HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy

SEA Environmental Report - Non-Technical Summary

On behalf of HITRANS Regional Transport Partnership

Project Ref: 330610615 | Date: April 2024

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The new Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) for the HITRANS region for the HITRANS' Regional Transport Partnership (RTP) has been prepared. The RTS provides the strategic framework for the development of transport, within HITRANS region for a period of 20-years. It sets out the transport problems within the HITRANS region and how HITRANS proposes to respond to them with the aim of contributing to the priorities of National Transport Strategy 2 (NTS2), namely 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 HITRANS region.

1.1.2 The emerging RTS has been developed in line with the principles of the refreshed Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) and marks the final stage in a three-stage process which involved the delivery of a Case for Change Report (developed in September 2022) and a Preliminary Options Appraisal Report (developed in June 2023). The findings are documented in the HITRANS RTS SEA Environmental Report (the 'ER'). This report provides a Non-Technical Summary (NTS) of the full HITRANS draft RTS SEA ER.

1.2 Purpose and Objectives

1.2.1 The purpose of SEA is to identify, assess and evaluate the likely significant environmental effects of a qualifying plan, programme or strategy. A key objective of SEA is also to enhance the environmental performance of a plan or programme. This is achieved through identifying any likely significant effects from implementation of the plan or programme as drafted, proposing mitigation measures to address any identified significant adverse environmental effects, and identifying enhancement measures where relevant to improve the overall performance of the plan or programme. As such, SEA is an integral part of good policy development.

1.2.2 The purpose of this NTS is to provide a summary of the findings of the SEA carried out for the HITRANS draft RTS to aid public consultation on both documents. This NTS and the associated full ER which accompanies the draft RTS respond to the relevant statutory requirements, consider the evolution of the draft RTS to date and present an assessment of the likely significant environmental effects from the draft RTS.

1.3 Consultation on this Environmental Report

This SEA Environmental Report and its Non-Technical Summary were published for consultation alongside the Draft RTS which has been prepared by HITRANS together with supporting reports including the Equalities Duties Report.

1.3.1 The Draft RTS and supporting assessment reports, including this environmental assessment, were published for consultation from 19th April 2024 for eight weeks. The consultation process reached a broad range of stakeholders and the general public who have been able to provide their feedback through a dedicated website facility (see below). The Draft RTS and SEA Environmental Report, together with other supporting reports, have been made available for public access on the HITRANS website (HITRANS - Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership). The documents were also made available in hard copy for inspection at the principal offices of HITRANS.

1.3.2 Details of how to participate in the consultation were published by HITRANS and, in accordance with statutory requirements, an advert was placed in a local newspaper inviting expressions of interest and stating where a copy of the relevant plan could be inspected. A

web-based consultation facility was established with access to the online feedback forms available on the HITRANS website.

1.3.3 The SEA Environmental Report and a copy of the Draft RTS (the 'relevant documents') were also provided to the SEA Consultation Authorities via the Scottish Government's SEA Gateway for formal consultation on the Strategy and the SEA under the requirements of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005.

1.3.4 The feedback from SEA Consultation Authorities has been received and included in this ER.

Other Related Appraisals

1.3.5 This SEA has been undertaken in parallel with an assessment of the equalities impacts of the RTS, incorporating an Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA).

1.3.6 With regards to Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA), HITRANS recognises and supports the importance of HRA for any programme or project which may have Likely Significant Effects (LSEs) on European sites. The policies in the RTS are not however location specific (with the exception of proposals to dual the A9 and A96, which are subject to their own Transport Scotland-led consenting process) and it is therefore difficult to undertake meaningful HRA screening at this stage. HITRANS commits to undertake appropriate HRA assessment of programmes and projects emerging from the RTS at the appropriate juncture.

2 Context

2.1 HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy

2.1.1 The RTS has been developed through an extensive process of transport planning in combination with policy development, stakeholder and public consultation, environmental and equalities appraisal and input. The plan development has also drawn on extensive baseline analysis and from consultation feedback as the Strategy has developed.

2.1.2 The RTS explains the process of transport problem analysis at the Case for Change stage, the development of Vision and Strategy Objectives and the Preliminary Options Appraisal. The RTS Vision states:

Our transport networks and services will act to realise the economic potential of our region through reducing the actual and perceived impacts of distance, poor resilience and low population density. By doing this, they will facilitate economically and socially valuable activities for all, provide equality of opportunity, enable people to live active and healthy lives and allow our region to contribute fully to the national net zero emissions target.

2.1.3 To implement this Vision, six draft Strategy objectives are identified:

- **Strategy Objective 1:** To make a just transition to a post-carbon and more environmentally sustainable transport network.
- **Strategy Objective 2:** To transform and provide safe and accessible connections between and within our city, towns and villages, to enable walking, wheeling and cycling for all.
- **Strategy Objective 3:** To widen access to public and shared transport and improve connectivity within and from / to the region.
- **Strategy Objective 4:** To improve the quality and integration of public and shared transport within and from / to the region.
- **Strategy Objective 5:** To ensure reliable, resilient, affordable and sustainable connectivity for all from / to our island, peninsular and remote communities.
- **Strategy Objective 6:** To improve the efficiency, safety and resilience of our transport networks for people and freight and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

2.1.4 To implement these RTS Objectives, 11 Themes are used as a framework for the RTS, each setting out a series of Priorities. The Priorities articulate the key policy focus and intention of the RTS and will be used to take forward more detailed and specific interventions in future stages of implementation of the Strategy, including through a proposed Action Plan.

2.1.5 At each stage, the environmental and equalities assessment teams have been involved in the analysis and review of data, the appraisal of key components of the Strategy and the assembly of the document.

2.2 Relationship with other Plans and Programmes

2.2.1 The identification of key environmental issues has been informed by consideration of the environmental topics prescribed within Schedule 3 of the SEA Act and from an evaluation of baseline environmental conditions, which is set out in more detailed in **Appendix B** of the full ER. These issues were analysed from an early stage in the SEA process and have been taken into account in the development of the emerging RTS and in the development and application of a framework for the environmental assessment.

2.3 Review of Plans and Programmes

2.3.1 In accordance with SEA statutory requirements, a review of the relationship between the developing Draft RTS and other relevant plans and programmes (including current legislation, policies and strategies at national and regional levels) has been carried out. This review identified key requirements, objectives and priorities of relevant plans and their implications for both the emerging RTS and for the SEA. A review of these plans and programmes is set out in **Appendix A** of the full ER and relevant information from the review has been used in developing the RTS and in identifying key issues for the SEA.

3 The SEA Process

3.1 Previous SEA Reporting

3.1.1 SEA is a multi-stage process which has been integrated with the key stages of development of the RTS. The two key SEA stages prior to the preparation of the full Environmental Report and this summary were:

- SEA Scoping
- SEA Case for Change

3.1.2 The purpose of the SEA Scoping Report was to confirm the need to undertake an SEA and identify a proposed SEA Framework to assess in a systematic way the likely significant environmental effects from all components of the emerging RTS. This Framework comprised a series of sustainability objectives and guide questions regarding identified socio-economic and environmental issues of relevance to the HITRANS region which may affect (or be affected by) the emerging RTS.

3.1.3 The SEA Scoping Report was submitted to the Consultation Authorities[1] in 2022. The overall approach to SEA was amended to take account of Scoping consultation responses, as detailed **Appendix E** of the ER.

3.1.4 The SEA at the 'Case for Change' stage identified a series of emerging environmental issues from synthesis of baseline information including the key policies and plans reviewed at that stage which was fed back to be taken into account in the development of the RTS. A compatibility assessment of the RTS Vision and Strategy Objectives with respect to each of the SEA objectives was carried out at this stage.

3.2 Approach to SEA

Key Stages of the SEA and Integration with the RTS

3.2.1 The SEA has been undertaken iteratively and in step with the development of the emerging RTS. The approach to environmental assessment of the Draft RTS has focused on three key groups of Strategy elements as follows:

- Compatibility appraisals of the preliminary elements (or 'strategic framework') of the Draft RTS including the RTS Vision and RTS Strategy Objectives
- Environmental appraisal of the long list of transport options generated in the 'Case for Change'
- Environmental assessment of the subsequent Draft RTS themes and associated Policies (as presented in the Draft Strategy)

Assessment Methods

3.2.2 The SEA Scoping Report, an SEA framework was prepared to provide the basis for comprehensive environmental assessment of the RTS components and a consistency of approach. This has been updated slightly in response to feedback from the SEA Consultation Authorities.

3.2.3 The framework is based around ten SEA Objectives, the potential effects of each RTS element is assessed against these SEA Objectives. The framework includes a series of guide

[1] Historic Environment Scotland (HES), NatureScot and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)

questions and supporting criteria to inform the consideration in a consistent and objective manner. Due to the high-level nature of the Strategy, the SEA team has applied professional judgement drawing from experience of assessing similar plans and programmes to determine the likelihood of significant environmental effects and to identify mitigation where appropriate.

3.2.4 The compatibility assessment of the preliminary elements (or 'strategic framework') of the Draft RTS followed a qualitative assessment method where the potential for environmental effects from the key emerging RTS elements at that stage (the Transport Planning Objectives and RTS Strategy Objectives) was considered by the SEA team with respect to each SEA Objective, and with reference to the guide questions in the SEA Framework. The findings of the initial compatibility appraisals were presented using simple tables with indicative environmental 'compatibility scores' and a supporting narrative. These appraisals were undertaken initially at the 'Case for Change' stage and the findings presented in the 'Case for Change' SEA ER. The appraisals have been reviewed and updated to reflect changes to the RTS elements (e.g., through changes to the wording of the RTS Objectives) following the consultation on the Case for Change in 2023.

3.2.5 The generation and appraisal of the long list of transport options for the Strategy was undertaken in accordance with Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) methods. The SEA team inputted into this process, providing an overarching check that all reasonable alternative options had been identified and providing an appraisal of the environmental and climate change criteria required by STAG based on a seven-point scale[2] of impact criteria to assign an indication of significance of the predicted impact alongside the impact commentaries.

3.2.6 Following the options appraisal, the RTS process involved the development of 11 Themes, each containing an associated set of Policies. The final key stage of the SEA environmental assessment involved the application of the SEA framework to assess the predicted environmental effects of these Policies. These also drew on the findings of the appraisals of the relevant options (as linked to each theme) from the STAG-based work.

3.2.7 For each element of the RTS, the SEA topic/objective was considered in turn by the assessment team and environmental effects were predicted with reference to the guiding questions and criteria in the SEA Framework and drawing on the judgement and professional experience of the assessment team. The predicted environmental effects of the RTS elements were then evaluated with reference to a set of impact criteria to determine their likely significance.

3.2.8 It should be noted that the biodiversity and climate change crises are inextricably linked (i.e., they are twin crises), and one cannot be addressed fully without addressing the other. The SEA has addressed the biodiversity loss along with tackling climate change as part of the twin crisis.

Assumptions and Limitations

3.2.9 The identification of any assumptions and uncertainties is an important element of the SEA process, as the emerging RTS will need to be unambiguous to ensure the plan can be implemented as intended.

3.2.10 The SEA has been undertaken alongside a relatively high-level and strategic document in the RTS which is intended to cover a significant timespan of up to approximately 20 years. There are some inherent uncertainties therefore in the accuracy of predictions made for the environmental assessment of long-term policies where the detail of implementation is still to be worked-up. Whilst the Strategy does not include any detail on specific spatial transport

[2] The scale provides a range of predicted impact categories from major through moderate and minor beneficial or adverse and one for neutral/no effect.

interventions, the process of identifying and appraising options and the subsequent linking of options with policies in the Draft Strategy has allowed the environmental assessment team to better judge the types of intervention which could potentially be associated with each policy.

3.2.11 This has reduced the uncertainties inherent in the assessment of a strategy of this nature and it is considered that the environmental assessment has been founded on sufficient prescription in the policies to allow for a competent strategic level assessment of potential significant effects. No significant difficulties or limitations have been encountered in preparing this SEA Environmental Report.

3.3 Consideration of Alternatives

3.3.1 The SEA legislation requires that the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the Strategy and reasonable alternatives to it are identified, described and evaluated. The reasons for selecting the alternatives considered should also be outlined.

3.3.2 Alternatives and options have been considered in the RTS development process from the outset. The overall direction of the Strategy, as expressed through its Vision and Strategy Objectives, inherently considered alternatives through refinement of their wording to reflect and address priorities for transport in the HITRANS region and in taking account of consultee feedback and suggestions on their amendment. This process included consideration of a wide range of policy drivers, spatial characteristics and key transport problems and opportunities as set out in the 'Case for Change' Report. The SEA process contributed to this refinement and direction through consideration of the compatibility of developing themes and wording for the RTS Vision and Strategy Objectives with environmental priorities expressed through the developing SEA objectives and framework.

