

**GO**  
**SEStran**

South East of Scotland  
Transport Partnership

# Annual Report

## 2023-24



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# Foreword



I am delighted to present SEStran's Annual Report for 2023-24, highlighting our achievements and ongoing initiatives in promoting sustainable transport across South-East Scotland. This report underscores the collaborative efforts made with our partner local authorities: City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, East Lothian, Falkirk, Fife, Midlothian, Scottish Borders, and West Lothian.

Over the past year, SEStran has made significant progress through collaborative efforts and transformative pilots aimed at improving transport within our region and realising our Regional Transport Strategy. Our commitment to a sustainable, efficient, and inclusive transport network has driven us to achieve important milestones, reflecting our dedication to serving the diverse needs of the region. We have focused on advancing our strategic priorities, including improving accessibility, reducing environmental impact, and integrating innovative technologies.

A key achievement this year is the progress on the SEStran Strategic Network, aimed at enhancing active travel routes within our region. In Summer 2023, we commissioned Arup to conduct a revised Multi Criteria Assessment of this network, considering post-COVID travel patterns, updated transport policies, and new data sources such as the Sustrans Network Planning Tool and SIMD. Completed in December 2023, this updated network provides a comprehensive framework for promoting sustainable travel and addressing the evolving needs of the region. The expansion of our active travel infrastructure has encouraged more people to embrace cycling and walking as viable modes of transport, contributing to healthier lifestyles and reducing traffic congestion.

This year also marked the beginning of preparations for SEStran's forthcoming People and Place Plan, supported by a £5.3M fund from Transport Scotland.

## Foreword Cont'd

This plan is crucial for advancing regional priorities in active travel and aims to facilitate behavioural change projects that promote increased rates of active travel. The launch of the People and Place Plan highlights SEStran's *expanding role in shaping regional transport strategies aligned with national objectives*. By partnering with local authorities, national stakeholders, and community organisations, SEStran aims to improve connectivity and accessibility while fostering resilient communities that prioritise active travel.

We are also proud to report the success of the "Do The Ride Thing" campaign, which effectively raised awareness of e-bikes and their benefits. Through media channels and field events, this campaign demonstrated a notable shift in mindset towards considering e-bikes for daily commutes, reinforcing SEStran's reputation as a leading advocate for sustainable transport solutions.

The collaborative spirit of SEStran has been instrumental in driving our achievements. We have strengthened partnerships with local authorities, transport operators, community groups, and stakeholders, fostering a cohesive approach to addressing the region's transport challenges. This collective effort has enabled us to leverage diverse perspectives and expertise, resulting in more comprehensive and effective solutions.

We have also welcomed three new team members in communications, strategy, and programmes, enhancing our activities over the past year. At the same time, we bid farewell to Hattie James and wish her success in her future endeavours.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to pushing the boundaries of innovation and sustainability in transport. The challenges posed by climate change and an ever changing region require us to continually adapt and evolve.

SEStran is dedicated to leading the way in creating a resilient transport network that meets the current needs of our region and anticipates future demands.

As I hand over the role of Partnership Chair to Cllr Sally Pattle, I extend my gratitude to the SEStran team, our partners, the Board, and the communities we serve for their unwavering support and contributions. Together, we are making significant strides towards a more connected, sustainable, and prosperous south east Scotland.



**Cllr Colin Davidson**  
Partnership Chair  
November 2024

# Who We Are

SEStran is the South East of Scotland Transport Partnership. We are one of seven statutory Regional Transport Partnerships in Scotland established under the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005. SEStran is a statutory Regional Transport Partnership covering the council areas of City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, East Lothian, Falkirk, Fife, Midlothian, Scottish Borders and West Lothian.

## SEStran's Vision

A south east of Scotland fully integrated transport system that will be efficient, connected, and safe; create inclusive, prosperous, and sustainable places to live, work and visit; be affordable and accessible to all, enabling people to be healthier; and delivering the region's contribution to net zero emissions targets.



## Who we are **SEStran Team**

SEStran has nine staff as of March 2024:

Partnership Director

**Brian Butler**

Senior Partnership Manager

**Keith Fisker**

Strategy Manager

**Rachael Murphy**

Programme Manager

**Michael Melton**

Project Officer

**Beth Harley Jepson**

Communication  
and Marketing Officer

**Cameron Duck**

Business Manager

**Angela Chambers**

Business Support Officer

**Cheryl Fergie**

Business Support Assistant

**Nikki Boath**

## Who we are **Local Authority Partners**

SEStran consists of eight local authorities:



**Clackmannanshire**

**Falkirk**

**Fife**

**City of Edinburgh**

**East Lothian**

**Midlothian**

**West Lothian**

**Scottish Borders**

## **Headquarters**

SEStran's operational and administrative premises are based in Edinburgh at Victoria Quay.

## Who We Are

# SEStran's Board

The Partnership Board consists of 20 elected members from the partnership local authorities and nine appointed non-councillor members, meeting quarterly.

