



South East of Scotland
Transport Partnership

Equalities Outcomes 2025-2029 and Mainstreaming Report



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About SEStran – Role & Function

SEStran is one of seven Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs) in Scotland. The partnership comprises 8 local authorities: City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian, West Lothian, Fife, Falkirk, Clackmannanshire and Scottish Borders. This covers an area of 3180sq miles and is home to 29.5% of Scotland's population. We are the fastest growing region in Scotland.

SEStran aims to develop a sustainable transportation system for the South East of Scotland that will enable business to function effectively and provide everyone living in the region with improved access to healthcare, education, public services and employment opportunities.

SEStran is a Model 1 RTP, as defined under the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005, with a main function to deliver a Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) for the area. We do not operate any transport services. SEStran's RTS is the cornerstone of its work. It lays out the vision for the strategic development of transport in South East Scotland up to 2035 (in the current version) and includes a focus on links to and from Edinburgh, as the economic hub of the region. We currently have a complement of 13 staff: 11 permanent, one fixed term and one Intern.

Legal Context

The Equality Act 2010 ("the 2010 Act")

Part 3 of Schedule 19 to the 2010 Act sets out that a Regional Transport Partnership established by Section 1(1) of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 ("the 2005 Act") falls within the definition of a public authority for the purposes of the 2010 Act.

The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 ("the 2012 Regulations")

Para. 1 of Schedule 1 to the 2012 Regulations sets out that a Regional Transport Partnership established by Section 1(1) of the 2005 Act falls within the definition of a public authority for the purposes of the 2012 Regulations.

The Regional Transport Partnerships (Establishment, Constitution and Membership) (Scotland) Order 2005, which was made under Section 1(1) of the 2005 Act, established SEStran, meaning SEStran is covered by both the 2010 Act and the 2012 Regulations.

This means SEStran is covered by the public sector equality duty (PSED), as set out in the 2010 Act. The PSED requires that SEStran must, when exercising its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the 2010 Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and

- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The 2010 Act explains that having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- (a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- (b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- (c) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

The protected characteristics under the 2010 Act are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation.

About this report

This report sets out how SEStran is addressing its responsibilities under the 2010 Act. It summarises the progress made in mainstreaming equality and sets out the progress SEStran has made towards achieving its Equalities Outcomes for the reporting period 2021-2025 and presents a new set of Equality Outcomes for the 2025-2029 reporting period. It demonstrates our continued commitment to developing and embedding equality, diversity and inclusion in our culture and behaviours and as a fundamental part of our day-to-day business and decision making.

SEStran is committed to providing a flexible working culture and there are a range of policies that enable staff to work flexibly. Our commitment to mainstreaming equality throughout our functions is demonstrated through this report.

Section 1: Mainstreaming Equality

Mainstreaming is a specific requirement for public bodies in relation to implementing the Equality Duty. It means integrating equality into the day to day working of the organisation.

Over the reporting period, SEStran has sought to mainstream Equality into its core functions as outlined below.

1. How SEStran Assesses Impact on Equality

SEStran is required to ensure that the needs of people with protected characteristics are taken in to account during the development and implementation of a new policy or service, or when a change is made to a current policy or service.

SEStran aims to consult with relevant groups from the start of discussions on any new proposals, policies, or projects, before progressing on to a more structured assessment in any subsequent stages. Officers are working to improve this process for this reporting period and will be increasing engagement and consultation with equality groups.

SEStran is keen to ensure that staff have a comprehensive knowledge of its obligations under the equalities legislation and has provided a variety of staff training courses and workshops to support and enhance this knowledge and awareness, which will assist in engagement with people with protected characteristics. In addition, EQIA's are published on the SEStran website. and opportunities are taken to involve people who identify as sharing protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 in our EQIA's at the earliest opportunity

2. Procurement

Equality is considered throughout the procurement and tender procedures, and use is made of Public Contracts Scotland, Scottish Government Procurement Frameworks and Scotland Excel, which is the Centre of Procurement Expertise for the local government sector in Scotland. SEStran's Contract Standing Orders were last updated in June 2024, and along with the Corporate Procurement Strategy, which was updated in March 2023, take account of the Scottish Government's Public Services Reform Agenda and the subsequent Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014, the associated Procurement (Scotland) Regulations 2016, and the Public Contracts (Scotland) Regulations 2015. Following Board member input, the Corporate Procurement Strategy was further been amended to include specific reference to the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

In addition, SEStran's Standard Terms and Conditions of Contract, which apply to all consultancy contracts, clauses 20.1 and 20.2 require consultants to demonstrate that they will comply with the terms of the Equality Act 2010 and observe as far as possible the Equality Act 2010 Code of Practice – Employment Statutory Code of Practice produced by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

3. HR Policies

Equality and diversity are fundamental principles in all HR policies and procedures and are actively promoted in SEStran. All policies are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect changes in legislation and best practice. This is done in consultation with HR advisers, stakeholders and staff, before finally being presented to the Performance and Audit Committee for further scrutiny and feedback.