3.3.3 The consideration of alternatives was an integral part of the identification and development of the 'delivery' elements of the RTS, principally in the form of the transport options which were generated and appraised through integrated working between the client, transport planning and SEA and equalities assessment teams. These options included a wide range of responses including policies, interventions, fiscal measures and generic indications of physical transport schemes which were broadly grouped into a series of aggregated options and then themes. The HITRANS RTS Preliminary Appraisal report (Stantec UK, 2023) sets out the initial option generation process, the packaging of those options and their appraisal using the STAG criteria.

3.3.4 As the RTS is a high level and strategic document, there remains considerable flexibility in the identification and consideration of alternatives for implementation of transport solutions during later stages of implementation.

3.4 How the SEA informed the RTS

3.4.1 Integration of the SEA process and team with the RTS and transport planning workstreams has allowed for an iterative approach to RTS development whereby feedback from the SEA team at key stages of Strategy development has informed subsequent RTS updates. This is considered to have improved the environmental context and contribution to better environmental outcomes.

3.4.2 The review and supporting 'compatibility appraisal' of the RTS Strategy Objectives made recommendations on how these objectives should be further developed to set out clearer outcomes, more explicit coverage of some environmental issues (including climate change mitigation and adaptation) and hence improve the environmental performance of the proposed RTS. The Strategy has therefore been developed following the 'Case for Change' with very clear and explicit integration of environment related issues.

3.4.3 An initial SEA 'coverage' assessment was also undertaken on the initial draft of the long list of options. This analysis identified that the options provided good coverage of relevant strategies and policy commitments. An initial review of the compatibility of these options with the SEA objectives was also undertaken, providing feedback on how options could be developed to improve compatibility with all SEA objectives (noting however the challenges of predicting environmental effects / outcomes when the options are necessarily high level and not locationally specified). The development, specification and appraisal of the emerging options is set out in further detail in the Preliminary Options Appraisal Report (Stantec UK, 2023) which will be made available during the public consultation period on the Draft RTS.

3.4.4 Through this approach, it is considered that the iterations of the RTS at each key stage have taken better account of environmental issues than they would have done without the SEA and has contributed to formulation of a Draft Strategy which optimises beneficial environmental effects, minimises adverse effects and identifies opportunities for environmental and social enhancement. The Draft RTS has very strong themes around climate change and social justice for example and the proposed transport measures and interventions are well aligned with the objective to achieve emissions reductions, climate resilience and other environmental and health outcomes.

3.4.5 In taking the RTS forward to implementation stages, it will be important to maintain the focus on achieving these beneficial outcomes for people and the environment.

4 Findings of the Environmental Assessment

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 This section sets out the findings of the environmental assessment of each key component of the Draft RTS including the assessment of compatibility of the RTS and SEA vision and objectives, the key findings of the environmental appraisal of the RTS options and the assessment of the likely significant effects of the RTS policies. Full details of the assessments can be found in **Chapter 5** of the main ER.

4.2 Assessment of RTS Vision and Objectives

4.2.1 The Vision and Objectives were appraised against the SEA Objectives to inform identification of any clear inconsistencies between the two sets of objectives and to identify any potentially significant environmental effects. The findings of the assessment have been updated to reflect subsequent amendments to RTS Strategy Objectives and are set out in **Section 5.2** of the full ER.

4.2.2 Overall, the RTS Vision and suite of proposed RTS Strategy Objectives have evolved in response to previous SEA reviews and clearly identify the role of the transport system in 'facilitating' positive environmental and health outcomes, as well as referencing the need for the transport system to be developed and operated sustainably. This provides an appropriate high-level platform from which to develop specific policies and proposals to address a range of key environmental (as well as socioeconomic and wider) issues.

4.2.3 The assessment has identified some areas of potential conflict between objectives to promote connectivity with requirements to meet emissions reduction targets. This is in part due to the rural nature of the region because of which it is recognised that road-based travel is an important as part of an integrated transport system, and the need to connect via sea and air to island and peninsular communities. The potential conflict between these objectives is however partly offset by the objective to decarbonise transport and therefore reduce emissions while also providing improved connectivity.

4.3 Assessment of Transport Options

4.3.1 The options were classified into a series of themed groups (11 in total) reflecting their focus and likely impact. A summary of the findings of the environmental appraisal of the options within each group of options is presented in the form of a range of predicted impact 'scores' in **Table 4-1Error! Reference source not found.**. The full findings of the environmental and climate appraisals of each individual option are set out in the options assessment table in the full ER and further information on the process of transport option development and STAG appraisal is set out in a stand-alone HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy Preliminary Appraisal Report (Stantec UK, 2023) which will be made available during consultation on the Draft RTS and this SEA ER.

Table 4-1 Assessment of transport options

Option Group	Predicted Environmental Impact
1. Transforming our communities and reducing the impact of transport upon them *A group of four options (options 1A to 1D) to* ▪ *Reallocate road space to active travel,* ▪ *Implement measures to reduce traffic levels and the impact of that traffic,* ▪ *Manage parking demand through parking restrictions and enforcement,* ▪ *Land-use planning measures*	*Overall, minor adverse to moderate beneficial environmental impacts are predicted (prior to mitigation):* × - ✓✓

Option Group	Predicted Environmental Impact
2: Connecting our communities *A group of five options (options 2A to 2E) to* ▪ *Improve to existing walking and wheeling routes,* ▪ *Improve to existing cycling routes,* ▪ *Invest in new 'greenfield' active travel routes,* ▪ *Widen the availability of cycling through reducing cost and improving bicycle availability and* ▪ *Promote walking, wheeling and cycling as a means of travel*	*Overall, minor adverse to minor beneficial environmental impacts are predicted (prior to mitigation)* Scoring: × - ✓
3. Extending public transport connectivity *A group of nine options (options 3A to 3I) to* ▪ *Reduce bus and rail journey times,* ▪ *Increase additional timetabled bus services,* ▪ *Implement DRT or EDRT to enhance / replace fixed routes,* ▪ *Deliver new railway stations* ▪ *Deliver new heavy rail routes* ▪ *Increased rail service frequency* ▪ *Provide discounted / quota taxi journeys*	*Overall, moderate adverse to moderate beneficial environmental impacts are predicted (prior to mitigation)* Scoring: ×× - ✓✓
4. Improving the integration, quality of and access to public and shared transport *A group of 20 options (options 4A to 4T) to* ▪ *Introduce a single and easily recognisable brand for transport and travel in the HITRANS region,* ▪ *Improve access to public transport for those travelling with a bicycle,* ▪ *Improve bus-to-bus; bus / rail; bus / ferry; rail / ferry; bus / air service, ferry-to-ferry and ferry-to-air integration* ▪ *Improve the quality of facilities at bus stations and bus stops,* ▪ *Improve access to and the quality of the onboard experience on existing buses and on-train* ▪ *Improve the quality of facilities at railway stations;* ▪ *Improve access to and the quality of ferry services* ▪ *Improve physical access to inter-island air services* ▪ *Improve the customer experience for those less able* ▪ *Improve public transport information* ▪ *Improve digital coverage in the region* ▪ *Increase the number of disabled parking bays* ▪ *Improve the quality and safety of taxi travel* ▪ *Implement Mobility hubs*	*Overall, negligible to moderate environmental beneficial impacts are predicted (prior to mitigation)* Scoring: ◯ - ✓✓
5. Providing connectivity that supports our island and peninsular communities *A group of 15 options (options 5A to 5O) to* ▪ *Convert Lo-Lo routes to Ro-Ro* ▪ *Reduce ferry journey times* ▪ *Improve ferry booking and ticketing arrangements* ▪ *Demand management measures – fares-based* ▪ *Make the most efficient use of existing vessels* ▪ *Additional sailings with existing vessels or additional vessels* ▪ *Introduce New vessels (excluding harbour works)* ▪ *Introduce 7-day a week ferry and / or inter-island air services* ▪ *Work towards a 'meaningful day' on-mainland and on-island* ▪ *Improve ferry service reliability (assuming no harbour works)*	*Overall, major adverse to major beneficial environmental impacts are predicted (prior to mitigation)* Scoring: ××× - ✓✓✓

Option Group	Predicted Environmental Impact
▪ *Provide additional seat capacity on PSO air services* ▪ *Work with commercial airlines to provide additional flights* ▪ *Develop new air routes* ▪ *Improve the reliability of inter-island air services* ▪ *Island and peninsular fixed links*	
6. Improving the efficiency of transport networks and supply-chains and reducing their impact on our communities *A group of six options (options 6A to 6F) relating to* ▪ *Reduce ferry freight fares* ▪ *New freight-only vessels / new vessels with an increased freight capacity* ▪ *Prioritise ferry capacity for freight / demand management to provide additional freight capacity* ▪ *Dedicated freight sailings* ▪ *Support the growth in rail freight* ▪ *Support the growth in waterborne freight*	*Overall, minor adverse to moderate beneficial environmental impacts are predicted (prior to mitigation)* Scoring: × - ✓✓
7. Improving the safety, reliability and resilience of our road and rail networks *A group of seven options (options 7A to 7G) relating to* ▪ *Improve road maintenance* ▪ *Improve the resilience of the road network* ▪ *Introduce measures to improve road safety* ▪ *Improve rail service reliability* ▪ *Improve rail network resilience* ▪ *Improve travel information for motorists and ferry passengers* ▪ *Reduce road-based journey times to / from: (i) Inverness; (ii) our sub-regional centres; and (iii) Scotland's other cities and beyond*	*Overall, moderate adverse to minor beneficial environmental impact are predicted (prior to mitigation)* Scoring: × × - ✓
8. Facilitating sustainable visitor travel demand *A group of six options (options 8A to 8F) to* ▪ Improve active travel options for those travelling to / from tourist destinations ▪ Improve public transport interchange experience for visitors ▪ Provide additional rail service capacity in peak season ▪ Improve parking provision, management and enforcement at key tourism destinations ▪ Targeted road improvements where there is high seasonal demand ▪ Bus-based Park &Ride to 'honeypot' tourist sites	*Overall, minor adverse to moderate beneficial environmental impacts are predicted (prior to mitigation)* Scoring: × - ✓✓
9. Decarbonising our transport *A group of five options (options 9A to 9E) to reduce carbon emission through -* ▪ Zero emission buses ▪ Decarbonisation of the railway network ▪ Decarbonisation of the aviation network within the HITRANS region ▪ Vehicle pooling or vehicle sharing ▪ Encourage zero emission vehicle uptake and use	*Overall, minor adverse to major beneficial environmental impacts are predicted (prior to mitigation)* Scoring: × - ✓✓✓
10. Embracing new technologies *A group of four options (options 10A to 10D) embracing new technologies including* ▪ Micromobility, ▪ Mobility-as-a-Service, ▪ Connected and autonomous vehicles ▪ Autonomous buses	*Overall, minor adverse to moderate beneficial environmental impacts are predicted (prior to mitigation):* × - ✓✓

Option Group	Predicted Environmental Impact
11. Reducing the cost of travel, particular *A group of nine options (options 11A to 11I) reducing the cost of travel, particular for those most in need through:* ▪ Reduce bus fare, rail fare, ferry foot passenger fare, ferry car fares, ferry accommodation fares (Northern Isles Ferry Services) ▪ Reduce or remove the cost penalty for interchange between operators and modes ▪ Extend the scope and / or geographic coverage of national fares and funding policies ▪ Reduce the cost of air travel on PSO routes ▪ Reduce the cost of air travel on commercially operated routes	*Overall, minor adverse to minor beneficial environmental impacts are predicted (prior to mitigation)* × - ✓

4.4 Assessment of Policies

4.4.1 This section summarises the findings of the environmental assessment of the RTS Policies within each of the eleven RTS Themes.

4.4.2 The assessment shown within this section is two-fold. An overall summary of the environmental assessment of each RTS Theme is presented in **Table 4-2** drawing on the consideration of the predicted environmental effects of the Policies within each Theme. Following this, a text-based summary of the assessment of the combined environmental effects of the RTS Policies is presented for each of the SEA Objectives in turn. This approach has allowed for understanding and presentation of the predicted environmental effects of the Draft RTS from both the perspective of each RTS Theme, and from the perspective of each SEA topic.