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**Cllr Colin Davidson** (Chair)

**Cllr Robin Lawson** (Deputy Chair)

**Cllr Sally Pattle** (Deputy Chair)

**Cllr Russell Imrie**

(Chair of Performance and Audit  
Committee and Deputy Chair of The Board)

**Cllr Margaret Anslow**

**Cllr Jenny Linehan**

**Cllr Jane Cox**

**Cllr Paul Garner**

**Cllr Tom Conn**

**Cllr Colin Cassidy**

**Cllr Sanne Dijkstra-Downie**

**Cllr Marie-Claire Munro**

**Cllr Danny Aston**

**Cllr Fiona Law**

**Cllr Derek Glen**

**Cllr Ruaridh Bennett**

**Cllr John McMillan**

**Cllr Denis Coyne**

**Cllr Scott Arthur**

**Cllr Jule Bandel**

**Alastair Couper**

**Dr Doreen Steele**

**Kate Sherry**

**Linda Bamford**

**Paul White**

**Simon Hindshaw**

**Callum Hay**

**Geoff Duke**

**John Scott**

## What We Do

# Regional Transport Strategy – 2035

### What is the Regional Transport Strategy – 2035

The Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) provides a comprehensive framework and direction for transportation in the south east of Scotland area. The Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 mandates the production of a statutory RTS, serving as a strategic framework for transport management and investment within the partnership area.

The RTS, initiated in November 2020 is progressing on track. It aims to provide a regional framework for managing future travel demand, behaviour, and developing the region's transport system, aligning with the National Transport Strategy 2, National Planning Framework 4, Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2019, and other relevant spatial and economic strategies.

RTS's milestones achieved include the completion of draft work on the Programmed Investment Plan (PIP) by consultants S82, publication of the RTS and its accompanying Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) on the SEStran website, and approval by the Scottish Ministers and SEStran Partnership Board.

Recent activities include engagement with the Edinburgh South East City Region Deal (ESECRD) grouping to align with transport delivery plan workstream, and refining PIP work by integrating case studies with consultants S82.

Planned activities include the development of an action plan matrix, integration into the SEStran Business Plan for 2024 to 2027, mapping baseline and gap analysis, setting up a working group, and determining criteria for 'regional' and 'cross-boundary' projects. Additionally, there's a focus on gathering ideas on funding models for projects.

However, there are risks related to funding availability for specific actions within the plan, which need to be addressed. Nonetheless, the project remains on track towards achieving its objectives, ensuring a robust and sustainable transport system for the region.





## What We Do

# Active Travel

**During the year, the following RTS actions have been delivered:**

Progress the delivery of the SEStran Strategic Network and broader cross boundary networks with partners. Develop further phases of this network to ensure a long-term pipeline of investment.

Promotional and communication campaigns to highlight the benefits of active travel across the region and encourage people to adopt it where possible.

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### Strategic Network

First developed in 2019, the SEStran Strategic Network presents a framework for coordinated development of cross boundary active travel routes connecting cities, towns, neighbourhoods, settlements and public transport hubs in the SEStran region.

In summer 2023, Arup was appointed to undertake a revised Multi Criteria Assessment (MCA) exercise for the SEStran Strategic Network, to inform an updated prioritisation and phasing of active travel routes within the network.

The MCA update was undertaken to reflect changes across the SEStran region since the original publication of the strategic network. This included changes in travel patterns due to the covid-19 pandemic, changes to national and local transport policy and conclusions drawn from newly available data. The MCA update has utilised new data sources available including the Sustrans Network Planning Tool (2023), SIMD (2020) and up to date Department for Transport STATS19 collision data. The refresh of the network was completed in December following consultation with all local authority partners.

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### Go e-bike / Do the Ride Thing

SEStran has been delivering the Go e-bike project since 2017. The project increases access to and awareness of the benefits of using e-bikes across the region. In 2023, SEStran was successful in securing funding from the Paths for All – Active Nation Funding for the delivery of a promotional campaign, employer trial and event support. Employer trials were delivered from February to April 2024 by West Lothian Bike Library, who have been involved with Go e-bike since the project started.

Do the Ride Thing was a promotional behaviour change campaign, which ran between March – April 2024. The aim of the campaign was to encourage the target audience to increase their consideration of e-bikes and choose them over cars for short daily trips such as a commute. The campaign would achieve this aim by raising awareness of e-bikes, their benefits, and emphasise the available support.

What We Do

## Active Travel Cont'd



The campaign was based on the insight that 26% of car journeys in 2022 were under 1km (Transport Scotland, 2024). The campaign aimed to limit this car dependency by advocating an active travel alternative.

Employing a phased communication approach – awareness, consideration, action – across a wide range of appropriate

channels, the campaign targeted adults, particularly women aged 40–60 with cycling experience and an interest in e-bikes, while also acknowledging first-time and returning cyclists.

The creative featured a landscape with e-bikes, building upon a previous Do the Ride Thing campaign creative.

The campaign website underwent significant redevelopment in content, copy, and technological updates to improve its performance and accessibility.

Field events were hosted at workplaces to promote e-bikes, offer e-bike trial runs, and address individual barriers.