SEStran will continue to review all policies and procedures to ensure they reflect SEStran's commitment to ensuring that it promotes an equitable and inclusive workplace.

All our policies can be found here: <https://sestran.gov.uk/publication-category/policy/>

4. Equalities and Access to Healthcare Forum

SEStran hosts the Equalities and Access to Healthcare Forum twice a year, with membership comprising of a variety of equalities groups, healthcare representatives, Board members, and stakeholders. This forum is an important way for SEStran to co-design projects and policies and gain input from individuals with protected characteristics or from groups representing the interests of those with protected characteristics.

In the last two years, the forum has heard about and fed back on;

- Transport Scotland's Accessible Travel Framework Delivery Plan
- SEStran's Regional Bus Strategy
- Thistle Assistance
- Human Rights Bill consultation response
- VoyagAR wayfinding app
- SEStran's new active travel behaviour change funding, People and Place Programme
- The Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland on their research and work on Transport to Health and Social Care, which informed the SG Transport to Healthcare Delivery Plan

5. Disability Confident Scheme

In 2017 SEStran became a Disability Committed Employer and progressed to the higher-level Disability Confident Employer in 2018. This is the level that SEStran continues to retain. The Disability Confident Employment Scheme is a government scheme designed to encourage employers to recruit and retain disabled people and those with health conditions. SEStran employs the Disability Confident logo to demonstrate that applicants with disabilities are encouraged and welcome.

6. Living Wage Employer

In 2017 Living Wage accreditation was achieved and SEStran continues to uphold this commitment. The real living wage is currently £12.60ph and is based on cost of living. Research has shown that paying the living wage helps organisations recruit and retain better staff, reduce absenteeism and encourage higher productivity.

7. Board Diversity

SEStran is committed to continuing to make progress on improving the diversity of its Board to encourage new and innovative thinking and maximise the use of talent, leading to better decision making and governance.

Our Board membership information is available here:

<https://sestran.gov.uk/the-board/>

Two thirds of the SEStran Partnership Board is made up of elected members and their appointments are made by their respective councils alone. However, SEStran took steps to encourage diversity by writing to councils to request that they take this into account when making their appointments to the SEStran Board, prior to the local government elections in May 2022, and will repeat this exercise for the elections in May 2027.

SEStran will undertake an inclusive application process for the non-councillor members for the new term beginning in 2025. These appointments are legislated by the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act 2018 and the purpose of the Act is to improve the representation of women on the boards of Scottish public authorities. The Act sets a gender representation objective for the non-executive member component of public boards. The objective is that 50% of non-executive members are women.

The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 set out that Scottish Ministers are required from time to time, to gather information about members' protected characteristics and that the Ministers will forward those to the public bodies covered by the duties. To regularise data collection, SEStran has developed its own equalities monitoring procedure and will publish the current gender balance of the Partnership Board. No other data on protected characteristics will be made available.

From the 17 Board Members who took part in the survey, the following gender statistics were recorded:

Identified as Male 59%; Identified as Female 41%; Identified as Non-Binary 0%;

The Succession Planning Committee and the Board Diversity Succession Plan¹ sets out the process to help deliver a more diverse Board. The role of the SEStran Succession Planning Committee is to: lead on meeting the Board's responsibilities in relation to planning for succession through appointments and Board member development; offer advice to the Board on future appointments and reappointments; review and evaluate the skills, knowledge, expertise, diversity (including protected characteristics) of current Board members, and requirements of future members and

¹ <https://sestran.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Board-Diversity-Succession-Plan-2.pdf>

monitor the development and continuous improvement of a succession plan that can be presented to the Board.

Skills audits and equalities monitoring exercises are undertaken for Board members and the results identify key areas of expertise and where development opportunities lie. A commitment made in our Equalities Outcomes is to increase the diversity of the board and by using the data obtained from the monitoring exercises, we will identify the areas where there is a gap in representation and allow recruitment to be tailored appropriately. A meeting of the Succession Planning Committee will be called by autumn 2025 to coordinate this exercise.

8. Chartered Institute of Highways and Transportation (CIHT) Charter

SEStran demonstrated a commitment to the diversity and inclusion agenda by signing the Chartered Institute of Highways & Transportation (CIHT) Diversity and Inclusion Charter in September 2016. Officers will attend various workshops being provided by the institute throughout 2025 and we continue to adhere to principles of this Charter.

9. Training

As part of the induction training programme for the new Board, the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) delivered a session on equality and public boards. The objectives of the session were to provide members with an improved awareness and understanding of the public sector equality duties, how the duties apply to members responsibilities and how they can become more inclusive leaders. The session was tailored to also look at the issues of poverty, inequalities and transport.

