

Annual Report 24/25 and Business Plan 25/26 Report

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report informs the board on progress of the Annual Report for financial year 2024/25 and the Business Plan for 2025/26-2027/28.

2 ANNUAL REPORT

- 2.1 A rough first draft of the 2024/25 Annual Report has been prepared. For this year, we have refreshed the approach to the Annual Report, focussing on creating a document which is easy to read and understand. This will allow the scope and impact of our work to be quickly and easily digested.

The new approach provides a short section of context to each project, highlights how the programme ties to the RTS objectives and actions, and a brief update of achievements over the year.

The report will be enhanced with a key stats section at the beginning of the document, to highlight the context in which we are working in. Key statistics, and where relevant, quotes, will be included throughout the document to help demonstrate impact.

- 2.2 The foreword and final 'looking ahead' sections are still to be drafted and will be completed ahead of publication in 2025/26.
- 2.3 When the draft has been signed off, the Annual Report will be sent to our graphic designer company and then be made available on our website.

3. BUSINESS PLAN

- 3.1 The planned work for 2025/26 has been grouped into five themes (below) that align with RTS Objectives:
- **Behaviour Change:** Informing and engaging the public in active and sustainable transport
 - **Integrated Networks:** Working for effective movement of people and freight across South East Scotland
 - **Strategy Development:** Realising the vision, objectives, policies and actions of the Regional Transport Strategy
 - **Innovation:** Future-proofing our efforts as transport develops and changes in our region
 - **Accessibility and Safety:** Advocating for and working towards access and safety for all

- 3.2 The Business Plan is presented in a Miro Board, an online platform officers have used to make the projects easy to develop, connect and share with others (see pictorial example in Appendix 1).
- 3.3 Miro Boards improve productivity, creativity, and efficiency in business planning by providing a dynamic and interactive platform for team collaboration.
- 3.4 The methodology was presented to the Performance and Audit committee on 28 February and was well received, with particular praise for the connection between the annual report of the year just gone and the plan for the upcoming year, 25/26, as well as the opportunity to overview projects, thus seeing the holistic body of work.
- 3.5 New projects included in this year's business plan:
- A policy note on e-scooters
 - A paper on multi-modal interchanges
 - SEStran at Twenty, a communications exercise to celebrate twenty years of the 2005 Transport Act and ten years to go of the RTS
 - A rail strategy
 - A discovery paper on a Data Strategy
 - A Transport to Health strategy

4. KEY ISSUES AND FUNDING

- 4.1 The key issue limiting the impact of SEStran work is the single-year funding model used. Whilst we have highlighted our direction of travel for three years, we are still not able to commit beyond March 2026.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 It is requested that the Board:

- 5.1.1 Read the draft Annual Report and email any comments or feedback to Sarah Junik (sarah.junik@sestran.gov.uk)
- 5.1.2 Share the Annual Report, once published, with their network and contacts, to help raise awareness of the work of SEStran.
- 5.1.3 Give feedback on the business plan methodology, in the Partnership Board Meeting
- 5.1.4 Give their feedback on the projects themselves

Rachael Murphy
Strategy Manager

Sarah Junik
Communications and Marketing Officer

7 March 2025

Policy Implications	Outlined project work contributes to the objectives identified within the SEStran Regional Transport Strategy.
Financial Implications	The majority of projects will be delivered within SEStran's core budget or through grants like People and Place. Where funding is not guaranteed, this has been highlighted within the plan.
Equalities Implications	SEStran does not expect any negative equalities impacts from the projects and strategies to be delivered next year. Several projects actively work to reduce inequalities.
Climate Change Implications	SEStran does not expect any negative climate impacts from the projects and strategies to be delivered next year. Several projects actively work to tackle climate change through the creation of, or support for more sustainable transport options.