A paid for media campaign ran across social, digital, audio and radio. In addition, the campaign engaged in a media partnership with Bauer Media to amplify the messages of the campaign.

The campaign gained support from stakeholders such as the Scottish Government, Energy Saving Trust, Cycling Scotland, and Wheels for Wellbeing, which was facilitated through outreach efforts and the provision of resources through a stakeholder toolkit. Field events generated positive results. Prior to attending 56% of event attendees typically travelled to work by car. However, after attending an event 97% of event attendees expressed willingness to consider hiring an e-bike from a Do the Ride Thing hub in the future, indicating the success of persuading car drivers to switch their choice of transport for the commute. The website also resonated well with the audience with good levels of visits and engagement across pages. Finally, paid for media reached 85.7% of the target audience across the region at least once, contributing to the achievement of the campaign objective to increase awareness of e-bikes and persuade users to switch to e-bikes.

## What We Do

# Active Travel Cont'd

### People and Place Plan Development

In December 2023, Transport Scotland invited Regional Transport Partnerships to apply for People and Place funding. The funding is intended to enable the delivery of behavioural change projects which would increase rates of active travel (walking, wheeling and cycling).

The funding largely replaces that previously provided by Transport Scotland to the Active Travel Delivery Partners (Cycling UK, Cycling Scotland, Living Streets, Paths for All, Scottish Cycling and Sustrans) to achieve similar outcomes, and is accompanied by further direct funding for related projects to be awarded by Transport Scotland directly to local authorities. From December 2023 to March 2024, SEStran, in close consultation with local authority partners, developed a plan for the distribution of these funds.

The plan will work in all of the region's eight local authority areas to provide a balanced package, based on the regional priorities, targeted at each of the four themes which Transport Scotland has suggested should form part of People and Place plan:

- Schools and young people
- Workplaces
- Developing accessible and inclusive communities
- Capacity and capability building within the public sector and community-based organisations

The plan includes both capital and revenue elements. It has been developed mindful of the need to deliver investment of the full grant award within the 2024/25 year and achieve best value.

The plan seeks to combine best practice and experience (to drive value for money) with innovation, recognising that the 2024/25 year is one of transition before what we hope will be a long-term plan in future years.

A total of £5.3M is available to SEStran for the 2024/25 financial year, of which 40% is funding for revenue expenditure and 60% for capital investment. A total of £2.56 million of the funding will be going directly to local authorities.

## What We Do

# Public Transport

During the year, the following RTS actions have been delivered:

Deliver improved public transport information in a variety of formats, supported by appropriate wayfinding infrastructure on the transport network.

Introduce Real Time Passenger Information for public transport services through mobile applications, stations and stops and across all parts of the region.

Opportunities should be explored with partners to introduce new services, including more direct links across the region, national boundaries and cross-city connections.

### Real Time Passenger Information

SEStran began implementing a region-wide network of Real Time Passenger Transport (RTPI) screens, providing bus timetable information to make bus travel more predictable and reliable in 2010. SEStran has worked with partners to build up a comprehensive network of over 200 maintained screens in travel hubs such as railway stations, park and choose / ride sites, hospitals, colleges, universities, shopping centres and large employer hubs. Since 2021, SEStran has worked with the City of Edinburgh Council to develop a new, regional RTPI system that will improve the information provided in the public facing regional screen network incorporating Lothian Buses information.

The system which has been implemented can receive and display information from all public transport operators (local bus, inter-city services, tram, rail and air), which enables operator information to be displayed

on the Bustracker screens. However, operators are responsible for their own real time data and are expected to maintain a high level of consistency and accuracy.

All 330 screens within Edinburgh have now been replaced. There are 15 operators using the new Travel Tracker System to show departure information across the SEStran region. 14 of the 15 operators using the system continue to show high levels of accuracy for their associated real-time departure information on screens across the region.

Local authorities within the SEStran region are continuing to purchase and install screens across their local authority areas, through the regional framework contract, so that travel information across the region provides very similar experiences for passengers throughout their journey.

## What We Do

# Public Transport Cont'd

### Novus FX Authority System

Novus-FX (a propriety system owned by Trapeze) has been designed to assist local authorities to manage bus information by streamlining the production of registration information, facilitating the transmission of accurate data to Traveline and journey planners, and integrating seamlessly with Trapeze's Novus-RT for the provision of real-time data. Novus-FX Publicity makes it easy to create modern and engaging printed information including roadside timetables, network maps and leaflets. The result is more accurate public transport data and better-informed passengers, leading to increased use of public transport.

This year SEStran has been working with local authorities on designing a new module for bus stop integration which will enhance the system and provide better standardisation of information across the region. Once design is finished this will be rolled out across the region in 2024.

As part of ongoing training, local authority officers from within the SEStran region participated in an online training course covering an introduction to the system facilitated by Trapeze. This included several new officers which will help increase capacity within this area for local authorities and increase the system resilience.

### Newburgh Transport Appraisal

The Newburgh Train Station Group (NTSG), South East Scotland Transport Partnership (SEStran) and Fife Council, with the support of SYSTRA Ltd, are working together to develop proposals to improve sustainable transport to and from Newburgh.

