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Report to Partnership Meeting 10 November 2023

PARTNERSHIP

Regional Transport Strategy Update

Purpose of Report

This report provides Members with an update on the development of a new Regional Transport Strategy.

Introduction and Background

HITRANS has a statutory duty under the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 to produce a Regional Transport Strategy (RTS). Working with local authority partners, HITRANS is in the process of producing a new RTS for the development of transport in the region over the next circa 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 region.***

The development of the RTS involves three broad stages:

- **Stage 1: The Case for Change** - this initial stage has set out the transport problems in the HITRANS region and established a set of Strategy Objectives focused on addressing these problems.
- **Stage 2: Option Generation and Preliminary Options Appraisal** - this stage involves generating, developing and appraising a set of options which help to resolve the problems identified and deliver the Strategy Objectives.
- **Stage 3: RTS Document** - this stage collates the outputs from the above activities into an RTS document ahead of statutory consultation.

Following a public consultation on the initial Case for Change and parallel Impact Assessments, copies of the final versions of each of these documents together with the Case for Change Technical Note can be found on the HITRANS website via this link;

[www.hitrans.org.uk/Strategy/Regional Transport Strategy](http://www.hitrans.org.uk/Strategy/Regional%20Transport%20Strategy)

Members and Partnership Advisors were subsequently invited to provide feedback on the Draft Preliminary Appraisal Report and approved the proposed structure for developing the Regional Transport Strategy at the last Partnership meeting in Orkney. Following this meeting, HITRANS officers have been working with Stantec (who have been commissioned to support the development of the HITRANS RTS) to develop an initial working draft of policies and actions that will support the delivery of RTS Strategy Objectives, and by extension address the transport problems identified.

A copy of the draft policies and actions table is attached as Appendix A to this report and Members and Advisors are invited to provide feedback on this initial draft so that a finalised version can be consulted upon as a core element of the final draft Regional Transport Strategy.

Next Steps

Following an initial discussion at the Partnership Meeting, officers will arrange meetings with each partner Council to discuss the draft set of policies and actions (attached in Appendix A to this report) in more detail. The set of actions identified will need to be reviewed and updated on a regular basis and will set out how HITRANS will implement the policies identified in the Strategy, informing its annual Business Plan.

The final Regional Transport Strategy will be accompanied by an Action Plan, that identifies the actions HITRANS will take to progress each policy.

RTS Delivery Timescale

Milestone	Date
'Case for Change' consultation	Complete
Preliminary Options Appraisal	Complete
Draft RTS and associated SEA, EqIA and ICIA	16 th January 2024 ahead of 2 nd February Partnership Meeting
Finalise Draft RTS reporting package	w/c 5 th February 2024
Draft RTS Statutory Consultation	w/c 5 th February to April 2024 (12 weeks)
Final RTS	May 2024
Post-consultation SEA Technical Note and Equalities Note	May 2024
Submission of RTS to Scottish Ministers	June 2024
Post-adoption SEA Statement	July / August 2024.

Key Stakeholder Engagement

Officers are considering how the key priorities and policies emerging from the updated Regional Transport Strategy are promoted and communicated in addition to the statutory 12 week public consultation of the draft document. Consideration has previously been given for HITRANS to seek a sponsor for an event at Holyrood that is focussed on the opportunities and challenges relating to strategic transport within the Highlands and Islands. Members are invited to consider whether the development or launch of the Regional Transport Strategy offers a useful opportunity to host such an event or if there are other similar opportunities that officers should be exploring?

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 for 2023/24.

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. Consider and provide feedback on the draft policies and actions identified to address the options developed through the development of the initial stages in the RTS report and attached as Appendix A to this report
3. Agree that HITRANS Chair and Partnership Director consider opportunities to support the launch of the HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy

Report by: Neil MacRae

Designation: Partnership Manager

Date: 2nd November 2023