Appendix 1. Examples of 2025/26 Plan

Behaviour Change

24/25	25/26	Future work (likely 26-28)									
<p>People and Place</p> <p>New grant programme for SEStran in 24/25 supporting active travel behaviour change</p> <p>£5.3 million funding for local authorities and third party organisations (inc. internal costs)</p> <p>Community fund ran by Paths for All in 24/25 (CTF) transitioning to SEStran in 25/26</p> <p>Funding covers 4 key themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools & Young People Workplaces Accessibility & Inclusion Capacity & Capability <p>This is in line with the RTS ambition to reduce car kilometres by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Switching modes to walk, wheel, cycle or use public transport where feasible 	<p>Regional Green Delivery</p> <p>Community Green Fund</p> <p>SEStran R&D delivery</p> <p>E-Scooters</p> <p>Consider we are considering the RTI, but there has been uncertainty as to what Government will do in support of this. We are now moving forward with our regional plan and have been successful in securing a £1.5m grant from the Department for Transport.</p>	<p>Milestones by Quarter</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Q1 milestones</th> <th>Q2 milestones</th> <th>Q3 milestones</th> <th>Q4 milestones</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>...</td> <td>...</td> <td>...</td> <td>...</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Q1 milestones	Q2 milestones	Q3 milestones	Q4 milestones	<p>The People and Place Delivery Plan covers future delivery of the programme (subject to availability of funding) and is designed to be a living document that is reviewed and adapted each year. The full delivery plan can be accessed here: https://sestran.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/People-and-Place-Delivery-Plan.pdf</p> <p>As evaluation and review of the programme is carried out, from 24/25 onwards, SEStran will develop an evidence base for what is working well across the region. This will inform the plan into future years.</p>
Q1 milestones	Q2 milestones	Q3 milestones	Q4 milestones								
...								
	<p>Q1/2 milestones</p> <p>This project will be informed by multi-modal work in the first two quarters of 25/26, and will be picked up in earnest in Q3.</p>	<p>Q3 milestones</p> <p>Desk based research on e-scooters</p> <p>Webinar with LAs to gauge interest</p>	<p>Q4 milestones</p> <p>Publish paper</p> <p>Publish accompanying blog @Sarah-Junk</p>	<p>We will continue to follow DfT and TS movements in this space, as well as shaping out future direction on the back of our findings in this project.</p> <p>Desk based research would provide outputs for future trials and implementation.</p>							

