

Item:
11



Report to Partnership Board 20.09.24

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

Route and Branch: HITRANS Rail Strategy

Purpose of Report

To inform the Board on the proposal to create a HITRANS Rail Strategy.

Background

In 2006 HITRANS, HIE and Highland Rail Partnership funded Room for Growth, a major report making the case for rail development in the HITRANS area. This led to two STPR 1 projects being taken forward: Highland Main Mile and Aberdeen-Inverness, although both have not been delivered as planned.

In 2012 we commissioned a suite of reports and studies to inform our submission to the ScotRail 2014 franchise consultation process.

All Change

Since 2014 a number of significant changes have occurred, including:

- the establishment of Scotland's Railway bringing Network Rail Scotland and ScotRail into an alliance
- changed travel behaviour as a result of Covid
- the nationalisation of ScotRail and Caledonian Sleepers
- the nationalisation of LNER
- the drive to Net Zero 2045
- the 20% vehicle miles reduction target
- the Rail Decarbonisation Action Plan
- rail freight growth targets
- Community Rail Partnerships
- the creation of Scottish Rail Holdings
- Request to Stop
- Inverness Airport Station
- Inverness and Cromarty Forth Green Freeport

With the finalisation of our 2024 Regional Transport Strategy it is now time to create a rail specific daughter document to our RTS.

Change

There are a number of key drivers that will result in changes to our network:

- the refreshed Decarbonisation Action Plan
- rolling stock replacement programme
- STPR2
- fares reform and ticketing developments
- focus on resilience impacted by climate change

Route and Branch

The study will identify shortcomings in our network and identify areas for development so that the railway plays its role in the move to Net Zero. Key to this will be decarbonised rolling stock and efficient freight on rail. We will work with colleagues at Nestrans, Tactran and SPT where we have overlapping interests.

RISK REGISTER

RTS Delivery

Impact –Mode shift, integration, decongestion, net zero, interchange with other modes, ability to do a day's work in key locations

Policy

Impact –STPR2, Rail Decarbonisation, transport efficiency, NTS2 vehicle miles reduction

Financial

Impact – The c. £50k study will be fully funded by HITRANS over the two financial years 2024-5 and 2025-6

Equality

Impact – Accessibility for all at stations and on rolling stock

Recommendation

1. Members are asked to approve the commencement of this work.

Report by: Frank Roach
Designation: Partnership Manager, HITRANS
Date: 02 Sept 2024