



REGIONAL TRANSPORT STRATEGY FOR THE HIGHLANDS & ISLANDS

Draft for consultation

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Contents	Page
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. BASELINE AND SCOPING OF ISSUES	7
3. SETTING OBJECTIVES	23
4. GENERATING OPTIONS	29
5. SIFTING AND PRIORITISING THE STRATEGIC OPTIONS	43

FIGURES

Figure 2.1	Traffic levels on all roads, by Council area	9
Figure 2.2	Summary of air transport	12
Figure 2.3	Average travel speeds along main corridor routes	15
Figure 3.1	Strategy vision and objectives	25
Figure 4.1	Network and settlement hierarchies	31
Figure 4.2	Strategic Network function and adequacy scatter chart	35
Figure 4.3	Regional Network adequacy radar chart	36
Figure 4.4	Relationships between horizontal themes in the Strategy	40

TABLES

Table 2.1	Means of travel to work or study	8
Table 2.2	Public road lengths by Council, 2004	9
Table 2.3	Population change 2004-2024	13
Table 2.4	Problems under a no-change/known changes scenario	20
Table 3.1	Objectives fit with problems and constraints	26
Table 3.2	RTS objectives and the Executive's five broad transport objectives	27
Table 4.1	Link aspirations versus the Strategy objectives	37
Table 4.2	Link aspirations for the priority Links in the Strategic Network	38
Table 4.3	Link aspirations for the priority links in the Regional Network	39
Table 5.1	Strategic network options for priority links	45
Table 5.2	Regional network options for priority links	50
Table 5.3	Horizontal theme options	52

APPENDICES

A	PRIORITY LINKS IN THE STRATEGIC AND REGIONAL NETWORKS
B	DESCRIPTIONS OF HORIZONTAL THEMES

FOREWORD

This Strategy provides an opportunity, for the first time, to set out a long term programme for the development of transport services over the whole of our region. The HITRANS Partnership has been working with transport stakeholders from across the region and at national level since the beginning of 2006. We have held several workshops with them and I believe this strategy represents the consensus view in what needs to be done, over the next 20 years, to bring our transport system up to an acceptable standard.

This is a critical time for us. The National Transport Strategy is about to be published. The Scottish Executive's review of the next round of spending on strategic transport projects has begun. We have a great opportunity to use our strategy to influence this national debate over the coming months. It is vital that we present a united case from the Highlands and Islands to the Minister in March 2007.

I welcome and look forward to your comments on this draft.

Charlie King

Chair of HITRANS

November 2006

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The HITRANS statutory Regional Transport Partnership (RTP) is tasked with preparing a strategy for the region. Indeed preparing, and maintaining, this Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) is one of the Partnership's key functions. The Regional Transport Strategy (known here simply as 'the Strategy') identifies common issues, builds consensus on the ways to tackle these issues, and sets out the priorities for future investment in the region. The Strategy is therefore a framework against which policy initiatives and projects can be developed by all partners across the region and beyond the region.
- 1.2 The Strategy also seeks to promote the region's strategic priorities as policy develops at the national and local levels. Transport is vital to every day life in the Highlands and Islands and enables economic development and social inclusion. Continued investment in the region's infrastructure and services will allow the region to make a full and effective contribution to national economic life. In particular, this will support the development of key and emerging sectors, such as renewable energy, tourism, food and drink and the knowledge economy. It will also enhance the region's place competitiveness by helping to attract and retain people with skills, through making it a better place in which to live and work.

The HITRANS Regional Transport Partnership

- 1.3 Regional Transport Partnerships came into being on 1st December 2005. HITRANS is the transport partnership for the Highlands and Islands of Scotland (excluding Shetland and Arran) and its first task is to draw up and submit a completed transport strategy for the region by April 2007. The Strategy will be the framework for investment in strategic transport infrastructure, services and demand management measures.
- 1.4 The partnership comprises eight members: one councillor from each of the five local authorities (Argyll and Bute, Highland, Moray, Orkney Islands and Western Isles) and three other appointed members.

Previous HITRANS Strategy

- 1.5 The previous HITRANS strategy, was conceived by the voluntary partnership which preceded the current RTP.¹ The strategy contained a vision for a regional transport system which:
- Enables the optimum growth of the regional economy through a network which secures the efficient import and export of products; facilitates internal and external business travel; and encourages growth in tourism.
 - Provides cost effective access to all regional transport services in pursuit of social inclusion.

¹ A Regional Transport Strategy for the Highlands and Islands, November 2002.
<http://www.hitrans.org.uk/downloads/Regional%20Transport%20Strategy.pdf>

- Is safe to use and operate.
 - Is sustainable and has minimal practical impact on the environment.
- 1.6 During the preparation of this Strategy, a review of the previous strategy was undertaken and consultation was undertaken with key stakeholders. The review of the 2002 strategy found that many of the priority strategic projects programmed for 2003-06 were expected to be substantially completed during the current Highlands and Islands Special Transition Programme, while a small number of significant others would not start under the current programme. However, it became clear that the issues of **cost, economic prosperity, safety and sustainability**, included in the original vision remain relevant today. The new Strategy therefore retains these ideals as its key foci.
- 1.7 Through consultation with HITRANS member bodies and other bodies across the region, the review identified the strengths of the Strategy as follows:
- Leverage of funding from the Public Transport Fund, leading to significant investment in public transport infrastructure.²
 - Assistance in lobbying for region interests.
 - Facilitation of partnership working at a regional level.
 - Prioritisation of projects at a regional level, which has supported individual project funding bids.
 - Facilitation of research on cross-boundary issues.
- 1.8 Meanwhile the identified weaknesses of the previous Strategy included:
- Low awareness of the strategy, particularly amongst transport operators.
 - Inadequate coverage of some issues such as concessionary fares, rail, accessibility and environmental sustainability.
 - A lack of focus in the delivery mechanisms.
 - Perceived as a political ‘wish list’ of projects.
 - Lack of monitoring framework.
- 1.9 The 2002 strategy has clearly played a role in supporting the case for and delivery of certain projects, which have referred to the strategy in their business case. Furthermore, it has strongly influenced the Public Transport Fund expenditure in the region, which has been guided by a set of Public Transport Fund investment themes developed from the 2002 strategy. Thus, delivery in the field of public and sustainable transport has been achieved on the ground across the region using this set of funding.

² The Public Transport Fund was set up in March 1999, and has now allocated £235 million to help deliver over 100 local projects across Scotland. The Public Transport Fund has provided for all aspects of public transport – rail, bus, ferry, air, as well as measures to help disabled people and improve facilities for walking and cycling. The fifth and final round of Public Transport Fund awards was made in November 2002.

Our new Strategy

- 1.10 The development of the new Strategy is in keeping with the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005, which calls for the strategy to:

‘plan how transport in the region will be provided, developed, improved and operated so as to ³’:

- *Enhance social and economic well-being.*
- *Promote public safety, including road safety and the safety of users of public transport.*
- *Be consistent with the principle of sustainable development and to conserve and enhance the environment.*
- *Promote social inclusion.*
- *Encourage equal opportunities and, in particular, the observance of the equal opportunities requirements.*
- *Facilitate access to hospitals, clinics, surgeries and other places where a health service is provided.*
- *Integrate with transport elsewhere.’*

- 1.11 The Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 also calls for each RTS to:

- Make provision in respect to how transport in the region needs to be provided, developed or improved, having regard to, among other things, future needs including those occasioned by demographic and land use changes; and what can be done, taking account of cost, funding and practicability.
- Provide an order of priority in which different elements of the provision, development and improvement of transport should be undertaken.
- Measure and monitor the achievement of the Strategy.

- 1.12 The development of the Strategy has been steered by the overall vision of the Partnership, and is congruous with the Scottish Executive’s five key transport objectives, and other national and local policies and strategies contained in the following documents:

- Scotland’s Transport Future: The Transport White Paper.
- Partnership for a Better Scotland.
- A Smart Successful Scotland.
- SPP17: Planning for Transport.
- SPP2: Economic Development.
- Local authority Development Plans:
- National Park Local Plans.
- Community Plans.

³ Transport (Scotland) Act 2005. Available at:
<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/acts2005/20050012.htm>

- (Emerging) Local Transport Strategies.
 - Local authority Corporate Plans.
 - Local Economic Strategies and plans.
 - Tourism Framework for Change: Scottish Tourism: the next decade.
 - A Smart, Successful Highlands and Islands: an enterprise strategy for the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.
- 1.13 The National Transport Strategy, expected to be published in November 2006, will be a key input to the RTSs. It will provide national policy context and direction on how transport delivery contributes to the achievement of other nation objectives, for example, on economic growth, climate change and social inclusion. At the same time, the Guidance on preparing Regional Transport Strategies suggests that work undertaken to prepare the RTSs will be an important input into the first national strategy.⁴
- 1.14 The HITRANS Strategy has also been developed to contribute towards Ministers' wider policy goals including their top priority of growing the Scottish economy, an issue which is particularly relevant in the Highlands and Islands context.
- 1.15 The Strategy is intended to contribute to the overall vision, aim and objectives set out in the white paper *Scotland's Transport Future* of June 2004. This vision is:
- 'an accessible Scotland with safe, integrated and reliable transport that support economic growth, provides opportunities for all and is easy to use; a transport system that meets everyone's needs, respects our environment and contributes to health; services recognised internationally for quality, technology and innovation, and for effective and well-maintained networks; a culture where fewer short journeys are made by car, where we favour public transport, walking and cycling because they are safe and sustainable, where transport providers and planners respond to the changing needs of businesses, communities and users, and where one ticket will get you anywhere. The aim is to promote economic growth, social inclusion, health and protection of our environment through a safe, integrated, effective and efficient transport system.'*⁵
- 1.16 The RTS will provide a framework for the transport activities of constituent councils, health boards and others, but will not necessarily provide detail on delivery issues that will remain outside the Partnership's direct responsibility.

⁴ *Scotland's Transport Future: Guidance on Local Transport Strategies*, February 2005.
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/37428/0026480.pdf>

⁵ *Scotland's Transport Future: the transport white paper*, June 2004, Scottish Executive.
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/transport/stfwp-00.asp>

- 1.17 In addition, each local authority within the region is at different stage in developing a new Local Transport Strategy (LTS). The Guidance on preparing Local Transport Strategies states that an LTS should cover a three-year period, whilst recognising that many transport projects will extend beyond this period. The Executive has not set a submission date for completed LTSs, but anticipates that the process will take around 12 months with local authorities completing their strategies during 2005/06.
- 1.18 This guidance also states that, because the RTSs are a statutory requirement, they will be binding on constituent authorities, meaning that the LTSs will need to be constituent with the objectives of the regional strategy.

What do we expect the Regional Transport Strategy to do?

- 1.19 The RTS is intended to be a document that will contain strategies and interventions for the short, medium and long term and provide a framework for the transport activities of local authorities and others.
- 1.20 The Strategy makes proposals for improvements to services and infrastructure provided by others, including the Scottish Executive Transport Group and Transport Scotland, where these have a regional impact. The full implementation of the Strategy will require additional funding or other action to be taken by the Scottish Ministers. The Partnership will use the Strategy to make the case to the Scottish Ministers for the inclusion of such proposals in forward investment plans.
- 1.21 The vehicle for doing this will be the Strategic Transport Projects Review, which will be carried out for the first time between 2006 and 2007.⁶ This RTS will be the region's main input to that review process.