Table 4-2 Summary of Environmental Assessment by RTS Theme

RTS Theme	Overall Score	Commentary
Strategy Theme 1 Transforming our communities and reducing the impact of transport upon them: Focused on transforming the communities and reducing the impact of transport upon them. This can be achieved through improving the public realm and mobility within the settlements, reducing the dominance of the private car in particular and maximising opportunities for walking, wheeling and cycling. Polices: ▪ ST1a: The RTS supports the principle of reallocating road space, including parking, from general traffic. This should support placemaking to shape improved walking, wheeling and cycling opportunities in our communities as a means to promote safe active travel and encourage use of active travel modes. Reallocation of road space should avoid any negative impacts on bus services. ▪ ST1b: Where traffic in settlements is reduced by investment in road infrastructure, road space reallocation should be undertaken as an integral component of that investment. ▪ ST1c: The RTS supports the principle of traffic calming and speed limit reductions and enforcement where this is the wish of our communities, including on the Trunk Road network. ▪ ST1d: The RTS supports measures to reduce road-based severance in our communities ▪ ST1e: The RTS recognises the challenges presented by the impacts of increasing abnormal load movements across the region. It calls for a coordinated approach to be taken to ensure that appropriate planning and mitigation is put in place as part of the planning process for new developments that will generate such movements. ▪ ST1f: The RTS supports greater consistency (in 'like-for-like' locations) of parking management across our region, including payment mechanisms, parking information and enforcement. ▪ ST1g: The RTS supports the principle of improving the management and enforcement of traffic and parking around schools, including School Streets (a road outside a school with temporary restriction on motorised traffic at school drop-off and pick-up times).	++	The majority of the policies are clearly compatible with the SEA Objectives and would have beneficial effects on climate change, air quality and amenity, access and connectivity, growth, human health and material assets. Significant benefits are predicted for access and connectivity and human health as most polices support opportunities for certain equalities groups and improved road safety. The policies also involve reallocating road space to active travel, which may offer opportunities to enhance local biodiversity through the creation and connectivity of new linear habitats (designing schemes with nature-based solutions which have the potential to offer positive effects for biodiversity); enhanced use of nature-based solutions for (new and upgraded) transport networks (including sustainable drainage systems, re-naturalisation of watercourses and establishment of wetlands); enhanced setting and appreciation of heritage assets; and increased accessibility to green spaces, open areas and new landscapes. The policies involve the integration of active travel, public transport and shared mobility into the planning of all new developments, which may give rise to some beneficial changes for people accessing and enjoying facilities, services and the wider environment, whilst reducing emissions through lower levels of car travel. The uptake of active travel is strongly influenced by distance - compact neighbourhoods with diverse and connected land-uses support its uptake. Some individual policies (such as ST1a, ST1b and ST1c) may have minor negative impacts on the economy associated with an increase in journey times and increased driver frustration. For the policy supporting the principle of traffic calming and speed limit reductions and enforcement, it could increase the emission of carbon dioxides (CO_2) and nitrogen oxides (NO_x), due to the reduction in vehicle speeds.

RTS Theme	Overall Score	Commentary
▪ ST1h: The RTS supports the prioritisation of new development in locations that are in proximity to key services and already well-served by active travel and public transport. ▪ ST1i: The RTS supports the local delivery of public services, including health and education, and other day-to-day retail and personal services (e.g., banking) which minimise the need to travel. ▪ ST1j: The RTS supports the integration of active travel, public transport and shared mobility into the planning of all new developments. New development proposals should be required to outline how they will connect into the local active travel and public transport networks. ▪ ST1k: The RTS supports the concept of 'infrastructure first' in relation to major developments across our region. ▪ ST1l: The RTS recognises the centrality of environmental considerations, particularly biodiversity enhancements and nature networks, within the planning and decision-making process.		

RTS Theme	Overall Score	Commentary
Strategy Theme 2 Connecting our communities: Focused on improving and expanding opportunities for walking, wheeling and cycling within and between our communities. Polices: ▪ ST2a: The RTS supports transformational investment in the improvement of our existing active travel networks to make these accessible to all. ▪ ST2b:The RTS supports the reinstatement and expansion of a network of strategic and local traffic free / quiet walking, wheeling and cycling routes to connect communities across and beyond our region. ▪ ST2c:The RTS supports the expansion of the National Cycle Network to all parts of the region. ▪ ST2d:Our active travel infrastructure should be designed to a high standard in accordance with the most up-to-date best practice and regionally appropriate design standards (as this evolves) to meet the needs of all users. ▪ ST2e:The RTS supports the integration of active travel and public transport connections within our communities. ▪ ST2f:The RTS promotes the adoption of measures outlined in the Sustainable Travel to Stations Strategy with respect to access to railway stations. ▪ ST2g:The RTS seeks the implementation of initiatives which widen access to bicycles and e-bicycles, including e.g., promoting ownership, expansion of bicycle share and hire and provision of new 'first mile, last mile' cycling opportunities. ▪ ST2h:The RTS supports the upgrade and new provision of bicycle parking and facilities at all public buildings, transport interchanges and key on-street locations within the region	++	These policies are clearly compatible with the SEA Objectives and beneficial effects are predicted for climate change, air quality and amenity, access and connectivity, growth, human health and materials assets. Improving active travel infrastructure, and integration of active travel and public transport connections within communities, may give rise to beneficial changes for people accessing and enjoying facilities, services and the wider environment, whilst reducing emissions through reduced vehicle-based travel. The uptake of active travel is strongly influenced by distance - compact neighbourhoods with diverse and connected land uses, support its uptake. In addition, policies leading to an improved standard of walking and wheeling routes could result in positive health, safety and wellbeing outcomes through enhanced personal security and improved health outcomes associated with higher levels of physical exercise. There would also be equality and accessibility benefits as a result of opening up opportunities for certain equality groups, particularly for those without access to a car or who would prefer not to drive one. Where delivered at scale, the policies could contribute significantly to achievement of regional and national net zero targets and would support other policies to reduce road traffic and its environmental, accessibility, health and safety impacts. Policies that support the widening access of bicycles and e-bicycles, upgrading and new provision of bicycle parking and facilities, and development of the active travel network in a more coherent, recognisable and integrated way would have a moderate economic benefit as a result of opening up tourism opportunities, including green / eco-friendly tourism which has been identified as a potential growth area for the region. It would also help people to access employment opportunities that they could not otherwise access. Policies that support transformational investment in the improvement of existing active travel networks and development of new active travel connections could

RTS Theme	Overall Score	Commentary
▪ ST2i:Our active travel network should be developed, presented and promoted in a more coherent, recognisable and integrated way for regular, occasional and new users of the network, including visitors	To --?	also help to reduce car kilometres resulting in benefit with respect to the climate change and air quality and amenity criteria. It may also offer opportunities to enhance local biodiversity through the creation and connectivity of new linear habitats (designing schemes with nature-based solutions which have the potential to offer positive effects for biodiversity); enhanced use of nature-based solutions for (new and upgraded) transport networks (including sustainable drainage systems, re-naturalisation of watercourses and establishment of wetlands); enhanced setting and appreciation of heritage assets; and increased accessibility to green spaces, open areas and new landscapes. There is a risk of negative environmental impacts associated with the construction (and any lighting) of these routes and during the expansion of the National Cycle Network. In particular, if the expansion of the National Cycle Network is within or has connectivity to sensitive habitats / species including protected areas such as European sites. It may lead to likely significant effects on biodiversity. It is anticipated that EIA and HRA would be conducted in the planning stage. Mitigation measures would also be implemented during construction to reduce the environmental impact.

RTS Theme	Overall Score	Commentary
Strategy Theme 3 Enhancing public transport connectivity: Focuses on Network coverage, Timetables / connections and Journey times and journey time reliability. Polices: ▪ ST3a: The RTS supports measures to reduce social exclusion for those without access to a car ▪ ST3b:The RTS recognises that the decline in bus passenger numbers in the region needs to be reversed and supports measures to extend service coverage, improve frequencies, lengthen the operating day and make the network more integrated. ▪ ST3c:The RTS supports measures to reduce bus journey times between and within settlements in the region, including through the provision of bus priority measures. ▪ ST3d:The RTS supports innovative alternatives to fixed route bus services where these can be affordably provided. ▪ ST3e:The RTS recognises the role which community transport and Demand Responsive Transport plays in our most rural communities and supports its expansion and integration with timetabled services. ▪ ST3f:The RTS supports measures to widen the awareness and use of community transport, DRT and EDRT amongst all members of society.	From ++	The majority of the policies are compatible with the SEA Objectives, with beneficial effects predicted, including for climate change, air quality and amenity, access and connectivity, growth, human health and material assets. In general, policies leading to additional bus services (including DRT / EDRT) and reduced bus journey time would facilitate mode shift from the private car, which would benefit the climate change and environment criteria. However, additional bus services and reducing bus journey times may increase CO_2 and NO_x emissions (from increased speeds and the requirement for more services to call at intermediate stops), which could reduce the benefit of mode shift if a hydrocarbon fuelled bus was used. The primary benefit of these policies is that they would reduce the peripherality (actual and perceived) of some of the most remote communities in the region. This would in-principle have a positive equality and accessibility impact. By bringing settlements within the region 'closer' together, these policies would have a minor economy benefit. However, they would also have a positive wider economic impact through better connecting jobs and labour. Given a significant proportion of bus travel from the most remote areas is also for health purposes, these policies could be expected to have a positive health and wellbeing impact. The policy supporting reduced rail journey times also offers an opportunity to reduce emissions and the harmful effects of road transport through mode switch, thus contributing to the climate change and air quality and human health criteria. This is particularly the case for long-distance travel to Aberdeen, the Central Belt and beyond, where rail does not currently enjoy the journey

RTS Theme	Overall Score	Commentary
▪ ST3g:The RTS recognises the role of taxis as a key element of transport provision in the region where community transport, DRT and EDRT services are not provided. ▪ ST3h:The RTS recognises that rail journey times to, from and within the region are typically longer than elsewhere in Scotland, and therefore supports measures to reduce these journey times. ▪ ST3i:The RTS supports the commitment to electrify the Highland Mainline as an opportunity to reduce rail journey times and improve reliability as part of the overall decarbonisation of the network ▪ ST3j:The RTS recognises that very low rail service frequency often makes rail uncompetitive with the car and therefore supports measures which would facilitate increased rail service frequency, particularly between Inverness and Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow. ▪ ST3k:The RTS promotes and supports the development of additional local rail services focused on our regional centres. ▪ ST3l:The RTS supports infrastructure measures which would enable increased service frequency, such as the electrification of the Highland Mainline, Aberdeen to Inverness and improvements to the signalling system. ▪ ST3m:The RTS supports the planning and delivery of new railway stations, including innovative solutions proportionate to the location, subject to the development of an appropriate business case.	**To -?**	time advantage that it does over road elsewhere in the country. Reduced rail journey times would contribute to both the accessibility and economy. This policy would also improve access to employment, education and business opportunities, as happened with the development of the 'Internet'. The policy that supports the building of new railway stations could facilitate mode shift, improvement of equality of access to services and economy benefits associated with reduced journey times, providing new journey opportunities and development. However, a new station could be an environmentally intrusive construction project and would incorporate significant embodied carbon, whilst also generating additional construction vehicle kilometres. The balance of embodied carbon versus vehicle emissions reductions would need to be determined on a case-by-case basis when implementing this policy.

RTS Theme	Overall Score	Commentary
Strategy Theme 4 Improving the integration, quality of and access to public and shared transport: Focused on addressing the impediments to travel by public transport, including interchange within and between modes, physical and other barriers for those less able and poor-quality facilities and travel information. Polices: ▪ ST4a:The RTS supports measures that will improve integration within and between modes of transport at key locations and transport interchanges in order to provide new travel options and alternatives to the private car, recognising the constraints within which this is possible (e.g., delivering school bus services). ▪ ST4b:The RTS supports integrated ticketing measures to simplify travel and improve the passenger experience. ▪ ST4c:The RTS supports the adoption of contract conditions for tendered and supported services that encourage operators to work in partnership to improve integration, timetable planning and coordination. ▪ ST4d:The RTS supports the provision and enhancement of mobility hubs across the region, in line with a hierarchy reflecting local requirements. ▪ ST4e:The RTS supports measures which will enable people to leave their bicycle in a secure environment at a bus stop / station, railway station, ferry terminal or airfield. ▪ ST4f:The RTS supports, where practical, the provision of increased bicycle capacity on public transport services within the region ▪ ST4g:The RTS supports the simplification of the process of taking a bicycle both to and onto a bus or train. ▪ ST4h:The RTS supports more widespread journeys which combine bicycle and public transport ▪ ST4i:The RTS supports the provision of consistent standards of facilities at bus stations and bus stops reflecting location and usage. ▪ ST4j:Our bus network should be safe secure and fully accessible to all. ▪ ST4k:Our bus network should provide a high-quality and consistent onboard experience. ▪ ST4l:Travel on buses to, from and within the region should, where possible, enable meaningful working time ▪ ST4m:The RTS supports the provision of more consistent standards of facilities at railway stations, reflecting station usage. ▪ ST4n:Our railway network should be safe, secure and fully accessible to all.	+	These policies relate to improving the integration, quality of and access to public and shared transport (incl. buses, rail, ferries) incorporating journey planning, increased accessibility, integration and the onboard experience and whilst waiting. Collectively, they support the attractiveness of the public transport network, which will support modal shift. The policies are compatible with the SEA Objectives, with beneficial effects predicted, including for climate change, air quality and amenity, access and connectivity, growth, human health and material assets. Where delivered at scale, and integrated with the wider transport system, they could contribute to achievement of regional and national net zero targets (particularly if implemented in conjunction with the decarbonisation of public transport, RTS Theme 9) and would support other policies to reduce road traffic and its environmental, accessibility, health and safety impacts. Improvements to public transport integration would open-up a wider range of travel choices for those in the region through reducing wait times between connecting services and addressing the barriers to switching within and between modes. For those polices focused on improvement of access to and the quality of the onboard experience, they would have an accessibility and connectivity benefit as they would enhance access for those in society who may otherwise have been excluded from using public transport / travel more generally. This would also result in enhanced access to employment, education, healthcare, and social opportunities, which would support the economy of the areas affected. The use of mobility hubs would contribute strongly to the SEA Objectives. Firstly, they make the use of active travel and public transport more attractive and thus can contribute towards reducing vehicle kilometres. There would therefore be positive impacts on the climate change criterion. By co-locating transport services, mobility hubs also improve quality, choice, convenience, safety and accessibility. They therefore contribute to improved human health, accessibility and connectivity.

