

Report to Partnership Board Meeting 6th February 2026

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

Inverness Interchange Bus & Car Park Feasibility Study

Purpose of Report

To introduce the findings of the feasibility study commissioned by HITRANS to explore the creation of a strategic multi-modal transport interchange within the Inverness Station Masterplan area

Background

Successive City Vision documents for Inverness have highlighted the desire for the city centre to become vibrant, accessible, and attractive. This has included realising the potential around what is now referred to as the 'Station Quarter.'

The recent purchase of the former Post Office sorting office by Network Rail means that the majority of the real estate around Farraline Park, and between it and the Railway Station, is now within public ownership. This, combined with the Council's need to consider future options for Rose Street car park, provides an opportunity to rethink how the area is developed to improve not only the experience of passengers, and pedestrians generally, but also the quality of the urban realm in this part of the City. These aspirations are set out within the Council's City Centre Vision and Masterplan, the principles of which were taken forward in the context of their 2025 Inverness Strategy.

Alongside this a Masterplan for Inverness Rail Station is being developed by Network Rail / Scotland's Railway in line with Recommendation 43 in STPR2 regarding Major Station Masterplans. The Inverness Interchange Feasibility Study (Bus Station / MSCP) has been progressed in close liaison with Network Rail / Scotland's Railway to ensure compatibility with the Masterplan for Inverness Railway Station. The Study considers an area deemed to be within the 'collaboration zone' associated with the Inverness Railway Station Masterplan.

Inverness Bus Station and Car Park Feasibility

HITRANS has commissioned the Inverness Interchange Bus Station and Car Park Feasibility Study to help explore the creation of a strategic multi-modal transport interchange within the Inverness Station Masterplan area and in line with Recommendation 43 in STPR2 regarding Major Station Masterplans.

The Study considers the feasibility of a range of key transport infrastructure interventions, specifically a new and reconfigured Bus and Coach Station, a resized replacement Multi-Storey Car Park (MSCP) and dedicated Active Travel Hub

Study Objectives and Findings

- Assess viable options for location, size, and indicative design of the interchange.
- Evaluate operational needs for buses, coaches, rail replacement services, and tourist operations.
- Integrate with existing and future transport networks (A82 access, rail connectivity).
- Promote sustainable travel (EV charging, active travel facilities, green infrastructure).
- Explore options for new MSCP.
- Improve user experience, safety, and accessibility for all, including those with sensory or mobility impairments.
- Align with city centre regeneration and placemaking goals.

Key Findings

A copy of the full report together with supporting visualisations can be found on the HITRANS website <https://hitrans.org.uk/projects/inverness-interchange-bus-station-car-park-feasibility-study/>

A summary of the key findings are outlined below:

1. The existing Bus Station and Multi-Storey Car Park need to be replaced.
 - a. Bus Station: Currently sub-optimal, undersized, and operationally inefficient. It has 7 'island' stances (operating as 14 stances 'double stacking') causing pedestrian/vehicle conflicts and failing to meet current standards in terms of accessibility, quality of passenger experience, operational efficiency and safety.
 - b. MSCP: Current restrictions imposed on operational capacity due to the under-design of structure to meet modern standards and the condition of the structure. Reports by others indicate a restricted future lifespan of the existing structure thereby requiring plans for the reprovision of car parking.
2. There is sufficient space to accommodate the reprovision of Bus and Coach Station, MSCP and Active Travel Mobility Hub all meeting best practice standards as part of a wider mixed-use regeneration of the 'Station Quarter' on land assembled by, and within the ownership of, The Highland Council and Network Rail / Scotland's Railway.
 - a. Bus Station: Based on available information initial analysis by transport planning consultants indicates that a replacement Bus and Coach Station with at least 14 stances and ideally 16 stances be located within the 'Station Quarter'
 - b. MSCP: Based on available information initial analysis by transport planning consultants indicates that the reprovision of a MSCP providing circa 850 spaces to accommodate spaces currently at TK Maxx and Railway Station car parks, meet future demand and designed to meet contemporary standards including EVs.
 - c. These recommendations should be developed and tested in greater detail in the next phase of design work to confirm this initial analysis.

3. There is an opportunity for mixed-use development across the 'Station Quarter' creating a new destination and gateway to the City Centre with improved public realm, and creation of a new landmark civic space at Farraline Park, greatly enhancing the setting of the A Listed library building.

Options

A longlist of options was developed and refined through workshops with stakeholders (HITRANS, Highland Council, Network Rail, ScotRail, Stagecoach). Twelve options (A–L) presented, varying by bus station location relative to the library, the details of which can be found via this link <https://hitrans.org.uk/projects/inverness-interchange-bus-station-car-park-feasibility-study/>.

Options were further refined down to 3 – see Preferred Options Draft Visualisations V3

- Option I: 16 stances north/east of Library; MSCP at north of Station Quarter.
- Option J: 15 stances east of Library; MSCP at north of Station Quarter.
- Option L: 16 stances east of Library; MSCP at north of Station Quarter.

This was based on a number of key assumptions: Retain A-Listed Library, Maintain pedestrian access from Strothers Lane, Bus/vehicular access from Longman Road/A82, Stop up Margaret Street; create civic square in front of Library, Minimum 14 bus/coach stances, MSCP with ~850 spaces (including disabled and EV), Rail replacement buses accommodated, Mixed-use development zones indicated, Tourist coaches remain off-site (Ardross Street).

Public and Stakeholder Engagement

There have been several rounds of internal engagement with the Highland Council, Network Rail / Scotland's Railway, ScotRail and Stagecoach during the development of the feasibility study and options.

Partners are now keen to engage wider and share the findings of the feasibility work and present indicative options that establish a series of key design principles, namely.

- Seeking to re-locate a new bus and coach station with sufficient capacity for current and projected demand and improve interchange with rail station
- Re-provide a circa 850 multi-storey car park (MSCP) to the north of the study area
- Establish a pedestrian first zone around the 'Station Quarter' including a traffic-free new civic square at Farraline Park
- Promote a mixed-use city centre regeneration masterplan for the 'Station Quarter'

A report outlining the proposed engagement plan will be taken to The Highland Councils City of Inverness Committee on 2nd February. The engagement will seek feedback and an indication of support (or otherwise) on the key design principles. With reference to the indicative option, invite consultees to indicate any preference and suggest any further improvements to the proposals to inform the work undertaken to date and or the preparation of a preferred option.

Next Steps

Beyond finalising and undertaking the stakeholder and public engagement on options, there is work required to formalise the existing partnership working arrangements between the Council, HITRANS and Network Rail/Scotland's Railways. It will also be necessary to undertake additional site constraints analysis (utilities, ground conditions, drainage) and seek property market advice that will help inform indicative phasing and costings.

RISK REGISTER

RTS Delivery

Impact – Supports several Regional Transport Strategy Policies and outcomes and the implementation of an action within the initial Delivery Plan.

Policy

Impact – NTS2 and STPR2 compliant. Synergy with Inverness City Vision and Strategy, ICF Green Freeport. Key economy and regeneration outputs.

Financial

Impact – The initial feasibility study was funded by HITRANS, while the current commission was commissioned by HITRANS but funded by The Highland Council through funding support from the Scottish Governments Bus Infrastructure Fund.

Equality

Impact – Accessibility to public transport for all.

Recommendation

Members are invited to:

1. Note the report and findings of the Inverness Interchange Feasibility Study
2. Recommend that HITRANS continues to work in collaboration with The Highland Council and Network Rail to progress business case for the Inverness Interchange and wider Inverness Station Masterplan.

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Designation:	Partnership Managers, HITRANS
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