⁶ Transport Scotland is undertaking the Strategic Transport Projects Review, a major study to help shape Scotland's transport network from 2012 onwards. The Review represents the first opportunity to carry out a nationwide, multimodal evaluation of Scotland's key strategic transport network. The scope of this work has been enhanced by the devolution of additional rail powers to Transport Scotland by the Railways Act 2005. At its conclusion expected in summer 2008, the Review will recommend a programme of improvements for implementation between 2012 and 2022. This could include new infrastructure projects, better incentives for alternative travel and more carefully targeted investment across the country.
<http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/defaultpage1221cde0.aspx?pageID=253>

2. BASELINE AND SCOPING OF ISSUES

Introduction

- 2.1 The Strategy is based on a thorough understanding of the transport challenges faced by the region. In keeping with the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance, it is important that the Strategy is based on a detailed and, where practicable, quantified understanding of the transport problems, constraints and opportunities within the region. In particular it is essential to understand where established policies and objectives are not being achieved as a result of deficiencies within the transport system.
- 2.2 The Highlands and Islands is a very diverse region, with a mixture of rural and remote rural areas, as well as several key urban centres. A large proportion of the region and its households are located in the remote and rural areas, in the islands and the west and north mainland, with significant implications for access to services and jobs. On the other hand, significant population numbers reside in the region's more urban areas including in Inverness, Oban, Stornoway, Kirkwall and Elgin.
- 2.3 The area covered by the HITRANS Partnership includes the most sparsely-populated area of the United Kingdom. The region comprises a huge area of land, with an indented coastline and a mountainous topography. As a result, journeys tend to be slower in this region than elsewhere in the UK.

Issues

- 2.4 Increasingly, the need to facilitate and improve access to all manner of opportunities is being recognised, as is the social and personal costs of the lack of transport and access to these services. The specific transport needs of rural areas have long been documented:

“The well-being of individuals, families and rural communities depends on access to employment and to basic services and amenities. Transport is the main agent in enabling people to satisfy these needs.”⁷

- 2.5 This still remains true today, albeit referred to as ‘social inclusion’. The ability of amenities, educational centres and businesses to go about their activities or provide services is highly dependant on the level and quality of access. Transport is therefore a critical issue for businesses in rural areas, enabling them to access goods and move products to market, and so enabling them to support the sustainability of rural communities.
- 2.6 The remainder of this section provides the context and current analysis rationale for the focus on these key issues to the region.

⁷ Pacine M (1984) *Rural Geography* Harper & Row. Pp 281.

Baseline transport situation

2.7 At 66 to 79%, **car ownership** levels in rural areas have, for many years, been higher than those in urban areas (typically 51 to 64%). The proportion of households having one, two or three or more cars is also greater in rural than in urban areas. This raises a number of significant issues in rural areas:

- A lack of public transport opportunities means that car ownership can be more of a necessity than a luxury and can impose high financial costs on relatively low-income families, meaning that expenditure on other items has to be forgone.
- Higher levels of car ownership, combined with the relatively low densities of population and long distances between settlements, mean that it is more difficult and expensive to operate an effective public transport network. This perpetuates the accessibility problems, so that where services are available journeys due to the distances and higher costs are more expensive to the user.
- Fuel costs are higher in the region compared to elsewhere in the UK and this, combined with generally longer distances travelled, means that expenditure on travel is much higher than in urban areas.
- Higher car ownership is often used as a proxy for levels of affluence. However, given the necessity of a car, this is frequently inappropriate for the region.

2.8 The 2001 Census collected data on the means of transport to work and study. Across the region these data show high levels of dependence on the car, public transport and walking. The data also show high incidences of working from home in the most rural and remote areas of Scotland. The data are presented in Table 2.1 below.

TABLE 2.1 MEANS OF TRAVEL TO WORK OR STUDY

	Work from home	Train	Bus, minibus, coach	Taxi, minicab	Car driver	Car passenger	Motorcycle	Bicycle	Walk	Other
Argyll & Bute	9%	4%	11%	1%	37%	11%	0%	1%	23%	2%
Eilean Siar	9%	1%	21%	1%	40%	13%	0%	1%	12%	2%
Highland	9%	1%	12%	1%	39%	11%	0%	3%	22%	1%
Moray	7%	2%	9%	1%	39%	11%	1%	4%	25%	2%
Orkney Islands	13%	0%	13%	0%	38%	10%	0%	2%	21%	3%
SCOTLAND	6%	3%	16%	1%	39%	11%	0%	1%	22%	1%

Source: Census 2001: Table UV40 Method of travel to work or study: resident population (Scotland)

2.9 The table shows that efficient access to employment opportunities, and all manner of other destinations, across the region for almost two-thirds of the region's working population is dependent upon an appropriate and efficient road network. Given that for many of those walking to work, the road network is also the main infrastructure for their journey, the road network arguably provides for almost 90% of all journeys to work across the region.

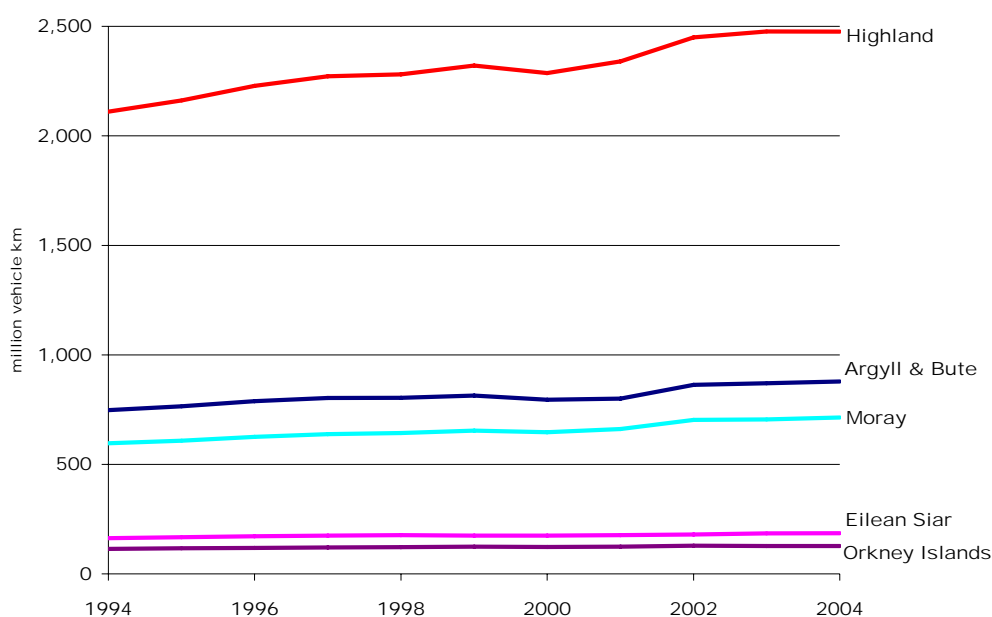
- 2.10 The region's **road network** comprises a mix of trunk and local roads (there are no motorways in the region). The management and maintenance of the trunk road network sits with Transport Scotland. The majority of the network is winding single carriageway roads, with limited passing places. This results in longer journey times, particularly in summer when traffic levels increase due to the volume of tourists visiting the region. Table 2.2 presents the public road lengths by local authority in April 2004.

TABLE 2.2 PUBLIC ROAD LENGTHS BY COUNCIL, 2004

	Trunk			Local Authority					Total
	Motorway	A Roads	Total	A Roads	B Roads	C Roads	Unclassified	Total	All roads
Argyll & Bute	-	231	231	549	619	431	709	2,309	2,540
Eilean Siar	-	-	-	333	182	174	502	1,190	1,190
Highland	-	980	980	1,389	979	1,437	2,846	6,650	7,630
Moray	-	97	97	157	291	366	693	1,507	1,604
Orkney Islands	-	-	-	161	205	160	452	977	977
Total		1,308	1,308	2,589	2,276	2,568	5,202	12,633	13,941

Source: Scottish Transport Statistics, No. 24, August 2005, Chapter 5, Table T5.2.

- 2.11 Table 2.2 illustrates the dominance of unclassified roads across the region, followed by almost equal proportions of A, B and C classified roads. Figure 2.1 shows traffic levels on all roads in each local authority area between 1994 and 2004.

FIGURE 2.1 TRAFFIC LEVELS ON ALL ROADS, BY COUNCIL AREA

Source: Scottish Transport Statistics, No. 24, August 2005, Chapter 6, Table T6.5

- 2.12 Traffic volumes increase significantly in some areas during tourist season. For example, in 2004 the section of the A830 between Lochailort and Arisaig saw a 200% increase in traffic volumes in August compared to February of the same year.
- 2.13 **Subsidised bus services** make up a large proportion of the local bus network in the region. This is particularly the case across the Islands' networks. The remainder of the local bus network consists of commercial bus services, over which local authorities have limited influence. Many places are served by local services and the long coach bus routes, yet limited frequencies away from all but the main routes severely limit opportunities for commuting and travelling to other time-sensitive destinations. Local transport services tend to consist of radial bus services out of the main built up areas, such as Inverness, Elgin, Oban, Thurso, Kirkwall and Stornoway. Many of these services will be at most hourly on six days per week. Furthermore, many places have only three or four buses per day and some of the more remote areas have only a daily Postbus or school bus. In the most remote areas, bus services tend to consist of a morning service and an afternoon service, perhaps with the addition of a shopping run in the middle of the day.
- 2.14 Inverness is the hub of the region's **rail network**, with the north-south route (Thurso/Wick to Glasgow/Edinburgh) and east-west route (Aberdeen to Kyle of Lochalsh) passing through the city. The Inner Moray Firth is served by the Far North Line (Inverness to Thurso/Wick) to the north, by the Inverness to Aberdeen line to the east and by the West Highland Line (Glasgow to Mallaig). The Tain Commuter Service connects communities in Lairg, Tain, Beauly, Dingwall and Invergordan to opportunities in Inverness.
- 2.15 Research has highlighted this issue of poor public transport links, with forty-two per cent of householders in remote rural areas saying they have at best an hourly bus service, compared with under one per cent of those in urban areas with such an infrequent service. Across Scotland as a whole, the percentage reporting a bus less than hourly is highest for Orkney (45%), Western Isles (36%), Argyll & Bute (20%), and Highland (26%). In Moray, six per cent of respondents have reported a bus service less than hourly.⁸
- 2.16 Considering the high car ownership levels, it is not unexpected that the car is the main means of travel for the journey to work. Many of the region's areas have levels of more than 50% of such journeys by car. Most notably, in almost all of South Uist and Barra over 70% of journeys to work are by car. Areas with the lowest levels of car use for journeys to work are in the north of Highland, in the southwest of Moray and across Argyll & Bute.