RTS Theme	Overall Score	Commentary
▪ ST4o:The RTS supports the continuation and expansion of the Scotland's Railway Adoption Programme and other measures to enhance the station environment. ▪ ST4p:Our ferry network should be safe, secure and fully and easily access to all. This includes both shore-to-vessel access and movement around the vessel itself ▪ ST4q:The RTS recognises that there is not a short-term solution to the accessibility issues with the Argyll and Bute and Orkney inter-island air services. We will keep abreast of developments in technology and new aircraft types and, in the meantime, continue to work with partners to support alternative options such as the Scottish Ambulance Service. ▪ ST4r:The RTS supports sufficient provision and better enforcement of Blue Badge parking across the region. ▪ ST4s:The RTS recognises the important role of taxis as part of the overall transport mix in the region. It supports partnership working with licencing authorities and taxi providers to raise standards of provision where required and to facilitate the expansion of the network ▪ ST4t:The RTS supports the provision of taxi services which are fully accessible in terms of booking and vehicle access. ▪ ST4u:A key component of making travel accessible to all, the RTS supports measures to remove barriers to travel, including increased staff training, passenger chaperones and the provision of physical and online travel information in accessible formats. ▪ ST4v:The RTS supports the maintenance and expansion of at-stop / at-station multi-modal real-time information. ▪ ST4w:The RTS promotes the simplification and consolidation of travel planning and in-journey information to make travel easier for less frequent users. ▪ ST4x:The RTS supports the further development of the GO-HI travel app. ▪ ST4y:The RTS supports the provision of up-to-date physical travel information at bus stops, and the removal of out-of-date information. ▪ ST4z:The RTS Calls for improved cross-provider digital connectivity across the region to facilitate access to travel information for all (including in-car information), enable meaningful working time when travelling by public transport and to help reduce the need to travel where possible.		

RTS Theme	Overall Score	Commentary
RTS Theme 5 Enhancing our external connections and supply chain: Focused on improving the connectivity and reducing the peripherality of island and peninsular communities through improved ferry and air services, and potentially fixed links. Policies: ▪ ST5a: The RTS supports the provision of longer daily time on-mainland and on-island where this is required for the long-term sustainability of a community. ▪ ST5b:The RTS supports the provision of services which minimise the requirement for one or more overnight stays. ▪ ST5c:Where practicable, the RTS supports the operation of additional sailings on the supported ferry networks within the region. ▪ ST5d:The RTS supports year-round seven-day connections for island and peninsular communities where this is required for the long-term sustainability of a community and enjoys public support. ▪ ST5e:The booking and ticketing arrangements for ferry services in the region should support the convenience and efficiency of travel for all.	From ++	It is recognised that ferry and air connections provide vital links to maintain the sustainability of island and peninsular communities; they provide access to services, facilities, education and employment opportunities, support tourism, transport goods, etc, and thus provide vital social and economic services. Policies relating to reducing or removing the capacity and connectivity barriers faced by islands or increasing the provision of ferry and air services would provide positive benefits for access and connectivity, and potentially further opportunities for economic activity. However, this would increase emissions of greenhouse gases both directly and potentially indirectly (e.g., where it indirectly results in increased onwards travel), albeit this would be offset at least in part when implemented in conjunction with the decarbonisation of the sector such as through Strategy Theme 9. One of the policies supports the principle of fixed links. Some considerations are summarised below: If free, a fixed link would almost entirely remove the constraints for cars, public transport and freight travelling to and from the relevant communities.

RTS Theme	Overall Score	Commentary
▪ ST5f:The RTS calls for the earlier opening of ferry booking systems and increased transparency around the release and management of vehicle deck space. ▪ ST5g:The RTS supports the principle of Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) but, where service frequency permits, controlled use of peak / surge pricing could be used to help manage demand at busy times, recognising that this would need to be at no net detriment to island and peninsular community accessibility. ▪ measures to reduce prices on off-peak sailings at busy times, recognising that this would need to be at no net detriment to operators. ▪ ST5h:The RTS supports operational measures which maximise the efficient management of vehicle deck space on sailings ▪ ST5i:The RTS supports measures to improve door-to-door journeys through enhancing active travel, public transport and shared mobility connections to and from ferry terminals, combined with other measures to reduce the need to take a car onboard. ▪ ST5j: The RTS recognises the long-term underfunding of vessels and infrastructure in the region and strongly calls for fleet and infrastructure modernisation to address issues of reliability and resilience. ▪ ST5k:The RTS calls for the development of a regularly maintained Vessels and Infrastructure Planning Pipeline across all publicly supported ferry networks in Scotland. ▪ ST5l:The RTS supports an increase in the overall fleet size and the inter-operability of that fleet and supporting infrastructure to strengthen resilience ▪ ST5m:The RTS supports the principle of increasing capacity through frequency rather than larger vessels. ▪ ST5n:The RTS calls for an objective consideration of the design characteristics of future vessels for all routes, including hull form and the provision of crew accommodation. ▪ ST5o:The RTS supports the introduction of new low or zero emissions vessels to replace life-expired tonnage. This should be done in line with the NTS2 Sustainable Investment Hierarchy.	To --?	Unless active travel links are incorporated within a fixed link, they would increase the dominance of motorised transport in communities (potentially leading to severance for those making active travel journeys). A fixed link would clearly be an environmentally intrusive construction project, would incorporate significant embodied carbon and would generate additional vehicle kilometres. It would though offset the emissions from the current diesel ferry fleet, although the adoption of zero or low carbon propulsion systems in future rounds of ferry replacement should ensure this is less of an issue for future vessels. Dependent on location, the construction and operation of fixed links has the potential to significantly impact important habitats such as marine and terrestrial SPAs and SACs. However, providing fixed connections to the communities would offer significant economic benefits in terms of providing unfettered access to mainland employment, business, service and leisure opportunities. This could assist in stemming population out migration and attract new residents to communities. It does though have to be acknowledged that effectively making the island communities part of the mainland could lead to a need to consider different service delivery models for e.g., health, education etc. and would also expose island businesses such as local shops to increased competition (although in-turn potentially providing island residents with lower prices). A fixed link would generate significant wider economic benefits. The feasibility of fixed links should include consideration of the potential for significant effects on European sites. At the current stage of RTS development, the potential for fixed links is not location specific, such that meaningful screening for any Habitats Regulations Appraisals (HRAs) cannot currently be undertaken. However, this will be kept under review as specific proposals emerge and may be a key determining factor in the viability of fixed links.

RTS Theme	Overall Score	Commentary
▪ ST5p: With the vessel and infrastructure replacement cycle, the RTS supports measures to reduce journey times for our island communities. This includes providing direct sailings rather than via another island (where this is the preference of the local community) and consideration of new ferry terminal locations that reduce crossing distances. ▪ ST5q: The RTS supports harbour infrastructure improvements ahead of life expiry where this could contribute to a material improvement in reliability ▪ ST5r: The RTS supports the conversion of the remaining Lo-Lo routes in the region to Ro-Ro where there is community support. ▪ ST5s: The RTS supports the further development of the Highlands and Islands' air network. ▪ ST5t: The RTS supports the further development of commercial external routes, particularly to London Heathrow and other international hub airports, that support the economic competitiveness of the region. ▪ ST5u: The RTS supports the retention of the PSO air network within the region and, where alternative travel choices are inadequate, its further expansion. 'Adequate' in this context refers to the ability to achieve an affordable daily return to / from a national centre. ▪ ST5v: The RTS supports the operation of additional connections and flights on the PSO air networks within the region, whether delivered by existing, additional or new aircraft. ▪ ST5w: The RTS supports more direct flights rather than via another island. ▪ ST5x: The RTS supports the adoption of technological and infrastructure solutions which would improve the reliability and frequency of inter-island air services. ▪ ST5y: The RTS supports the principle of fixed links where they represent value for money and are supported by the island or peninsular community. Any fixed link should be implemented in conjunction with improved public transport connectivity and incorporate provision for active travel offer which incorporates provision for cyclists.		

RTS Theme	Overall Score	Commentary
▪ ST5z: The RTS supports the consideration of tolling where this would assist in making the case for a fixed link. The use of vehicle number plate recognition technology could allow local residents to travel for free.		
Strategy Theme 6 Improving the efficiency of transport networks and supply-chains and reducing their impact on our communities: Focused on enhancing the efficiency of supply-chains and identifying means for reducing the impact which they have on our communities by on ferry, other waterborne transport and rail-based supply-chains. Polices: ▪ ST6a: The RTS supports the principle of new dedicated or high-capacity freight vessels on freight intensive routes. ▪ ST6b: The RTS supports the formalisation and extension of the carriage of unaccompanied trailers to a wider range of routes.	**From ++**	Policies relating to transferring freight from road to rail / water (and indeed growing rail / waterborne freight more generally) would support the climate change, air quality and amenity objectives (by reducing vehicle per kilometres); human health (by reducing road accidents); and growth (by improving supply-chain efficiency). Nevertheless, there is a risk of negative environmental impacts associated with the construction of new rail freight terminals and new connections to emerging industrial sites. It is anticipated that environmental assessment would be conducted in planning stage. Mitigation measures would also be implemented during construction to reduce the environmental impact. At this stage, it is assumed that, with appropriate design, assessment, mitigation and enhancement, these works could be delivered without significant adverse environmental effects.

RTS Theme	Overall Score	Commentary
▪ ST6c: The RTS supports the operation of dedicated freight sailings, either by contracted or commercial operators where there is demand and it is operationally deliverable. ▪ ST6d: The RTS supports moves towards greater simplification and consistency in the setting of ferry freight fares across the region, recognising that this would be achieved over the medium-term. ▪ ST6e: The RTS supports infrastructure measures which will enable the growth of rail freight to and from the region. ▪ ST6f: The RTS supports infrastructure investment and funding initiative which will enable the growth of waterborne freight to, from and within the region.	To -?	Policies relating to increased ferry freight capacity through new dedicated / high capacity freight vessels, simplification of freight fares and dedicated freight sailings would support the economy of island communities. However, any additional sailings would increase the emission of greenhouse gases, albeit this would be offset at least in-part when implemented in conjunction with the decarbonisation of the sector such as through **Strategy Theme 9**.

RTS Theme	Overall Score	Commentary
RTS Theme 7 Improving the safety, reliability and resilience of our road and rail networks: Focused on improving the safety, reliability and resilience of transport networks within the region**.** Polices: ▪ ST7a: The RTS restates our support for the full dualling of the A9 and A96, with early prioritisation of the Elgin and Keith bypasses to dual carriageway standards, following the already committed Inverness to Wester Hardmuir scheme. ▪ ST7b: The RTS calls for incremental improvements to our road network where there are safety, efficiency and environmental benefits, including in relation to single track roads. ▪ ST7c: The RTS supports the expansion of 50mph HGV speed limits across the Trunk Road network in the region ▪ ST7d: The RTS supports the provision of improved overtaking opportunities on our roads, especially where there are known problems with vehicle platooning which can cause driver frustration. ▪ ST7e: The RTS calls for investment in our regional road network where there are regular and sustained periods of disruption due to weather and / or geological instability. ▪ ST7f: The RTS recognises the increasing vulnerability of our region's road network to severe weather events linked to climate change and supports capital and revenue measures to mitigate this. ▪ ST7g: The RTS recognises the increasing vulnerability of the railway network to severe weather events linked to climate change and supports capital and revenue measures to mitigate this.	**From ++**	Most of the policies would improve the efficiency, safety and resilience of the region's transport networks for people and freight and adapt to the impacts of climate change. The policies would thus make a highly positive contribution to the economy, accessibility and human health. It is important to acknowledge that the solutions to some of the road-based resilience problems in the region would require major engineering works, which would also have negative construction environmental impact. Nevertheless, the network resilience improvement work would reduce vulnerability to the effects of climate change. Polices to reduce road-based journey times have potential for beneficial equalities impacts where connectivity to key services and facilities is enhanced or the negative impacts imposed by current roads is addressed. There is potential to tackle socio-economic disadvantage where employment opportunities are improved and through reduced differential impacts compared with other locations. The policies will likely lead to an increase in emissions and other harmful effects associated with motorised travel. Any capital improvements to the road network such as new stretches of dual carriageway or targeted town bypasses would evidently have negative environmental impacts, potentially including on landscape, visual amenity and biodiversity and habitats. The trade-off in this respect would be the improved economic performance associated with reduced journey times. It should be noted that some road improvement measures, such as those that reduce stopping and starting on single track roads, could have positive impacts. It is anticipated that an Environmental Impact Assessment and HRA would be undertaken for any proposed road schemes at the planning stage. Mitigation measures would also be implemented during construction to reduce the

RTS Theme	Overall Score	Commentary
▪ ST7h: The RTS supports the continued provision and expansion of real-time travel information for motorists and public transport users through existing and emerging platforms. ▪ ST7i: The RTS recognises that many parts of our region's road network are in poor condition. It calls for enhanced preventative and remedial road maintenance to ensure the safe, reliable and efficient movement of people and goods and the delivery of services across our region. ▪ ST7j: Investment in our road network should continue to have an overarching focus on safety with a view to reducing road traffic casualties in accordance with Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2030. ▪ ST7k: To address risks which are particular to roads in our region, the RTS supports: enhanced advisory signage; ongoing public information campaigns around the use of single-track roads; provision of additional safe motorist services and HGV rest areas; and information campaigns for visitors driving left-hand drive vehicles. ▪ ST7l: The RTS specifically supports the improvement or removal of priority junctions on higher speed trunk roads, especially for right-turning traffic. ▪ ST7m: The RTS calls for increased provision of level boarding at stations across the region, which will reduce station dwell times. ▪ S17n: The RTS supports the provision of additional sections of double track (or static or dynamic passing loops where double track does not represent value for money) to improve punctuality. ▪ ST7o: The RTS supports infrastructure and timetable improvements external to the region which will improve the reliability of services to / from Inverness, Fort William, Oban and Mallaig.	**To -**	environmental impact. At this stage it is assumed that, with appropriate design, assessment, mitigation and enhancement, these works could be delivered without significant adverse environmental effects.