Strategy Development

24/25	25/26	Future work (likely 26-28)									
<p>Regional Bus Strategy</p> <p>In 24/25, we commissioned SYSTRAN and Statmco to help us prepare a Regional Bus Strategy. The production of this strategy is a key action from the RTI.</p> <p>This year, we have delivered a case for change, our strategy and begun to appraise options for direction.</p>	<p>Bus Strategy</p>	<p>Milestones by Quarter</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Q1 milestones</th> <th>Q2 milestones</th> <th>Q3/4 milestones</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Work Package 3: Appraisal of Delivery Options</td> <td>Work Package 5: Finalise Strategy</td> <td>The strategy will include a routemap to realising the world class bus service we aspire to. We would hope to begin working on the routemap in the second half of the year and will be able to update throughout Qs 1-2.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Q1 milestones	Q2 milestones	Q3/4 milestones	Work Package 3: Appraisal of Delivery Options	Work Package 5: Finalise Strategy	The strategy will include a routemap to realising the world class bus service we aspire to. We would hope to begin working on the routemap in the second half of the year and will be able to update throughout Qs 1-2.	<p>We will be led by the RBS findings but would expect to undertake actions from the strategy via its roadmap.</p>		
Q1 milestones	Q2 milestones	Q3/4 milestones									
Work Package 3: Appraisal of Delivery Options	Work Package 5: Finalise Strategy	The strategy will include a routemap to realising the world class bus service we aspire to. We would hope to begin working on the routemap in the second half of the year and will be able to update throughout Qs 1-2.									
<p>Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan</p> <p>Aroundside the City Region Desk, we have worked with transport and economic development colleagues from our local authorities, to create a long list of their projects and activities, including those in a starting position to highlight projects that can be connected across the region or that have high interoperability.</p>	<p>RTSDP</p>	<p>Milestones by Quarter</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Q1 milestones</th> <th>Q2 milestones</th> <th>Q3 milestones</th> <th>Q4 milestones</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Development of operational options</td> <td>Development of the first project</td> <td>Define a list of key RTI actions</td> <td>Finalise Strategy</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Q1 milestones	Q2 milestones	Q3 milestones	Q4 milestones	Development of operational options	Development of the first project	Define a list of key RTI actions	Finalise Strategy	<p>Once established, the list of deliverable projects could inform focuses of our work, like strategy development, and help shape funding bids we lead or to which we contribute.</p>
Q1 milestones	Q2 milestones	Q3 milestones	Q4 milestones								
Development of operational options	Development of the first project	Define a list of key RTI actions	Finalise Strategy								
<p>SEStran at Twenty: A vision for the future</p> <p>New project celebrating twenty years of RTPs and looking to the future in our region</p>	<p>SEStran at Twenty</p>	<p>Milestones by Quarter</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Q1 milestones</th> <th>Q2 milestones</th> <th>Q3 milestones</th> <th>Q4 milestones</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>...</td> <td>...</td> <td>...</td> <td>...</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Q1 milestones	Q2 milestones	Q3 milestones	Q4 milestones	<p>This is a standalone year of activity. With that said, we hope that increased engagement and new relationships will contribute to future work.</p>
Q1 milestones	Q2 milestones	Q3 milestones	Q4 milestones								
...								
<p>Freight Strategy - next steps</p> <p>Developed Horizon FUSION proposal with European consortium - this was unsuccessful but did improve knowledge and engagement.</p> <p>SEStran Freight strategy work has supported Green Freight Consortium with business case development for Rethink to Africa rail line.</p>	<p>Freight Strategy</p>	<p>Milestones by Quarter</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Q1 milestones</th> <th>Q2 milestones</th> <th>Q3 milestones</th> <th>Q4 milestones</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>...</td> <td>...</td> <td>...</td> <td>...</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Q1 milestones	Q2 milestones	Q3 milestones	Q4 milestones	<p>How to say 'we don't know until we do it?'</p>
Q1 milestones	Q2 milestones	Q3 milestones	Q4 milestones								
...								
<p>Rail Strategy</p> <p>Policy leadership for the region</p> <p>Strategic rail network coverage</p> <p>High speed rail</p> <p>Altering strategy between PTS and corner of rail sector as we find it in 2025 - get projects into the RTSDP</p> <p>Build on work done via the Regional Rail Group with Transport Committee (TRC), Network Rail and Transport Scotland</p> <p>Support station development in the region as well as high speed rail</p> <p>Support motor rail targets for freight</p>	<p>Rail Strategy</p>	<p>Milestones by Quarter</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Q1 milestones</th> <th>Q2 milestones</th> <th>Q3 milestones</th> <th>Q4 milestones</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>...</td> <td>...</td> <td>...</td> <td>...</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Q1 milestones	Q2 milestones	Q3 milestones	Q4 milestones	<p>Continue rail strategy?</p>
Q1 milestones	Q2 milestones	Q3 milestones	Q4 milestones								
...								

Annual Report 2024/2025

Welcome – Cllr Sally Pattle

Maximum 300 words. **To follow**

Contents

Who we are and what we do

About our region

The Regional Transport Strategy

- Go E-bike

- GoSEStran

- EV Delivery

- RTPI

- Thistle Assistance

- Travel to Healthcare

- RTS Delivery Plan

- Regional Bus Strategy

- Regional Freight Strategy

- Rail Strategy

- People and Place

Looking ahead

Who we are and what we do

We are the South East of Scotland Regional Transport Partnership (SEStran), one of seven regional transport partnership in Scotland, created following the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005. We cover eight local authorities – Scottish Borders, East Lothian, Midlothian, City of Edinburgh, West Lothian, Falkirk, Clackmannanshire and Fife.

There are a wide range of transport issues across our region, and we are responsible for producing a Regional Transport Strategy that looks to tackle these whilst also moving the region towards a more sustainable and efficient transport network.