In January 2023 staff attended a refresher training session provided by our legal advisers Anderson Strathern LLP on Equalities Impact Assessments. Anderson Strathern also worked with staff to develop the SEStran EqlA template.

Also in January 2023, the Mental Health Foundation delivered a training session to staff on how the most marginalised groups in society can be supported to feed into processes to improve community services. This included how refugee and asylum seekers needs and views can be better represented or heard in transport.

Refresher courses are now being planned for all staff, and Board members will be invited to attend.

Staff can access Equalities and Diversity Training Modules via Falkirk Council's e-learning portal. This training aims to raise awareness and covers the legislation and is designed so that staff are encouraged to think about, reflect and challenge their perceptions. It includes examples, quizzes and a test at the end of the training which aims to help staff understand equality and diversity issues.

10. Thistle Assistance Programme

SEStran has operated the Thistle Assistance programme² since 2011, a scheme that aims to give those with mobility challenges, disabled and elderly transport users more confidence in using public transport. The free Thistle Assistance card and app allow people to show transport staff what additional support they may require in a discreet way. Both the card and app can be personalised to the needs of each individual.

Thistle Assistance is part of the Scottish Government's Accessible Travel Framework and is a key priority in the current delivery plan³.

SEStran operates Thistle Assistance across Scotland on behalf of all the RTPs. Since its launch over 100,000 cards have been distributed and there have been over 15,000 downloads of the app.

SEStran will continue to promote Thistle Assistance widely, through online and offline advertising, and by working with public transport providers and other partner organisations. This will help reduce barriers to accessing public transport for all and promote social inclusion for those who have no other means of transport.

A user survey has been administered in collaboration with Transport Scotland and Disability Equality Scotland which led to over 100 responses collected on the general awareness and use of Thistle Assistance. The results can be found on our website:

<https://sestran.gov.uk/projects/the-thistle-assistance-card-app/>

In 2015, SEStran's work on Thistle Assistance was recognised by the Scottish Accessible Transport Alliance (SATA) with an achievement award in recognition of outstanding achievement in facilitating transport services for disabled people.

<https://www.thistleassistance.com/>

11. Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI)

Building on a substantial investment over the past 10 years by SEStran, the major bus operators have now modernised their ticketing and RTPI technology and are now providing their own RTPI to Traveline and, directly, to the travelling public.

SEStran has worked with the City of Edinburgh Council and Journeo to develop and launch a new, common regional RTPI system that will improve the information provided on the public-facing regional screen network incorporating multiple transport operators (bus, rail & tram) data and scheduled information.

Benefits of RTPI include:

- **Accessibility:** The RTPI system provides real-time updates on bus services, making public transport accessible and user-friendly, especially for those with mobility challenges
- **Convenience:** Digital screens show the status of transport options, reducing waiting times and help public plan their journeys.

² <https://www.thistleassistance.com/>

³ <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/accessible-travel-delivery-plan-progress-report-20192020/>

- **Safety:** Real-time information on transport schedules and delays helps users make informed decisions, reducing overcrowding and ensuring safer travel
- **Environmental Impact:** The RTPI system helps reduce carbon emissions and traffic congestion by encouraging the use of public transport
- **Social Inclusion:** The system makes public transport more accessible to everyone, including those from rural areas who rely on these services

The new system went live in December 2021 with operator data being integrated over the following months. SEStran received funding from Transport Scotland to update the existing RTPI screen system with new PCs so that the new system will operate and integrate with other systems more efficiently. The rollout of these new PCs with the new software started in February 2022 and is still ongoing.

SEStran is also working with partner local authorities to place new on-street signage across the region, again working with the contractor Journeo.

12. Hate Crime Charter

SEStran has been involved in the Transport Scotland Hate Crime Working Group. This working group, which is being led by Disability Equality Scotland, has been working on a programme aimed at tackling hate crime on public transport by raising awareness and encouraging people to report incidents of hate crime.

Following a series of public consultations on the topic, the group developed a Hate Crime Charter, which was piloted in partnership with Stagecoach East, First Bus, and ScotRail. The pilot reached over 1.2 million people in an eight-week period. Awareness was raised amongst transport staff who felt better equipped to recognise and report hate crime. 70% of bus staff said they felt the Charter would make a difference.

Furthermore, the post-pilot survey indicated that 79% of transport staff would welcome more training on hate crime, which is being taken forward by Disability Equality Scotland and Police Scotland.

Based on the feedback from the pilot, the working group agreed the final design of the Hate Crime Charter⁴ which was officially launched on 23 March 2021.

SEStran has since been involved in conversations with the Transport Scotland Hate Crime Working Group to see how we can assist in promotion of the campaign and key messages. In early 2022, the Minister for Transport announced that the Scottish Government would consult on the safety of women and girls when using public transport, including both public transport users and those working within the public transport system in Scotland. SEStran was involved in a stakeholder workshop to discuss the draft recommendations, to see how our organisation could help take these recommendations forward. The final report [Women's and girls' views and experiences of personal safety when using public transport](#) can now be found on the Transport Scotland website.