RTS Theme	Overall Score	Commentary
RTS Theme 8 Facilitating sustainable visitor travel demand: Focused on facilitating sustainable visitor travel demand across the region. Policies: ▪ ST8a: The RTS supports the further development of long-distance walking, wheeling and cycling routes (including the National Cycle Network), recognising the visitor, economic and local benefits offered. ▪ ST8b: The RTS supports the development of active travel connections to our ports, airports and regionally important railway stations. ▪ ST8c: The RTS supports the development of active travel connections to our key tourism destinations where this would be a realistic option for some visitors. ▪ ST8d: Where there are concentrations of international tourists, including cruise passengers, the RTS supports the provision of enhanced local travel information and coordination to improve visitor experience and reduce impacts on local networks. ▪ ST8e: The RTS supports the operation and promotion of additional local rail services to key tourism destinations. ▪ ST8f: The RTS supports the provision of additional carriages on existing services in peak season, where feasible. ▪ ST8g: The RTS supports the principle of flexible timetabling where this can co-exist with regular services for local residents. ▪ ST8h: The RTS supports the principle of expanded open access rail services where these can be accommodated at no disadvantage to scheduled services.	**From ++**	These policies would contribute towards addressing tourism pressures in the region, albeit this is a much wider issue than transport alone and will require a coordinated approach across a range of organisations and policy areas. The polices would have significant economy benefits associated with both better management of and (potentially) increased visitor numbers. Policies that support the improvement of active travel for those visiting the HITRANS region would have the potential to enhance opportunities for protected characteristics groups and people. These policies would make a positive contribution to human health and accessibility in terms of better connecting settlements to tourist sites. They would also contribute to climate change and air quality by providing active options for accessing tourist sites, increase the accessibility of green spaces, open areas and new landscape and enhance the setting and appreciation of heritage assets. Policies on providing additional rail service capacity in peak season would contribute to accessibility. The policies would have climate change, air quality, and human health through encouraging mode shift from the private car. Policies on parking provision, management and enforcement at tourist destinations would have safety benefits through reducing the extent to which indiscriminate and illegal parking impact negatively on walking, wheeling and cycling in settlements amongst both residents and visitors. In addition, current parking problems also impact negatively on the economy and accessibility of areas. The policies would assist in alleviating this problem and would thus record benefits with respect to these categories. It should be noted that any expansion of car parking provision would have negative environment, climate change and health impacts if it led to increased vehicle kilometres. Policies relating to road improvements to improve traffic flow and safety would have a positive economy impact in terms of reduced journey times and

RTS Theme	Overall Score	Commentary
▪ ST8i: The RTS supports the principle of sustainably accommodating visitor demand whilst maintaining or increasing visitor numbers. ▪ ST8j: The RTS supports the introduction of additional parking restrictions and greater enforcement of existing traffic orders at tourist honeypots as a tool to encourage improved access to these locations by public transport or active modes and to address indiscriminate and dangerous parking ▪ ST8k: Where new or increased parking charges are introduced, this should be done in combination with improved visitor facilities, including e.g., parking provision, public toilets etc. ▪ ST8l: Whilst recognising the benefits of motorhome and campervan-based tourism in our region, the RTS acknowledges that it can impact negatively on our communities at certain times of the year. The RTS therefore supports measures to ensure that this demand is sustainably accommodated. ▪ ST8m: Whilst recognising the benefits of cruise tourism in our region, the RTS recognises that catering for this demand can negatively impact on our communities. The RTS therefore supports measures to ensure that this demand is more sustainably accommodated. ▪ ST8n: The RTS supports measures which would allow the benefits of cruise tourism to be more evenly distributed around the region. ▪ ST8o: The RTS supports the principle of bespoke bus services aimed at tourists to address excessive car-based demand at honeypot locations. ▪ ST8p: The RTS recognises that high volumes of tourist traffic are impacting the condition of some roads in our region and that increased central government funding is required that reflects this increased pressure on local transport infrastructure to supports an enhanced repair and maintenance programme.		improved journey time reliability. There would also be human health benefits associated with these policies through the reduction in driver frustration, particularly when trying to catch a ferry. A regular complaint in island and deep rural areas is that tourists do not allow users familiar with the road to pass on occasions preventing e.g., doctors attending emergency calls. The policies would help to address this issue and have benefit to human health. Nevertheless, cycling works, road improvement works and expanding parking provision would have negative construction environmental impacts. If construction is within or has connectivity to protected sites, it may lead to likely significant effects on biodiversity. It is anticipated that environmental assessment on these works would be conducted in the planning stage. Mitigation measures would also be implemented during construction to reduce the environmental impact. At this stage it is assumed that, with appropriate design, assessment, mitigation and enhancement, these works could be delivered without significant adverse environmental effects. There is also potential for negative environmental effects through increased tourism on sensitive natural heritage areas.

RTS Theme	Overall Score	Commentary
▪ ST8q: The RTS recognises that high volumes of tourist traffic can lead to slow and inefficient journeys and therefore supports measures to address this.	To --?	

RTS Theme	Overall Score	Commentary
Strategy Theme 9 Decarbonising our transport, mitigating the effects of climate change: Focused on supporting the decarbonisation of transport through the adoption of zero emission vehicles, vessels and aircraft: Policies: ▪ ST9a: The RTS supports the implementation of measures which facilitate the decarbonisation of the public transport vehicle fleet within the region, including commercial vehicles, buses and community transport, rail rolling stock, aircraft and ferries. ▪ ST9b: The RTS recognises the opportunities brought about by the availability of renewable energy in our region, including locally produced green hydrogen. The transport fleet mix and associated infrastructure should reflect this. ▪ ST9c: The RTS supports the development of vehicle pooling and vehicle sharing services across the region to reduce the need for personal car ownership. ▪ ST9d: The RTS calls for the expansion of EV charging infrastructure to support the decarbonisation of all vehicle based travel in our region. ▪ ST9e: The RTS recognises the challenges of distance, topography, climate and short winter daylight hours to the rollout of battery electric powered commercial vehicles and seeks low or zero emission solutions appropriate to our region, and which capitalise on the surplus energy production within our region.	++	Decarbonising of the vehicle fleet in the HITRANS region, including cars, buses, commercial vehicles, aircraft and ferries, would have significant beneficial effects on climate change mitigation, offering the potential for a step-change reduction in emissions in the transport sector. Such measures offer the potential to be industry leading, influencing others. Further benefits would also result in relation to the SEA topics of climate, air quality, access and connectivity, growth, and human health. The Policies are generally not predicted to have a significant effect on the other SEA Objectives. Policies on bus vehicle replacement would be predicted to significantly enhance accessibility for people with protected characteristics, including older people, those with disabilities, and those travelling with children. Policies on air / rail network decarbonisation would not in itself have equalities impacts, but the introduction of new aircraft and new rolling stock would provide an opportunity to deliver improved physical accessibility. For the policies on vehicle pooling or vehicle sharing, the increased levels of vehicle-pooling would deliver positive climate change, environment and health, safety and wellbeing benefits due to reduced vehicle kilometres. There is potential for beneficial equality and accessibility impacts where the policy offers affordable and enhanced accessibility for disadvantaged groups, such as non-car owners and communities with poor public transport connectivity. In addition, there would be economic benefits including positive Transport Economic

RTS Theme	Overall Score	Commentary
▪ ST9f: The RTS supports the roll-out of other alternative fuels to promote the decarbonisation of our transport networks, ports, ferry terminals, airports and airfields	To -?	Efficiency benefits and wider impacts as a result of enhanced access to employment. The delivery of a formal vehicle sharing scheme may also open-up tourism opportunities generating further benefit. However, there could also be a negative impact where vehicle sharing or pooling leads to people making trips by ICE vehicles that they either previously did not make or made by other more sustainable modes. Polices relating to improvement of transport infrastructure such as alternative refuelling facilities and material use to support manufacture of electrical and electronic components would have potential adverse effects on natural and cultural heritage receptors. At this stage it is assumed that, with appropriate design, assessment, mitigation and enhancement, any new works could be delivered without significant adverse environmental effects.

RTS Theme	Overall Score	Commentary
Strategy Theme 10 Embracing new technologies: Focused on embracing new technologies: Capitalising on innovations and new technology. Policies: ▪ ST10a: The RTS embraces the opportunities provided by new technologies to improve the provision of transport infrastructure and services across the region. ▪ ST10b: The RTS supports consideration of the provision of future innovative personal transport within the design of our active travel network and mobility hubs. ▪ ST10c: The RTS supports the principle and further development of Mobility-as-a-Service as the technology evolves, particularly through our Go-HI app. ▪ ST10d: The RTS supports opportunities for the more widespread adoption of Connected and Autonomous Vehicles and autonomous buses, whilst recognising the challenges posed in our region.	+	These policies realise the new opportunities associated with emerging technologies and are generally compatible with the SEA Objectives, with beneficial effects predicted for climate change, air quality and amenity, access and connectivity, inclusive growth and material assets. Enhanced innovative personal transport may give rise to some beneficial changes for people accessing and enjoying facilities, services and the wider environment. Where delivered at scale, the lower carbon policies (such as car sharing), could contribute significantly to the achievement of regional and national net zero targets and would support other policies to reduce road traffic and its environmental, accessibility, health and safety impacts.

RTS Theme	Overall Score	Commentary
Strategy Theme 11 Reducing the cost of travel, particularly for those most in need: Focused on policies that reduce the cost of travel, particularly for those most in need. Polices: ▪ ST11a: Transport poverty is a complex, dispersed and often hidden problem in our region. The RTS commits to define and evidence this problem and identify appropriate actions to be delivered by HITRANS and our partners. ▪ ST11b: Recognising that, for many in our region (and especially those living in our island communities), transport costs account for a high proportion of household income, the RTS supports a reduction in public transport fares and the introduction of payment plans for multi-journey tickets. ▪ ST11c: The comparative costs of public transport mean that residents and visitors to the region often choose to travel by car. The RTS therefore supports a reduction in the cost differential between travelling by public transport and car ▪ ST11d: The RTS supports in principle the roll-out of Road Equivalent Tariff to any ferry routes on which it does not currently apply, including local authority services. ▪ ST11e: The RTS calls for greater cross-industry partnership working and regulatory reform to reduce the cost penalty for interchange within or between modes of transport. ▪ ST11f: The RTS calls for the extension of the National Concessionary Travel Scheme and Under-22s Concessionary Travel Scheme to rail, ferry and air services where these are the main or only mode of public transport in an area. ▪ ST11g: The RTS calls for the retention and expansion of the Air Discount Scheme, including to businesses in the region. ▪ ST11h: National road pricing proposals may emerge in response to the reduction in fuel duty and Value Added Tax as a result of the mass adoption of electric vehicles. If this eventuality materialises, the RTS calls for a road pricing system that recognises the unique characteristics of our region	+	These policies are clearly compatible with the SEA Objectives and beneficial effects are predicted for climate change, air quality and amenity, access and connectivity, growth, human health and materials. Where reduced fares / fares caps helped to make routes more sustainable (at least in terms of passenger numbers, if not revenue), it could provide a more stable transport network encouraging modal shift from the car. This would contribute benefits to the climate change and environment criteria. Whilst there would be economy (e.g., reduced cost access to employment) and health benefits (e.g., reduced cost access to health facilities), the critical benefit would be in relation to equality and accessibility. Transport poverty has been highlighted as a major problem in the region and reducing transport fares would contribute towards addressing this, particularly for groups with a protected characteristic.

