including generation and appraisal of transport options which will take full account of relevant equalities issues. This indicates that the RTS Strategy Objectives are generally compatible with the requirements of applicable equalities duties.
- 3.3.8 Going forward, the equalities duties (and the SEA and ICIA processes) will be applied to test the relationship between the proposed RTS Strategy Objectives and individual options in order to maximise likely significant beneficial effects and avoid or minimise adverse effects from the RTS when read and implemented as a whole. Similarly, monitoring and evaluation frameworks should be designed so that differential impacts can be measured. Data for these characteristics should be collected wherever possible to allow an evaluation of the equalities impacts of the Strategy and its associated delivery mechanisms.

Table 3.2: Compatibility of Proposed RTS Objectives with Equalities Assessment Framework

Objective	Public Sector Equality	Fairer Scotland	Child Rights & Wellbeing	Commentary
Strategy Objective 1: To make a just transition to a post-carbon and more environmentally sustainable transport network	✓	✓	✓	This objective has implicit compatibility with the PSED, FSD and CRW assessment frameworks as it has the potential to alleviate some health-related inequalities which can be affected by poor environmental conditions such as air quality and anxiety relating to climate change. Promotion of sustainable transport networks also has the potential to enhance access for all equalities groups to public transport and for some people to increase physical activity through greater uptake of walking, wheeling and cycling.
Strategy Objective 2: To transform and provide safe and accessible connections between and within our city, towns and villages, to enable walking, wheeling and cycling for all	✓✓	✓	✓✓	This objective performs strongly against the PSED and the CRW assessment frameworks as there is clear compatibility with the purpose of advancing equality of opportunity for protected groups (including potential health benefits) by transforming accessible travel for those who are able to use active travel. It is implicitly compatible with the FSD framework by addressing socio-economic disadvantage and improving outcomes through access to enhanced walking, wheeling and cycling facilities which are typically low-cost forms of transport.
Strategy Objective 3: To widen access to public and shared transport and improve connectivity within and from / to the region	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	This objective is assessed as performing strongly against the PSED, FSD and CRW assessment frameworks as there are explicit references to removing barriers and enhancing connectivity by public and shared transport. Improved public transport links and services, and better access to them, can reduce inequalities of opportunity (for all protected groups) and tackle socio-economic disadvantage through enhancing access to employment areas.
Strategy Objective 4: To improve the quality and integration of public and shared transport within and from / to the region	✓✓	✓	✓✓	This objective performs strongly against the PSED and the CRW assessment frameworks as there is clear compatibility with the purpose of addressing disadvantage (for all groups with protected characteristics), advancing equality of opportunity and helping young people to safely and independently access education and other services. It is implicitly compatible with the FSD framework by supporting those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage through better integrated public transport which would potentially enhance access to employment, education and training opportunities.
Strategy Objective 5: To ensure reliable, resilient, affordable and sustainable connectivity for all from / to our island, peninsular and remote communities	✓	✓✓	✓	This objective has implicit compatibility with the PSED and CRW assessment frameworks as there is clear alignment with the purpose of addressing disadvantage (for all groups with protected characteristics) in remote rural and island areas. There is clear compatibility with the FSD framework through advancing equality of opportunity and equality of outcome for remote rural and island communities with socio-economic disadvantage through delivery of reliable, resilient and affordable transport connections.

Objective	Public Sector Equality	Fairer Scotland	Child Rights & Wellbeing	Commentary
Strategy Objective 6: To improve the efficiency, safety and resilience of our transport networks for people and freight, and adapt to the impacts of climate change	✓	✓	✓	This objective has implicit compatibility with the PSED, FSD and CRW assessment frameworks as there is clear compatibility with the purpose of addressing disadvantage (for all groups with protected characteristics) and advancing equality of opportunity and equality of outcome for those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage through efficiency and safety and therefore enhanced and reliable transport and means of access.