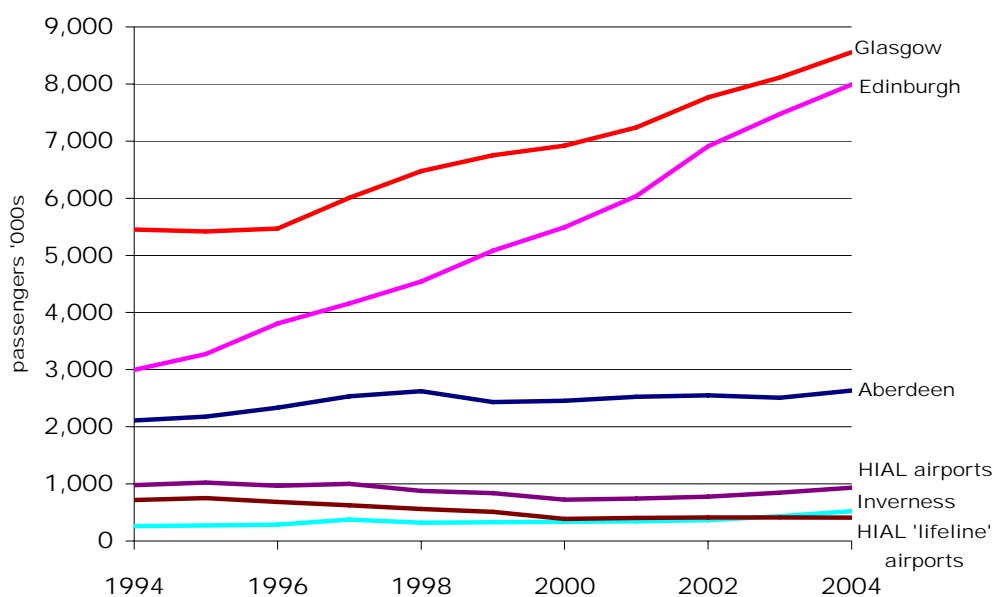
⁸ Scottish Household Survey 2001/02: www.Scotland.gov.uk/stats/bulletins/00134-01.asp#b2

- 2.17 The highest proportions of public transport use for the journey to work are in the northeast of Highland, around Caithness and Wick (10-30%), across significant parts of Western Isles, including Stornoway with 30%+ , and Hoy and North and South Ronaldsay (10-30%) ⁹. These data compare with the Scottish averages, of 15% of adults travel to work/education by bus and 3% travel by rail.¹⁰
- 2.18 **Ferries** also make up an important part of the Highlands and Islands transport network and both mainland to island and inter-islands services provide lifeline links for the populations of the islands. There is marked increase in network coverage and the frequency of sailings during the summer months to cope with the tourist trade. Communities benefit from increased summer schedules buoyed by tourist demand, but this then leaves deficiencies in service in the winter periods. There is poor integration, in terms of information, ticketing and timetabling, with public transport.¹¹
- 2.19 The cost of providing the Caledonian MacBrayne and Northlink services is high. The resultant high fares on some routes can act as a disincentive to travel. The fare structure charged across the overall network is extremely variable, even for journeys of a comparable distance. On this basis, there seems to be scant economic rationale for setting fare levels across the region. Services are sometimes based around operation needs rather than those of the markets they serve, and whilst incremental improvements have been made over the years, the frequency on some routes remains poor, sometimes less than daily.
- 2.20 **Air services** in the Highlands and Islands are a crucial part of the transport network. The network is comprised of a combination of commercial and subsidised services (supported by Public Service Obligation), serving both internal routes and destinations external to the region. In 2001, the network of scheduled air services linking the ten airports of the Highlands and Islands to the Scottish Mainland cost approximately £22.4 million to operate 'empty', before allowing for the marginal costs of carrying the current level of 383,000 passengers a year. At the same time, there is a general consensus that fare levels on these routes are very high compared to other domestic routes and that they are holding back the economic and social development of Scotland's peripheral regions. Growth of air traffic in the Highlands and Islands has been moderate for a few years while traffic to and from Central Scotland airports has continued to grow apace.
- 2.21 Figure 2.2 shows terminal passengers by airport between 1994 and 2004.

⁹ This reflects the number of services that are provided to connect staff at shift start and end times to Dounreay.

¹⁰ Scotland's People: Results from the 2001/02 Scottish Household Survey (Table 5.20).

¹¹ A report for HITRANS: *Strategic Sea Crossings in the Highlands and Islands: Development Opportunities (2005-2025)*, November 2005. Prepared by Fisher Associates.

FIGURE 2.2 SUMMARY OF AIR TRANSPORT

- 2.22 In February 2006 the Scottish Government announced plans to employ the Aid of Social Character scheme to allow public sector support to reduce air fares in remote and peripheral regions on approval from the European Commission. This scheme enables residents of Shetland, Orkney, Western Isles, Islay, Jura and Caithness to access an estimated 40% discount on trips to Inverness, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen. The Scheme is intended to better link isolated populations to commercial centres and so is not be available to those whose main residence is not in the eligible geographic area.

Current transport problems

- 2.23 A widely-dispersed **population** can make it difficult to deliver efficient and effective public transport systems, and poor transport networks contribute to the attractiveness of an area to live and work in. Thin transport networks also limit the ability of businesses to compete with their counterparts in less peripheral areas.
- 2.24 The 2001 Census identifies 86 localities across the region, ranging from Aird with a population of 443 to Inverness with a population of 44,084. The region has two localities with populations greater than 10,000 people: Inverness (66,576) and Elgin (20,829). There are a further 16 localities across the region with between 5,000 and 10,000 people.
- 2.25 There are many much smaller communities across the region, 29 localities with between 500 and 1,000 people, and many yet smaller settlements and hamlets dispersed across the region's vast area. Many of these areas are remote and peripheral in nature, particularly in terms of access to employment, services and facilities.

- 2.26 The Highlands and Islands region is home to approximately half a million people, living in an area of 39,000 square kilometres. The region is seeing a shift in its population dispersal with some areas seeing marked increases and others marked out-migration. Overall, the population of the region grew by 0.8% between 1991 and 2001 and is projected to grow by 2.3% in the twenty years to 2024.^{12 13} This growth is shown by local authority area in Table 2.3.

TABLE 2.3 POPULATION CHANGE 2004-2024

Local Authority area	Population 2004	Population projection 2024	Population change
Argyll & Bute	91,190	94,676	3.8%
Eilean Siar	26,260	22,413	-14.6%
Highland	211,340	218,894	3.6%
Moray	87,720	90,942	3.7%
Orkney Islands	19,500	19,108	-2.0%

Source: General Register Office for Scotland: Projected population by council and (NHS board) area (2004-based), 2004-2024. Table 1

- 2.27 However, authority-level population changes mask variations across the region and across local authority areas. The general population trend in the Highlands and Islands is that the more remote and peripheral areas are experiencing population decline, while population centres, especially around the Inner Moray Firth, are experiencing population growth.
- 2.28 Population growth in the Highlands and Islands is dominated by the Inner Moray Firth. The Inverness and Nairn area is home to 37% of the Highland (Council area) population and 45% of all employees in the region work there.¹⁴ This generates a great deal of demand for travel, and the Inverness network must carry both these local trips and the travel demand of movements through Inverness. Inverness and the surrounding areas suffer from acute **congestion**, for example on the A96 through Moray.
- 2.29 Local centres are also projected to continue to grow, including Stornoway, Kirkwall, Elgin and Oban. These too present travel demand issues, which may lead to localised traffic conflict / congestion.

¹² Taken from Highlands and Islands Enterprise Network Economic Information, October 2003 Economic Update. Available from: <http://www.hie.co.uk/HIE-highlands-and-islands-area-profile-2003.pdf>

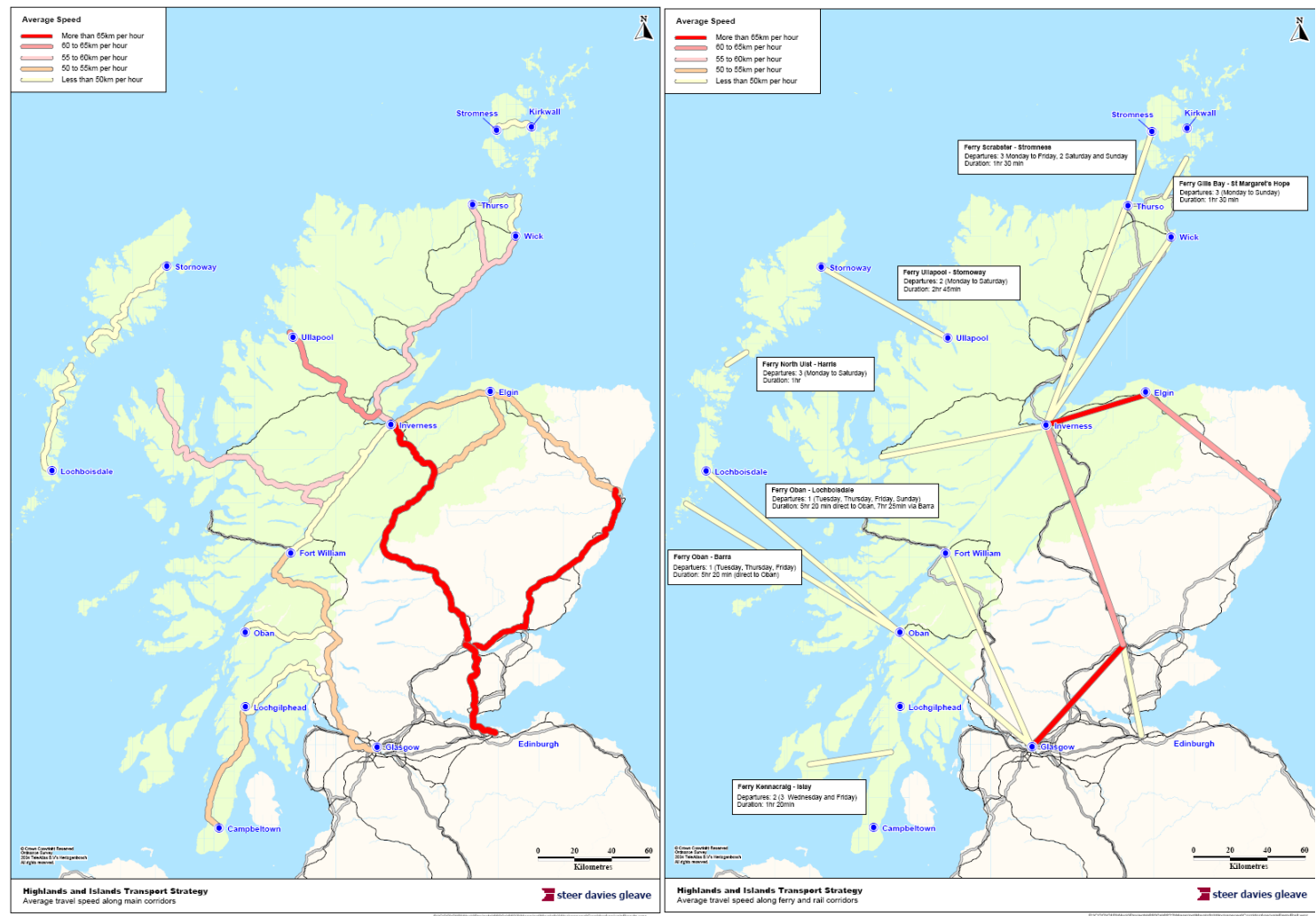
¹³ General Register Office for Scotland: Projected population by council and (NHS board) area (2004-based), 2004-2024. Table 1, available at: <http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/statistics/library/popproj/04pop-proj-scottishareas/list-of-tables.html#table1>

¹⁴ Annual Business Inquiry, 2001.

- 2.30 Limited accessibility (and local facilities) can deter people from returning to their home to seek employment upon the completion of education or training programmes or a period of employment elsewhere. This is particularly the case in the most remote, including island, localities. This means an ever-increasing loss of working-age population, which severely compromises the viability of island and remote communities.¹⁵
- 2.31 Due to the settlement patterns in the area, many journeys are relatively **long distance**, including transportation of goods to the marketplace, filling up with fuel, travelling to school, the shops, health services and the regional centres. Longer journey distances incur a time penalty (they take longer) and also add to the cost of travel. Across the region, 14% of people are travelling more than 20km to work, compared to 10% of the Scottish population.
- 2.32 Long journey distances, slow and circuitous routes result in **long journey times** for private and public transport. Figure 2.3 shows average travel speeds along the main corridor routes around the region and to key destinations outside the region. The road network is shown on the left-hand-side map and the rail and ferry network on the right. On the latter, straight lines represent train or ferry journeys, while the true rail alignment is shown also, in black.

¹⁵ Consultation report from workshop session, Tuesday 21st February 2006, Stornoway.