We work closely with a range of partners of wide variety of projects. This annual report sets out our achievements over the 2024/2025 year, demonstrating how each project ties back to our Regional Transport Strategy.

You can read more about who we are and what we do (including more information about our Board and governance) on our website: www.sestran.gov.uk

About our region

Key stats about the region:

- Population¹ = 1,619,460
- No households² = 738,714
- Car ownership³ = estimated at over 870,000, on average 1.18 cars per household (but varies greatly between local authorities)
- Kms of road³ = 11,671
- 135 million passenger journeys on local buses in 2022-23³
- 63 train stations³
- 12,623 million vehicle kms in 2022³
- 23% of the population have a limiting long-term physical or mental health condition⁴
- 19% of population are over 65 with significant growth in elderly population anticipated in the future⁴
- **Additional stats to follow**

¹ National Records of Scotland: Mid-year population estimates 2023

² National Records of Scotland: Households and dwellings in Scotland 2023

³ Scottish Transport Statistics 2023

⁴ Scottish Household Survey

The Regional Transport Strategy

Our Regional Transport Strategy has four key objectives, and throughout this Annual Report, we will demonstrate how our programmes of work and projects relate back to these.

Regional Transport Strategy objectives:

- Objective 1: Transitioning to a sustainable, post carbon transport system.
- Objective 2: Facilitating healthier transport options.
- Objective 3: Transforming public transport connectivity and access across the region.
- Objective 4: Supporting safe, sustainable and efficient movement of people and freight across the region.

Go e-Bike

Go e-Bike enables people to access e-bikes and bike share initiatives through a variety of ways, including e-bike trials, bike share initiatives and bike training and bike maintenance training.

RTS objectives: 1, 2 and 4

RTS actions:

- Expand the provision of bike-sharing initiatives across the region.
- Identify locations where implementation of shared mobility solutions could be beneficial and reduce the level of 'forced' car ownership.

e-bike trials

During 2024/25 e-bike trials took place at East Lothian Council, St John's Hospital and Persimmon Homes in West Lothian, and at Skills Development Scotland in Edinburgh. The trials are supported in partnership with West Lothian Bike Library and gives access to a fleet of e-bikes for staff to use for four weeks.

Add stats

"Having access to the e-bike gave me the confidence to try commuting to work where before I'd have felt it was 'too far', and that it'd be 'too hard' before a day in the office. I soon realised my preconceptions were wrong. My journey to and from work was really enjoyable, energising and helped me deal with the mental stresses and strains of the day."

Ailsa Morgan, Skills Development Scotland (use pic of Ailsa)

Bike share

During the year, we began trialling Brompton bike lockers in two locations. The lockers provide access to Brompton's folding bikes, which can be hired for up to 60 days at a time. The bike lockers are at Sheriffhall park and ride in Edinburgh and Queen Margaret University in East Lothian.

Add stats

Bike training and maintenance

We provided cycle ride leader training to staff at the Social Bite Village in Edinburgh to support the use of the e-bike fleet with both staff and residents. We also delivered bike maintenance and cargo bike training to Porty Community Energy to support volunteers with the e-bikes available to loan.

Add stats / quote

Go SEStran

Go SEStran is a pilot regional journey planning app. It has been designed to prioritise sustainable travel. This approach is often referred to as Mobility as a Service (MaaS). We received funding from Paths for All to run a pilot to assess the viability of MaaS in the south-east of Scotland and have been working with Tactran, our neighbouring Regional Transport Partnership, who are developing similar pilots in their region.

RTS objectives: 1, 3 and 4

RTS actions:

- Deliver improved public transport information in a variety of formats, supported by appropriate wayfinding infrastructure on the transport network.
- Deliver a regional MaaS pilot scheme to establish the long-term viability of MaaS in the region.

Our focus during 2024/25 has been to investigate opportunities for the app to offer more to users, including signposting to more payment methods, integrating more features and targeting specific user groups. Alongside this, we have been developing VoyagAR, an app focused on providing digital support to users. This includes augmented reality providing visuals during the journey, and chat support for carers, friends and family.

