

Item:

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## Report to Partnership Meeting 4 February 2022

### PARTNERSHIP

#### Regional Transport Strategy Update

##### Purpose of Report

This report provides Members a proposed timeline and approach for updating the HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy.

##### Introduction

Following a report to the Partnership meeting in September 2021 which considered the scope and priorities for an updated Regional Transport Strategy, HITRANS officers have sought a proposal from transport consultants to support the Partnership develop a refreshed Strategy which will set out the vision and transport priorities for the area up to 2040.

##### Updating the HITRANS Regional Strategy

As required by Transport Scotland, our proposed approach to updating the Regional Transport Strategy will follow the sequence of steps set out in Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG). We therefore envisage producing a strategy document which will build on the work undertaken for the 2018 RTS update, subsequent National and Local transport strategies and the development of the Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2):

This will include:

- Setting out the context of the demographics, economy and transport supply side in the area
- Systematically setting out the transport problems which affect the area, with an emphasis on problems experienced by residents of, visitors to, and those doing business in the area – together with the travel and societal consequences of these problems, all linked to the supply side root causes of these problems
- Capturing the tackling of these problems in a set of Strategy Objectives with accompanying KPIs for the purposes of monitoring and evaluation. We will also consider whether the setting of targets is appropriate for an RTS.
- Setting out the means to achieve these objectives under a range of strategy ‘themes’, under which we will:
  - Develop a range of **policies** (essentially position statements) which subsequent studies can use to indicate whether proposals are consistent with regional policy – these would also encapsulate the types of project which would be supported by the RTS
  - Develop a range of **actions** for HITRANS with respect to each of these themes – these actions should then form the basis of HITRANS’s activities over the RTS period, essentially a ‘to do’ list for the partnership which could include e.g., the delivery of projects, support to third parties in delivering projects, undertaking research and appraisal etc.
  - Individual project aspiration will be included within the RTS Delivery Plan which HITRANS will review on a regular basis to that it is comprehensive and up to date.

## Case for Change

The Case for Change (CfC) stage is the foundation of the RTS as it establishes and evidences the key issues which the RTS will deal with and captures these in a set of Strategy Objectives which are linked to the national policy context.

In the Case for Change, we will set out the Policy Context in which the RTS sits and also review and update the policy context as presented in the current RTS.

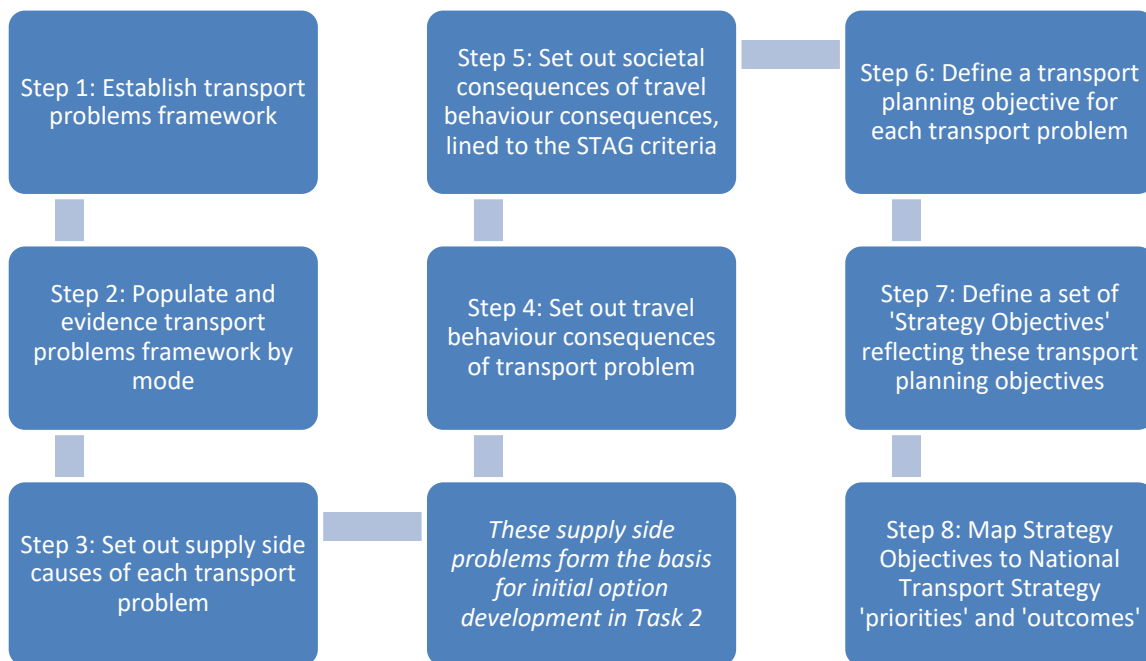
The recent publication of the National Transport Strategy, 20% car reduction route map and STPR2 and NPF4 means there is a degree of policy clarity at a national level within which the Regional Strategy will sit. HITRANS will also review and update the constituent local authority policy context and also the key issues from a regional perspective, including HIE, Regional Economic Forums and Community Planning Partnerships.