4.4.3 A few RTS Themes and Policies are predicted to have significant beneficial effects where implementation of supporting measures would deliver positive impacts and in particular for the RTS Themes which have the potential to achieve a step change in active travel and public transport uptake. These include:

- **Strategy Theme 1** (Transforming our communities and reducing the impact of transport upon them) and **Strategy Theme 9** (Decarbonising our transport, mitigating the effects of climate change) are overall predicted to have significant beneficial effects on the SEA Objectives for climate change, air quality and amenity, access and connectivity, human health and material assets. Individual priorities relating to decarbonisation within **Strategy Theme 5** (Enhancing our external connections and supply chain) also offer these significant beneficial effects for these SEA Objectives.
- The following RTS Themes are predicted to have significant beneficial effects on access and connectivity and / or inclusive growth, through their support for improved connections in HITRANS region.
  - **Strategy Theme 2:** Connecting our communities.
  - **Strategy Theme 3:** Enhancing public transport connectivity to / from: (i) Inverness; (ii) our sub-regional centres; and (iii) Scotland's other cities and beyond.
  - **Strategic Theme 11:** Reducing the cost of travel, particularly for those most in need.
- The following policies are also predicted to have significant beneficial effects on inclusive growth:
  - **Strategy Theme 3:** Enhancing public transport connectivity to / from: (i) Inverness; (ii) our sub-regional centres; and (iii) Scotland's other cities and beyond.
  - **Strategy Theme 5:** Providing connectivity that supports our island and peninsular communities.
  - **Strategy Theme 6:** Improving the efficiency of transport networks and supply-chains and reducing their impact on our communities.
  - **Strategy Theme 7:** Improving the safety, reliability and resilience of our road and rail networks.
  - **Strategy Theme 8:** Facilitating sustainable visitor travel demand.

4.4.4 There are potential for significant adverse environmental effects through the following policies:

- ST2c: Expansion of the National Cycle Network (within Strategy Theme 2)
- ST5s and ST5t: Development of air network (within Strategy Theme 5)
- ST5y: Progressing the feasibility and case for fixed-links (within Strategy Theme 5).
- ST7a and ST7b: Full dualling of the A9 and A96 and incremental improvements of road network (within Strategy 7)
- ST8a - c: Development of active travel connections (within Strategy Theme 8)

ST5s and ST5t may have significant adverse environmental effects in relation to the SEA Objective for air and climate as result of an increase in emissions. However, with the implementation of Strategy Theme 9 on decarbonising the transport, this will alleviate the impact.

ST2c, ST5y, ST7a and b, and ST8a - c may have the greatest potential for significant adverse environmental effects in relation to the SEA Objective for biodiversity as a result of the risk to important features, including designated areas such as European sites. ST2c, ST5y, and ST7a and b could also affect sensitive heritage, landscape and water receptors in the HITRANS region if not properly planned. There is uncertainty on the likely effects at this

strategic level as the nature (e.g., causeway, bridge or tunnel), location, extent and design of any future works is currently unknown. The high-level nature of the Draft RTS does not allow for specific prediction of effects of these measures on the SEA topics. With a clear commitment (see **Table 5-1**) to consideration of environmental effects within future feasibility assessments, through to project level assessments and controls in the delivery of measures at future stages of RTS implementation, it is not predicted that significant adverse effects would necessarily result. However, this would need to be closely considered during development of future delivery and business case work.

4.4.5 The other RTS Policies are generally not predicted to have significant environmental effects, whether beneficial or adverse. However, the assessment has identified the potential for environmental enhancement to be achieved in combination with the delivery of RTS Policies which seek to deliver enhanced networks for active travel.

4.4.6 There is some uncertainty associated with the effects of improved connectivity between islands and with Scotland's mainland in relation to climate change and air quality within **RTS Strategy Themes 3** (Strategy Theme 3: Enhancing public transport connectivity to / from: (i) Inverness; (ii) our sub-regional centres; and (iii) Scotland's other cities and beyond), **5** (Providing connectivity that supports our island and peninsular communities.), **6** (Improving the efficiency of transport networks and supply-chains and reducing their impact on our communities) and **8** (Facilitating sustainable visitor travel demand). Where implemented together with **RTS Theme 9** (Decarbonising our transport), these adverse effects may be avoided or reduced.

SEA Objective 1: Climate Change

4.4.7 The Draft RTS Policies are predicted to have a range of beneficial and some negative effects on the Climate Change SEA Objective.

4.4.8 **Strategy Theme 1** (Transforming our communities and reducing the impact of transport upon them) and its associated policies would provide opportunities for active travel, which would enhance biodiversity through the creation and connectivity of linear habitats as well as the use of nature-based solutions including sustainable urban drainage systems, re-naturalisation of water courses and establishment of wetlands. These will have positive effects in mitigating climate change. **Strategy Theme 9** (Decarbonising our transport, mitigating the effects of climate change) and its associated polices involve the decarbonising of the transport system. These two strategy themes are predicted to have significant beneficial effects on climate change mitigation. **Strategy Theme 4** (Improving the integration, quality of and access to public and shared transport) would also have benefits on climate change. These themes collectively provide support for modal shift to active travel; support decarbonisation of vehicles, ports, ferry terminals, airports and airfields; and support opportunities for offshore renewable energy generation. Similarly, a policy within **Strategy Theme 5** (Providing connectivity that supports our island and peninsular communities) supports the introduction of new low or zero emissions vessels to replace life-expired tonnage, which is in line with the NTS2 *Sustainable Investment Hierarchy*. Policies within **Strategy Theme 6** (Improving the efficiency of transport networks and supply-chains and reducing their impact on our communities) support infrastructure measures which will enable the growth of rail freight and waterborne freight to and from the region. These offer the potential for a step-change in addressing the challenges of achieving net zero targets within the HITRANS region.

4.4.9 Adaptation to climate change is supported through a policy within **Strategy Theme 6** (Improving the efficiency of transport networks and supply-chains and reducing their impact on our communities), which recognises the need to consider how climate change may affect the transport networks and services and the associated risks that this brings.

4.4.10 There is potential for adverse effects due to increased carbon emissions through improved connectivity and increased capacity / fleet size within **Strategy Themes 5** (Providing

connectivity that supports our island and peninsular communities), **7** (Improving the safety, reliability and resilience of our road and rail networks) and **8** (Facilitating sustainable visitor travel demand). However, where such measures are implemented together with **Strategy Theme 9** (Decarbonising our transport), these adverse effects may be avoided or reduced.

4.4.11 When considered collectively, **the RTS Policies are predicted to have the potential for significant beneficial effects on climate change mitigation and adaptation.**

SEA Objective 2: Air Quality and Amenity

4.4.12 The Draft RTS Policies are predicted to have a range of beneficial effects on the Air Quality and Amenity SEA Objective and some uncertain / potentially negative effects. The effects mirror those of the climate change criterion, where emissions to air, and to an extent noise and vibration issues, are closely linked to the use of hydrocarbons within transport.

4.4.13 When considered collectively, **the RTS Policies are predicted to have the potential for significant beneficial effects on air quality and amenity.**

SEA Objective 3: Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Soil

4.4.14 The predicted effects of the RTS on the Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Soil SEA Objective are mixed with some predicted beneficial effects and potential for adverse effects, including significant adverse effects. Uncertainties exist due to the absence of scheme and location-specific details at the Strategy stage. It should be noted that there are links between this objective and the **SEA Objective 1**: Climate Change, where improvements to biodiversity along with nature-based solutions could help to tackle climate change.

4.4.15 The predicted beneficial effects have been identified for the RTS Policies which would work to deliver a transport network that is less reliant on private car journeys (through uptake of active travel and buses) and decarbonisation of the transport (**Strategy Theme 9**), resulting in a reduction in air pollutant emissions which can be harmful to biodiversity, geodiversity and soils (and indirectly by avoiding the need for extensive road improvements). These indirect beneficial effects are not predicted to be significant at the regional scale.

4.4.16 There is some uncertainty around the implementation of new or upgraded transport infrastructure (such as **ST2c**- the expansion of the National Cycle Network, **ST7b**-incremental minor improvements to the road network, **ST8a** - long-distance walking, wheeling and cycling routes, **ST8b** – active travel connections to ports, airports, and regionally important railway stations, and **ST8c** – the development of active travel connections to tourism destinations). These have the potential for some adverse effects on biodiversity, geodiversity and soil dependent on the location of the schemes, the baseline sensitivity of the areas affected (such as where long-distance routes may be constructed through peatland habitats) and the proximity to the protected sites which may lead to likely significant effects. At this stage, specific improvement proposals have not been identified and a commitment has been made in this SEA to key mitigation principles to ensure that new works are delivered sensitively, avoid significant adverse effects and are developed together with enhancement of blue / green habitats wherever possible.

4.4.17 Policy **ST1j** (the integration of active travel, public transport and shared mobility into the planning of all new developments) of **Strategy Theme 1** and Policy **ST2a** (transformational investment in the improvement of our existing active travel networks to make these accessible) and **ST2i** (active travel network to be developed, presented and promoted in a more coherent, recognisable and integrated way for regular, occasional and new users of the network) of **Strategy Theme 2** provide opportunities for enhancing biodiversity through the integration of active travel within new developments as well as improvements to existing active travel networks for example, and that along with Climate and Air, there is potential for positive effects on the SEA Objective Biodiversity. Provision and upgrading of transport infrastructure,

such as the reallocation of road space for active travel, also provides opportunities to enhance local biodiversity through the creation and connectivity of new linear habitats, designing schemes with nature-based solutions which have the potential to offer positive effects for biodiversity. These also provide enhanced transport facilities for people to benefit from accessing greenspaces and natural areas as part of active travel journeys.

4.4.18 There are potential opportunities to undertake restoration of important peatland habitat when progressing transport schemes.

4.4.19 As previously explained, there is potential for significant adverse environmental effects to biodiversity through progressing the feasibility and case for fixed-links and acting on the conclusions **(Strategy Theme 5)** as a result of the potential impacts on important features, including designations such as SPAs and SACs. The feasibility of fixed links should include consideration of the potential for significant effects on European sites. At the current stage of RTS development, the potential for fixed links is not location specific, such that meaningful screening for any Habitats Regulations Appraisals (HRAs) cannot be currently undertaken. However, this will be kept under review as part of the feasibility assessment and may be a key determining factor in the viability of fixed links.

4.4.20 The Draft RTS is predicted to have some beneficial and some adverse effects (potentially significant), dependent on the detail of future implementing measures. The uncertainty in predicting environmental effects on these receptors has been reduced through identification of important mitigation principles which the assessment has assumed would be committed to in the later stages of RTS delivery. There are opportunities for local biodiversity enhancement in delivering new transport measures, particularly through the adoption of nature-based solutions as part of transport and active travel networks.

SEA Objective 4: Water, Flood Risk and Resilience

4.4.21 Generally, the RTS Policies are predicted to have minor (and non-significant) effects on the SEA Objective for Water, Flood Risk and Resilience.

4.4.22 Policies that may result in significant new transport infrastructure, such as fixed links, have potential for adverse effects on the water environment both during their construction and operation. However, assuming the appropriate level of environmental assessment is undertaken and key avoidance and mitigation measures implemented, these effects are not predicted to be significantly adverse at this stage.

4.4.23 Adaptation to climate change is supported through some policies within **Strategy Theme 7** (Improving the safety, reliability and resilience of our road and rail networks), which recognises the need to consider how climate change may affect the transport networks and services, which includes increased flood risk.

4.4.24 There are opportunities for enhanced use of nature-based solutions for (new and upgraded) transport networks, including sustainable drainage systems, re-naturalisation of watercourses and establishment of wetlands.

4.4.25 When considered collectively, the policies of the Draft RTS are not predicted to have significant effects on water resources and flooding.

SEA Objective 5: Cultural Heritage

4.4.26 Overall, it is predicted that the impact of the RTS Policies would be generally neutral with regards to the Cultural Heritage SEA Objective.

4.4.27 Where new and extended infrastructure is developed on greenfield or previously undeveloped land, the potential for impacts on archaeological resources would need to be considered

further as proposals were located, designed and assessed. Similarly, new, reinstated, extended and improved infrastructure has the potential to impact on built heritage, both within the infrastructure itself (where the infrastructure is a heritage asset), and in proximity to the infrastructure. It should be noted that many of the heritage assets within the HITRANS region are not designated, hence consideration should include non-designated heritage assets. It has been assumed in this SEA that mitigation principles to avoid, reduce and mitigate such adverse effects would be committed to in the later stages of delivery.

4.4.28 Providing an enhanced public transport service and improved active travel facilities are predicted to make accessing historic and cultural sites easier for people and there would be potential for a resultant increase in visitor numbers and increased awareness and appreciation of the region's historic and cultural assets. Similarly, reallocating road space to active travel may offer opportunities to enhance the setting and appreciation of heritage assets.