The multi-model transport appraisal builds on work already undertaken by the NTSG and focuses on improving links to and from Perth, Edinburgh and Fife. It follows the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG).



The final stage of the report – the detailed options appraisal – was completed and submitted to Transport Scotland for review in September 2023. The project team met with Transport Scotland in early 2024 to discuss further refinements to enhance the report. Due to the complexity of the appraisal process, and the number of revisions needed, the project has taken a long time to reach this stage, however, it is anticipated that the final addendum will be submitted to Transport Scotland in May 2024 to inform the next stages of the project.

## What We Do

# Technology

**During the year, the following RTS actions have been delivered against:**

Deliver a regional Mobility as a Service (MaaS) pilot scheme with a view towards establishing the long-term viability of MaaS in the region.

Work with Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) and community transport operators to deliver more widespread and efficient usage of services in areas where traditional fixed-route bus services are inappropriate. Differing approaches may be required for urban and rural areas.

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### Go SEStran

Mobility as a Service (MaaS) is a concept that places the traveller's needs at the heart of transport. Most commonly it is based on a digital app that allows the person making the journey to plan, book and pay

for their journey in one place, irrespective of the type of transport or which transport operator(s) are involved.

SEStran was successful with a bid to Transport Scotland for the Maas Investment Fund, and received £212,440 in September 2021. This was a third of the original bid, which led to the innovative approach of sharing the MaaS platform licence with Tactran. The GoSEStran app launched in July 2022, powered by Fuse Mobility. The app includes integrations to various transport modes such as trains, buses, taxis, community transport and e-bikes. The GoSEStran app also has access to real time passenger information and a map to show the users location of park & ride, electric vehicle charging and journey hubs.

The pilot was initially focused on East Lothian, and currently has over 3,700 users on the app.

SEStran was successful with a joint bid with Tactran to Smarter Choices Smarter Places (SCSP) to fund the licence and continued work on the GoSEStran pilot up to March 2024. Prior to the year end, further funding of £42,000 was received from Transport Scotland. This was an extension to the MaaS Investment Fund pilot, to extend the platform licence for six months until Transport Scotland's appraisal of all the MaaS pilots has concluded and procurement of a longer-term contract, subject to funding, can be carried out. A further award of £100,000 for the next financial year was also received in late March 2024 from SCSP.

Key to continuation of MaaS in Scotland is joint working between all of the public bodies interested in pursuing a digital solution to travellers' needs. For this reason, much of the work in the year to March 2024 involved working closely with other RTPs and local authorities in the Integrated Mobility Programme Scotland (IMPs) to share knowledge and pool funding.

## What We Do

# Technology Cont'd

### Demand Responsive Transport (DRT)

One objective in SEStran's bid to the MaaS Investment Fund was to test how DRT and MaaS influence each other. After going out to procurement, SEStran awarded a contract to The Routing Company to work in partnership with Prentice Coaches to create a new DRT route in East Lothian which went live March 2023. This new DRT service was also integrated into the GoSEStran app.

The project evaluation found that the pilot faced a number of challenges, and it proved difficult to grow passenger numbers using the app as an additional incentive. A positive outcome of the pilot was that Prentice of Haddington and East Lothian Council have decided to proceed with a DRT bus service, not using digital technology, but instead relying on requests for service by phone and email.



This was seen by them as a better service than the original fixed line route, and may well serve as a model for similar, low passenger number rural routes.

East Lothian have also pursued a separate tech-enabled DRT pilot with Eve Coaches, covering the Oldhamstocks to Dunbar area.

## What We Do

# Technology Cont'd

### Thistle Assistance VoyagAR

Thistle Assistance VoyagAR is an end-to-end journey-planning and journey-tracking system to allow disabled people to utilise public transport in a safer, more convenient, and more enjoyable way. The system is designed to make disabled people feel more confident and comfortable when journeying on public transport services.

The traveller accesses the system through a smartphone app. Appropriately authorised carers or family members can assist with journey planning and track the traveller's progress using a companion website. During a journey, the traveller receives wayfinding guidance and support at key points, using a flexible combination of digital mapping, simple directional indicators, and augmented reality.

SEStran has received £300,000 funding from Scottish Enterprise to develop the project through phase one proof of concept and phase two prototype development which, after mini competition from the phase one work, Sentireal based in Northern Ireland was contracted to develop the phase two pilot.

The work on the phase two pilot was completed in March 2024 with the development of the system architecture and a working app and website tested.

The developer Sentireal took the decision to move their business in another direction and will not be able to support the launch of the system. In agreement with SEStran they have agreed to transfer all the assets including base code and intellectual property to SEStran.

Whilst this was a setback, SEStran will look to find another partner in 2024 to bring the system to the public.

The creative development for a promotional campaign has begun. Collaboration with key stakeholders to gather their feedback and lived experiences will be delivered in the future. This approach ensures that the creative content developed is accurate and resonates effectively with the target audience. By engaging stakeholders through feedback sessions, we will be able to refine the creative and highlight the most appealing features of the VoyagAR app. This collaborative effort will result in a promotional campaign that authentically represents the app's value proposition and effectively persuades potential users to engage with the app.