FIGURE 2.3 AVERAGE TRAVEL SPEEDS ALONG MAIN CORRIDOR ROUTES



- 2.33 Using Figure 2.3 it is possible to compare the relative travel speed along each of the corridors around the region. On pure journey time, the Inverness to Elgin (rail) and Inverness to Edinburgh (road) corridors appear the quickest, with average speeds of 65-70km per hour. The ‘slowest’ road routes around the region are the Western Isles spinal route, the Great Glen, and Oban and Lochgilphead to Glasgow. The ‘slowest’ rail routes are Caithness to Inverness and Oban and Fort William to Glasgow, while Inverness to Edinburgh is slightly ‘faster’ with a 3 hour 20 minute journey, but a very slow average speed south of Perth.¹⁶
- 2.34 Businesses have stated that the candidates most likely to be successful in getting a job are those who live close to their place of work. Therefore, those living in more remote areas with longer distances to travel are at a disadvantage. By virtue of the need to travel long distances across the region, combined with the fact that fuel is often up to 10% higher than, say, the Aberdeen price, **affordability of transport** is a more significant and widespread issue for the Highlands and Islands than for other types of areas across Scotland.¹⁷
- 2.35 Businesses commonly comment upon the **detrimental impact of transport to their business** or service. Businesses say that high travel costs mean that they can struggle to send staff to training courses, and that business growth and prosperity is constrained by high operating costs and a constrained geographical area from which to draw their staff. One business reported that it costs £1,400 to take a trailer load from Stornoway to Belgium and that half of this cost is accounted for on the leg of the journey from Stornoway to Ullapool.¹⁸
- 2.36 **Economic development** is a focus for the region. For example, the Western Isles Community Planning Strategy: *Creating Communities for the Future*, recognises that transport has a role to play in the vision to revitalise the islands and to transform the Western Isles into a net contributor to the Scottish Economy.¹⁹ *Moray 2020*, the strategy for the diversification of the Moray economy, recognises the:

“need to transform the infrastructure of the area in terms of transport links...to enhance our appeal as a location for inward investment, government dispersals and growing business.”²⁰

¹⁶ Journey times are based on public transport timetable information and for private car travel from link speeds taken from TransportDirect (NADICS).

¹⁷ A report for Highlands and Islands Enterprise: *Affordability of Travel for Work and Education in the Highlands and Islands*. September 2004.

¹⁸ Consultation report from workshop session, Tuesday 21st February 2006, Stornoway.

¹⁹ *Creating Communities for the Future*: www.cne-siar.gov.uk/ccof/index.htm

²⁰ *Moray 2020: Strategy for the diversification of the economy of Moray following restructuring of the RAF bases at Kinloss and Lossiemouth*: http://www.moraycommunity.org.uk/documents/Moray_2020.pdf

- 2.37 The strategy reports that the inadequacies of transport infrastructure in the area compound the relatively remote geographic position of Moray, and that this is the most all-pervading structural limitation on Moray's prosperity. The *Community Plan for the Highlands* ²¹ calls for infrastructure investment in transport as an essential requirement to attract higher levels of in-migration and to retain the resident population, by maintaining and underpinning the region's economy (and its quality of life). ²² The *Argyll & Bute Community Planning Partnership Detailed Action Plan* calls for transportation and accessibility needs to be addressed through the development of an integrated transportation network. ²³ The *Orkney Community Plan* focuses on three principles of survival, sustainability and social inclusion. In terms of transport, the aim is to facilitate:

“...sustainable, integrated transport services which meet the (social and) economic needs of Orkney's communities”. ²⁴

- 2.38 The small scale of the internal market place within the region means that many of the region's businesses have a strong outward focus, selling goods and services outside of the region. In 2002, Highlands and Islands companies exported over £1 billion of goods to countries outside of the UK, accounting for 16% of Scotland's food and drink exports. For this reason the movement of goods is of critical importance to the region's economic prosperity. Road transport is the dominant mode for **freight transport** in the region. Approximately 8.7 million tonnes of freight are lifted annually by UK HGVs in the Highlands and Islands (excluding Argyll & Bute). However, existing road traffic flows are such that present levels of HGV volumes on the region's roads do not have significant negative environmental impacts. ²⁵
- 2.39 **Tourism** is a key sector for the economy of the region. The region has a strong national and international appeal as a visitor destination. This appeal stems from a diversity of activities, locations and attractions, built upon the natural and the built environment.

²¹ *Community Plan for Highland 2004/07*: <http://www.highland.gov.uk/cx/pdf/cp-highland.pdf>

²² As well as Community Infrastructure, Housing, Public Utilities, Telecommunications and Waste Management Facilities.

²³ *Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership Detailed Action Plan Summer 2002*: http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/complan/pdf/Detailed_action_plan.pdf

²⁴ *Orkney Community Plan*: <http://www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/COMMUNITYPLANNING/>

²⁵ Scottish parliament local government and transport committee freight transport inquiry: submission by highlands and islands enterprise. Available at: <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/committees/lg/inquiries/fti/Highland%20and%20Islands%20Enterprise.pdf>

- 2.40 However, issues facing the development of the tourism sector in the region include:
- The area is perceived as remote to access.
 - Variable weather across the region.
 - Limited direct access flights.
 - Poor frequency for certain transport provision.
 - Relatively high cost of transport (fuel, internal flights and ferry services).
 - Increasing number of destinations offering similar experiences and more established “activity” from a lower cost base (for example, Eastern Europe).²⁶
- 2.41 Globally, tourism is the world’s largest industry in terms of outputs, creating some 8% of jobs worldwide and expanding annually at the rate of 4-5%. The region has the potential to contribute to the *Tourism Framework for Change* and in delivering 50% growth in tourism revenues for Scotland by 2015.²⁷ Travel is an essential part of the visitor’s stay, and as most people will only be in the region for a short break (or at least a limited time period) the ability to move around quickly, easily and comfortably is directly related to the prosperity of the sector. The *Framework for Change* reports that most tourists travel to, and around, Scotland by car and so there is a commitment that the:
- “Executive will work to maximise the efficiency of the national motorways and trunk roads.”²⁸*
- 2.42 However, as much of the region’s network connecting to tourist attractions consists of non-trunk roads, as well as the ferry and public transport network, it is crucial that the efficiency of the whole transport network is considered for the purposes of tourism, in order that the region is not left trailing behind the remainder of Scotland.
- 2.43 Part of the attraction of the Highlands and Islands as a tourist destination is the remote and rural idyll, the island locations, the unique natural and built heritage and biodiversity that is prevalent across the region. The Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Regional Transport Strategy, which has been carried out alongside the strategy development, has explored the environmental baseline in full detail and has assessed the potential impacts of the RTS on the **environment**. It is important to the future prosperity of the region that the region’s environment is protected, not only that it remains an attraction for visitors, but continues to contribute to the quality of life and wellbeing of residents.

²⁶ Highlands and Islands Enterprise: Network Economic Information: *Tourism Economic Update*, March 2004: <http://www.hie.co.uk/sectoralprofiles-tourism20.pdf>

²⁷ *Tourism Framework for Change – Scottish Tourism: the next decade*: <http://www.hie.co.uk/Tourism-Framework-for-Change.pdf>

²⁸ *Tourism Framework for Change – Scottish Tourism: the next decade*: <http://www.hie.co.uk/Tourism-Framework-for-Change.pdf>

- 2.44 Environmental conditions are generally good across the region, although there are areas where the negative impacts of traffic are beginning to pose particular problems in terms of congestion, air quality and noise, for example. These areas concentrate on the most populated areas, such as Inverness, Elgin and other district centres across the region.

Conclusions on the key issues for the region

- 2.45 It is evident that the key issues facing the region today are consistent with those that were the focus for the voluntary partnership's first regional transport strategy. It has been useful to validate these issues, particularly through the consultation programme, and the reporting of the issues presented above are strengthened by the latest experiences of communities and businesses around the region.
- 2.46 Table 2.4 sets out a summary of the problems, constraints and opportunities identified for the region. These issues are then extrapolated to consider the future problems that could ensue under a no-change/known changes scenario.

TABLE 2.4 PROBLEMS UNDER A NO-CHANGE/KNOWN CHANGES SCENARIO

Issue	Problem, constraint, opportunity	Future problem / opportunity
Car ownership	High dependence on car. High cost associated with car use. Social exclusion resulting from unavailability of a car.	Increasing car dependence is expected, together with increasing costs associated with running a car. Widening divide in social outcomes between those who have and do not have access to a car.
The regions roads	Mainstay of road network. Winding single-carriageway roads with limited passing opportunities. High and seasonal volumes.	Worsening situation, whereby increased traffic and worsening conditions, without investment in maintenance and upgrading of the trunk road network, will result in longer journey times.
Subsidised bus network	Thin network, mainly radial out of built areas. Limited frequencies. Congestion in built up areas compromising service reliability and attractiveness.	Thinning out of routes as the car becomes more attractive. Increasing congestion in the most built up areas reduces the attractiveness of public transport as a journey option.
Rail network	Increasing populations and demand for rail services, including by tourists. Low frequency services. Poor passenger facilities.	Long lead times on service enhancements Appetite for improving end-to-end journey times Potential for rail commuting into Inverness Worsening facilities as they age
Ferries	High fares on some routes, with large variances for similar journeys. Services are sometimes based around operation needs rather than those of the markets they serve. Frequency on some routes remains poor, sometimes less than daily. Fragility of land-based infrastructure as a consequence of the effects of climate change.	Long lead times on service enhancements (tendering process and securing funding). Opportunities for mode shift for coastal shipping – therefore saved lorry miles. Vessels and infrastructure approaching the end of workable life. Requirements to meet legislation in respect to vessels may compromise provision. Requirements are for all vessels, but small operations face a higher relative cost and tend to operate at lower margins. Increasing fragility in respect to climate change effects.
Air services	High costs for those not resident on Island. Limited route options. Capacity constraints.	High costs for those not resident on Island and relatively for those island residents on low incomes. Requirements to meet legislation in respect to airfields may compromise provision.

Issue	Problem, constraint, opportunity	Future problem / opportunity
Population	Difficult to deliver efficient and effective transport systems. Poor transport networks contribute to the attractiveness of an area to live and work in. Limit the efficiency of businesses to compete.	Vicious circle, as area becomes less attractive to live in/stay, it becomes increasingly difficult to deliver transport to meet needs. Particularly felt as younger generations move away, and more importantly, do not return. Higher service needs and expectations of the aging and inward population.
Long distances	Time penalty. High relative cost of travel.	Worsening network conditions will increase time penalties and the costs associated with maintaining vehicles and transport services.
Affordability of transport	Access to employment and education. Access to other services / amenities. Social exclusion.	In an increasing number of cases, high travel costs become a discernable barrier to individuals' ability to progress their career/education. For many others, travel costs become an increasingly limiting factor.
Detrimental impact of transport to business	Employer and employee skill levels. Artificially high costs for products and services. Declining business, job losses. Congestion in built up areas.	Under these threats to business, industries will continue to decline, leading to fewer employment vacancies. This could further fuel the trend of a declining population in the most remote area and particularly amongst the younger generations.
Economic development	Economic development is a focus across the region. Transport is recognised as an inhibitor to economic development.	Economic development will be inhibited further and businesses and then communities will become less viable, until they reach the point of collapse.
Freight	Relatively high levels of freight movement. Poor infrastructure / inadequate road network for internal and external journeys. High fuel costs / high ferry costs.	Worsening infrastructure, worsening journey times and reliability – businesses will be less able to compete. Under these threats to business, manufacturing will continue to decline. Competition for capacity on rail (and ferry) routes.
Tourism	Limited motorway and trunk road access to visitor attractions and so no Executive commitment to maximising the efficiency of said network. Poor frequency for certain transport provision. Relatively high cost of transport (fuel, internal flights and ferry services).	Widening gap as region's attractions become more difficult to access, and especially relative to competition from other destinations.
Environment	Extensive environmental assets. Increasing congestion in built up areas.	Worsening congestion across the network and specifically in regional and district centres. This will lead to worsening air quality, noise and an increase in CO ₂ emissions. Increasing congestion will constrain economic efficiency and development and will result in worsening health of those exposed to the worsening conditions.