Tactran has been leading the project this year, which has focused on developing the platforms and procuring services.

Stat: 1,800 unique scans of Go SEStran marketing QR codes.

Electric vehicle charging infrastructure

To help support the move to electric vehicles (EVs), we have been working with seven of the eight local authorities in our region (East Lothian Council is working independently) and Dumfries and Galloway (the SWESTrans region) to develop documentation and explore opportunities to procure regionally for public EV charging infrastructure. The aim is to create efficiencies by creating a bigger market for suppliers in the final tender process, and to support a joined up network for the public.

RTS objectives: 1 and 4

RTS actions:

- Engage with the Scottish Government for effective national strategy / guidance / specifications on fleet decarbonisation and rollout of appropriate and future-proofed supporting infrastructure. This should include legislation to manage on street charging provision and the provision of chargers in new developments.
- 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.

The beginning of the year saw us putting into place the formal governance structure needed to run the project, along with the procurement of a consultant to develop documentation and support local authorities. We worked with Transport Scotland to identify the grant available to each local authority and understand the available budget.

The second half of the year was focused on agreeing a lead local authority (Edinburgh City Council) and running regular steering group and working group meetings to determine the best route forward.

“This procurement offers the opportunity to expand the public charging network in the South of Scotland in a fair and representative way.” To be agreed and attributed to someone from Scottish Futures Trust.

Real time passenger information

Reliable real time passenger information is vital if we are to encourage people to move towards more sustainable travel methods rather than use their car. We work with local authorities and operators in our region to provide real time, and accurate, information for bus users. The screens can also be used to advertise local campaigns and information.

RTS objectives: 1, 3 and 4

RTS actions:

- 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.

A focus for the year has been the integration of live Lothian bus information to the network of screens across the region. We've worked with Journeo to provide training for local authorities so new staff members can report faults, track the status of screens, add imagery and adverts to screens, and track performance.

We were pleased to be able to use the screens in advance of Storm Eowyn in January 2025 to inform public that no bus or tram services would be running during the region's red weather warning.

Stat: 94 indoor screens in libraries, community centres and transport exchanges.

Thistle Assistance

Thistle Assistance is an initiative to help people feel safer and more comfortable when using public transport. The free Thistle Assistance card and app are recognised by many public transport operators across Scotland, and the initiative allows people, in an easy and subtle way, to request the extra support they would like. We manage and operate Thistle Assistance for the whole of Scotland, and on behalf of the other regional transport partnerships.

RTS objectives: 1, 3 and 4

RTS actions:

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

The focus for Thistle Assistance has been to understand how the Thistle Assistance card and app are currently being used and where improvements may be needed. To do this we worked with Disability Equality Scotland and distributed a questionnaire to their members. We also promoted the questionnaire more widely across our own channels. The results of this work will enable us to improve Thistle Assistance going forward.

Insert stats and quotes from questionnaire. To follow once available.

We have also been focusing on marketing Thistle Assistance, working with a media buying agency to advertise to target audiences across a range of digital channels.

Insert stats about advertising once available.

Transport to health

Getting to and from an appointment at a hospital, at the local doctor's surgery or other healthcare setting can be difficult for many people. We're working with healthcare partners across our region to better understand the issues and find ways to tackle them. By connecting key stakeholders, we hope to enable positive and educational conversations, leading to more joined-up and strategic thinking on this complex subject.

RTS objectives: 1,2,3,4

RTS actions:

- Support the delivery of bus services and infrastructure measures which ensure access to healthcare for all.

During the first half of the year, our focus was on developing relationships with our four health boards (Fife, Lothian, Forth Valley and Borders), NHS Assure and the Scottish Ambulance Service. Following this, we set up a transport to health project group and began meeting regularly to share best practices and discuss current challenges.

