

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, including findings from a survey launched by HITRANS in February 2021 to gather views on transport across the Highlands & Islands. In addition to this survey, other reports and statistics accessed include the HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) 2008-2022 & Refresh 2018, HITRANS Annual Business Plan, RTS Monitoring Report, National Transport Strategy 2 (NTS2), the National Transport Survey 2019, HIE Impact of Covid-19 on the Highlands & Islands, and research from a variety of HITRANS project work.

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 23% aged over 65 compared to 19% in Scotland. Some areas have a particularly high proportion of older populations with both Argyll & Bute Council and Eilean Siar at 26% aged 65+ (shown in Table 1 below).

Table 1: Age Structure in the Highlands and Islands

	Total	Aged 0-15		Aged 16-64		Aged 65+	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Highland	235,830	39,039	17%	143,706	61%	53,088	23%
Moray	95,820	16,145	17%	58,959	62%	20,716	22%
Argyll & Bute	67,613	9,923	15%	40,169	59%	17,521	26%
Eilean Siar	26,720	4,254	16%	15,571	58%	6,895	26%
Orkney	22,270	3,582	16%	13,382	60%	5,306	24%
HITRANS	448,253	72,943	16%	271,787	61%	103,526	23%
<i>Scotland</i>	<i>5,463,300</i>	<i>921,397</i>	<i>17%</i>	<i>3,497,758</i>	<i>64%</i>	<i>1,044,145</i>	<i>19%</i>

Source: National Records of Scotland Mid-2019 Small Area Population Estimates

Covid-19 has 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 might 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 by 20% in the last 5 years compared to only 8% fall in the rest of Scotland. Similarly, there has been a 5% reduction in rail passenger journeys between 2015/16 and 2016/17 in the HITRANS area compared to an overall percentage change of 0.6% for Scotland.

Areas within the HITRANS region have been identified as some of the worst hit for job losses in Scotland due to Covid-19. Although the overall HITRANS region has lower unemployment rates than Scotland as a whole, the relative increase in unemployment since Covid-19 has increased at a faster rate in the HITRANS region – emphasising the impact the pandemic has had. The area experienced a 116% increase in unemployment rates¹ up to February 2021 from April 2020 compared to Scotland's 92%, with Eilean Siar (139% increase) and Highland (122% increase) having been hit hardest. The self-employed have also been negatively impacted by Covid-19 and the Highlands & Islands has a higher proportion of self-employed workers than in Scotland as a whole, with self-employed females at higher risk than males due to higher proportions working in at-risk sectors. Youth unemployment also continues to rise, adding to the existing issue examined by HIE that found transport results in a barrier to study for 31% of young people and a barrier to employment for 12% of young people.

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.

HITRANS Transport Equality Survey

HITRANS Transport Equality Survey was open for 4 weeks from February 2021-March 2021 and received 328 responses. The purpose of the survey was to gather views on transport across the Highlands and Islands, identify any key issues that could help to develop equalities outcomes, and support wider decision making on policies and processes. The findings will also help us to address matters to focus on when conducting future research.

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 have been 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 61% of the population, and 60% of our respondents were female compared to 51% of Scotland's population.

Key findings from the survey include:

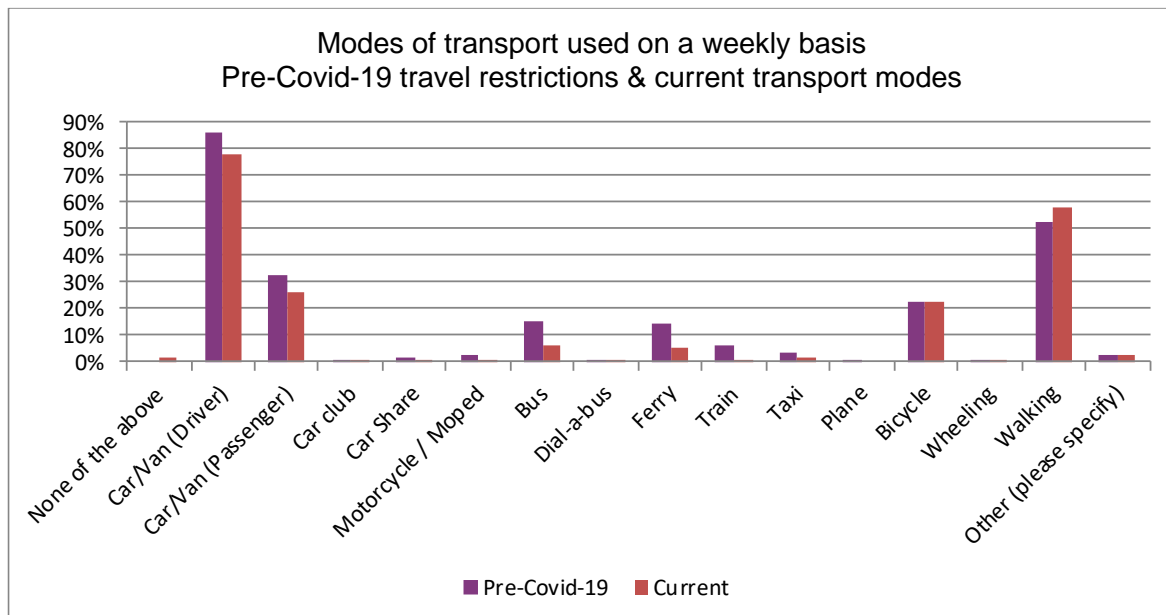
- Mode of transport pre-Covid-19 and currently are almost identical, except for a small reduction in bus, train, and ferry usage (expected due to Covid-19 travel restrictions and service changes)