## What We Do

# Accessibility



**thistle**  
ASSISTANCE

**“Thistle Assistance is on my phone for whenever I need it. I just show it to the staff and they help me on my way.”**

**During the year, the following RTS actions have been delivered:**

Deliver improved public transport information in a variety of formats, supported by appropriate wayfinding infrastructure on the transport network.

### Thistle Assistance Programme

SEStran is working with the other regional transport partnerships to deliver the Thistle Assistance Programme. The aim is to make using public transport easier for older people and those with disabilities or illnesses.

Thistle Assistance is supported by a wide variety of voluntary organisations across Scotland and by most bus, train, tram, ferry, and airport operators. The Thistle Assistance card comes with a supply of peel-off stickers to tailor the communication of support that is required. The app replicates the physical card and can be used on a mobile device to advise the driver or conductor of the passenger's mobility challenge or disability and the help they need in an easy-to-read format.

Awareness about the programme is generated by a print media campaign using the 'A Little Help Goes a Long Way' marketing creative which is placed in specialist audience publications and by engaging with key stakeholders to understand how staff employees are being engaged and made aware of the campaign.

## What We Do

# Strategy

During the year, the following RTS actions have been delivered:

Work with the private sector and partners to develop a regional electric vehicle (and e-bike) investment and charging strategy, with associated technical guidance, including a spatial strategy across the area for long journey, rapid-charging facilities and for local area hub/community charging.

Collate data/knowledge around green hydrogen/fuel cell technology, EV charging technology (e.g. on-street/at home/workplace/forecourt) and regularly monitor both emerging technology and trends.

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### Electric Vehicle Strategy

Responding to the region's ambitions to grow the public electric vehicle charging network in line with national policy, SEStran brought together a regional EV Forum to discuss common challenges and potential solutions. As part of this work, a baselining and positioning statement was created with support of Urban Foresight to provide an overview of current electric vehicle (EV) uptake and charge point coverage throughout the region. A key conclusion of this report was that, to maintain delivery momentum and progress to sustainable and optimised EV charging infrastructure, there was a need to collaborate regionally in the development and delivery of a strategic EV charging infrastructure plan. To that end, SEStran has worked with partner local authorities and Dumfries and Galloway Council to develop regional consensus around a collaborative approach, with this outcome of this to be delivered in 24/25.



## What We Do

# Strategy Cont'd

### Regional Bus Strategy

During the year, the following RTS actions have been delivered:

Undertake a Regional Bus Connectivity study for non-Edinburgh travel to identify settlement pairs where travel demand is high and bus services are poor, as a means to promoting new routes and connectivity (in partnership with other policies).

Undertake a Regional Bus Priority study which will identify regional, cross-boundary, quality bus corridors and key bus priority interventions to reduce bus journey times and improve bus journey time reliability where Edinburgh is likely to be a focus.

Deliver the bus priority interventions funded by Transport Scotland's Bus Partnership Fund and subsequently identified by the Regional Bus Priority study.

Review the bus powers detailed in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 and identify if they could be implemented across all or parts of the region within an integrated strategy to enhance the bus network.

In collaboration with bus operators, undertake analysis of regional and cross-boundary corridors where congestion is impacting on bus operations and identify locations where road space reallocation may be required.

The Regional Transport Strategy seeks to 'transform and extend' the bus network in the region rather than accept a position of managed decline. As with the National Transport Strategy (NTS2), the RTS sees the bus network at the heart of the region's public transport system. Almost half (47%) of residents of the region used a bus service at least once a month in 2019 and patronage is building back. At the June Partnership Board Meeting, a paper titled *Towards a World Class Bus Service* was brought forward to

begin the process of shaping a Regional Bus Strategy for the south east of Scotland.

Given the diverse range of issues currently impacting the bus sector, the Partnership Board considered that, following the mandate of the adopted RTS, it is the right time to develop a Regional Bus Strategy. Work in developing the new RTS has reaffirmed significant concerns in terms of the efficiency, performance, affordability and overall sustainability of the bus network across the SEStran region, both presently and in the future.

## What We Do

# Strategy Cont'd

The scope and provisions of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 are wide ranging and within it provides powers which offer an ambitious new model for bus services. While many of the provisions of the Act have yet to be supported by regulation or guidance, one aspect that has been enacted is the power for local authorities to run their own bus services. The SEStran region is fortunate, in that the only local authority-controlled bus service operating in the country is Lothian Buses which covers a large part of the regional network.

SEStran looked for consultancy support to develop a Regional Bus Strategy and to consider how best to utilise the competitive advantage of a local authority-controlled bus service.

In the final months of 2023–2024, consultants were procured to undertake the strategy with the following components:

- Work Package 1 Case for Change
- Work Package 2 Options Appraisal
- Work Package 3 Strategy Development
- Work Package 4 Finalise Strategy & Consultation

The successful bid was won by Systra and Stantec, working in collaboration, and began with an inception meeting in February 2024.