During the second half of the year, we began working with Public Health Scotland to grow engagement and knowledge of the key relationship between transport and health. We presented our work at the Public Health Scotland conference in November 2024 and held a joint stakeholder event in February 2025. This event brought together transport, planning and public health colleagues from across the region to address our shared ambitions to improve health, take climate action and reduce inequalities.

"Delighted to have partnered with you on this enthusiastic and productive discussion, SEStran! Thank you for a great event!" Public Health Scotland

"I really enjoyed today's workshop – some great discussions and it was lovely to meet others working on similar pieces of work across the region." Sustainability Officer from NHS Fife

Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan

The Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan provides a mechanism to assess and prioritise regional projects required over the next ten years to realise the ambitions of the Regional Transport Strategy, supporting the economic and net-zero goals of the Regional Prosperity Framework. The Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan dovetails with the Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 (STPR2) to support the delivery of a transport network that:

- Takes climate action.
- Addresses inequalities and accessibility.
- Improves health and wellbeing.
- Supports sustainable and inclusive economic growth.
- Improves safety and resilience.

The Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan complements STPR2, highlighting projects within and outside the plan that contribute to our concordat vision with the Edinburgh and South East of Scotland City Region Deal.

RTS objectives: 1, 2, 3 and 4

RTS actions:

- Partner councils work with SEStran through the statutory planning processes to implement RTS policies with regards to major developments.

Over the course of the year, we have been working closely with colleagues from both the Edinburgh and South East of Scotland City Region Deal and local authorities to develop a matrix of regional projects, agree scoring and weighting that brings parity across our eight authorities. Those priorities are now plotted with Power BI and GIS mapping to demonstrate how rich our region is with opportunities.

“Linking the regional economic ambitions to the way we deliver transport infrastructure and services is essential to maximise the opportunities across the region, while ensuring we deliver an infrastructure first approach enabling people to access these opportunities sustainably in the future. Working in partnership with SEStran to deliver the Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan continues to strengthen the approach of putting the end user at the heart of everything we do and utilising data to help inform decision making.”

Ewan Doyle, Workforce Mobility Manager at Edinburgh and South East of Scotland City Region Deal

Images from Ewan Doyle

Regional Bus Strategy

We want a world-class bus service for our region. Pre-covid, almost half of residents in our region used a bus at least once a month. The impact of covid saw this reduce drastically, but data shows that bus patronage is building. 2024/25 saw the beginning of the process to shape a bus strategy for our region.

RTS objectives: 1, 3 and 4

RTS actions:

- 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.

At the beginning of the year, we procured consultants Stantec and Systra and engaged our local authorities and bus operators in the bus strategy development process. With ongoing engagement from our local authorities, bus operators, Partnership Board and a group from our Integrated Mobility Forum, we have worked through a Case for Change and consulted on draft strategy policies and actions.

Insert stats/graphs from the Case for Change

Regional Freight Strategy

As set out in the Regional Transport Strategy we will support, where appropriate, the development of new or enhanced rail freight services in our region. We are currently exploring an innovative idea to incorporate freight on trams in Edinburgh. We are also looking at how our region can support improved road freight services with better driver facilities and using non-traditional fuel for HGVs and LGVs as we transition to a post carbon transport system.

RTS objectives: 1 and 4

RTS actions:

- 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.

During the year we have been working to achieve funding for two proposals:

- Access to goods proposal in partnership with the University of the West of Scotland.
- Edinburgh Tram for Freight proposal - part of the wider Freight and Urban System Integration for Optimised Networks (otherwise known as FUSION), which aims to cut average travel delays by 30%, reduce transport energy consumption, and lower greenhouse gas emissions through simulations and pilot programmes.

Unfortunately, due to a very competitive funding market, we have not yet been successful in securing funds, but we'll continue to explore opportunities to improve freight transport in our region.

We are also working with the Forth Green Freeport partners on enhanced freight links between Rosyth and Alloa.

Rail Strategy

The rail network has an important role to play in helping people travel sustainably around the south-east of Scotland. Our work includes exploring how improvements to the rail network can help people travel in a more sustainable way. This can include more direct through-services between locations, reducing the need for interchange on existing routes, and increased frequencies on particular routes or at key times of the day.