2.47 A number of themes emerge from the analysis of problems, constraints and opportunities for the region:

- **Economic development.** There is consensus across the region on the need to grow business, to tackle economic inactivity and get more people into jobs.
- **Population change.** Population growth is mainly focussed around the Inner Moray Firth and the Skye and Lochalsh area. Remote and rural areas have however declined over recent decades, with steady population decline in Orkney, Caithness & Sutherland, Argyll and the Islands and in Lochaber. The population of the region is slightly older than that of Scotland as a whole, and there is a trend towards an ageing population.
- **Accessibility.** Poor accessibility, in the form of affordability, availability, awareness and physical accessibility limits the people of the region from accessing life opportunities. This impacts upon all people, to varying degrees, but most severely on those who are recognised as being most prone to social exclusion – young people, those on low incomes, the unemployed, people in remote areas, those without access to a car and/or public transport services.
- **Congestion.** Inverness is one of the fastest-growing cities in Scotland and the popularity of the locality to live and work in is bringing with it increasing levels of congestion. Elgin and Oban are also particular growth areas in the region.
- **Environmental impacts.** The region has a multitude of environmental assets which are an attractor for tourists and provide the quality of life enjoyed by residents across the region.

3. SETTING OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 requires the Strategy to provide for meeting the needs of all inhabited places particularly those that are remote or sparsely populated. It requires the Strategy to provide for meeting the need for efficient transport links between heavily populated places. The Act also requires the Strategy to enhance social and economic well being and public health; safety; the environment; social inclusion and equal opportunities; transport integration; and access to health service locations.
- 3.2 A number of strategic issues have been discussed at the Spring 2006 stakeholder meetings and also at the Nairn National Transport Strategy Highlands and Islands Regional Consultative Event.²⁹ The issues contained in the previous Strategy have been revisited to determine if they are still relevant.
- 3.3 The Strategy and its objectives are congruous with the previous HITRANS strategy and its objectives, which consisted of goals as follows:
- *We want to see a reduction in costs to the users of the transport network and reduced costs in the movement of goods. Cost of transport is one of the most pressing concerns of communities and businesses in the region because of the long distances to be travelled.*
 - *We want to improve journey times by investment in better infrastructure particularly roads, public transport vehicles and vessels, and the rail network. Over the strategy period, modernising the road network will be a key priority.*
 - *We want to improve integration in public transport system to increase choice, reduce delays and waiting periods, and make public transport more attractive. We also want to increase the choice of destinations provided by public transport particularly for movements to centres outside the region. We want to improve the frequency and flexibility of public transport particularly in rural areas and in the external links to centres outside the region. Developing the region's air service network will be a key priority.*
- 3.4 The vision and objectives of the new strategy, presented below, are founded on the existing strategy combined with a clear understanding of the current and future problems, constraints and opportunities that are intrinsic to, and faced by, the communities of the region.

²⁹ The Regional Consultative Event for the Highlands and Islands took place on 25 August 2005 in Nairn. This event was held in conjunction with HITRANS. Details at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Transport/NTS/HITRANS/HITRANS>

3.5 The development of planning objectives has also been steered by the overall vision of the Partnership and fit with the Scottish Executive's five key transport objectives and those of other national and local policies and strategies contained in the following documents:

- Scotland's Transport Future: The Transport White Paper.
- Partnership for a Better Scotland.
- A Smart Successful Scotland.
- SPP17 – Planning for Transport.
- SPP2 – Economic Development.
- Local authority Development Plans:
- National Park Local Plans.
- Community Plans.
- (Emerging) Local Transport Strategies.
- Local authority Corporate Plans.
- Local Economic Strategies / Plans.
- Tourism Framework for Change – Scottish Tourism: the next decade.
- A Smart, Successful Highlands and Islands: An enterprise strategy for the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

3.6 The Strategy vision and objectives have been formulated based on an understanding of the transport problems, constraints and opportunities for the region. These have been presented, discussed and refined in consultation with stakeholders across the region. In the earlier review of the previous Strategy, consultation was carried out with a wide range of stakeholders across the region through an email survey and a number of in-depth interviews. In developing the new Strategy, in spring and summer 2006, focussed workshops were facilitated with key strategic stakeholders, with a wide range of representatives in each local authority area, and with representatives of various means of transport / user groups.

3.7 The Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) states that care must be taken when developing specific objectives to take account of the subtleties of the planning environment. For the development of this Strategy, the planning environment is the entire transport system as described in Section 2. The Strategy is concerned with the interconnectivity of this network for residents, business and visitors alike. This is a complex network which requires a strategic planning approach. Such a Strategy has to capture complex issues associated with the numerous transport challenges that are under scrutiny.

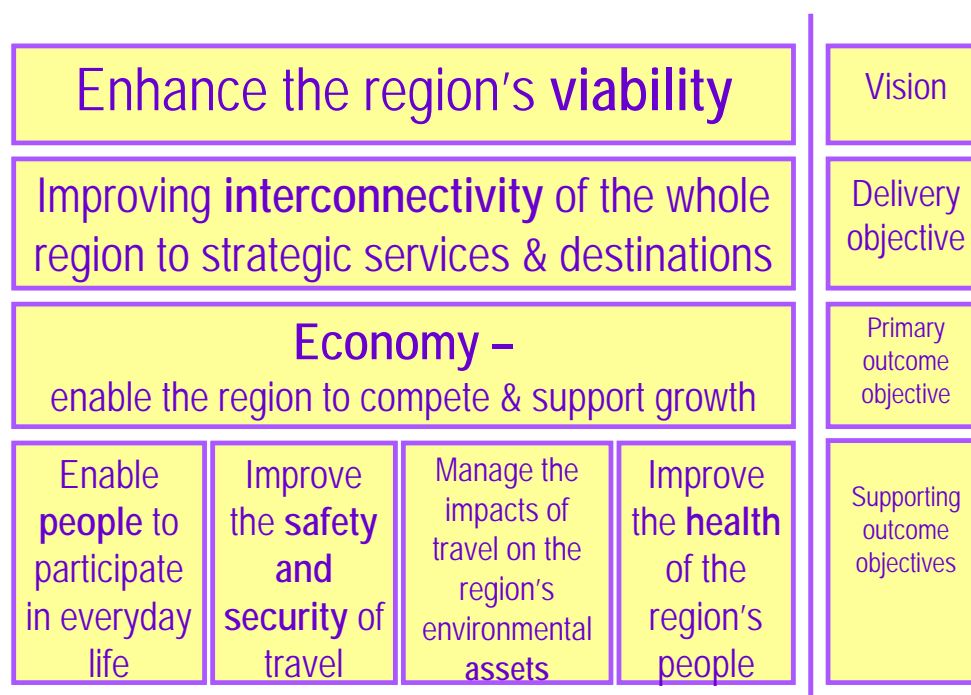
3.8 STAG offers some guidance in respect to such a case:

*“where the full set of potential proposals is unmanageably large, a transparent mechanism must be used to narrow the choice down to a selection that can be more thoroughly analysed...”*³⁰

³⁰ STAG para 29 of the Executive Summary.

- 3.9 Objectives have therefore been developed that allow the study to hold true to the principles of enabling the development of apposite and creative proposals to the problems, constraints and opportunities that have been identified in the region.
- 3.10 The objectives presented below are strategic in nature. They have been used to focus thought for the development of options and interventions, both in the initial process of assessment which has aimed to narrow the choice of these options into a workable package, and the later assessment process which will more thoroughly analyse and prioritise options.
- 3.11 The Strategy vision and objectives are presented in Figure 3.1. The vision for transport in the region is a statement of the final high-level outcome the Strategy is intended to achieve. Overarching the Strategy is the vision for the region, which is to **enhance the region's viability**, enhancing the region's place competitiveness and thereby attracting and retaining people in the region and making the Highlands and Islands a more attractive place in which to live, to work, to conduct business and to visit.

FIGURE 3.1 STRATEGY VISION AND OBJECTIVES



- 3.12 The vision prompts a common theme: to improve the interconnectivity of the region to strategic services and destinations. Improving connectivity is central to all the problems and constraints that have been identified through analysis of the issues and during consultation with stakeholders around the region.
- 3.13 From improved connectivity comes the focus on the desirable outcomes for the region, the more specific planning objectives that will shape the Strategy and be the first level of sifting for the Strategy options. The planning objectives, while being focussed on the identified issues, are also designed to be congruous with Governments five main objectives for transport (economy, safety, accessibility, integration and environment).

3.14 The planning objectives for the Strategy are as follows, to:

- Enable the region to compete and to support growth – this is the primary planning objective, or desirable outcome. This fits with regional and national priorities. For example, in the Partnership Agreement³¹, “*Growing the economy is our top priority.*”
- Enable the people of the region to participate in everyday life.
- Improve the safety and security of travel.
- Manage the impacts of travel on the region’s environmental assets.
- Improve the health of the region’s people.

3.15 The relationship between these objectives and the problems, constraints and issues that are described in the preceding section is presented in Table 3.1 below.

TABLE 3.1 OBJECTIVES FIT WITH PROBLEMS AND CONSTRAINTS

KEY	✓ Minor fit	Enable the region to compete and support growth	Enable people to participate in everyday life	Improve the safety and security of travel	Manage the impacts of travel on the region’s environmental assets	Improve the health of the region’s people
	✓✓ Moderate fit					
	✓✓✓ Major fit					
Economic development		✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓		✓
Population change		✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓
Accessibility		✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓		✓✓✓
Congestion		✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓
Environmental impacts					✓✓✓	✓✓✓

3.16 As well as ensuring that the transport planning objectives are relevant to the problems in question, it is also necessary to assess their appropriateness in relation to the Executive’s five broad transport objectives - environment, safety, economy, accessibility and social inclusion, and integration. Table 3.2 presents this assessment.

³¹ A Partnership agreement for a better Scotland: Partnership Agreement.
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2003/05/17150/21952>

TABLE 3.2 RTS OBJECTIVES AND THE EXECUTIVE'S FIVE BROAD TRANSPORT OBJECTIVES

KEY	✓ Minor fit	Enable the region to compete and support growth	Enable people to participate in everyday life	Improve the safety and security of travel	Manage the impacts of travel on the region's environmental assets	Improve the health of the region's people
	✓✓ Moderate fit					
	✓✓✓ Major fit					
Environment			✓✓		✓✓✓	✓✓
Safety		✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓		✓✓
Economy		✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Accessibility and social inclusion		✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓✓
Integration		✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓

- 3.17 Each of the Strategy options will be appraised against the RTS objectives and the Executive's five broad transport objectives. As part of this process, the potential strategic environmental impacts of each option needs to be considered. This is done through the Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report, which accompanies this draft Strategy.

4. GENERATING OPTIONS

Introduction

- 4.1 In this section the process used to generate Strategy options is described. The RTS Guidance suggests that options should be packages of complementary measures such as:
- Improving strategic transport corridors (Act requirement regarding efficient transport between heavily populated places – for example, Inverness to Aberdeen; Inverness/Elgin to Edinburgh/ Glasgow; West of the region to Glasgow; Western Isles spinal; Western Isles, Orkney and Caithness to Inverness; Strategic sea crossings and air routes).
 - Dealing with neglect (for example, west of the region roads condition).
 - Securing capital and revenue support for thin routes/remote and sparsely populated communities (for example, Orkney internal ferries; island air services; rural bus services; fixed links).
 - Changing travel behaviour (for example, modal shift to coastal/rail freight; public transport improvement; increasing levels of walking and cycling; business/facility travel planning).
- 4.2 The generation of options systematically follows on from the scoping, vision and objective-setting stages. However, in reality, options for projects, services and initiatives have been generated throughout the strategy development process, and indeed prior to commencing the development of the new strategy. A two-part phased approach has been employed to systematically generate options that will contribute to the strategy objectives.
- 4.3 The first part of the approach focuses on the region's transport network, and the second and parallel part of the approach focuses on particular users of the region's transport network and other key 'horizontal' themes of relevance right across the region. This section sets out the approach that has been used to assess and then generate options in both of these approaches.