¹ Claimant rates as a proportion of residents aged 16-64 between 04/2019-03/2020 and 04/2020-02/2021

- Respondents between the ages of under 18-54 are 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 who have a disability are disproportionately dissatisfied with public transportation
- Respondents who identify as female or non-binary are disproportionately dissatisfied with public transportation
- Respondents who are mixed race or identify as “other” ethnicity are 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 Scottish Household Survey which ranked the order as car/van as driver, walking, car/van as passenger and bus. The main differences are bicycle scoring higher in our survey as a more popular mode of transport, and bus scoring lower than the Scotland survey. There’s a distinct lack of car club usage or car sharing, even pre-Covid-19 prior to restrictions on shared transport.



Interestingly, there is little difference in transport modes when comparing travel prior to the pandemic and travel currently. Notable decreases are in public transport which were expected due to reduced services and travel restrictions. Bus use dropped from 15% to 6%, ferry from 15% to 5%, and train from 6% to 1%. Travelling by bicycle has remained the same, and walking has increased slightly from 53% to 58%.

Transport Influences

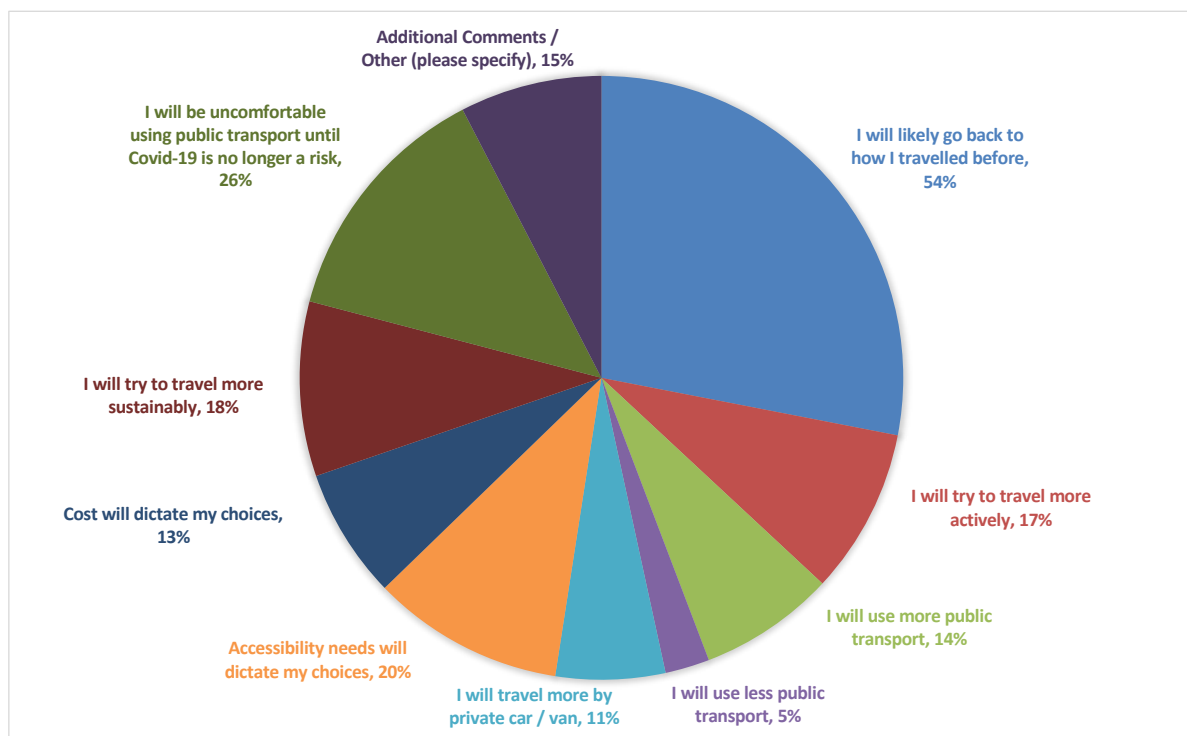
The most popular reason for selecting certain modes of transport was ease and convenience (77%), with price placing low in comparison (16%). It’s encouraging to see a total of 54% prioritising health and fitness reasons, and accessibility plays a large role in many respondent choices of transport modes (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 once restrictions allow. The majority of respondents selecting