13. Regional Transport Strategy

⁴ [Hate Crime Charter - Accessible Travel Hub](#)

The SEStran Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) was approved in 2023 and is now the rudder for all SEStran projects and strategies.

The RTS is underpinned by its commitment to equalities, as seen in the following reports:

- [Equalities-Duties-Summary-Report.pdf \(sestran.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Equality Impact Assessment \(EQIA\) record \(sestran.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Fairer Scotland Duty summary template \(sestran.gov.uk\)](#)
- [2021-10-22-Draft-SEStran-RTS-CRWIA FINAL.pdf](#)

As the RTS is the cornerstone of SEStran's work, the strategies that flow from it, such as the Regional Bus Strategy, are similarly committed to equalities.

14. Go e-bike

Go e-bike is a regional e-bike share programme with locations across the South East of Scotland, which launched in April 2017, supporting the then Programme for Government. It aims to increase the awareness, accessibility to and usage of power-assisted cycling across the region and beyond. The programme supports community outreach charities, sustainability organisations, tourism and hospitality outlets, healthcare practitioners, and academic institutions.

By enabling further distances to be travelled, e-bikes and e-cargo bikes supplied through Go e-bike can expand the reach of the organisations involved. E-bikes have the potential to help widen access to cycling to a much greater audience. Due to their power assist they can allow people to take up or continue cycling into later life, so supporting improving health into older age. They can also enable those with reduced mobility or injury to be able to use a bike.

A series of community e-bike hubs have been supported across the region. Each hub is unique and tailored to its community to support long term sustainability. Ongoing support is provided for each Go e-bike hub.

SEStran also offers cycle training in association with Cycling Scotland. Each hub supports the sustainability of the program by helping to promote Go e-bike and contributing to ongoing research. Alongside the hubs, an Employer Roadshow scheme ran from March to October 2024, offering short term trials of e-bike fleets to employers to promote active travel. The project has involved hubs at West Lothian Bike Library, Transition St Andrews, CLEAR Buckhaven, Social Bite Village, Walkerburn Community Development Trust, Porty Community Energy and Cargo Bike Movement.

15. Demand Responsive Transport

SEStran worked with a wide range of stakeholders, including local authorities, other public bodies (i.e. higher education), shortlisted specialist technology providers (including both Mobility as a Service (MaaS) and Demand Responsive Transport (DRT)), shared and public transport operators, the Open Transport Initiative, community councils and Mott MacDonald's MaaS Advisory team, to prepare a Mobility-as-a-Service (MaaS) project proposal for the Transport Scotland MaaS Investment Fund Round 2.

MaaS can be described as a digital platform which allows users to plan, book and pay for all the various transport modes for a particular journey. Part of SEStran's plan to develop a region-wide MaaS platform was to integrate new DRT routes to support bus services and introduce DRT in rural areas experiencing transport poverty.

SEStran's bid was successful, and the GoSEStran MaaS integrated journey planning app launched in August 2022. A DRT service ran in the first half of 2023 in partnership with Prentice Coaches and The Routing Company in East Lothian.

The SEStran DRT Strategic Study, which was carried out by SYSTRA in March 2020, considered the strengths and weaknesses of the current DRT (including community transport) sector, and identified digital innovation as an opportunity to optimise the DRT services in the SEStran region. Furthermore, it is recognised that bus patronage has dropped over the last decade. Increasing fares, longer journey times, and discontinued rural services are some of the causes of a falling patronage and Covid-19 is putting additional pressure on the viability of bus services across the region. SEStran sees DRT technology as a way of optimising and supporting transport services, particularly in areas where traditional fixed-line bus services are not commercially viable.

Although the MaaS and associated DRT pilots are now at an end, one key lesson from the MaaS pilot in particular was that a higher proportion of users were disabled people than as represented in the population as a whole. This suggests that digital tools could have a specific role in helping disabled people

to travel, thereby increasing their employment and quality of life opportunities.

SEStran has written to Transport Scotland to emphasise that this should be taken into account when the next steps for both initiatives are being considered and budgets being set.

This is also one of the drivers behind SEStran being keen to promote use of the lessons learned in the VoyagAR pilot by means of making the software available to other tech developers on an open source, not for profit basis.

16. SEStran Strategic Network

In 2020 SEStran published the Strategic Networkⁱ, which was the culmination of partnership working to develop cross boundary active travel routes across the region, ensuring the connection of people to places. The network was developed based on a quality standard which would provide access to all users to a route that was physically separated from motor traffic and be safe and comfortable. From the outset the project looked to establish small high-quality routes that would link to create a wider network that could be used for longer travel.

A review of the multi criteria assessment was completed in 2023 to ensure the most up to date information is being used for future planning.

