

Item:

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Report to Partnership Meeting 20th September 2024

PARTNERSHIP

Regional Transport Strategy

Purpose of Report

This report provides Members with an update on the development of a new Regional Transport Strategy and invites members to formally approve the Strategy that will then be submitted to Cabinet Secretary for their approval along with all supporting Impact Assessments and other supporting documents.

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 has produced 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 has involved three broad stages:

- **Stage 1: The Case for Change** - this initial stage set out the transport problems in the HITRANS region and established a set of Strategy Objectives focused on addressing these problems. A public consultation was then undertaken to help ensure that the Case for Change had fully captured the transport problems and also to invite feedback on the Strategy Objectives.
- **Stage 2: Option Generation and Preliminary Options Appraisal** - this stage involved generating, developing and appraising a set of options which help to resolve the problems identified and deliver the Strategy Objectives.
- **Stage 3: RTS Document** – the final stage involved collation of the outputs from the above activities into a final draft Regional Transport Strategy document which was then followed by a statutory public consultation on the final RTS and supporting documents.

Statutory Consultation

The statutory eight-week public consultation on the draft Regional Transport Strategy ran from Friday 19 April until Friday 14 June 2024. An online StoryMap was used to set 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 along with an online survey on the material presented. Hard copies of the documents were also available on request and at HITRANS office in Inverness.

An RTS Consultation Note is attached as **Appendix B** to this report. The Consultation Note summarises the consultation on the Draft HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy and includes responses to all written comments provided, together with a note on where the Draft RTS has been amended to reflect a comment.

All comments have been reported verbatim – they have not been modified in any way, including to account for eg. spelling, grammar etc. This document is primarily intended for internal use by HITRANS and its constituent authorities. It has not been prepared as a public facing document.

Attached as **Appendix A** to this report is a copy of the final Regional Transport Strategy incorporating all the changes from the pre-consultation draft following the statutory public consultation including those captured within the Consultation Note (Appendix B).

Next Steps

Following the Board meeting, and subject to approval by the Board, a final version of the RTS will be developed into a presentable form, incorporating high resolution images, and plans to be approved by Chair and Vice Chair.

This final version of the Regional Transport Strategy and supporting documents including all the parallel Impact Assessments: Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Equalities Impact Assessment Report (EqIA) and an Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA) will then be submitted to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport for approval.

In parallel, officers will finalise work on the first Delivery Plan and Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. Members and Advisors have already input to a draft version of the Delivery Plan earlier this year and a final draft will be submitted to the Board following approval of Regional Transport Strategy by Scottish Ministers. The intention is to regularly update the Delivery Plan, providing an opportunity to reset or realign priorities to the changing political, social, environmental and economic landscape.

There will also be consideration of how the strategy and action plans for specific areas such as rail and active travel that sit underneath the RTS will be updated.

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
2. Approve the amended text for the final HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy, as contained in **Appendix A** to this report;
3. Instruct officers to finalise the production of the strategy into a final format, including images, infographics, case studies and maps;
4. Authorise the Chair and Vice Chairs to approve a final version, taking account of any comments and amendments sought by the Board;
5. Instruct officers to submit the final strategy to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, as soon as practicable;

Report by: Neil MacRae
Designation: Partnership Manager
Date: 13th September 2024