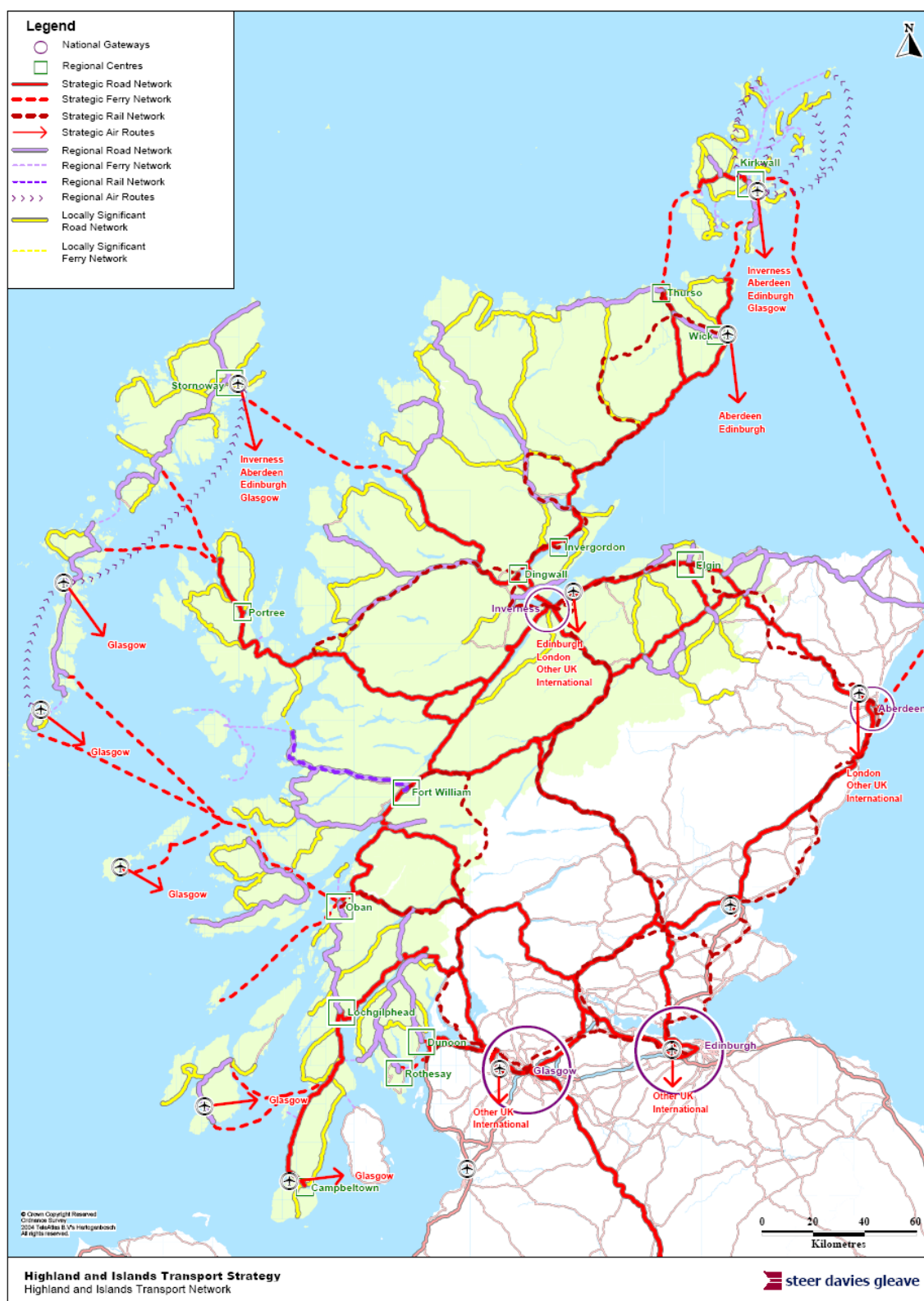
The region's transport network

Settlement hierarchy

- 4.4 A hierarchy for the region's transport network has been agreed by the Partnership which is consistent with the settlement hierarchies in the Structure Plans. The hierarchy has been defined using three levels of settlements: Each is described below and is shown in Figure 4.1.
- 4.5 **National Gateways** are settlements with direct onward connections to the rest of the UK and beyond. National Gateways provide a full compliment of services and functions, such as employment, health, education, cultural, leisure and retail opportunities. Inverness, Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow are the National Gateways for the region.
- 4.6 **Regional Centres** fulfil a wide range of functions and provide a range of services to support surrounding hinterlands. Regional Centres are commonly the administrative centre for the local authority area and tend to be the focus for development and growth. Most Regional Centres function as gateways for onward travel from their hinterland to other Regional Centres and ultimately to the National Gateways. This is particularly the case for the region's island communities, although for some islands the connection to a National Gateway is via a route other than from the Regional Centre. These port / airport gateways have also been included therefore in the top level of the region's network hierarchy. The Regional Centres are: Kirkwall, Thurso / Wick, Dingwall / Invergordan, Elgin, Stornoway, Portree, Oban, Lochgilphead, Campbeltown, Fort William, Dunoon and Rothesay.
- 4.7 **Local Centres** provide a range of facilities and services and fulfil an important function as a focus for both the community and often for public transport. In rural areas, a range of shops and other facilities are provided in small towns and villages. These locations form an important part of a network as the uses provide vital local community and economic services. Their loss can therefore have a severe impact not only on small settlements but also on the surrounding rural hinterland. As Paragraph 9 of *Scottish Planning Policy 15* indicates, planning policy should support the vital role of these centres. Protecting and enhancing such centres is therefore a key consideration which underpins Government policy.³²
- 4.8 The Local Centres are: Aberlour, Aird, Alness, Balivanich, Beaully, Bettyhill, Bowmore, Buckie, Burghead, Castlebay, Coll, Craigellachie, Craginure, Cullen, Dounby, Drumnadrochit, Dufftown, Fochabers, Forres, Fort Augustus, Fortrose, Gairloch, Golspie, Granton-on-Spey, Hopeman, Inveraray, Kames/Tighnabruaich, Keith, Kingussie, Kinlochbervie, Kinlochleven, Kinloss, Kyle of Lochalsh, Lhanbryde, Lochboisdale, Lochinver, Lochmaddy, Lossiemouth, Mallaig, Mosstodloch, Nairn, Nis, Port Ellen, Portgordon, Portknockie, Rothes, Scarinish, St Margaret's Hope, Sandwick, Stromness, Strontian, Tain, Tarbert (Argyll & Bute), Tarbert (Western Isles), Taynuilt, Tobermory, Tomintoul, Tong and Ullapool.

³² SPP15 Planning for Rural Development, Scottish Executive, 2005 (ISBN 0-7559-2527-0).

FIGURE 4.1 NETWORK AND SETTLEMENT HIERARCHIES



Network hierarchy

- 4.9 The first level of the network hierarchy is the **Strategic Network**. The Strategic Network provides connections between Regional Centres and National Gateways and comprises all modes of transport. The National Planning Framework for Scotland recognises that:

*“place competitiveness relies heavily on adequate investment in infrastructure, including transport and communications networks... Small economies have the potential to adapt to changing economic circumstances more readily than their larger competitors. However a common thread running through all economic scenarios is the importance of infrastructure, particularly transport infrastructure.”*³³

- 4.10 The next level of the network hierarchy is the **Regional Network** which provides connections between Local Centres and Regional Centres. Again, the Regional Network comprises all means of transport – road, rail, air and sea.
- 4.11 Finally, the **Locally Significant Network** provides connections between smaller and dispersed communities and Local Centres, and links into other parts of the Strategic and Regional Networks.
- 4.12 The Guidance on preparing RTSs is based on planning for integrated transport networks that take account of the needs of all users (road, rail, waterborne and air; personal and freight) and of the contribution that can be made by all means of travel, including walking and cycling. With this in mind it is apparent that there are two main types of issue of relevance to the Strategy. The first is those that have a particular spatial reference (the Strategic and Regional Network), and secondly, those which have a relevance across the whole region and which cut across local particularities (here referred to as ‘horizontal’ Themes).
- 4.13 Responses to the **Horizontal Themes** are best progressed at a strategic, region-wide level, particularly where benefits arise from integration and uniformity. Horizontal issues relate to the entire population of the region and / or are relevant to certain groups which share travel patterns / needs and socio-economic / socio-demographic characteristics.

³³ National Planning Framework for Scotland: guidance for the spatial development of Scotland to 2025, Scottish Executive, 2004. (ISBN 0-7559-4195-0).

- 4.14 The Horizontal Themes were identified through consultation with stakeholders across the region, and are:
- i. Active travel.
 - ii. Aviation and the region's air network.
 - iii. Community and health passenger transport.
 - iv. Congestion and urban issues.
 - v. Freight transport.
 - vi. Locally significant network and maintenance of the region's roads.
 - vii. Mainstream passenger transport.
 - viii. Ports, ferries and waterway transport.
- 4.15 The Strategic and Regional Network and the Horizontal Themes have been assessed. The assessment has comprised understanding functions and purpose; then evaluating problems, constraints and opportunities; and then developing options to overcome these problems and constraints and take advantage of the opportunities.

Assessing the strategic and regional network

Strategic network assessment

- 4.16 The first step towards identifying options for the Strategic Network is to assess each link in the network. This assessment has been done by:
- i. **Assessing 'functionality'** – scoring each link based on the number of Regional Centres which it connects to National Gateways.
 - ii. **Assessing 'adequacy'** – scoring each link based on the number of defined adequacy tests which it fails.
 - iii. **Assessing future transport needs** – adjusting the adequacy score of each link to reflect the future transport needs occasioned by demographic and land use change.

Assessing functionality

- 4.17 Each link in the Strategic Network has been given a 'function score'. This score relates to the number of Regional Centres that this link connects to one or more of the National Gateways. For example, the A82 road corridor provides a connection between six Regional Centres and Glasgow. These Regional Centres are Fort William, Portree, Stornoway, Oban, Lochgilphead and Campbeltown, as well as providing a connection for other crossings from the Western Isles via Uig or Oban. Therefore, the A82 road corridor has a high function score.

Assessing adequacy

- 4.18 Each link in the Strategic Network has also been given an ‘adequacy score’. This score relates to the current adequacy of the link in performing its strategic function. A set of adequacy tests have been applied and these vary depending on the means of transport – road, rail, air or sea. For example, the A82 road corridor fails the adequacy tests of alignment / topography, limited overtaking opportunities, pinch points, accidents / safety, environmental risks, alternative route availability and passenger transport provision. Therefore, the A82 road corridor has a low adequacy.

Assessing future transport needs

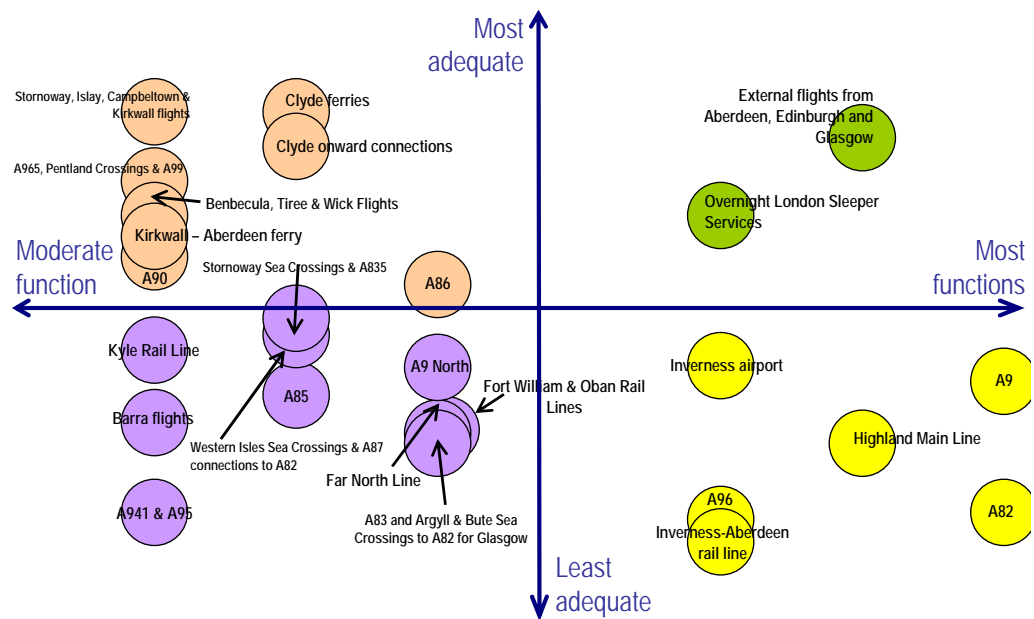
- 4.19 Each link in the Strategic Network has been assessed in respect to affects occasioned by future development over the lifetime of the Strategy. The Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 requires the Partnership and Strategy to have regard to future needs, including those occasioned by demographic and land-use changes. This assessment is intended to ensure that future changes in land-use and demographics are taken into account in the generation and appraisal of Strategy options.
- 4.20 A subjective assessment has been made for each link in the Strategic Network as to the magnitude of the land-use changes. The ‘adequacy score’ has then been adjusted to reflect this assessment. For example, the A96 corridor will see significant development over the course of the Strategy period and beyond. The adequacy score for the A96 corridor is thus reduced to reflect the future demand on this transport corridor, and the future transport problems that will ensue without intervention.