It is worth noting that the bus strategy is taking place during the pause on the £500million Bus Partnership Fund from Transport Scotland. This pause has drawn concern from local authorities, both that work undertaken already will wither on the vine, and that the pause represents a de-prioritisation of bus by Transport Scotland.

The Bus Partnership Fund, prior to pausing has, in the SEStran region, achieved the following:

### Midlothian: Bus Alliance

In May 2022, AECOM was commissioned by Midlothian Council, in partnership with SEStran, to conduct a study based on Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) for four bus corridors within Midlothian:

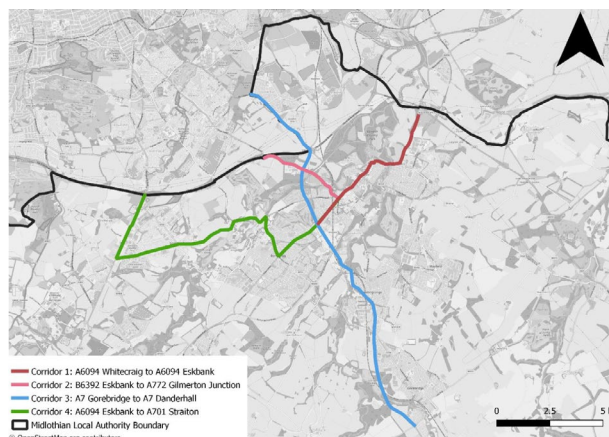
- Corridor 1: A6094 Whitecraig to A6094 Eskbank
- Corridor 2: B6392 Eskbank to A772 Gilmerton Junction
- Corridor 3: A7 Gorebridge to A7 Danderhall
- Corridor 4: A6094 Eskbank to A701 Straiton

## What We Do

### Strategy Cont'd

Following a process of option identification, development, review and appraisal, four Option Packages were taken forward for detailed appraisal against the study Transport Planning Objectives (TPO), STAG criteria and deliverability criteria. Overall, the assessment has identified that each of the four Option Packages would be anticipated to have positive impacts against the assessment criteria and address the study TPOs by delivering bus priority measures that would reduce bus journey times, and in turn reduce bus journey time variability, particularly during the peak morning and evening travel periods.

While several of the bus priority measures within the Option Packages would be suitable for speedy delivery, such as traffic signal priority measures, it should be noted that further assessment is required to confirm the feasibility of specific measures. For example, for those measures which include road space reallocation,



modelling would be required to understand their impact on wider traffic, road safety audits would be required to confirm the suitability of bus laybys for removal, while for measures to address on-street parking, these will require TROs and further consultation.

### Forth Valley Bus Alliance (FVBA)

The Forth Valley Bus Alliance (FVBA) identified corridors in the Falkirk, Clackmannanshire and Stirling Council areas. The work was led by Falkirk Council as the lead local authority on behalf of the FVBA and will be supported by SEStran and consultancy partners ATKINS & Anturus.

Five corridors are considered in the appraisal:

- Stirling-Falkirk
- Glasgow Road
- Graham's Road
- A9-A872
- A908-B9096

## What We Do

# Strategy Cont'd

### The key findings and recommendations from the study were:

**Across all corridors** – improve bus stop arrangement through infill of laybys or build out at parking to allow the bus to stop in the traffic and remove delays pulling in and out of traffic. This typically achieves a 3:1 benefit to cost for the investment and actively impacts on car journey times as vehicles are given lower priority to buses. These are supplemented by the potential introduction of bus detection to provide priority at traffic signal-controlled junctions on the corridors. These interventions have the additional benefit that if patronage increases the benefits increase and only a marginal increase in patronage provides a significant improvement to the benefit cost ratio.

**Within Corridor 2** – Improvements at Greencornhills Roundabout to introduce signals for east/west bus priority incorporating an active travel route across the A91 which aligns with Stirling Council's

Active Travel Strategy – identified for further consideration and investigation with a detailed business case.

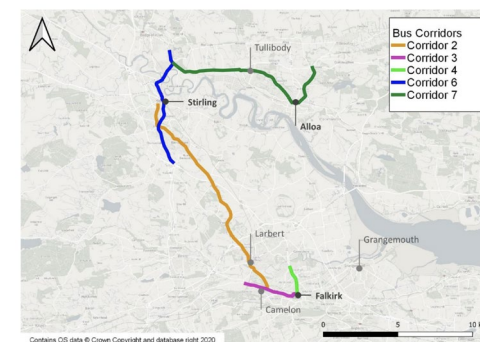
**Within Corridor 3** – Improvements on Glasgow Road at Camelon Station to allow buses to bypass congestion – this addresses a longstanding pinch point on the network which impacts all services in the town – road widening to allow a bus lane and active travel path to be provided delivers significant journey time savings on the corridor but only to buses.

**Within Corridor 6** – Improvements to Stirling Bus Station which can improve the flow of buses through the bus station with potential for significant time savings – this would include bus gates and improved active travel connections which would remove general traffic from parts of Goosecroft Road.

