

Report to Partnership Meeting 12th September 2025

Research and Strategy Delivery

Regional Transport Strategy: 1st Delivery Plan

Purpose of Report

This report introduces HITRANS 1st Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) Delivery Plan.

HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy: 1st Delivery Plan

HITRANS updated Regional Transport Strategy was adopted by Partnership Members following confirmation of Ministerial approval on 13th May 2025. A formatted version of the document is being developed for the Parliament reception on 23rd September (see Item 19).

To guide the implementation of the RTS, a first Delivery Plan has been prepared. The purpose of the Delivery Plan is to set out a series of actions including an ongoing programme of physical and non-physical interventions which will help deliver the objectives defined in the RTS. The Action Plan contains a combination of proposed appraisals / business cases, research studies, projects and programmes as well as 'business-as-usual' activities intended to promote the interests of our region.

Following Member and officer input at the Partnership meeting in April 2025 a final version is attached as Appendix A setting out a proposed timescale for each Action and the outcome sought. The Delivery Plan will be reviewed and updated throughout the lifetime of the strategy as part of the ongoing monitoring process. This review will coincide with each Scottish Local Authority Election cycle providing an opportunity to reset or realign priorities to the changing political, social, environmental and economic landscape.

Below is an updated summary of some of the key actions set out in the draft which HITRANS will seek to implement over the timeframe of the 1st Delivery Plan covering the period up to Summer 2027:

- Advocate for the early completion of committed strategic transport projects including A9 dualling, A83 at Rest and Be Thankful and A96 dualling between Inverness and Auldearn and bypasses of Elgin and Keith.
- Develop Regional Rail (Item 7) and Bus Strategies as daughter documents to the RTS
- Update the Regional Active Travel Strategy
- Develop the Regional People and Place Behaviour Change Programme in partnership with local authorities and anchor community organisations
- Expand HI-Bike e-bike share scheme within Inverness, Fort William and into Elgin
- Lead the development of an Integrated Transport Plan for Fort William
- Work with local and national partners to improve transport integration between modes at points of key interchange including Inverness, Oban and Fort William.
- Lead work to migrate all public local authority owned EV chargers in Argyll and Bute, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Orkney Islands and Shetland Islands onto a new back office and replace those that are out of date by mid 2026.

- Finalise an EV charging network expansion strategy for Argyll and Bute and the Northern and Western Isles that seeks to attract private investment, and procure it.
- Continue to support the expansion of our Moove Flexi app for new DRT services across our region
- Establish a Highlands and Islands Health and Transport Action Plan building on recent collaboration and progress made in the Western Isles and elsewhere with the region
- Expand the Sustainable Aviation Test Environment (SATE) across the Highlands & Islands with different demonstration activities across the region, with the overall aim to integrate sustainable aviation within the overall transport mix
- Support The Highland Council in developing the business case and procuring an improved PSO contract serving Wick airport
- Expand and maintain provision of online and wayside public transport information in partnership with local authorities and operators

These actions and others set out in 1st Delivery Plan complement a wide range of ongoing work that HITRANS will continue to undertake in support of objectives and policies set out in the updated Regional Transport Strategy.

Risk Register

RTS Delivery

Impact - Positive

Comment:

The Delivery Plan will be updated every 5 years or council term and sets out the actions that HITRANS and partner organisations will undertake to support the implementation of the Regional Transport Strategy.

Policy

Impact - Positive

Comment:

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

Financial

Impact – Positive

Budget line and value – Funding for undertaking actions of the first Delivery Plan will be identified in future Business Plans and through the wider work of the Partnership which will be reported to members at Partnership meetings.

Equality

Impact – Positive

Comment:

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

Recommendation

Members are invited to:

1. Note the report
2. Approve the 1st Delivery plan attached as appendix to this report.

Report by: Neil MacRae

Designation: Senior Partnership Manager

Date: 2nd September 2025