

Item:

7



Report to Partnership Meeting 26 April 2024

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

Regional Transport Strategy Update

Purpose of Report

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

Background and Progress to Date

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 comments received after the last Partnership meeting in February, a final version of the draft Regional Transport Strategy has been prepared ahead of statutory public consultation.

Statutory Consultation

The statutory eight-week consultation period begins on Friday 19 April and runs until Friday 14 June during which time the public is invited to comment on the Strategy and associated policies by completing a survey on the material provided.

An online StoryMap sets out an overview of the RTS development process; a summary of the RTS vision and strategy objectives, themes and policies; the draft RTS and supporting documents and a survey on the material presented. It can be read at this link [HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com)

Hard copies of the documentation can be inspected or are available from HITRANS Office in Inverness (Town House, 1 High Street, Inverness IV11JJ).

Following the review of the public consultation, HITRANS will seek Ministerial approval of the finalised Regional Transport Strategy, at which point we will also publish a Delivery Plan that will set out our priorities for implementing the Strategy. The Delivery Plan will be updated regularly, providing an opportunity to reset or realign priorities to the changing political, social, environmental and economic landscape.

HITRANS would be grateful of partners support in publicising the statutory consultation to help ensure that there is as wide a response as possible. Officers are also still considering opportunities for further key stakeholder engagement on the RTS including seeking a sponsor for an event at Holyrood as discussed at the previous partnership meeting.

Risk Register

RTS Delivery

Impact - Positive

Comment:

The work to refresh the Regional Transport Strategy will involve the development of a new Delivery Plan that will be updated every 5 years or council term

Policy

Impact - Positive

Comment:

This work helps set new policies and objectives for HITRANS that are relevant to the policy and governance framework within which the Partnership currently sits.

Financial

Impact – Positive

Budget line and value – Funding for developing the Regional Transport Strategy Update was identified in the HITRANS Business Plan for 2023/24.

Equality

Impact – Positive

Comment:

Updating the Regional Transport Strategy offers an opportunity to comprehensively review both transport and wider inequalities across the region. Parallel Impact Assessments including Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Equalities Impact Assessment Report (EqIA) and an Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA) have been undertaken to inform each stage in the development of the RTS.

Recommendation

Members are invited to:

1. Note the report

Report by: Neil MacRae

Designation: Partnership Manager

Date: 17th April 2026