In addition, provision of a park and ride at South Stirling Gateway as a measure to improve bus patronage in the area which again would support the other direct

measures which improve journey times on the corridor.

**Within Corridor 7** – Reallocation of road space around Shillinghill roundabout to provide a bus lane on dual carriageway within the town centre, prioritising buses over general traffic.



### Fife Bus Alliance

WSP was commissioned by Fife Council to undertake bus corridor appraisals across five key bus corridors in Fife as part of the Bus Partnership Fund (BPF), managed by Transport Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Government.

## What We Do

# Strategy Cont'd

### Freight Strategy

During the year, the following RTS actions have been delivered:

Work with partners to identify, through the further development of the SEStran Freight Strategy, locations where Freight Consolidation Centres could be located.

Work with partners to identify, through the further development of the SEStran Freight Strategy, locations where gauge clearances should be increased to enable new and enhanced rail freight services to operate in the region.

Identify opportunities to implement innovation and automation in the freight and logistics industry in the region, including the delivery of relevant pilot projects.

Further develop proposals for new rail freight services, including a potential multi-user freight train running from Grangemouth and use of converted passenger trains for freight, as part of the development of the SEStran Freight Strategy.

In March 2024 SEStran, working with consultants AECOM, completed the final report on the regional freight study, the Detailed Options Appraisal, assessing the potential impact of the three freight related interventions in the region: freight on trams, converted electric passenger trains and a multi-user freight train operating out of Grangemouth. By following the STAG appraisal guidance, the costs, benefits and feasibility of the options have been investigated and where possible, quantified.

Throughout the study, over four years, from the Case for Change through to the Detailed Options Appraisal, each of the options has been refined, assessed and discussed in detail with key stakeholders.



All three options have demonstrated they align strongly with the aspirations of UK, Scotland, SEStran and local authorities. All three options have also been subject to strong support from stakeholders, demonstrating not only viability, but a real desire to see these services introduced.

Critically, all options have performed well in relation to costs and benefits. For a relatively modest capital investment and resource requirement to set up and maintain services, benefits equal to millions per year can be realised.

## What We Do

# Strategy Cont'd

It is anticipated that in future years, these can be achieved with no subsidy and are likely to be revenue earners.

The options are not mutually exclusive and there may be benefits and synergies to linking options. For example, parcels could be brought to the freight tram from the heavy rail network. Regardless, all three options perform well in isolation.

But perhaps the most powerful aspect of each option is the opportunity for south east Scotland to act as an exemplar for sustainable freight and modal shift to rail freight. By proving the case for sustainable freight, volumes can grow and other areas can learn from these interventions.

The freight tram is a clear example of an intervention that could be high profile and a good news story for the network with likely strong public support. With the tram network already affording a direct route into Edinburgh, and much of the network traffic-

free, the scope for a more reliable, quicker supply chain network is significant.

With infrastructure requirements likely to be modest and the 'last/final mile' being undertaken by cycle logistics, the benefits of this intervention are clear.

Ex-passenger trains for freight coming directly into the city centre has the potential to raise the profile of rail freight given the high footfall of passengers at stations such as Waverley. With collections from the platform by cycle logistics or small electric vans, the potential for a seamless and emission free logistics supply chain is significant.

The benefits of this intervention will also be felt outside of south east Scotland, with the potential for services to Yorkshire and other locations. This in turn will help create a more robust network for associated services as well as metrics such as carbon emissions, which affect the global climate.

Whilst traditional rail freight is well established, exacting targets for increasing modal shift mean supporting new services is vital. A multi-user train linking the central belt with northeast Scotland and the Highlands would help alleviate traffic from key routes such as the A9 and the A90. Carbon savings would be significant, and the service would take advantage of growth in potential volumes associated with the Green Freeport initiative and other proposed infrastructure improvements, further enhancing the business case for those initiatives.

Overall, all three measures justify further investigation and ultimately the development of a Full Business Case to set out revenue and costs in more detail. SEStran will be exploring this with partners further in 2024.



## What We Do

# Communications and Marketing

**During the year, the following RTS actions have been delivered:**

SEStran will engage with relevant bodies and stakeholders to develop and implement interventions which reassert public confidence in public transport services.

In October 2023, SEStran welcomed the appointment of a dedicated Communication and Marketing Officer, marking a step towards improving the awareness of SEStran's profile and improving stakeholder engagement. Since then, significant milestones have been achieved, underscoring SEStran's commitment to effective communication.

One of the key activities undertaken was the "Do the Ride Thing" campaign, an integrated marketing campaign aimed at promoting e-bikes, their benefits and the support available. The campaign used paid media, field events, and stakeholder

engagement activities to maximise reach and drive impact. The campaign gained over 17,000,000 impressions reaching an estimated 85% of the target audience in the region at least one. This success raised awareness about e-bikes and amplified the awareness of SEStran.

SEStran has initiated the development of a comprehensive communication strategy, aiming to establish clear objectives and stakeholder identification and engagement approaches. This strategic framework will serve as a roadmap for future communication activities, ensuring alignment with Regional Transport Strategy and facilitating meaningful interactions with stakeholders.