Key

Clear reference / compatibility	✓✓		Incompatible	X
Implicit compatibility	✓		No clear relationship	~

3.4 How has this EqlA informed the 'Case for Change'?

- 3.4.1 A proportionate EqlA has been carried out with respect to the 'Case for Change' to apply relevant equalities duties. This assessment focused on assessing the coverage of the identified key equalities issues within all substantive elements of the 'Case for Change' and the extent to which proposed RTS Objectives address these issues and are compatible with applicable equalities duties. The findings of the assessment are documented in this report.
- 3.4.2 Preparing this report and the 'Case for Change' concurrently allowed emerging EqlA findings to inform the final 'Case for Change' Report as published for consultation. In summary, the following updates and recommendations were identified:
- **Equalities evidence base alignment with the three duties.** This report presents a summary of key findings from the equalities evidence base which were originally presented in the RTS Equalities Assessment Framing Note. The summary has aligned the main points from the evidence with the three equalities duties to support the ongoing application of the equalities assessment framework to the RTS.
 - **More explicit reference to inequalities in transport problems:** The review of coverage of equalities issues in the draft 'Case for Change' identified a number of areas of the baseline and problems analysis where clearer reference to equalities issues such as demographic groups and protected characteristics would benefit the document. These amendments, particularly in the analysis of transport problems and definition of TPOs, underpin the generation of Strategy Objectives.
 - **Equalities issues identified in RTS Strategic Objectives:** Following EqlA recommendations from the compatibility assessment presented in this report, all six of the proposed RTS Strategic Objectives defined within the 'Case for Change' and their underpinning narratives now include specific reference to social groups and protected characteristics. This will help to ensure the differential needs of these groups is appropriately considered through future options generation and appraisal and RTS development processes.
- 3.4.3 This demonstrates that through identifying gaps in the draft document and recommending associated changes, the EqlA process has influenced the preparation of the 'Case for Change', which is the foundation on which the new HITRANS RTS will be built.
- 3.4.4 Following incorporation of the EqlA recommendations summarised above, a formal assessment of the Strategic Objectives in the settled version of the 'Case for Change' was undertaken. The objectives perform well against the equalities assessment frameworks as they encompass a range of cost, affordability, environmental, health and socio-economic issues which are likely to have beneficial equalities impacts. The 'Case for Change' and RTS Strategic Objectives are considered to be compatible with the equalities duties and provide an appropriate high-level platform from which to develop later stages of the RTS including generation and appraisal of transport options which will take full account of relevant equalities issues.
- 3.4.5 The review of the settled version of the 'Case for Change' has recommended that the specific outcomes of each Strategy Objective are articulated (including with reference to equalities issues) and that an over-arching 'Vision' is established for the RTS. These should be considered post-consultation alongside reviewing all comments received with respect to the 'Case for Change', with the recommendations used to inform the preparation of the Draft RTS in due course.

4 Next Steps

- 4.1.1 This Equalities Duties Report is being published for consultation alongside the 'Case for Change' which has been prepared by HITRANS (with support from Stantec) to underpin the preparation of the new RTS for the region. This forms part of a multi-stage process which will include a detailed options appraisal and future consultation on a full Draft RTS.
- 4.1.2 In accordance with best practice, relevant equalities duties have been applied from the outset and in tandem with the development of the emerging RTS to allow key equalities issues to inform the content of the new RTS. All consultation received in respect of the 'Case for Change' Report and this Equalities Duties Assessment Report will be reviewed and used to inform and (if required) refine the proposed Strategy Objectives and the process of RTS development.
- 4.1.3 The next stage will involve the development, sifting and appraisal of individual options to implement the proposed RTS Strategic Objectives (and thereby address all identified TPOs) through Stage 2 – Preliminary Options Appraisal of the STAG process. This will be undertaken in tandem with the application of the Equalities Assessment Framework (as well as the SEA Framework) to test and refine all emerging options for potential inclusion within the Draft RTS. Relevant equalities duties (detailed in **Section 2**) will therefore be applied as part of the iterative options development and appraisal process.
- 4.1.4 Outcomes of the appraisal process will inform the preparation of a full Draft RTS, which will be accompanied by a detailed Equalities Duties Report for consultation.

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