

Item:
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Report to Partnership Meeting 12 September 2025

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

Rail Round Up

Purpose of Report

To inform the Board on current rail matters.

Inverness Station Masterplan

HITRANS commissioned Austin Smith Lord to undertake the Inverness Bus Station and Car Park Feasibility Study. The draft report is being reviewed by key stakeholders. It makes a number of significant recommendations about the future location and capacity required for the bus station of the future with a real focus on delivered a transport interchange fit for the future of Inverness. Following approval of the final report there will be a significant focus on Stakeholder and Public Engagement to allow members of the public to have a real and meaningful voice in the future of the city's public transport hub. When finalised, the report will allow the Station Masterplan process to re-commence.

Viaduct via Rail

Following on from the Fort Transit study, proposing additional rail services to help make Fort William the centre for rail tourism, while also creating opportunities for school and ferry traffic, new timetable work was commissioned to identify extra Glenfinnan services to assist with the problems of the very high demand to see the steam trains cross the viaduct. This study has been fed into the forum chaired by Deputy First Minister Kate Forbes, and also into the wider Fort William 2040 activity. The report is appended.

Oban

HITRANS commissioned the Oban Integration report to improve accessibility for wheeling, walking and cycling between Oban rail station and the ferry terminal. The report has now been concluded with a proposed route between the two that

follows the shortest route and avoids conflict with commercial vehicles serving premises on the pier. While partners including Network Rail and Cal Mac are supportive of the proposed scheme, ScotRail have indicated that they cannot support the proposals as they stand. Subject to any final comments received from other partners, it is proposed that HITRANS seek to address any substantive issues raised by Scotrail and then resubmit a bid to the Active Travel Infrastructure Fund Tier 2 for construction in 2025/26. The report is appended.

Rail Development Strategy Route & Branch

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

It will focus on:

- electrification and alternative traction
- journey time
- frequency
- scheduling
- route capacity
- route capability
- terminal and depot capacity
- integration with other modes
- new station opportunities
- accessibility
- rail freight
- resilience
- traincrew deployment
- open access operations

and also consider policy areas such as rail devolution to a sub-regional level.

Peak Fares

Peak fares were abolished on 1 September 2025. Designed to manage demand in the morning and evening peaks it had the effect of making journeys from the Highlands be charged as peak even when arrivals in the Central Belt well into the afternoon.

Faslane

Following a presentation to a joint meeting of Argyll and Bute Council and HMNB Clyde, a meeting between HITRANS and RN has been set up to progress the station proposal.

Power to Rail

HITRANS has identified potential rail freight flows to handle construction materials and components for major renewables projects. Discussions have been held with contractors and infrastructure providers for traffic both cross-border and internal.

Altnabreac

Altnabreac Station has reopened to the public, with a new pedestrian access.

Alcohol on Trains

Alcohol is now permitted 1000-2100 on ScotRail trains, although some services for sporting events etc may be dry. Catering trolleys are also stocked with alcoholic drinks.

RISK REGISTER

RTS Delivery

Impact – Mode shift, integration, economy

Policy

Impact – Decarbonisation, transport efficiency, rail freight growth targets

Financial

Impact – Route & Branch and Oban Feasibility fully funded by HITRANS, others- nil impact

Equality

Impact – Access to the network for all

Recommendation

1. Members are asked to note the report.
2. Members are asked to approve the recommendation to resubmit the Oban scheme to the Active Travel Infrastructure Fund Tier 2, and to outline our reasons to Transport Scotland.

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