'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.

Future Transport Choices

Respondents were asked what they thought their future travel choices might be post Covid-19 travel restrictions. 54% of respondents said that they will likely go back to how they travelled before. A high proportion of respondents travelled by private car/van prior to Covid-19 restrictions, and we would prefer to see a modal shift for people to travel more sustainably. Encouragingly, a combination of 35% of respondents said that they will try to travel more sustainably or more actively in the future. Also, 17% of respondents said that they will use more public transport compared to 5% stating that they will use less public transport – an encouraging statistic considering possible Covid-19 implications. However, fear of Covid-19 plays a key role in future travel choices for 26% of respondents who expressed they would feel uncomfortable using public transport until Covid-19 is no longer a risk, possibly aligning with the 11% of respondents who said they will travel more by private car/van. Accessibility needs will dictate 20% of respondent choices, and again price is a lower motivator than other factors with cost dictating choices for 13% of respondents.

Where respondents included comments, several noted the benefits of walking and wish to maintain this level of active travel going forward, and many acknowledged that more work can be done remotely so are hopeful to travel less. Several respondents noted they had an electric car for travel or will consider one in the future.



NB: respondents were invited to select all options that apply so responses do not total 100%.

Additional Findings

Additional key statistics captured from the survey include:

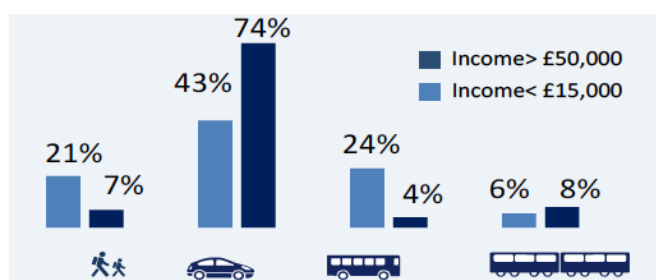
- 94% of respondents have access to at least one car/van as either a driver or passenger, aligning with the 2019 Scottish Household Survey of 90% in accessible rural areas having

access to one or more cars, suggesting that further promotion of liftshare or car clubs could encourage sustainable travel – however, 12% of respondents who consider themselves to have a disability have no access to a car/van

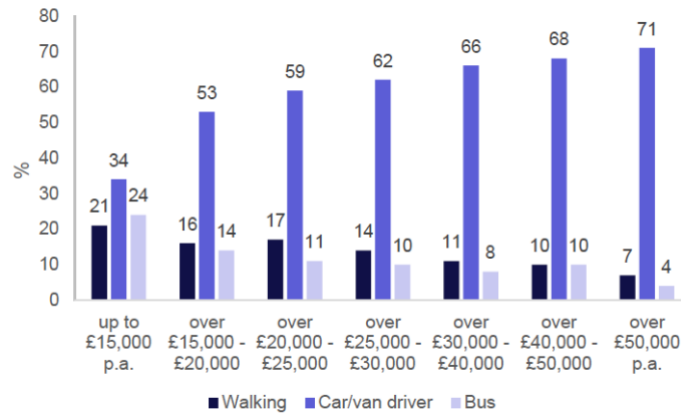
- The weighted average for satisfaction of public transport in the area was 2.65 out of 5 stars, with the majority (38%) selecting a 1- or 2-star rating
- The top 5 reasons for not using public transport are listed below, with many comments stating a lack of joined up services as reason not to travel 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)
 - Hltravel 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

Results from the **2019 Scottish Household Survey** on Transport and Travel in Scotland stated that wealthier people were more likely to drive or take the train to work and less likely to walk or catch the bus, highlighted by the tables below.



Journeys to work – mode of transport by household income (2019)



% of people taking the 3 most common methods of travel to work by household income (2019)

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.