The HITRANS area is the largest and most diverse of any of the RTPs ranging from a city and its hinterland to most of Scotland's Island communities and the most rural and poorly connected areas on the mainland. The scope is also broad, with ferry and (internal and external) air services prominent as well as rail, bus and road. Some of Scotland's key ports are also in the area, particularly in the context of the emerging offshore wind sector. We will also set out the challenges and opportunities in terms of active and integrated travel.

There are a large number of settlements, performing a range of functions such as local centre, sub-regional centre, regional centre etc. in terms of for example healthcare provision, transport and retail. Different parts of the area also have strong links to different cities outside the area, for example looking to Glasgow, Edinburgh or Aberdeen as 'their' major city. In the CfC we will therefore:

- Consider all of the significant settlements in the HITRANS area and establish a broad regional hierarchy, reflective of e.g., service provision and employment patterns
- Develop a high-level analysis of the demographics and economy of the area, including tourism – reflecting the hierarchy developed above
- Set out the factual position with respect to the transport supply side in the context of this regional hierarchy and transport connectivity, including external links – this supply side analysis will include the current delivery mechanisms for transport services across the region. We will develop a range of connectivity indicators to illustrate the current transport supply side.
- Set out the transport demand side considering transport and travel volumes and patterns by mode for both people and freight. This will include specific consideration of peaks in travel associated with tourism which is a key issue for the Highlands and Islands.
- Briefly outline the main societal and technological changes which the RTS will have to be developed in the context of – this will include the most recent understanding of the evidence concerning post-COVID-19 travel behaviours.

Having set out the policy and regional context, the transport supply and demand side as well as how this may evolve in response to societal and behavioural change, we will undertake a process to identify transport problems and link these through to strategy objectives. The chart below outlines eight steps we will follow in developing this.



In Step 1, we will consider all the aspects which define any trip including:

- All modes of travel: awareness of travel options; cost of travel; fuel / power issues; integration of travel between modes (e.g., bus to ferry); journey information; journey quality; journey times; personal security (fear of crime); personal accessibility – being able to access transport networks and services specifically from a disability / protected group perspective; reliability of journey times (including public transport service punctuality); safety (transport); travel emissions
- Public transport services specifically: capacity; comfort; connectivity (availability of services); ease of use / convenience; integration between services (within mode, e.g., bus to bus); service reliability (cancellations); timetables (first and last / frequency)

A key part of developing the CfC will be engagement, both with the public and stakeholders. This engagement is important in ensuring that all who wished to contribute could but also in evidencing the problems (and indeed providing geographical referencing to problems). However, we are also aware of the range of engagement exercises carried out recently so will look to tailor this to ensure that it is as effective as possible and we will look to utilise a mixture on open online consultation but also transport forums such as the Ferry Stakeholder Groups, Community Planning Partnerships, and also our partner Council's Committee structures.

At the conclusion of the CfC, we will propose a number of 'strategy themes', where each theme will form a chapter of the Draft RTS. These themes will represent the main issues to which the RTS will set out a response. The themes could incorporate responses to the supply side problems identified here, and also responses to the opportunities provided by the new policy context and new transport technologies and societal change.

We will then look to consult on the draft CfC Report itself through an online platform where feedback can be provided via a respondent survey. This feedback will be focused on whether people agree or disagree with:

- The range of problems identified
- The resulting strategy vision and objectives
- The emerging 'strategy themes' which will be developed in the Draft RTS

The feedback from this consultation process will be used to finalise the CfC report.