In 2024, a data collection exercise was carried out with constituent Local Authorities to understand the variance and gaps in mapping of cycle infrastructure across the region. The exercise highlighted a variety of differing approaches and completeness

in the mapping of current and future development of cycling infrastructure. Further work will be undertaken in 2025, focussing on addressing gaps.

17. People and Place

The People and Place programme, set up in 2024, is a Transport Scotland funded active travel behaviour change fund that is administered by RTPs. At the core of the programme, are four themes, Schools and Young People, Workplaces, Accessibility and Inclusion and Capacity and Capability. SEStran has developed a future delivery plan for the programme with the following four objectives:

- Increase the proportion of active and sustainable journeys in the region
- Increase awareness of the benefits of active and sustainable travel to encourage future behaviour change
- Increase the use of active and sustainable travel modes among underrepresented groups in the region who might face additional barriers
- Collaborate with local authorities and third-sector partners to strengthen capacity and capability in active and sustainable travel

The delivery plan also incorporates an Integrated Impact Assessment.

As part of the 24/25 People and Place delivery, SEStran has supported a wide range of projects under the theme of accessibility and inclusion. This has included:-

- Cycling UK's Connecting Communities project in East Lothian, including the introduction of 'Trike Tuesdays', which aims to engage those with mobility issues who are unable to ride a standard cycle. The numbers of attendees at these sessions has grown steadily, and this has led to the loan of a side-by-side e-tandem to a participant and their carer.
- City of Edinburgh council held an event in collaboration with Glasgow City Council to coincide with International Women's Day: "A Tale of Two Feminist Cities: why the public realm needs to be safer for women and girls and how they can achieve it".
- Street accessibility audits have been carried out in Hawick and Jedburgh in the Scottish Borders, Tranent, Prestonpans, Haddington and North Berwick in East Lothian, with initial works including 7 new dropped kerb crossing points in East Lothian.
- Greener Kirkcaldy launched the Kirkcaldy Cycle Shed in February that has created an opportunity for individuals to come into the Greener Kirkcaldy Active Travel hub to develop their skills and interest in bicycle mechanics and socialise with others interested in bikes. Individuals can come along to the drop-in sessions to work on their own bikes, help out with processing donations and bikes recovered from recycling centres, and plenty of other workshop-based tasks.
- Fife Council has worked with Hyndhead Special School to install new thermoplastic mats on key routes to school to highlight crossing points.
- Fife Council has also purchased a fleet of 13 trikes to be used and stored at Lochore Meadow & Fife Cycle Park as well as within schools.

- In Scottish Borders, the Walk-It project (upskilling walk leaders with the aim of delivering more led walks and improve inclusion to AT), has been focussing on social inclusion, behaviour change and targeting low mobility walkers and those with long-term health conditions. A Pilot Study has been added into this project for indoor walking with the provision of fitness walking classes, open to all and free of charge. The aim is to encourage people to walk more by reducing any barriers due to the weather, the fear of slips, trips and falls, and maintain physical activity in the winter period.

18. Women and Girls Safety Using Public Transport

We will focus on implementing the key recommendations from the Working Group on “Women and Girls Safety Using Public Transport” to improve safety, accessibility, inclusivity and give women and girls confidence to use more sustainable modes of travel. Objectives include enhancing engagement with stakeholders to ensure equitable policy development aimed at reducing inequalities, as public transport is currently designed and delivered around the travel patterns and needs of male passengers and commuters. By embedding these recommendations within our strategy plans, we will cultivate a transport system that is responsive to the needs of women and girls, ensuring safer travel experiences to give confidence to travel by public transport without fear and with improved accessibility.

Employee Data

SEStran collects information at recruitment stage and from current employees but is not required to publish information about the workforce for data protection reasons owing to the small number of staff employed.

SEStran uses the data it collects in order to better perform the equality duty, and to better understand the recruitment and workforce profile, enabling it to identify areas of improvement and eliminate any adverse impact on equality.

Equal Pay and Gender Pay Gap

Due to having less than 20 employees, SEStran is not covered by legal obligations in respect of publishing a Statement on Equal Pay or Gender Pay Gap information.

However, there is no discrimination in terms of equal pay for work of equal value.

Section 2: Equality Outcomes

The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012, as amended, requires SEStran to publish equality outcomes. Our equality outcomes specify a result that we aim to achieve to further one or more of the needs of the general equality duty, which are to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, and
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The protected characteristics under the 2010 Act are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation.

To help inform our equality outcomes, SEStran gathered and considered relevant evidence. Evidence was obtained through:

- Engagement with SEStran's Equalities and Access to Healthcare Forum who represent the interests of people with the relevant protected characteristics
- An analysis of reports and evidence finder tools published by the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland, third sector organisations that represent the interests of people with the relevant protected characteristics, public bodies and other organisations
- An analysis of our workforce data
- An analysis of our public involvement data
- Staff engagement
- Engagement with and attending workshops run by the EHRC
- Engagement with the other RTPs

After analysis of equalities monitoring data there was no evidence of inequalities relating to this characteristic. This data will be monitored, however, and actions relating to these protected characteristics are being achieved through mainstreaming activities.