People in rural areas are more likely to have driving licences compared to urban areas (86% vs. 63% respectively). Also, driving licence possession alters by ethnic group, gender, and household income. 77% of men aged over 17 hold driving licences compared to 66% of women, however the gap has narrowed significantly since 1999 (77% vs. 52% respectively). 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. 50% 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.

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.

	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%

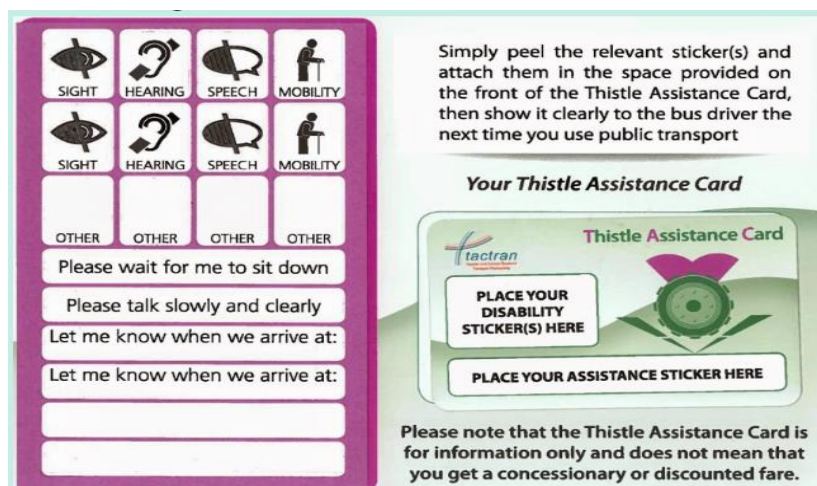
SABI table 4: Weekend scores (quintiles)

	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.



Thistle Assistance Card

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). The TV advert produced can be re-run and used to market the card elsewhere, and the campaign has increased engagement with transport operators and third sector organisations such as the McMillian Cancer Trust, Diabetes Scotland & Alzheimer Scotland. 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.

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	<p>People can have trouble accessing the transport network because of safety, comfort, availability, connectivity, information, and assistance</p> <p>Consideration of communication needs of different protected characteristics to ensure people have the information required to plan and undertake their journey</p>	<p>Eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not</p> <p>Eliminate discrimination in the planning and delivery of transport services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 Keep the HITRANS website updated and accessible 	<p>NTS2: Reduce inequalities, help to deliver inclusive economic growth and promote greener, cleaner choices</p> <p>RTS: Improve the quality and accessibility (availability, affordability, information, and integration) of travel</p>	<p>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.</p>

<p>Gather evidence to provide better understanding of transport inequalities</p>	<p>Limited information available at a regional level on protected characteristics views and use of transport</p>	<p>Gather information and data to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not</p> <p>Take steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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) 	<p>NTS2: Reduce inequalities</p> <p>RTS: Reduce barriers to participating in employment, learning, social, leisure, health, and cultural activities through the region</p>	<p>The baseline survey was launched February 2021. These baseline figures will be monitored regularly through research and engagement, and activities will change as appropriate.</p>
<p>Support the sustainability of regional transport networks</p>	<p>Protected characteristic groups are more likely to use public transport, but regional transport networks are at risk</p>	<p>Advance equality of opportunity in the planning and delivery of transport services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<p>NTS2: Reduce inequalities, help to deliver inclusive economic growth, improve health and wellbeing, and get people where they need to get to</p>	<p>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.</p>

			<p>services can be accessed when required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further work on the CivTech technology solution to gather data on transport across the area, vehicle capacity and service gaps • Promote the HItravel Liftshare car sharing web portal 	<p>RTS: Reduce barriers to participating in employment, learning, social, leisure, health, and cultural activities through the region</p>	<p>The data gathered through HITRANS CivTech solution will aim to support the sustainability of regional transport networks.</p>
<p>Improved access to public transport for those with mobility problems</p>	<p>People can have trouble accessing the transport network because of safety, comfort, availability, connectivity, information, and assistance</p>	<p>Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics</p> <p>Encourage people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where participation is disproportionately low</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<p>NTS2: Reduce inequalities, ensuring fair access to services we need that are easy to use for all</p> <p>RTS: Improve safety of transport and travel, improve the quality and accessibility of travel</p>	<p>HITRANS officers work closely with health, Council and voluntary sector to improve integration of specialist transport services</p>

<p>Perform equalities audits, assessment of project activities and a forum for consultation</p>	<p>Limited information available at a regional level on protected characteristics views and use of transport</p>	<p>Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<p>NTS2: Reduce inequalities and help make our communities great places to live</p> <p>RTS: Improve the quality and accessibility of travel</p>	<p>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.</p>
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