

Item:

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## **Report to Partnership Meeting 6 October 2022**

### **PARTNERSHIP**

#### **Regional Transport Strategy Update**

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

This report provides Members with an update on the Regional Transport Strategy development as it enters the Case for Change stage.

##### **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 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. The commission of this support was approved by the Partnership Board in February 2022.

##### **Overview of Case for Change Report**

The Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 created the framework for Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs), effectively recognising the need for cross-boundary transport strategy, planning and delivery. The guidance for the development of a Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) states, in summary, that the RTP must *seek to identify the present and future transport needs of the region, practical means of addressing these needs, and set out how transport in the region will be provided, developed, improved and operated so as to: promote safety; enhance social and economic well-being; promote sustainability; conserve and enhance the environment; promote social inclusion and equal opportunities; improve access to healthcare; and foster integration between modes and with cross-boundary routes.*

The current HITRANS RTS was first published in 2008 and was refreshed in 2017. The Transport (Scotland) Act states that RTPs should keep their RTS under review and modify or create a new one as necessary. Given wider socio-economic changes and the evolving policy environment, there is a recognition that a new RTS is now required. HITRANS has therefore commissioned Stantec UK Ltd to produce this new RTS. The new RTS will set the strategic framework for the development of transport in the HITRANS region over the next 20 years with the aim of delivering a transport system that reduces inequalities, takes climate action, helps deliver inclusive economic growth, and improves the health and wellbeing of people in the HITRANS region.

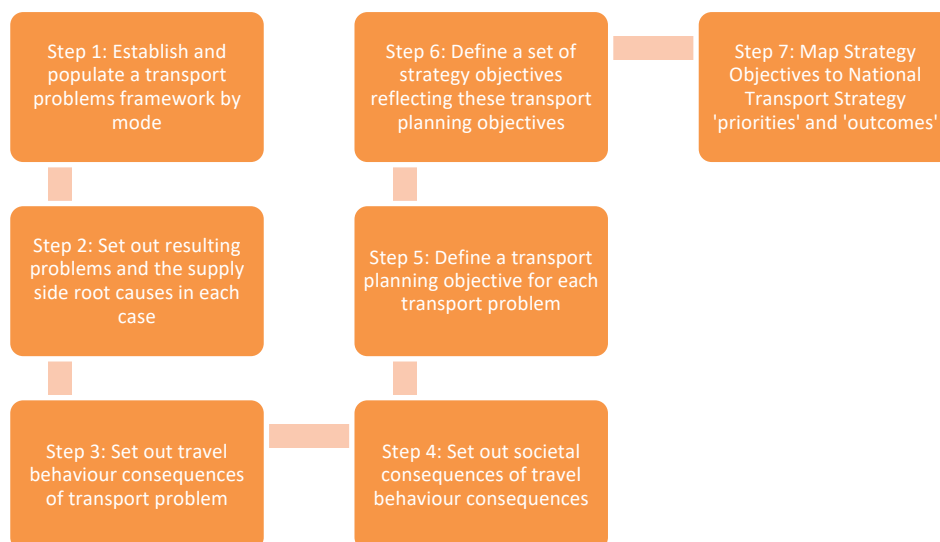
The RTS development process must broadly follow STAG (Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance) and the first step is to clearly establish the Case for Change to set the scene for the subsequent options appraisal and development of the strategy. As well as a clear expression of the context in which the RTS must sit, the key output is a set of evidenced and logically derived strategy objectives.