1. Progress Update on our Equalities Outcomes 2021-2025

1. Increase diversity of the Partnership Board	
Inequality	The representation of women, people from ethnic minorities and disabled people serving on public boards is disproportionate to population levels.
Equality outcome	Increase the representation of ethnic minorities and disabled people on the SEStran Partnership Board, whilst retaining the gender balance of the non-councillor members.
General equality duty	Will help to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity for women, disabled people, and people from ethnic minorities.
Link to strategic priority	Links to the Gender Representation on Public Boards Act, Scottish Government's Race Equality Framework, the EHRC Is Scotland Fairer.
Outputs	The barriers facing women, disabled people and people from ethnic minorities identified.
Activities	Engage with relevant equalities groups and third sector organisations.
Measuring progress	Identify base line evidence and conduct equal opportunities monitoring surveys.
2023 Update	Engagement with Equate Scotland and Mental Health Foundation.
2025 Update	This outcome will be carried over to the next reporting period.

2. Facilitate access to Active Travel facilities for disabled people	
Inequality	There are insufficient opportunities for disabled people to take part in active travel, due to, for example, poor infrastructure design, and insufficient space and access to specialised equipment such as adapted bikes.
Equality outcome	To ensure design and development of all active travel initiatives deliver increased opportunities for disabled people to access active travel initiatives.
General equality duty	Will help to eliminate inequality between non-disabled people and disabled people in developing healthier lifestyles.
Link to strategic priority	The encouragement of and provision of active travel facilities is now the highest priority in NTS2 and will be in the emerging Regional Transport Strategy.
Outputs	Policy within the RTS that will guide development of active travel facilities to ensure that any new facilities should be inclusive by design and include sufficient available provision for disabled people to both access and use active travel provision, safely.
Activities	Consult with appropriate bodies to establish appropriate guidance and the types of provision required.
Measuring progress	Establish baseline statistics
2023 Update	<p>The existing e-bike provider advised SEStran in late 2022 that their intention to bring into production an e-trike that could be integrated into the existing Go-eBike hire system will not now progress.</p> <p>Officers from SEStran had been in discussion with the provider for a period of 18 months previous to this notice, on the understanding that the system could be improved to provide an e-trike style bike.</p> <p>Information provided to SEStran indicates the provider's decision was due to lower-than-expected market demand for the more accessible bike within the system. This has been reflected in an update to the Go eBike EqIA.</p>
2025 Update	<p>The project has continued to support access to e-bikes as a cycle that provides a lower point of entry to those who may struggle to use a standard cycle.</p> <p>SEStran also funded organisations to purchase adaptive cycles through 2024 and 2025 as part of the Go e-bike project and through the people and place programme. For example, through People and</p>

	<p>Place, City of Edinburgh Council funded Thistle Outdoors, who support individuals to access adaptive cycles.</p> <p>SEStran continues to work in partnership with West Lothian Bike Library who support access to adaptive cycles in West Lothian but also loan out adaptive cycles to other groups in the region.</p>
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3. Increased Access to public transport in rural areas for disabled people, older people and young people.	
Inequality	A lack of access to public transport in rural areas disadvantages disabled people and older people, and reduces opportunities for young people to access education, training and employment. Many more opportunities to access public transport exist in urban areas. This is particularly relevant to people using concessionary travel cards.
Equality outcome	Increased opportunities to access public transport in rural areas for ensuring the benefits of concessionary travel are available to relevant groups, mainly disabled people, older people and young people.
General equality duty	Will help to improve outcomes for individuals, communities and society and narrow or remove the biggest inequalities experienced by the identified groups.
Link to strategic priority	The encouragement of promoting increased public transport use is now a high priority in NTS2 and will be in the emerging Regional Transport Strategy. To ensure that the RTS policies and specific actions and projects creates a framework and actions to deliver change.
Outputs	RTS policies that promote and facilitate alternative public transport solutions.
Activities	Regional implementation needed and lead role for SEStran in seeking consistent approaches across the Region.
Measuring progress	Number of services introduced and or narrative on progress.
2023 Update	New RTS includes a new Regional Mobility Theme focussing exclusively on Enhancing the Accessibility of Public Transport.
2025 Update	Building on the RTS, we have begun a Regional Bus Strategy, with the strategic vision: "To provide a high quality, affordable, accessible and available bus network for the whole region which is fully integrated with other forms of transport and increases passenger numbers and passenger satisfaction, to support the social, environmental and inclusive economic development of the region"

