

Item:
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Report to Partnership Meeting 28th November 2024

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

Regional Transport Strategy

Purpose of Report

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

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 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.

Following amendments made in response to feedback received through the statutory public consultation, Members approved a final version of the Regional Transport Strategy at the last Partnership meeting in Stornoway in September.

A copy of the final version of the Regional Transport Strategy, together with supporting documents (that included all the parallel Impact Assessments: Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Equalities Impact Assessment Report (EqIA) and an Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA)) was then submitted to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport for approval on 4th October. It is anticipated that a response will be received within two months of submitting the documentation.

Following receipt of a response, Officers hope to be in a position to submit the final Regional Transport Strategy for adoption at the next Partnership meeting in February.

Delivery Plan

HITRANS Regional Transport Partnership sets out a long -term, strategic framework for transport in the Highlands and Islands. Its delivery will be dependent on a combination of actions by HITRANS, partner local authorities, Transport Scotland and wider partnership working with other key local and national organisations.

To guide the implementation of the RTS, a Delivery Plan will be prepared to accompany the strategy. The purpose of the Delivery Plan is to set out a series of actions including an ongoing programme of physical and non -physical interventions which will deliver the objectives defined in the RTS. Members and Advisors have already input to a draft version of the Delivery Plan prior to the statutory consultation. Officers are currently updating this based on the final version of the Strategy that was submitted to the Cabinet Secretary.

This document will constitutes the first of the Delivery Plans that accompany the RTS. It is proposed that the Delivery Plan will be reviewed and updated throughout the lifetime of the strategy as part of the ongoing monitoring process which will be undertaken every two years. This will provide an opportunity to reset or realign priorities to the changing political, social, environmental and economic landscape.

The Delivery Plan will focus on the actions which will be taken by HITRANS although in many instances the outcomes that are sought could be delivered by partner organisations.

All actions within the Delivery Plan will be closely linked to the RTS priorities as well as being set within the context of the Vision, Strategy Objectives and RTS Themes.

A draft version of the first Delivery Plan will be presented at the next HITRANS Partnership meeting in February.

Risk Register

RTS Delivery

Impact - Positive

Comment:

The work to refresh the Regional Transport Strategy will involve the development of an 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: 30th October 2024