4.4.29 None of the RTS Policies have been predicted to have significant effects on cultural heritage and, when taken together, the Strategy is not predicted to have significant effects. Overall, the Strategy is predicted to have potential for some minor beneficial and adverse (non-significant) effects on cultural heritage and archaeology. There are opportunities for transport improvements to contribute to enhanced understanding and interpretation of the region's history and cultural heritage for all people through better access to sites and areas of interest and importance.

SEA Objective 6: Landscape

4.4.30 Overall, the RTS Policies are predicted to have neutral effects on the Landscape SEA Objective. Policies encouraging bus and active travel are predicted to have some beneficial effects in terms of improving townscape and amenity in urban and built-up areas through helping to reduce traffic congestion. This would contribute to improved air quality, reduced noise and lower visual intrusion, which would make spending time in these environments more pleasant.

4.4.31 Implementation of policies to substantially enhance active travel networks would have the potential to increase the accessibility of green spaces, open areas and new landscapes. Similarly, the delivery of improved public transport (access, capacity and affordability) would increase opportunities for all people to access areas of high-quality landscape.

4.4.32 Any new infrastructure to enhance transport connections and improve connectivity has the potential for adverse effects if not located and designed sympathetically with the local landscape or townscape character. Siting of transport infrastructure will be a key consideration as the RTS is implemented, given the presence of National Scenic Areas, 'wild land', and the general tranquillity of the region. Specific transport interventions have not been identified at this stage. However, the assessment has adopted a number of key mitigation principles which have reduced the uncertainty of the assessment and, provided these are implemented at future stages of delivery, then significant adverse landscape and visual effects would not be predicted.

4.4.33 None of the policies in the RTS has been predicted to have significant effects on landscape and, when considered collectively, the RTS Policies are not predicted to have significant effects on landscape and townscape. The Strategy is predicted to have potential for some beneficial and some adverse non-significant effects. There are opportunities for transport development in the region to contribute to enhanced enjoyment of landscape and townscape through enhanced accessibility of open spaces and civic areas by active travel and public transport. Where designed and delivered sensitively, projects supporting active travel also provide new opportunities for the enhancement of attractive and healthy communities.

SEA Objective 7: Accessibility and Connectivity

4.4.34 The Accessibility and Connectivity Objective receives good coverage across all RTS Themes, which are predicted to have a beneficial effect on accessibility for all groups. This is set against a background of a dispersed rural population, coupled with high transport costs.

4.4.35 **Strategy Themes 3, 5 and 11** support increased connectivity in the HITRANS region, including through increased capacity, improved integration, better accessibility and cheaper travel. Should fixed links come forward, they would offer a step change in the access to the relevant communities.

4.4.36 When considered collectively, **the RTS Policies are predicted to have the potential for significant beneficial effects on accessibility and connectivity.**

SEA Objective 8: Inclusive Growth

4.4.37 Overall, the Inclusive Growth SEA Objective is covered well by the RTS Themes and their associated Policies. **Strategy Themes 3 and 5** support enhanced connectivity across the region, offering both improved access to services, including employment opportunities for residents, improved access for tourists, and improvements to the supply-chain to support economic activity. These offer the potential to overcome some of the current constraints to economic activity experienced in the HITRANS region.

4.4.38 **Strategy Theme 9**, which promotes the decarbonisation of the transport system, may promote investment and demand in low carbon industries and energy generation which may have beneficial effects on inclusive growth.

4.4.39 **Strategy Theme 11** would support inclusive growth through reducing the cost-based barrier to accessing employment.

4.4.40 When considered collectively, **the RTS Policies are predicted to have the potential for significant beneficial effects on inclusive growth.**

SEA Objective 9 – Human Health

4.4.41 The majority of the RTS Themes assessed are predicted to have a beneficial effect on this objective. A large proportion of the RTS Policies are designed to enhance opportunities for access to services, including healthcare facilities and open spaces, which would be predicted to have beneficial effects on human health. Additionally, a number of the RTS Policies aim to increase the proportion of trips undertaken by active travel allowing people to incorporate exercise into their daily trips and increasing levels of physical activity. Exercise is known to have beneficial effects on both mental health / wellbeing and physical health.

4.4.42 **Strategy Theme 9** (Decarbonising our transport) is predicted to improve air quality through reductions in transport emissions which in turn will have beneficial effects on health, particularly respiratory health and for groups such as children and older people who are typically most sensitive to the adverse effects of air pollution.

4.4.43 There are some predicted significant beneficial effects to human health from reducing transport-related road accidents and improving the resilience of the road network.

4.4.44 When considered collectively, **the RTS Policies have the potential for beneficial effects on human health.**

SEA Objective 10 – Material Assets

4.4.45 The majority of RTS Themes assessed are predicted to have some beneficial effects on the Material Assets SEA Objective through encouraging more efficient forms of transport and protecting and enhancing critical infrastructure. Where the RTS Policies are implemented at scale across all forms of transport in HITRANS region, the effects have the potential to be significant.

4.4.46 **Strategy Theme 1** (Transforming our communities and reducing the impact of transport upon them) is predicted to have a significant beneficial effect on this objective through reduced resource use.

4.4.47 RTS Policies which deliver improvements to public transport (bus, train, ferry and air) to make it more attractive and accessible are likely to result in greater uptake of public transport, along with wider DRT and active travel options where they form part of an integrated transport system. Where such measures support modal shift towards more sustainable modes of transport, increased resource efficiency is likely to result. However, improvements (including increased capacity) to ferry and air services (internal and external) could result in increased resource use, where they are undertaken without efficiency improvements.

4.4.48 There is some predicted uncertainly around the effects of the implementation of the RTS Policies which could promote new or upgraded infrastructure (such as fixed links or upgraded ferry terminals) from the resultant demand on new materials. Promotion of a circular economy in the HITRANS region would be key to efficient materials management and reducing the indirect environmental effects associated with resource extraction, processing and end of life / waste management. Transport system improvements should always be developed wherever possible through re-use and reallocation of existing assets to avoid and reduce the need for new materials and non-renewable resources.

4.4.49 When considered collectively, the RTS Policies are not predicted to have significant effects on material assets. Overall, the Strategy is predicted to have mainly beneficial non-significant effects provided implementation takes account of the potential for environmental effects from non-renewable resource use.

4.5 Cumulative Effects

4.5.1 The preceding discussion of predicted effects of the Strategy on the individual SEA Objectives has identified that the Draft HITRANS RTS, when implemented, is likely to have a range of predominantly beneficial environmental effects, in some cases significant. The analysis in **Section 5.4** also identifies the key RTS Policies which are considered to particularly contribute to significant effects for each environmental theme captured by the relevant SEA Objective. This approach has allowed for consideration of the total contribution of the RTS Policies to the environmental themes in the SEA, which supports further consideration of the potential cumulative effects of the Strategy.

4.5.2 Whilst the high-level nature of the Draft RTS precludes a detailed appraisal of cumulative effects, some strategic-level commentary on cumulative effects of the Strategy is set out here. These are addressed first for the potential for different predicted effects of the Strategy to combine and result in effects on sensitive receptors that are different from those when single theme environmental effects are considered (termed here as in-combination effects). The potential for implementation of the Strategy to cumulatively affect receptors when considered with the effects of other key policies and plans in HITRANS region is also briefly addressed (and referred to as cumulative effects).

In-Combination Effects of the RTS

4.5.3 Across the HITRANS region, receptors sensitive to in-combination effects can be considered in terms of all the communities and areas of population and the supporting civic, community and transport infrastructure that serves them. Key natural heritage sites include those designated for their high quality and sensitivity (such as the National Scenic Areas), important habitats including those supporting internationally important assemblages of birds and other species, the coastal and inter-tidal zone, and the region's rich and varied cultural heritage.

4.5.4 At the strategic level of the RTS, only broad consideration of in-combination effects and receptors is possible. The SEA has identified the potential for significant adverse environmental effects to biodiversity in the event that fixed links are taken forward. Given that more than one fixed link is being considered at this early stage, the potential for in-combination effects of fixed links will require further consideration as part of their feasibility assessment.

4.5.5 No other significant adverse environmental effects in relation to the eleven topic-based themes and objectives (provided adverse effects are avoided or effectively mitigated) have been identified, which lowers the potential for impacts to combine and have additive or synergistic effects on key receptors which may be significant.

4.5.6 It is recommended that as the Strategy is implemented, a framework for continued consideration of environmental impacts is taken forward commensurate with the detail and location-specific nature of the delivery stages. To ensure that environmental and sustainability effects are considered holistically (and in relation to cumulative effects) it may be appropriate to develop a framework based on a natural-capital approach. This would characterise the range and scale of natural (and man-made) assets and services in the region from which a more informed understanding of the potential impacts of sub-programmes and key transport interventions could be identified.

4.5.7 The main potential for the RTS to have in-combination effects is on residents, through the potential for increased geographic access to services and reduced transport costs. Whilst officially recorded deprivation is generally low in the HITRANS region, access to services is also low, coupled with high transport costs, leading to transport poverty in many cases. Transport is increasingly being defined by policy makers as a human right and the potential benefits of the RTS, where it can be implemented and sustained at scale, would support significant beneficial environmental and health effects to these communities.

4.5.8 The potential for significant beneficial in-combination effects of the Draft RTS is therefore predicted in areas where a step-change in accessibility and mobility is delivered from its implementation contributing to improved health, amenity, accessibility to key services and improved socio-economic prospects (including productivity).

Cumulative Effects of the RTS

4.5.9 There are many policies, plans and programmes relating to land-use and transport development in the HITRANS region, including some of those identified in **Appendix A**. A proportionate approach to consider potential cumulative effects with other strategies has been followed reflecting the strategic nature of the RTS, its predominantly beneficial predicted effects, and the inherent complexity and uncertainty in forecasting cumulative effects.

4.5.10 The key plans which are considered to have potential for significant cumulative effects with the RTS are those likely to have a 'reinforcing' impact on its predicted beneficial effects. These include the Scottish Government's National Transport Strategy 2 (and associated delivery plans), the Scottish Climate Change Plan Update, and the 'road-map' proposals to achieve a 20% reduction in road vehicle kilometres by 2030. These policies, and their relevant subordinate and related action plans in areas such as electric vehicles, cycling, road safety

and micromobility, set out high level proposals and commitments in complementary themes to the RTS including:

- Emissions reductions (relevant to SEA Objectives for climate change mitigation and air quality and amenity)
- Uptake of active travel (relevant to SEA Objectives for health and accessibility)
- Step changes in public transport services and integration (relevant to SEA Objectives for accessibility and connectivity, material assets and inclusive growth).

4.5.11 Taken together with these strategies, and with other complementary regional level programmes and interventions, it is predicted that the RTS would have significant beneficial cumulative environmental effects on climate, air quality, human health, accessibility and productivity. The extent of the beneficial outcomes and when they might be achieved would depend on the effectiveness and timescales of the delivery measures taken forward by HITRANS and its partner organisations.

4.5.12 The potential for significant adverse cumulative effects has also been considered. The predicted adverse environmental effects of the Draft RTS are limited in number and scope.

4.5.13 To ensure that significant adverse cumulative effects with other similar or linked transport plans and programmes are avoided in future, the implementation of future projects should be taken forward in collaboration with other key delivery agencies including local councils, transport operators, Transport Scotland and HITRANS. Delivery of new transport projects would therefore be complementary with, and supportive of, national level interventions which may come forward in the region from programmes such as the National Planning Framework (NPF4). Engagement with the key environmental authorities including SEPA, NatureScot and Historic Environment Scotland (HES) will also ensure that relevant connected initiatives and programmes are integrated with transport development, including for example SEPA's strategic infrastructure sector plans, NatureScot's programmes on biodiversity, climate change, nature recovery, access and placemaking and HES's programme of work on climate adaptation and resilience.

4.5.14 This would ensure that new and upgraded transport infrastructure and facilities were planned and delivered to maximise beneficial outcomes and take account of all relevant environmental and sustainability constraints and opportunities. It is considered that an integrated approach together with implementation of the other environmental mitigation principles set out in this SEA (see **Section 6.2**) would avoid the potential for significant adverse cumulative environmental effects with other key plans and programmes in the region.

5 Mitigation and Monitoring

5.1 SEA Mitigation

5.1.1 A series of environmental mitigation measures in the form of high-level principles have been defined through the SEA process, particularly following initial options appraisal and in the assessment of the RTS Policies. Mitigation in this SEA is presented in the form of principles and general commitments as it reflects the level of detail of the Draft RTS as evidenced in the RTS Policies and their supporting narratives.