The Case for Change report is structured into six chapters:

- Chapter 2 provides a socio-economic profile of the HITRANS region covering: population, population age profile, net-migration, long term population trends and projections, urban-rural classification, car availability, deprivation and second home ownership, the structure of the regional economy, labour markets, healthcare and tourism in the region
- Chapter 3 sets out the national policy context in which the RTS sits – this sets out a range of recent transport and related policies which provides a new context for the development of the RTS, with a focus on the issues covered by the National Transport Strategy 2
- Chapter 4 provides an analysis of transport in the HITRANS region, taking each mode of travel in turn and focussing on the range of transport problems which the RTS will seek to address. The analysis covers: transport networks in the region; recent trends in travel by mode; active travel and barriers to walking and cycling; bus and coach services; the rail network; ferry services including capacity and reliability; road-based journey times and journey time reliability; personal injury accidents on the roads; electric vehicles and charging infrastructure; aviation; and emissions (total and transport)
- Chapter 5 sets out the range of technological and behavioural changes which may affect the transport sector over the life of the RTS, and therefore which must be taken into account when developing the RTS including: alternative fuels, shared mobility, mobility-as-a-service, automation, long-term travel trends; and the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Chapter 6 then builds on the findings of the previous chapters and sets out a structured approach to the development of Strategy Objectives.

The Case for Change has been developed in parallel with an Equalities Impact Assessment and a Strategic Environmental Assessment process.

Setting Strategy Objectives is therefore a key part of the Case for Change process. The analysis undertaken for the Case for Change has formed the basis of a structured process to develop these Strategy Objectives, broadly following the process set out below:



In considering transport in the region by mode of travel, this structured approach has led to the development of a comprehensive set of over 160 'transport problems'. A Transport Planning Objective has been set in relation to each problem and these have been aggregated into the following six Strategy Objectives:

***Strategy Objective 1 - To make a just transition to a post-carbon and more environmentally sustainable transport network***

Why? – Scotland has a target to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2045 and transport is a key sector in terms of carbon emissions. Our transport networks must adapt to fulfil this target in a fair and equitable manner, whilst also being developed in as environmentally sustainable a way as possible.

***Strategy Objective 2 – To transform, and provide safe connections between Inverness, our towns and our villages, to enable walking, wheeling and cycling for all***

Why? – to allow everyone to walk, wheel and cycle more, leading to more local living patterns, greater inclusion, healthier lifestyles, and reduced car use - the latter leading to reduced emissions / noise etc and improved road safety

***Strategy Objective 3 – To widen access to public and shared transport and improve connectivity within and to / from the region***

Why? – to give people new travel choices, allowing them to: (i) use public or shared transport options to make journeys they previously could not make; or (ii) to use public or shared transport instead of the car - leading to lower levels of car use and reduced emissions / noise etc., as well as improved road safety. This objective is also important in encouraging inclusive economic growth by widening labour markets.

***Strategy Objective 4 – To improve the quality and integration of public and shared transport within and to / from the region***

Why? – to make public and shared transport more attractive and competitive with car-based travel. This will improve the travel experience for existing public transport users and encourage people to use public or shared transport instead of the car, leading to lower levels of car use and reduced emissions / noise etc and improved road safety

***Strategy Objective 5: To ensure reliable, resilient, affordable and sustainable connectivity for all to our island, peninsular and remoter communities***

Why? – some of our island and peninsular communities have suffered from pronounced connectivity difficulties in recent years. This has wide-ranging impacts on these communities and this objective recognises the need to tackle this issue. Delivering on this objective will provide the foundation for the long-term sustainability and success of these vulnerable communities.

***Strategy Objective 6 – To improve the efficiency, safety and resilience of our transport networks for people and freight, and mitigate the impacts of climate change***

Why? – our transport systems must be safe and able to adapt to changing demands (e.g., tourism patterns, trade) and be resilient in the face of climate change. This objective is important in allowing the economy of the HITRANS region to prosper.

The draft Case for Change and associated impact assessment reports will be open for public and stakeholder consultation for a period of four weeks. We will seek views primarily on: (i) whether people think the transport problems of the region have been effectively captured in the Case for Change; and (ii) to what extent people agree or otherwise with the Strategy Objectives.

The next step in the process will be to develop options which respond to the problems identified here and qualitatively appraise these in the context of the prevailing policy, the Strategy Objectives and the STAG criteria.

#### 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 and 2022/23.

#### 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

**Report by:** Ranald Robertson  
**Designation:** Partnership Director  
**Date:** 6<sup>th</sup> September 2022