### **Option Development and Appraisal**

In the RTS context, 'options' can take a number of forms. These could include:

- Named capital / infrastructure projects
- The concept of types of capital / infrastructure projects
- Named revenue funded projects
- The concept of types of revenue funded projects
- Policies – or more specifically the desired outputs of policies
- Other initiatives

Once a long list of options has been generated - derived in the first instance from the supply side problems identified in the CfC but also all the options and aspirations which emerged from the STPR2 and RTS consultations. We will use this to populate the initial 'long list' linked to Step 3 in the above flowchart. Building on lessons learned and work undertaken in previous RTS studies, we will then:

- Undertake an option development process which outlines the option in more detail in the HITRANS context, and this could include any specific aspirations. This development process would include case studies of where a similar initiative has been implemented elsewhere.
- Undertake a high-level appraisal (broadly equivalent to the STAG Preliminary Options Appraisal) of each option against the Strategy Objectives and the current STAG Criteria.

The above analysis will be reported in an Option Development and Appraisal Report. These options will then form the basis of the policies and actions which will be developed in the Draft RTS.

### **Draft RTS and Consultation**

In parallel with the Case for Change and Option Generation, the structure of the Draft RTS will be developed. The Draft RTS will include substantive chapters setting out a comprehensive range of policies and actions which will provide a framework for the development of regional and local transport across the HITRANS area for the RTS period.

The Draft RTS will be subject to a 12-week consultation period. This consultation will include all statutory impact assessments.

### **Final RTS**

Following the consultation on the Draft RTS we will collate all the responses, reviewing all the comments and incorporate these where appropriate in the Final RTS. Following approval by the Partnership Board, this will then be submitted to Scottish Ministers for approval.

### **Impact Assessment**

The process of impact assessment runs in parallel to all of the above steps and is focussed on the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA).

The objectives of the EqIA are to integrate the consideration of relevant equalities issues and impacts into the development of the RTS and to demonstrate compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty, the Fairer Scotland Duty, Child Rights and Wellbeing duties.

Our current understanding is that the only equalities duties applicable to HITRANS on a statutory duty are the public sector equality duty and the Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA). This EqIA will however also address the Fairer Scotland and Child Rights and Wellbeing duties insofar as relevant to the RTS on a voluntary basis, as these relate to issues affecting the transport system and apply on a statutory basis to HITRANS's constituent local authorities and NHS health boards.

The main steps in the process are as follows:

- SEA and Equalities Scoping
- Case for Change Report - SEA Environmental Report and Equalities Duties Report
- Preliminary Appraisal and STAG and Equalities Appraisal
- Draft RTS (SEA Environmental Report and Equalities Report)
- Final RTS
- Post Adoption Statement

### **Timescales**

Subject to Member approval of the proposal outlined in this report it is hoped that the updating of the HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy - starting with work to develop the Case for Change – can commence at the earliest opportunity.

Given the timing of the Local Elections in May, Officers will have to ensure that any public consultation and engagement is tailored around the local election timetable. However, it is hoped that work on the RTS can progress over the summer with a view to consulting HITRANS new Partnership Board on the emerging RTS at the partnership meeting in September ahead of the statutory public consultation on a draft document.

### RTS Delivery

Impact - Positive

Comment – The work to refresh the Regional Transport Strategy seeks to update the Delivery Plan

### Policy

Impact - Positive

Comment – This work helps set new policies and objectives for HITRANS that are relevant to the framework within which the Partnership now sits.

### Financial

Impact – Positive

Budget line and value – Funding for developing the Regional Transport Strategy Update has been identified in the HITRANS Business Plan 2021/22 with an allocation of £50,000 anticipated this year. A similar budget is anticipated in 2022/23 in order to finalise the RTS including the statutory Impact Assessments for submitting to Scottish Ministers for approval.

### Equality

Impact – Positive

Comment – Updating the Regional Transport Strategy offers an opportunity to address both transport and wider inequalities across the region

### **Recommendation**

Members are invited to:

1. Note the report
2. Approve the proposal and approach to updating the HITRANS Regional Strategy set out in the report.

**Report by:** Neil MacRae  
**Designation:** Partnership Manager  
**Date:** 26<sup>th</sup> January 2022