RTS objectives: 1, 3 and 4

RTS actions:

- Work with key stakeholders (Transport Scotland & Network Rail) to develop new rail infrastructure supported by appropriate appraisal and business case development.
- Opportunities should be explored with partners to introduce new services, including more direct links across the region, national boundaries and cross-city connections.

The main focus of our rail work during 2024/25 has been supporting the Newburgh community in Fife in the quest to get the railway station in the town reinstated, and working with the community in Winchburgh, through their monthly steering group, on the case for a station in the town following substantial house building and development.

Newburgh

During the year, and in response to comments from Transport Scotland, we completed work to enhance the existing STAG appraisal, including a stakeholder workshop. This has now been submitted to Transport Scotland for review.

Winchburgh

The Winchburgh work is progressing with both the development of the business case and the design of the new station. We are a member of the steering group, which meets monthly.

People and Place

In 2024/25, Transport Scotland set out their new regional approach to funding active travel behaviour change across Scotland, passing funding to each of Scotland's seven regional transport partnerships. The programme supports activity that gives people the knowledge, skills and confidence to choose to walk, wheel and cycle more often.

Following this, we developed our People and Place Plan and through this distributed £5.3million of funding to 18 delivery partners, including our region's eight local authorities. This funding focused on:

- Schools and young people
- Workplaces
- Accessibility and inclusion
- Capacity and capability building

Through the funding, our People and Place work will:

- Deliver increases in walking, wheeling and cycling, by both enabling and encouraging people that don't make these choices to start to do so, and those that do so already to do more.
- Raise awareness of the benefits of active travel to many other people, making them more likely to choose active travel in future.
- Work in many of the region's communities, schools, and residential settings, plus build capacity and capability for further change.

RTS objectives: 1, 2 and 4

Schools and young people

We funded two regional projects to work intensively with schools to support young people to choose active travel more often.

We provided funding to the WOW project, allowing 49 schools across the region to encourage more children to walk to school.

We funded six local authorities to deliver a range of cycle storage improvements in their primary and secondary schools.

[Young person quote]

[Short case study example]

Accessibility and inclusion

We funded seven projects to audit streets / areas with high pedestrian, wheeling and cycling potential and remove barriers where needed.

Our funding enabled the creation of an active travel hub in East Lothian.

[East Lothian quote, or from hub person]

We funded two organisations to deliver walking and cycling activities for their local communities to encourage participation in active travel.

[Short case study example]

Workplaces

We funded TravelKnowHow, to support employers in the region to enable their staff to travel by more sustainable modes.

Our funding allowed NHS Fife to improve cycle storage facilities and to set-up an e-bike hire scheme for staff.

We funded Midlothian Council's project to encourage staff to walk more with a series of lunchtime led walks and council wide step count challenges.

Our funding allowed East Lothian Council to install additional cycle storage facilities for staff.

[quote from one of the orgs?] – can provide case study from Mid or Fife

[Short case study example]

Access to Cycles

We funded an access to cycles project across the region to support cycle repairs, bike recycling and purchase of new cycles.

Six local authorities funded to provide access to bikes for young people.

Our funding allowed Fife Council to purchase 13 adaptive cycles for young people.

We funded a bike library for children to loan bikes for free in Edinburgh.

Capacity and capability building

We funded a strategy officer to work with Falkirk Council to develop a comprehensive behaviour change strategy for active travel.

We delivered a shared learning workshop for all local authorities in our region.

We funded the creation of a public dashboard to share information on funding distribution and project delivery.

We organised a visit for the Cabinet Secretary for Transport to funded projects in Edinburgh.

Worked with our partners in the creation of a future delivery plan for People and Place.

We commissioned an evaluation of the 2024/25 People and Place programme delivery.

More detailed information about the impact and evaluation of the first year of our People and Place funding is available... [link to follow once available](#)

Looking ahead to 2025/26 [To follow](#)