

Item:  
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## Report to Partnership Meeting 2 February 2024

### RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

#### Regional Transport Strategy Update

##### Purpose of Report

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

##### Background and Progress to Date

HITRANS has a statutory duty under the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 to produce a Regional Transport Strategy (RTS). Working with local authority partners, HITRANS is in the process of producing a new RTS for the development of transport in the region over the next circa 20 years with the aim of delivering a transport system that ***reduces inequalities, takes climate action, helps deliver inclusive economic growth, and improves the health and wellbeing of people in the region.***

The development of the RTS involves three broad stages:

- **Stage 1: The Case for Change** - this initial stage has set out the transport problems in the HITRANS region and established a set of Strategy Objectives focused on addressing these problems.
- **Stage 2: Option Generation and Preliminary Options Appraisal** - this stage involves generating, developing and appraising a set of options which help to resolve the problems identified and deliver the Strategy Objectives.
- **Stage 3: RTS Document** - this stage collates the outputs from the above activities into an RTS document ahead of statutory consultation.

Following a public consultation on the initial Case for Change and parallel Impact Assessments, copies of the final versions of each of these documents together with the Case for Change Technical Note can be found on the HITRANS website via this link;  
[www.hitrans.org.uk/Strategy/Regional Transport Strategy](http://www.hitrans.org.uk/Strategy/Regional%20Transport%20Strategy)

Members and Partnership Advisors were subsequently invited to provide feedback on the Draft Preliminary Appraisal Report and approved the proposed structure for developing the Regional Transport Strategy at the September Partnership meeting in Orkney.

Following this meeting, HITRANS officers have been working with Stantec (who have been commissioned to support the development of the HITRANS RTS) to develop, and by extension address the transport problems identified.

An initial working draft of policies and actions to support the delivery of RTS Strategy Objectives and by extension address the transport problems identified was shared for comment at the Partnership meeting held in Elgin in November 2023. At this meeting, it was agreed that HITRANS officers would arrange a series of meetings with partner Councils and other key stakeholders to offer an opportunity to discuss the key priorities for each area.

Subsequent meetings were then held with elected members and senior officers in each partner Local Authority in December and January. In addition, there were meetings with HITRANS non-elected board members, HITRANS Advisors from HIE and Prosper together with an engagement session with Prosper's board.

Input from each of these meetings has been used to update the policies and actions and wider comments incorporated into the draft Regional Transport Strategy.

### **Next Steps including Statutory Consultation**

A copy of the draft Regional Transport Strategy will be shared with Members and Advisors to review in advance of the HITRANS Partnership Meeting.

Following the receipt of any final comments on the draft RTS at the Partnership meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2024, officers will look to commence the 8 week statutory public consultation on the RTS later in February.

To facilitate the engagement with the public, HITRANS will publish an ArcGIS online StoryMap similar to that which was used for the 'Case for Change' consultation. This will include a description of the RTS process, a link to the RTS documents and a survey which the public will be invited to respond to. Hard copy versions of the consultation material will also be available at the HITRANS office and on request. Separately, HITRANS will write to the statutory authorities to invite comment on the RTS. The consultation will be run over a period of 8 weeks.

HITRANS would be grateful of partners support in publicising the statutory consultation to help ensure that there is as wide a response as possible. Officers are also still considering opportunities for further key stakeholder engagement on the RTS including seeking a sponsor for an event at Holyrood as discussed at the previous partnership meeting.

### **RTS Delivery Timescale**

<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Date</b>
'Case for Change' consultation	Complete
Preliminary Options Appraisal	Complete
Draft RTS and associated SEA, EqlA and ICIA	2 <sup>nd</sup> February Partnership Meeting
Finalise Draft RTS reporting package	w/c 5 <sup>th</sup> February 2024
Draft RTS Statutory Consultation	w/c 12 <sup>th</sup> February to April 2024 (8 weeks)
Final RTS	May 2024
Post-consultation SEA Technical Note and Equalities Note	May 2024
Submission of RTS to Scottish Ministers	June 2024
Post-adoption SEA Statement	July / August 2024.

RTS Delivery  
Impact - Positive

Comment – The work to refresh the Regional Transport Strategy seeks to update the Delivery Plan

Policy  
Impact - Positive

Comment – This work helps set new policies and objectives for HITRANS that are relevant to the framework within which the Partnership now sits.

Financial  
Impact – Positive

Budget line and value – Funding for developing the Regional Transport Strategy Update has been identified in the HITRANS Business Plan for 2023/24.

Equality  
Impact – Positive

Comment – Updating the Regional Transport Strategy offers an opportunity to address both transport and wider inequalities across the region

**Recommendation**

Members are invited to:

1. Note the report
2. Review the draft Regional Transport Strategy and provide any final comments ahead of the statutory public consultation by 7<sup>th</sup> February 2024.
3. Agree that HITRANS officers will share a copy of the final draft of the Regional Transport Strategy and online version of the statutory public consultation with Members ahead of commencing the 8 week statutory process.

**Report by:** Neil MacRae  
**Designation:** Partnership Manager  
**Date:** 25<sup>th</sup> January 2023