Regional network assessment

- 4.21 A similar process as described above for the Strategic Network has been applied to the Regional Network. However, in this case each of the links connect just one Local Centre to Regional Centres(s), and so the function of each link is alike.
- 4.22 The adequacy of each link in the Regional Network has been assessed according to the adequacy tests, giving an ‘adequacy score’ for each link. The link has then been considered in respect to future demands.

Priority links

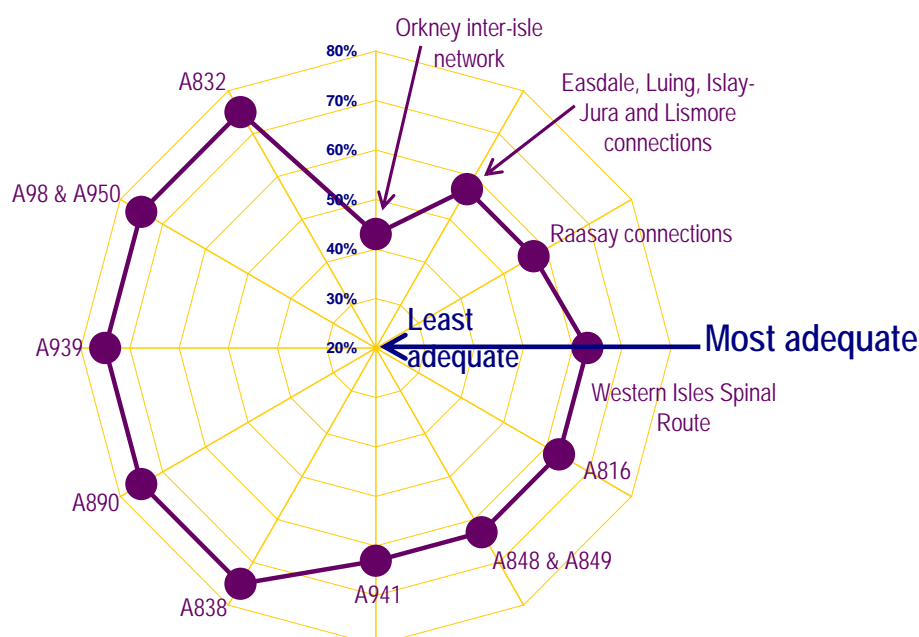
- 4.23 The function and adequacy scores of each link in the Strategic Network have been plotted against each other. By comparing function and adequacy (see Figure 4.2) in this way four types of links emerge: those with high function and low adequacy; those with moderate function and low adequacy; those with high function and high adequacy; those with moderate function and high adequacy.

FIGURE 4.2 STRATEGIC NETWORK FUNCTION AND ADEQUACY SCATTER CHART

- 4.24 The Guidance on preparing Regional Transport Strategies states that, at the time of these (first) Strategies being developed:

“...there are a number of proposals for projects and interventions in each region at various stages of development, including those that have already undergone a full appraisal; prioritisation should be used to decide which of the new or current identified projects should move forward to the next stage of development and which should not (at least not yet).”

- 4.25 By assessing and comparing the function and adequacy of links in the Strategic Network, and the adequacy of links in the Regional Network (see Figure 4.3), links have been identified which are seen as priorities for intervention. In the Strategic Network, links that have high or moderate function and low adequacy are the priority links. These are the links below the x-axis in Figure 4.2. In the Regional Network, links that have low adequacy are priority links (all links shown in Figure 4.3).

FIGURE 4.3 REGIONAL NETWORK ADEQUACY RADAR CHART

- 4.26 Whilst addressing these top Priority Links in the first instance, the Partnership will also undertake research into those issues which currently lack an evidence base. This will enable the Partnership to be in an informed position for future refinement of the Strategy and for future Investment and Delivery Plans. In addition, the links in the network that are not identified as Priority Links will be monitored for any changes in their adequacy. All links in the Strategic Network have both a degree of Strategic Function and a varying degree of inadequacy. Similarly all links in the Regional Network have a degree of inadequacy.
- 4.27 As time passes it is intended that all inadequacies in the network are tackled. In this first Strategy however, it is important that there is a focus on those links in the Strategic and Regional Networks that have been shown to be most in need of attention.
- 4.28 Details of the Priority Links in the Strategic and Regional Networks are provided in Appendix A.

Generating options for the Strategic and Regional Network Priority Links

- 4.29 Outcome aspirations have been identified for each of the Priority Links. They are intended to ensure that the emerging options for each link are developed to be consistent with the issues / inadequacies of that particular link. The achievement of these aspirations anywhere in the network would generally enable the satisfaction of the Strategy objectives. Table 4.1 demonstrates the fit between link aspirations and the Strategy objectives. An 'other' category of aspirations provides scope for flexibility in the aspirations. Typical 'other' aspirations include modal shift and improving integration.

TABLE 4.1 LINK ASPIRATIONS VERSUS THE STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

	Improve journey reliability	Reduce journey time	Increase journey frequency	Improve journey consistency	Provide a daily link	Enable a days' business	Improve safety and security	Other
Enable the region to compete and support growth	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Enable people to participate in everyday life	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Improve the health of the Region's people							✓	✓
Improve safety & security of travel	✓		✓				✓	
Manage the impacts of travel on the region's natural and built heritage assets			✓	✓				✓

- 4.30 The aspirations for each of the Priority Links in the Strategic and Regional Network are provided in Table 4.2 and Table 4.3 respectively overleaf.

TABLE 4.2 LINK ASPIRATIONS FOR THE PRIORITY LINKS IN THE STRATEGIC NETWORK

	Journey reliability	Reduced journey time	Journey frequency	Journey consistency	Daily link available	Days business / commute	Safety	Other
A82 Corridor (Road)	✓	✓		✓			✓	
Highland Main Line		✓	✓					✓
A9 Inverness to Edinburgh (Road)	✓	✓						
A96 Corridor (Road)	✓	✓		✓			✓	
Inverness-Aberdeen rail line (A96)		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Inverness airport and flights						✓		✓
A83 and Argyll & Bute Sea Crossings to A82 for Glasgow	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Far North Line		✓	✓					
Fort William & Oban Rail lines (A82)		✓	✓					
A9 north (Road)	✓	✓						
Oban A85 connections to A82 for Glasgow	✓	✓					✓	
Western Isles Sea Crossings & A87 connections to A82 for Glasgow		✓			✓	✓		
Stornoway Sea Crossings and A835 to Inverness					✓		✓	✓
Kyle Rail line						✓		✓
Moray A941 and A95 to A9 for Edinburgh	✓	✓		✓			✓	
Barra airport and flights				✓		✓		✓

TABLE 4.3 LINK ASPIRATIONS FOR THE PRIORITY LINKS IN THE REGIONAL NETWORK

	Journey reliability	Reduced journey time	Journey frequency	Journey consistency	Daily link available	Days business / commute	Safety	Other
Orkney internal connections	✓					✓		✓
Easdale, Luing, Islay-Jura, Lismore and Raasay ferry connections			✓					✓
Western Isles spinal route (A859, A867, A865, A888) & Sound of Harris and Barra crossings	✓	✓	✓	✓				
A816 Oban to Lochgilphead	✓	✓		✓			✓	
A848 & A849 Tobermory to Fionnphort & Iona ferry	✓			✓				
A941 Dufftown to A95	✓			✓			✓	
A838 Kinlochbervie to Lairg	✓							
A890 Lochcarron to A832	✓			✓			✓	
A939 Tomintoul to A95	✓						✓	✓
A98 from Elgin to Fraserburgh & A950 to Peterhead							✓	
A832 Gairloch to Garve	✓			✓			✓	

4.31 The next stage is, for each link, to develop options designed to achieve these aspirations, and ultimately to achieve the Strategy objectives.

4.32 The types of interventions considered can be grouped into three broad categories which reflect the existing evidence base in the region and beyond, the need to make the best use of existing and future resources and assets. The interventions or options categories are:

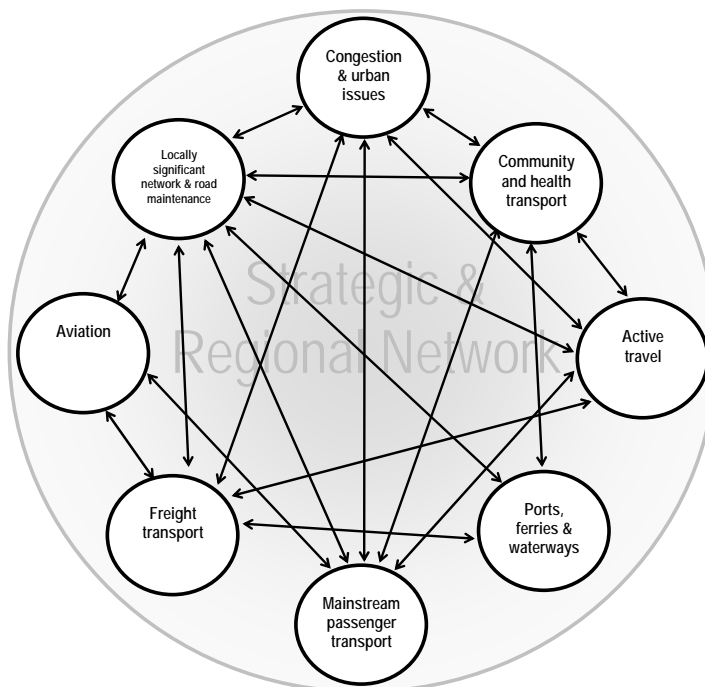
- **Network development options:** interventions to make best use of, or enhance, the transport network, including roads and the rail network, and infrastructure pertaining to aviation and ferries.
- **Service options:** interventions to enhance the passenger transport provision across the region, including the bus, coach, rail, ferry and air network. These interventions are intended to enhance service connectivity, and, where passenger transport is a viable alternative to the car, to make it more attractive than the car.

- **Demand management options:** interventions here are intended to change travel choices. Measures in this category may ‘ration’ use of the transport network in favour of travel means at the top of Scottish Planning Policy 17³⁴ hierarchy, that is walking, cycling and public transport. They may include promotion of these alternatives through information / marketing, together with measures to help individuals, business and organisations to plan travel using these alternatives to the car.

Assessing the horizontal themes

- 4.33 Each of the **Horizontal Themes** (introduced at Paragraph 4.14) is inextricably linked to the region’s transport network, since the pursuance of each theme is dependent upon the use of an adequate transport network. If the network is of poor quality, for example a link with many pinch points and poor alignment, then the quality of the public transport offer will be adversely affected. Public transport journeys will be slow and unreliable, and will therefore not be an attractive alternative to the car. The nature of the service, and the impact on demand for that service, will constrain the public transport operator from developing the service.
- 4.34 Each of the Horizontal Themes is also closely related to each other in that they may be working towards the attainment of similar outcomes, a desire for better integration between two different means of travel, or a (potential) conflict between the development of one over the other. Figure 4.4 shows the connections between the horizontal themes.