5.1.2 The key mitigation principles are summarised in the table below:

Table 5-1 SEA Mitigation Measures

Group	Mitigation Commitment
General Mitigation Principles	
• The mitigation principles outlined in this report will be developed and applied through the RTS delivery stages including through continued application of an appropriate level of environmental assessment as the details of interventions are progressed. • These environmental assessments will be supported, where appropriate, through the development of environmental baseline information specific to the key transport corridor(s) where transport measures are being considered. • The implementation of future RTS interventions will be taken forward in collaboration with other key delivery agencies including the local authorities, bus operators and HITRANS. • Engagement with the key environmental authorities including SEPA, NatureScot and Historic Environment Scotland will be maintained to ensure that relevant connected initiatives and programmes are integrated with RTS delivery.	
Policy Specific Mitigation Measures	
Vehicles, fleet and Decarbonisation	• Increased provision of public transport capacity (bus, train, ferry and air) and services should deploy zero or ultra-low emission vehicles as soon as is practicable. • Public transport operators should be supported to achieve decarbonisation of existing vehicle fleets where practicable. • Where new electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure is developed, opportunities should be taken to provide as wide as possible access for local communities and other users. • Transition to electric vehicles should be supported with circular economy activities and initiatives to support the re-use, re-manufacture and recycling of key materials such as battery components.
Relevant RTS Themes: *1. Transforming our communities and reducing the impact of transport upon them.* *5. Providing connectivity that supports our island and peninsular communities* *6: Improving the efficiency of transport networks and supply-chains and reducing their impact on our communities.* *9. Decarbonising our transport, mitigating the effects of climate change* *10. Embracing new technologies*	
Transport Infrastructure	• New transport infrastructure should be developed wherever possible through re-use and reallocation of existing transport assets / road space (in accordance with the Scottish Government's Investment Hierarchy3) and where new facilities or infrastructure are required these should be designed and constructed following circular economy principles to minimise use of primary resources.

[3] As set out in the 2021 Infrastructure Investment Plan: https://www.gov.scot/publications/analysis-responses-consultation-draft-infrastructure-investment-plan-2021-22-2025-26/

Group	Mitigation Commitment
	• Any new or upgraded transport infrastructure would be subject to appropriate levels of environmental assessment and consenting. Feasibility assessments will consider environmental effects from the outset to ensure constraints and opportunities inform the strategic decision-making process (such as further SEA); with the subsequent project level environmental assessment (such as Environmental Impact Assessment through the planning system) and controls to inform the development of designs, mitigation measures and sensitive construction environmental management. Integration of environmental issues from feasibility through to construction would aim to avoid and reduce possible significant adverse environmental effects across all SEA topic areas. • Screening for Habitats Regulations Appraisal will be undertaken as part of the feasibility assessment of fixed links, where required. • Where materials are required to develop transport infrastructure priority should be given to the use of secondary, recycled and remanufactured materials and products before use of non-renewable resources.
Relevant RTS Themes: *1. Transforming our communities and reducing the impact of transport upon them.* *2: Connecting our communities* *3: Enhancing public transport connectivity to / from: (i) Inverness; (ii) our sub-regional centres; and (iii) Scotland's other cities and beyond.* *4: Improving the integration, quality of and access to public and shared transport.* *5. Providing connectivity that supports our island and peninsular communities* *6: Improving the efficiency of transport networks and supply-chains and reducing their impact on our communities.* *7. Improving the safety, reliability and resilience of our road and rail networks* *8: Facilitating sustainable visitor travel demand* *9: Decarbonising our transport, mitigating the effects of climate change* *10. Embracing new technologies*	
Transport Networks and Enhancement	• Support should be provided to reducing the need to travel (such as improved broadband connections and development of 20-minute neighbourhoods). • Development of 20-minute neighbourhoods and other land-use and transport integration measures should identify and implement opportunities for related environmental improvements to the public realm including for example green / blue infrastructure, local habitat enhancement and where relevant interpretation of cultural heritage. • Development of active travel network infrastructure should identify and implement opportunities for related environmental improvements including for example green / blue infrastructure, local habitat enhancement and where relevant interpretation of areas cultural heritage interest/importance. • New active travel infrastructure should be designed, constructed and maintained in accordance with environmental best practice to avoid or reduce the potential for adverse effects from changes in land use. • Measures to protect and enhance the natural and built environment should seek to work with nature and adopt approaches based on green / blue infrastructure. Opportunities for enhancement of local environments and habitats (including through delivery of biodiversity net gain) should be taken in the delivery of new schemes. • Measures to adapt the transport system to climate change should take account of the embodied carbon in designs and materials and wherever possible solutions should seek to work with nature and adopt approaches based on green / blue infrastructure. Opportunities for enhancement of local environments and habitats should be taken in the delivery of new schemes. • Collaborative working with relevant flood risk agencies and local authorities should be pursued in integrating transport resilience works with flood prevention activities, wherever possible working at a watercourse catchment scale.

Group	Mitigation Commitment
Relevant RTS Themes: *1. Transforming our communities and reducing the impact of transport upon them.* *2: Connecting our communities* *3: Enhancing public transport connectivity to / from: (i) Inverness; (ii) our sub-regional centres; and (iii) Scotland's other cities and beyond.* *4: Improving the integration, quality of and access to public and shared transport.* *5. Providing connectivity that supports our island and peninsular communities* *6: Improving the efficiency of transport networks and supply-chains and reducing their impact on our communities.* *7. Improving the safety, reliability and resilience of our road and rail networks* *8: Facilitating sustainable visitor travel demand* *9: Decarbonising our transport, mitigating the effects of climate change* *10. Embracing new technologies*	
Access and Fairness	• Measures using pricing to reduce demand for car travel should be designed equitably to ensure that they do not have unintended consequences for people with socio-economic disadvantage, in line with national and regional commitments to a Just Transition to Net Zero. • The implementation of active travel infrastructure should be fully accessible for all users and integrated across the region to realise full benefits. • Enhancement to bus, ferry, train and air services and facilities should be designed and operated to ensure that the needs of all users and disabilities groups are accommodated. • Enhancement to bus, ferry, train and air services and facilities should be designed and operated to ensure that the needs of all users and disabilities groups are accommodated.
Relevant RTS Themes: *1. Transforming our communities and reducing the impact of transport upon them.* *2: Connecting our communities* *3: Enhancing public transport connectivity to / from: (i) Inverness; (ii) our sub-regional centres; and (iii) Scotland's other cities and beyond.* *4: Improving the integration, quality of and access to public and shared transport.* *5. Providing connectivity that supports our island and peninsular communities* *6: Improving the efficiency of transport networks and supply-chains and reducing their impact on our communities.* *7. Improving the safety, reliability and resilience of our road and rail networks* *8: Facilitating sustainable visitor travel demand* *9: Decarbonising our transport, mitigating the effects of climate change* *10. Embracing new technologies* *11. Reducing the cost of travel, particularly for those most in need.*	

5.1.3 These mitigation commitments provide a framework for the development of specific interventions in more detail alongside the articulation of the RTS Action Plan. Future elaboration of this framework will include identification of specific lead responsibilities for HITRANS and other partners and associated timeframes. At this stage it is important to note that the principles are committed to by HITRANS which has allowed them to be used in considering the potential residual (i.e., post mitigation) environmental effects of the Draft Strategy as reported in Section 5 of the full ER.

5.2 Monitoring Framework

5.2.1 The 2005 Act requires SEA Environmental Reports to provide a *"description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with section 19"*. Section 19 requires the responsible authority to *"monitor the significant environmental effects"* in a manner which enables it to *"identify any unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage" and to "undertake appropriate remedial action"*.

5.2.2 The Draft RTS includes a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) linked to the RTS Strategy Objectives. These in-turn are closely related to those for monitoring the NTS2. These will be used to measure the change in performance of the transport system in the HITRANS region against the baseline initially established in the HITRANS 'Case for Change' report. Monitoring will be produced on a two-yearly basis.

5.2.3 Many of these indicators are considered to be suitable to help track progress in the delivery of the Strategy with respect to environmental outcomes. Further, monitoring of environmental effects will be better integrated and practical to undertake where the indicators used are shared with those proposed for the main RTS monitoring process. The indicators considered to be useful in tracking progress against both RTS Objectives and SEA Objectives have been captured in **Table 5-2**.

Table 5-2 Indicators for Monitoring RTS Environmental Effects

SEA Objective	Monitoring & Tracking Indicators	Relevant RTS Objectives
1. Climate Change	• Transport emissions in the HITRANS region (Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy • Number of Air Quality Management Areas in the region (Scottish Transport Statistics) • Proportion of road vehicle fleet which is ULEV (DfT Vehicle Licencing Statistics) • Total public charging and rapid charging devices (DfT EV charging map) • Number of kilometres of electrified rail track **or** number of battery-electric or alternatively fuelled rail rolling stock units (Network Rail and ScotRail) • Number of battery-electric or alternatively fuelled vessels (CMAL and local authorities) • Number of battery-electric or alternatively fuelled aircraft used on PSO air services (Transport Scotland and local authorities) • Use of EVs by residents (HTTS)	1
2. Air Quality and Amenity	• Number of Air Quality Management Areas in the region (Scottish Transport Statistics)	
3. Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Soil	None identified	
4. Water, Flood Risk and Resilience	None identified	
5. Cultural Heritage	None identified	
6. Landscape	None identified	
7. Accessibility and Connectivity	• Passenger journeys by region for local bus services (Scottish Transport Statistics, although the figures for the region also include the Shetland Islands) • Rail passengers by station (ORR estimates of station usage) • Use of local bus services in previous month (Scottish Household Survey Travel Diary, SHSTD)	2, 3, 4, 5, 6

SEA Objective	Monitoring & Tracking Indicators	Relevant RTS Objectives
	• Use of local train services in previous month (SHSTD) • Main mode of travel – bus (SHSTD) • Main mode of travel – rail (SHSTD) • Number of taxi vehicles and private hire cars (Scottish Transport Statistics, local authority level) • Number of taxi driver licences (Scottish Transport Statistics, local authority level) • Number of wheelchair accessible taxis and private hire cars (Scottish Transport Statistics, local authority level) • Annual ferry passenger carryings by route (Scottish Transport Statistics) • Annual ferry car carryings by route (Scottish Transport Statistics) • Annual ferry commercial vehicle and coach carryings by route (Scottish Transport Statistics) • Annual proportion of scheduled sailings cancelled, diverted or late by route (ferry operator data) • Terminal passengers by airport – Inverness, Passengers on selected domestic air routes to and from Inverness, Terminal passenger traffic by origin / destination – Inverness, Aircraft movements, by airport and type of movement – Inverness, and Air transport movements by airport - Inverness (Civil Aviation Authority reported in Scottish Transport Statistics) • Residents' use of public transport (including barriers to travel) (HTTS)	
8. Inclusive Growth	• Road journey times by time period / time of year (INRIX, for the 17 route sections identified in the 'Case for Change') • Average freight lifted by UK HGVs in the HITRANS region (Scottish Transport Statistics) • Foreign and domestic freight at ports in the HITRANS region (Scottish Transport Statistics) • Breakdown of freight commodity at ports in the HITRANS region (Scottish Transport Statistics) • Tonnage of freight carried, by airport (Civil Aviation Authority reported in Scottish Transport Statistics)	**Objectives:** 5, 6
9. Human Health	• Adults (16+) – frequency of walking in previous seven days (SHSTD) • Main mode of travel – walking (SHSTD) • Main mode of travel – bicycle (SHSTD) • Cycling mode share (SHSTD) • Percentage of pupils cycling to primary school (Sustrans Hands-Up survey) • Percentage of pupils cycling to secondary school (Sustrans Hands-Up survey) • The level of, barriers to, and attitude to walking, wheeling and cycling will be monitored in the biennial (HTTS)	**Objectives**: 2, 3, 4, 5 6

SEA Objective	Monitoring & Tracking Indicators	Relevant RTS Objectives
	• Road-based casualties by severity and type local authority level are regularly published and will be monitored • Reported road collisions (Scottish Transport Statistics) • Personal injury accidents, overall and by route section as per the 'Case for Change' report (Scottish Transport Statistics) • Fatal and serious personal injury accidents per million vehicle kilometres, by route section as per the 'Case for Change' report (Scottish Transport Statistics) • Residents' perceptions of safety (HTTS)	
10. Material Assets	• Total public charging and rapid charging devices (DfT EV charging map) • Number of kilometres of electrified rail track or number of battery-electric or alternatively fuelled rail rolling stock units (Network Rail and ScotRail) • Number of battery-electric or alternatively fuelled vessels (CMAL and local authorities) • Number of battery-electric or alternatively fuelled aircraft used on PSO air services (Transport Scotland and local authorities)	**Objectives**: 5, 6

5.2.4 These indicators will be developed and refined following feedback from consultation on the Draft RTS.

6 Next Steps

6.1.1 The Scottish Ministers will review the finalised RTS and determine whether it can be approved with or without any further modifications. Following approval of the finalised RTS, HITRANS will formally adopt and publicise the Strategy. At this time, an SEA Post Adoption Statement (PAS) will be prepared to explain how the SEA process has closely informed the development of the finalised RTS and how the feedback from consultation has been taken into account in finalising the Strategy. The PAS will also set out proposals for future monitoring of the environmental effects of the RTS.