

Item:
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Report to Partnership Meeting 16 November 2018
RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY
Inverness Rail East- IRE

Purpose of Report

To Update members on proposals for a new rail station to the east of Inverness.

Inverness Rail East Initial Appraisal- Case for Change

The East Inverness area has developed rapidly in recent years with the Retail Park, UHI Campus, Lifescan, Raigmore hospital as journey attractors joining the burgeoning communities of Smithton, Balloch and Cradlehall. The area has two rail lines - the Aberdeen line to the north and the Highland Main Line to the south. Access to rail is limited by the requirement to head out of the city centre (thereby increasing journey time) for students and workers residents, or conversely into the city centre for local residents. This can be difficult in the peak. The A9 trunk road acts as barrier between the city and this area.

This project seeks to test the feasibility of rail access through the provision of rail stations at ONE of Seafield, Beechwood UHI and Stratton Farm. It is included in the Highland Council's Inverness East Development Brief:

" Rail lines connecting to Aberdeen and Perth pass through the Brief area and offer an opportunity for a new, local rail halt to serve residents wishing to travel to the city centre and beyond but also commuters, shoppers and other visitors wishing to visit destinations within the Brief area. Over the next 10 years, both the Perth and Aberdeen lines are scheduled for major investment in line capacity and timetabling of services and therefore this an opportune time for a local connection to the rail network.

However, there are financial, physical and technical challenges to establishing a new rail halt within the Brief area. The Highland Council is working with The Highlands and Islands Regional Transport Partnership (HITRANS) to further investigate the feasibility of a rail halt at Seafield, the Campus or Stratton. This feasibility will assess: market demand for the facility; technical issues such as signalling, line curvature and gradient; the likely degree of support from funding agencies and rail operators, and; an indicative cost for the facility. This work will require to be informed by a wider appraisal based on the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance."

Rail may provide a public transport link to employment, education and training for the inhabitants of the Inner Moray Firth, from Tain on the north to Elgin in the east. It may also provide local and longer journey opportunities for existing and new residents in the local community.

Dislocation from the rail network can be overcome, linking diverse communities including those that are disadvantaged from across the Moray Firth Arc to access facilities that are of regional significance.

Strategic Fit with NTS

This project aims to provide:
integrated and reliable transport that supports economic growth- access to employment and education
provides opportunities for all and is easy to use-for young non car owners
a transport system that meets everyone's needs, respects our environment and contributes to health- built on walking and cycling to the station
a culture where transport providers and planners respond to the changing needs of businesses, communities and users- allowing the legacy network to be adapted to today's needs

High Level Objectives

- Promote economic growth - through access to employment and education
- Promote social inclusion- providing non-car owner access to employment and education
- Protect our environment and improve health- carbon reduction and active travel access
- Improve safety of journeys- rail is a very safe form of travel
- Improve integration

Key Strategic Outcomes

Improved journey times and connections, removing the interchange time from rail to bus and vice versa.

Reduced emissions through car use reduction.

Improved quality, accessibility and affordability.

Strategic fit with RECIS

A focus on value for money -the project provides the optimum value for money solution in terms of economic, social and environmental outcomes (see our track record with Beaulieu Conon and Dalcross).

Assurance from whole-system specification, making sure that the infrastructure, rolling stock and timetabling all work together- care will be taken to serve the new station with local services that do not create capacity and performance problems for long-distance services.

The prioritisation of the 3 sites projects will be determined by the ability to derive maximum utility from the existing network through whole industry measures that can make best use of existing railway assets, fully exploiting timetable/service-based opportunities and rolling stock options- the stop will be best served by new services coming in (in 2 of the 3 sites).

Efficient and affordable, targeted investment in our infrastructure, in the right location

and at the right time centred around whole industry measures to unlock additional capacity on the network- care will be taken to ensure performance will not be impacted. Targeted investment to help reduce inequality and increase inclusive economic growth- this is designed to build on the area's education and employment opportunities particularly from more rural and deprived communities.

Strategic fit with RTS

The HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy aims to deliver connectivity across the region which enables sustainable economic growth and helps communities to actively participate in economic and social activities. The project has been identified in the RTS Delivery Plan.

Next Steps

1. Brief to be drawn up.
2. Consideration of LRDF2 submission.

RISK REGISTER

RTS Delivery

Impact – Positive. Modal shift, access to employment and education, developing the economy

Policy

Impact – Positive. Aligned with RTS, THC East Inverness Development Plan proposals

Financial

Impact – This will require funding from HITRANS

Equality

Impact – Access to education and employment for all

Recommendations

1. Members and Advisors are asked to approve the report

Report by: Frank Roach
Designation: Partnership Manager
Date: 6th November 2018