

New Regional Transport Strategy (RTS): Update Report

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an update on progress to develop the new RTS, as agreed by the Board on 21 June 2019. For completeness, it covers the period of MIR development just prior to the cancelled 20 March 2020 Board meeting. The preliminary 'Main Issues' stage of the RTS is complete, and preparation for the next stages of the RTS's development are substantially prepared. A review of the RTS delivery programme is recommended to take account of any required changes in relation to Covid-19.

2 Completion of the Main Issues Report

- 2.1 The Board was due to consider a presentation by consultants (Jacobs) on the draft MIR at its meeting of 20 March 2020, however this meeting was cancelled in light of the emerging Covid-19 pandemic situation. An alternative opportunity for the Board to comment was arranged, with a short summary paper on the MIR circulated on 1 April. Feedback from members of the Board was then incorporated into a draft final version of the MIR.
- 2.2 Due to the evident pressures on local authority partners dealing with Covid-19 related issues from mid-March on, it was felt appropriate to re-circulate the final draft version of the MIR in mid-April, thus allowing a further opportunity for authority partners and Board members to comment on the content of the report and identified issues. This proved a worthwhile exercise, with useful partner feedback received and incorporated. Covid-19 was also incorporated into the MIR, as a significantly important issue contributing to uncertainty for future transport strategy and delivery.
- 2.3 The RTS Steering Group has met at key points throughout the the MIR development, providing a sounding board for the project and the RTS Project Management Team.

3 Main Issues identified for the region

- 3.1 The MIR explores issues across three key areas affecting regional transport: the rationale and context for a new RTS, the characteristics of the SEStran region (its people, society, environment, economy) and finally the SEStran region's specific transport issues and challenges. A total of 36 issues were identified across these three areas, from which 10 main issues were highlighted for consideration as the RTS is developed moving forward.
- 3.2 The 10 Main Issues for the new SEStran RTS are included at Appendix 1 of this report.

3.3 The MIR data analysis and investigations were all undertaken prior to the full emergence of the pandemic. The MIR states this clearly and identifies at a very high level that any emerging RTS will need to carefully consider the emerging impacts which result from the lockdown and the effects on travel and transport caused by this serious health issue.

4 New RTS – Covid-19 and next steps

4.1 Covid-19 has created an extremely uncertain future for transport provision across the SEStran region. At a fundamental level, the long term aims and objectives at the heart of the existing and new RTS and the National Transport Strategy (NTS2) are likely to remain unchanged by Covid-19, although achieving the following challenges may in fact become more urgent due to the wide-ranging impacts of Covid-19:-

- reducing inequalities,
- taking climate action by reducing the need to travel,
- encouraging sustainable mode choices and active travel, and
- supporting inclusive growth.

4.2 The long-term effects of lockdown and transition out of lockdown create new challenges for maintaining a viable public transport network and this is now an important factor to consider in the development of the RTS, and could affect the region for some years. How flexible policies and interventions can be developed and implemented is vital to helping with the long-term recovery for transport provision. New and different ways of working must be factored into the methodologies for developing the new RTS.

4.3 Covid-19 has impacted on the pace of development of the Second Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2) and National Planning Framework (NPF4). It is vital that the RTS aligns with the outcome of both these processes. With completion dates pushed back to allow for a necessary focus on dealing with the effects of the pandemic, the exact timings of the RTS development may now require some modification. It is important to progress the RTS development process to maintain valuable stakeholder buy-in and momentum, but equally it is important that the RTS doesn't fall out of step with a wider policy context that is now progressing more slowly.

4.4 The current RTS project delivery programme allows for sufficient time in the appraisal stage consider any interventions against the evolving policy landscape described above, it is apparent that the programme may require some modification to better align with other processes and this is a new challenge for the RTS.

4.5 These new risks and issues have been identified and reported here to the board as part of the ongoing management and governance of the project by the RTS Project Management Team and they have been added to the project specific RTS project RAID log / Risk Register to enable ongoing monitoring.

4.6 It is anticipated that a procurement process for consultancy support services for the development of the RTS will commence in summer 2020.

4.7 A preliminary meeting has been held to instigate the Equalities Impact Assessment, and discussions have commenced with Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) to set out the terms of a Strategic Environment Assessment for the RTS.

5 Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board:

- 5.1 notes the content of this report;
- 5.2 notes the requirement to review the delivery programme to take account of the resource effects and consequences to transport delivery of COVID -19; and
- 5.2 notes that to minimise potential delays to the ongoing progress of the project, approval of a revised programme for delivery of the RTS is delegated to the Partnership Director in consultation with the Chair following the detailed review.

Jim Stewart
Strategy and Projects Officer
 Date 19th June 2020

Policy Implications	A new RTS will impact on future strategy development and local transport authorities' plans and strategies.
Financial Implications	Funds are earmarked from the 2020/2021 budget, for consultancy services to develop and deliver the new Regional Transport Strategy.
Equalities Implications	The new RTS is subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA)
Climate Change Implications	The new RTS will be subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)
Appendices	Appendix 1 RTS Main Issues

SEStran Regional Transport Strategy - Main Issues

- Much of the relevant policy and legislative context for transport investment decisions has changed since SEStran's extant RTS was published: the new RTS should respond to the need to deliver these different outcomes, and also to the new tools, emerging technologies and opportunities that are now available;
- Coordination of planning and delivery resources between transport agencies is not consistent, and could be improved to increase the efficiency and efficacy of regional transport outcomes. Some stakeholders are debating the most effective transport governance arrangements and the most effective model for coordination and delivery of wider regional transport priorities;
- Land use planning decisions are not effectively supporting sustainable travel objectives for the region, and sustainable transport provision is not always delivered early enough in the development process to support modal shift;
- The region's transport network must respond to population growth across all age demographics with by far the largest growth predicted in the elderly population;
- Current action is not delivering a reduction in carbon emissions from transport in the region. There is a need to act quickly if targets for reduction are to be met, and to minimise risks of transport unreliability from more extreme climate events;
- Many of the region's people (especially those that are older, have mobility and accessibility challenges, are women, on low incomes, or live in rural areas) lack appropriate, affordable transport to enable them to meet their needs;
- The relative cost of car use has fallen in recent years compared to that of public transport and general cost inflation; this is enabling many people in the region to sustain high levels of car use;
- There are good examples of initiatives promoting healthier and more sustainable modes in the region, but they are yet to make a significant difference to net demand for car use. The proportion of journeys in the region undertaken by car/taxi increased in the decade to 2018;
- Some parts of the region's transport network lack capacity to enable sustainable peak time growth, especially on the rail network and, on the road network, where buses are delayed by congestion;
- The future is increasingly uncertain, due to both potential changes in technology (e.g. for autonomous vehicles) and in societal attitudes (e.g. changes in employment patterns, changes in attitudes towards single-occupancy car use); the new RTS must be able to respond to these issues and opportunities as they emerge.