4. Develop and Promote the Thistle Assistance Programme.	
Inequality	Disabled people (seen/unseen) and mobility challenges often face difficulties when trying to access and use public transport.
Equality outcome	Develop a Thistle Assistance Journey and Wayfinding solution to help disabled people, older people, vulnerable people and women access public transport and plan their journeys more easily.
General equality duty	SEStran will help develop and promote an accessible and safer public transport system for disabled people, older people, and women, which will help to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity.
Link to strategic priority	Scotland's ten-year Accessible Travel Framework and These aims assist with delivering on the pledges within Scotland's first ever National Accessible Travel Framework published in 2016 (Going Further) .
Outputs	Journey planning and Wayfinding tool to help with the door to door journey
Activities	Stakeholder engagement
Measuring progress	Survey
2023 Update	Test (and if successful) launch VoyagAR the wayfinding and journey planning application.
2025 Update	<p>A user survey has been administrated in collaboration with Transport Scotland and Disability Equality Scotland which led to over 100 responses collected on the general awareness and use of Thistle Assistance.</p> <p>A promotional campaign is currently being run across various channels, it started in March 2025 and will end at the end of April 2025; initial findings are positive and encouraging and will lead to a more data and evidence-based plan for 25/26.</p> <p>An attempt was made to integrate VoyagAR into the GoSEStran MaaS project but has proved unsuccessful.</p>

5. Expansion of Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) Network and promotion of Hate Crime Charter.	
Inequality	Disabled people, older and vulnerable people, people from ethnic minorities, LGBT people and women do not always feel safe using public transport and experience difficulty accessing information.
Equality outcome	Expand the RTPI network and continue to promote the Hate Crime Charter to improve safety and accessibility to public transport within the region.
General equality duty	This outcome will help to eliminate discrimination, foster good relations and advance equality of opportunity.
Link to strategic priority	This links to the National Transport Strategy focus on reducing inequalities, the SEStran RTS and the Accessible Travel Framework.
Outputs	Availability of travel information to allow for better journey planning.
Activities	Financial commitment to new Content Management System (CMS).
Measuring progress	Increase in the number of RTPI screens installed and quality of bus operator data.
2023 Update	Continue to work with Local Authority partners and transport operators to expand and develop the network.
2025 Update	<p>Continue to work with Local Authority partners and transport operators to improve accuracy of data and expand and develop the network by exploring funding opportunities for new RTPI and bus stop infrastructure.</p> <p>Work with Disability Equality Scotland and key stakeholders to promote the Hate Crime Charter in the SEStran region.</p>

2. Equalities Outcomes 2025-2029

1. Increase the use of active and sustainable travel modes among underrepresented groups.	
Inequality	There are many underrepresented groups in Scotland with low participation rates in active and sustainable travel. Barriers include cost, social perception, culture, health, ability, location, equipment and infrastructure.
Equality outcome	Increase the use of active and sustainable travel modes among underrepresented groups in the region who might face additional barriers.
General equality duty	Increased equality of opportunity to access active and sustainable transport and reduce the mobility gap (difference in the active travel behaviours between groups who share protected characteristics and those who don't).
Link to strategic priority	<p>Alignment with the strategic aims and objectives set out in the Regional Transport Strategy, National Transport Strategy 2, Accessible Travel Framework and the Active Travel Outcomes Framework.</p> <p>For the RTS, this specifically relates to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy objective 1: Transitioning to a sustainable, post-carbon transport system. • Strategy objective 2: Facilitating healthier travel options • Strategy objective 4: Supporting safe, sustainable and efficient movement of people and freight across the region.
Outputs	Successful delivery of projects throughout the course of the People and Place programme that meet the specified objective to: Increase the use of active and sustainable travel modes among underrepresented groups in the region who might face additional barriers.
Activities	<p>Support through targeted funding of projects under the accessibility and inclusion theme of the People and Place programme. This includes LA led projects, community-based projects and larger delivery partner led projects that contribute to the overarching objective to: Increase the use of active and sustainable travel modes among underrepresented groups in the region who might face additional barriers.</p> <p>We will develop a specific criterion to the grant application process to ensure that each project delivers on the need to increase the use of active and sustainable transport by underrepresented groups.</p>

Measuring progress	Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of this objective as part of the People and Place plan delivery and RTS, and from the contingency planning and mitigation measures introduced to respond to the findings identified in project EqlAs.
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2. Increased access to healthcare for disabled people	
Inequality	Limitations of the transport system in the SEStran region mean that some people are struggling to access healthcare. This is particularly the case for disabled and older people.
Equality outcome	Improve health outcomes for disabled and older people across the region by making it easier for them to travel to and from healthcare facilities when they need to.
General equality duty	Help to advance equality of opportunity between non-disabled people and disabled people in accessing healthcare in the region.
Link to strategic priority	Links to RTS, Transport (Scotland) Act 2019's obligation on RTPs and Health Boards to work together and the Transport to Healthcare Delivery Plan.
Outputs	Transport to Health Strategy (this will be made up of a literature review, a case for change, an options appraisal and a strategy document). This will be delivered over the next three years, from April 2025.
Activities	These will be specified in the Project Initiation Document for this programme
Measuring progress	<p>Measuring progress will be complicated by two key factors: that there is no pre-existing baseline for Transport to Health travel patterns or associated data, and there is not a regional strategy to set direction. Our work will try to establish some data understanding, which will make progress measurement easier.</p> <p>We will progress the recommendations relevant to RTPs in the Scottish Government's Transport to Healthcare Delivery Plan, while working collaboratively with Transport Scotland and the Scottish Government to progress delivery of the plan's commitments.</p> <p>In the research and base setting, we will look at the National Audit Office report and recommendations on Transport to Health and Social Care (2011)</p>