SEStran's digital platforms have been key in amplifying messages and engaging with audiences. SEStran has developed a presence across LinkedIn and X (formerly Twitter). LinkedIn emerged as a strong performer, recording 14,064 impressions



with an average engagement rate of 4.65%. Furthermore, the account received a substantial increase in 163 followers which is notably for purely organic activity.

The X platform experienced more modest performance, with 3,326 impressions and an average engagement rate of 4%. However, it remains a key platform to the social media mix, offering valuable opportunities for targeted outreach and engagement to the wider public.

## Appendix

# Governance

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### Decision Making Structure

SEStran's main policy and budgetary decisions are taken by the Partnership Board, which consists of 20 councillor and nine non-councillor members. Operational decisions are taken by the Partnership Director and other officers in accordance with the List of Officer Powers which forms part of SEStran's Governance Scheme. The scheme is reviewed regularly and was last updated in March 2024. The Partnership Board delegates some decisions to committees in accordance with the [Governance Scheme](#). The Performance and Audit Committee remit covers scrutiny of performance, staffing, standards and audit. It comprises a councillor member from each constituent authority, and four non-councillor members. It is currently chaired by Councillor Russell Imrie. The Succession Planning Committee remit covers matters related to succession planning and Board appointments. Its membership consists of the Partnership Chair, two Board members, the Partnership Director, the Partnership Secretary and a Human Resources adviser.

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### Equalities Duty

SEStran is a listed public body under the Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Act 2012 (Scotland) Specific Duties Regulations, and as such has a duty to publish a biennial Equalities Mainstreaming Report and a set of [Equality Outcomes](#) to enable the organisation to better perform the equality duty. SEStran published a new set of Equality Outcomes 2021-2025 in April 2021 and a progress report in April 2023. A new set of Equalities Outcomes will be published in April 2025.

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### Cyber Security

To comply with the Scottish Government's Public Sector Cyber Security Action Plan, SEStran carried out a robust review of its IT provision. Under the scheme, an independent cyber security consultant was appointed in 2018 and audited the partnership's IT environment. The outcome of this audit was SEStran being awarded Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation. SEStran has been re-audited annually and continue to retain the award.

## Appendix

# Formal Partnership Meetings and Forums

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### Partnership Board

The Partnership Board met four times during the reporting period. At its meetings, in addition to dealing with standard business, the Board considers relevant topics, with in-depth presentations and discussion. Topics in this period included Bus Strategy, collaboration with stakeholders and partners, Travel to Healthcare and the People and Place Programme. These topics generated considerable insight which was shared in SEStran forum groups described below.

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### Succession Planning Committee

The Succession Planning Committee meets biennially. The last meeting took place in May 2024, where the committee approved two revisions being made to the Board Diversity Succession Plan and appointing observers to increase the diversity of the Board make up.

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### Performance and Audit Committee

SEStran's quarterly Performance and Audit Committee meets two weeks before each Board meeting to scrutinise the running of SEStran and to suggest improvements.

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### Chief Officers' Liaison Group

The remit of the group is to provide a forum for discussion of transport matters between officers of the constituent councils and officers of SEStran.

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### Integrated Mobility Forum (IMF)

The Integrated Mobility Forum aims to develop a better understanding of the opportunities to improve implementation and understanding of integrated mobility in the region, such as maximising the use of public transport through discussions between stakeholders.

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### Logistics and Freight Forum

The Logistics and Freight Forum aims to support economic growth and resilience across the region by developing and implementing sustainable business and distribution solutions.

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### Equalities and Access to Healthcare Forum

The Equalities and Access to Healthcare Forum aims to deliver our Equality Outcomes and legislative requirement to consult health boards and those who represent those with or who share a protected characteristic. The forum covers how equality issues should be considered in future transport strategy development.

## Appendix

# Annual Accounts and Reports

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### Annual Accounts

Note: SEStran's Annual Accounts will be published separately.

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### Climate Change Report

The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 places duties on public bodies to act in the way best calculated to contribute to the delivery of emissions reduction targets, to help deliver any statutory climate change adaptation programme, and in a way that they consider is most sustainable. The Climate Change Report will be available on our website once published.

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### Public Services Reform Act

The Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 (Sections 31 and 32) imposes duties on Scottish public bodies to publish financial information as soon as is reasonably practicable after the end of each financial year. This statement can be accessed online [here](#).

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### Community Empowerment Act

SEStran is a listed public authority under the Community Empowerment Act and one of our duties under the Act is to consider requests from the community. Participation Requests can help groups from the local community to liaise with SEStran on improving issues. We welcome requests from groups that can aid SEStran in delivering its strategic functions. To gain more information on how to place a request, please follow the link [here](#).

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### Public Records Act

SEStran is required under the terms of Section 1 of the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 to produce a Records Management Plan, setting out proper arrangements for the management of its records and to submit this to the Keeper of the Records for approval. SEStran submitted its RMP in January 2011.

[Records Management Plan \(PDF document\)](#)



South East of Scotland  
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