3. Improve the experience for people and groups who share protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 using public transport	
Inequality	Disabled people, those with mobility challenges, and people and groups who share protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, often face barriers and difficulties (availability, accessibility, affordability) using public transport.
Equality outcome	Improve the experience for people and groups who share protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, using public transport, particularly regarding safety and security.
General equality duty	Eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity for disabled people, women, ethnic minorities, the elderly and LGBT+ people by developing and promoting a safer and more accessible transport system.
Link to strategic priority	<p>Relevant to both the Equalities and Human Rights Commission Strategic Plan 2025-2028⁵ and Scotland's ten-year Accessible Travel Framework⁶, in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring equitable access to public transport is crucial for enabling all individuals, including those with disabilities and those living in rural areas, to participate fully in society • Enabling Travel: Ensuring those involved in delivering transport services and infrastructure support disabled people to travel • Safety and Comfort: Making sure disabled people feel comfortable and safe using public transport, free from hate crime, bullying, and harassment
Outputs	<p>Include in the annual SEStran Business Plan detail on how SEStran will improve this equality outcome focussed on the following RTS policies & actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional audit to identify stops, stations and interchanges (and access routes) which can be enhanced with the instillation of Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) • Improved access to public transport information in a variety of accessible formats to improve the door-to-door journey experience • Expand provision of RTPI for public transport services
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of the Thistle Assistance national scheme, an information scheme which aims at supporting people who may have specific needs while taking public transport. Main comms and marketing activities will be trackable and targeted at key audiences

⁵ <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/2025/Strategic%20plan%202025-2028%20large%20print%20version.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.transport.gov.scot/our-approach/accessible-transport/accessible-travel-framework/>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder engagement to increase awareness of Thistle Assistance and encourage transport operators to include it in staff induction & training • Regular surveys with key target groups • Support Disability Equality Scotland with the promotion of the Hate Crime Charter • Install new RTPI infrastructure at appropriate locations • Work with transport operators to improve/maintain the accuracy of real-time data • Work collaboratively with other organisations to progress delivery of the recommendations in the 'Women and Girls Safety Using Public Transport' report.
Measuring progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of staff being trained by transport operators on Thistle Assistance • Increased awareness and use of Thistle Assistance card & App • Increased number of RTPI screens installed and quality of information provided • Accuracy of real-time information versus scheduled

4. Improve the diversity of the Partnership Board	
Inequality	The representation of women, people from ethnic minorities and disabled people, serving on public boards is disproportionate to population levels.
Equality outcome	Increase the representation of minority groups, and disabled people, (including older people within these groups) on the SEStran Partnership Board, whilst retaining the gender balance of the non-councillor members.
General equality duty	Will help to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity for women, disabled people, and people from ethnic minorities.
Link to strategic priority	Links to the Gender Representation on Public Boards Act, Scottish Government's Race Equality Framework, the EHRC Is Scotland Fairer.
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The barriers facing women, disabled people and people from minority groups identified • Recruitment channels widened • Application process reviewed • Use positive action to appoint Observers with relevant protected characteristics to the board
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with relevant equalities groups and third-sector organisations • Review application process for Non-Councillor Member and Board Observer recruitment programmes • Collect equalities monitoring data from board members • Provide equalities data to Succession Planning Committee prior to the Non-Councillor Member Re-appointment/appointment exercise in late 2025, for new appointments in April 2026 • Write to partner authorities to consider diversity when appointing Elected Members to the SEStran Board at the next Local Government elections in May 2027 • Arrange meetings of the Succession Planning Committee. • Host hybrid meetings to reduce barriers in relation to travelling and access to physical meetings and also lack of access or confidence using technology.
Measuring progress	Monitor equalities data and schedule regular surveys.

Performance Reporting

SEStran will publish an update to this report before the end of the next period, i.e. 30 April 2027.

The Partnership will also continue to monitor all Partnership Board reports for any implications arising from them that may affect any equalities issues.

Providing Information in Various Formats

Information is provided in a variety of formats, including reports provided in Easy Read, PDF and RTF format but can also be provided in alternative formats and/or languages such as large print or Braille.



Area 3D (Bridge) | Victoria Quay | Edinburgh EH6 6QQ

0131 524 5160 | www.sestran.gov.uk