FIGURE 4.4 RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN HORIZONTAL THEMES IN THE STRATEGY



³⁴ Scottish Planning Policy 17: Planning for Transport gives the order of priority for personal travel: walking, then cycling, then public transport, then other motorised modes.
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/08/16154406/44078>

- 4.35 A summary of the nature of the Horizontal Themes is provided in Appendix B.
- 4.36 For each theme the following assessment has been undertaken:
- i. **Assessing the key issues and key opportunities** for the theme in the region.
 - ii. **Setting aspirations** for this theme within the Strategy.
 - iii. **Generation of options.**
- 4.37 As was the case with the Strategic and Regional Network, aspirations are intended to ensure that the emerging options for each Horizontal Theme are developed to be consistent with the issues / inadequacies that pertain to that theme. The achievement of these aspirations for each theme will generally enable the satisfaction of the Strategy objectives. The aspirations for each of the themes then are:
- **Active Travel:**
 - Promote the long-term development of active travel across the region.
 - Enable progress in active travel to be monitored across HITRANS.
 - Promote partnership working in promotion of active travel.
 - Achieve consistency of standards in infrastructure to support active travel.
 - **Aviation:**
 - Enhance intra-regional connectivity between island and peripheral communities and regional centres and national gateways.
 - Retain and increase links with European and intercontinental services.
 - Manage the environmental impact of the vital air services to, from and around the region without adversely affecting economic growth and sustainability.
 - **Community & Health Transport:**
 - Increase the sustainability of the sector.
 - Achieve consistency of standards across the sector.
 - Improve communications, internal to the sector and between the sector and other bodies.
 - Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the sector.
 - **Congestion and urban issues:**
 - Reduce congestion and increase the efficiency of travel in and through urban areas.
 - Improve the reliability of journey times.
 - Improving accessibility and the attractiveness of public transport, walking and cycling.
 - Reduce car use, especially on short journeys, and increase average car occupancy.
 - **Freight Transport:**
 - Enhance effectiveness and efficiency of freight transport.
 - Optimise modal shift opportunities for freight transit.
 - Enhance co-ordination within, and support for, the freight industry.
 - Co-ordinated freight policies and plans, locally, regionally and nationally.

- **Locally significant network & road maintenance:**
 - Asset management plans for all road infrastructure elements.
 - Sustainable programme of road maintenance and enhancement that allows control over future spending on maintaining the network.
 - Maintain access and connectivity between communities and Local and Regional Centres.
 - Improve the quality of travel for all travellers, focussing on enhancing the travelling experience for passenger and community transport.
- **Mainstream passenger transport:**
 - Achieve consistency of standards throughout passenger transport in the region.
 - Improve communications between passenger transport providers.
 - Improve efficiency and effectiveness of passenger transport.
 - Improve accessibility and enable greater confidence in, and usage of, passenger transport around the region.
- **Ports, ferries & waterways:**
 - Develop a long term strategy for ports, ferries and waterways that is driven by socio-economic goals.
 - Encourage diversity and innovation in supply of services.

Generating options for the horizontal themes

- 4.38 Options for the horizontal themes have been developed in order to satisfy both the tailored aspirations for that theme and also the overriding Strategy objectives. The options have been developed in partnership with stakeholders around the region, including at the HITRANS stakeholder conference on the 13th October 2006.

Long list options for the strategic and regional network and horizontal themes

- 4.39 The outcome of the processes discussed in this section is a long list of potential options for inclusion within the Strategy. This long list of options sets out interventions that it is intended will assist in realising the Strategy objectives. The long list of options comprises interventions for the Strategic Network, the Regional Network, and each of the horizontal themes. All possible options were presented for inclusion, and we do not consider at this stage how, or by whom, the interventions will be delivered.
- 4.40 The appraisal of this long list of options against the Strategy objectives and the five Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance criteria is discussed in Section 5.

5. SIFTING AND PRIORITISING THE STRATEGIC OPTIONS

Prioritisation step 1

5.1 In the first stage of the prioritisation process, each of the interventions identified is tested against the objectives of the Strategy in order to sift out those which do not achieve the necessary outcomes. This is a requirement of the STAG process and has been detailed in supplementary guidance on prioritisation for the Regional Transport Strategies from the Scottish Executive.

5.2 Assessment against the strategy objectives has been undertaken using a three point scale, as follows:

- **☑ Green: the option will have an unambiguously positive impact on the objective.**
- **⊗ Amber: the option will have a positive impact, but this will be lesser and / or may have mixed or a distribution of positive and negative impacts.**
- **✗ Red: the option will have an adverse impact on the objective. This is a warning for the option development / refinement to consider.**

5.3 In the assessment against the **Environment** objective (manage the impacts of transport on the Region's natural and built heritage assets) a fourth score has been used which indicates if this option includes interaction with one of the following protected areas, that have been identified in the scoping of the Strategic Environmental Assessment:

- Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
- Nature Park.
- Special Area of Conservation.
- Special Protection Area.
- Wetland Area.
- Historic Gardens and Design Landscapes.

Options that would come into such an area are flagged thus: ☒

5.4 As a result of assessment exercise, a number of options on the network and in the horizontal themes have been dropped, refined or packaged with other options.

Prioritisation step 2

5.5 The second step in the prioritisation process has been to test the remaining options against their contribution to achieving the **connectivity** objective and the national objectives of improving the environment, health and safety. A similar process to that described for Step 1 has been employed, whereby each of the options have been given a score on the three point scale in relation to their contribution to the policy tests of connectivity, environment, health and safety.

5.6 The policy tests are:

- **Connectivity** for the economy:
 - Option reduces journey time to national gateways and beyond.
 - Option improves journey reliability to national gateways.
 - Option allows a days business at a national gateway and vice versa.
 - Option removes / reduces road congestion.
 - Option improves journey consistency.
 - Option increases journey frequency for passenger transport.
- **Connectivity** for accessibility:
 - Option improves accessibility to labour market / jobs.
 - Option improves accessibility to training and education.
 - Option reduces affordability barriers.
 - Option reduces physical barriers.
 - Option extends the reach of passenger transport.
 - Option makes passenger transport more attractive than the car.
- **Environment, health and safety:**
 - Option enables shift in freight transport from road to rail and water.
 - Option reduces transport emissions.
 - Options increases active travel.
 - Option reduces road accidents.
 - Option reduces traffic speeds in sensitive areas.

5.7 From this assessment, a set of ‘best fit’ options have been identified. ‘Best fit’ options are those which have scored the greatest number of ‘greens’ in the assessment against these tests.

Initial package of strategy options

5.8 The following tables list the ‘best fit’ options for the Strategic and Regional Network priority links and the horizontal themes. Network options are grouped under their link in their respective network, and horizontal theme options are grouped under their respective theme. An assessment of the contribution that that option makes to the Strategy objectives is also given, indicated using the scoring system described at the start of this section.

5.9 In the design of schemes, the appropriate national policy guidance will be used. In particular, the principles of *Scottish Planning Policy 17 Planning for Transport* will be applied, which include designing for a hierarchy of sustainable transport means (walking, cycling, public transport and motorised modes).

5.10 Following the assessment of contribution to the Strategy objectives, the options have been programmed into the 15 year period of the Strategy in three five-year periods as follows: 2007-2012, 2012-2017 and 2017-2022. As necessary, time has been allocated for research and for scheme preparation, such as land acquisition and design for example. Where a scheme will require a significant undertaking the scheme has been spread over an appropriate time period.

TABLE 5.1 STRATEGIC NETWORK OPTIONS FOR PRIORITY LINKS

Map ID ³⁵	Link	KEY	Strategy objectives					Provisional programme		
			Enable the Region to <u>compete</u> and <u>support growth</u>	Enable people to <u>participate</u> in everyday life	Improve the <u>health</u> of the Region's people	Improve <u>safety</u> and security	Manage the impacts of transport on the Region's <u>natural and built heritage assets</u>	Short term (2007-12)	Medium term (2012-17)	Long term (2017-23)
	Option	<div> <div>✓ Unambiguously positive contribution</div> <div>⊖ Lesser positive impact or distribution</div> <div>✗ Negative impact</div> <div>⊠ Protected area</div> <div>▲ research and scheme preparation</div> <div>➔ delivery</div> </div>								
A82 Corridor (Road)										
S1a	Western bypass at Crianlarich and Pulpit Rock Tunnel		✓	✓		✓	✗ ⊠	➔		
S1b	Ballachulish to Fort William route enhancements		✓	✓		✓	✗ ⊠	▲	➔	
S1c	Tarbet to Ballachulish strategy (road improvement Tarbet to Inverarnan & route enhancement Tyndrum to Ballachulish)		✓	✓		✓	✗ ⊠	➔ Tarbet to Inverarnan ▲ Tyndrum to Ballachulish	➔ Tyndrum to Ballachulish	
S1d	Pinch points / junction improvements Fort William to Inverness		✓	✓		✓	✗ ⊠			▲
S1e	A82 to A9/A96 Inverness link road		✓	✓	⊖	✓	✗ ⊠	▲	➔	
S1f	Modern 2-track standard Inverness to Glasgow		✓	✓		✓	✗ ⊠		▲	
Highland Main Line										
S2a	Journey time and frequency improvements (hourly departure)		✓	✓		⊖	✓	▲	➔	➔

³⁵ Map ID – refers to identifier code of schemes on interactive maps which display RTS proposals, available on HITRANS website during Draft RTS consultation.




Map ID ³⁵	Link	KEY	Strategy objectives					Provisional programme		
			Enable the Region to <u>compete</u> and support <u>growth</u>	Enable people to <u>participate</u> in everyday life	Improve the <u>health</u> of the Region's people	Improve <u>safety</u> and security	Manage the impacts of transport on the Region's <u>natural and built heritage assets</u>	Short term (2007-12)	Medium term (2012-17)	Long term (2017-23)
	Option	<div> <div>✓ Unambiguously positive contribution</div> <div>⊖ Lesser positive impact or distribution</div> <div>✗ Negative impact</div> <div>⊠ Protected area</div> <div>▲ research and scheme preparation</div> <div>➔ delivery</div> </div>								
A9 Inverness to Edinburgh (Road)										
S3a	Dual carriageway options between Inverness and Perth		✓			✓	✗ ⊠	▲	➔	➔
S3b	Variants of the above option include schemes to provide dual carriageway sections; and/or wide 2+1s		✓			✓	✗ ⊠	➔		
Inverness airport and flights										
S4a	Surface Access Strategy to deliver better integration		✓	⊖		⊖	✓	➔		
S4b	Terminal building and runway extension		✓				✗	▲	➔	
Inverness-Aberdeen Rail Line										
S5a	Commuter services Elgin-Inverness		✓	✓			⊖	➔		
S5b	Dalcross Station at Inverness airport		✓	⊖			⊖	➔		
S5c	Journey time improvements and hourly departure Inverness to Aberdeen		✓	✓		⊖	⊖	▲	➔	➔
A96 Corridor (Road)										
S6a	Dual carriageway Inverness to airport		✓			✓	✗	➔		
S6b	Fochabers bypass with demand management & provision of space for passenger transport / cycling through Fochabers, plus bus priority on approaches and P&R		✓			✓	✗ ⊖	▲ ➔		

Map ID ³⁵	Link	KEY	Strategy objectives					Provisional programme		
			Enable the Region to <u>compete</u> and support <u>growth</u>	Enable people to <u>participate</u> in everyday life	Improve the <u>health</u> of the Region's people	Improve <u>safety</u> and security	Manage the impacts of transport on the Region's <u>natural and built heritage assets</u>	Short term (2007-12)	Medium term (2012-17)	Long term (2017-23)
	Option	<div> <div> Unambiguously positive contribution Lesser positive impact or distribution Negative impact Protected area </div> <div> research and scheme preparation delivery </div> </div>								
S6c	Elgin bypass with demand management & provision of space for passenger transport / cycling through Elgin, plus bus priority on approaches and P&R							demand management / local internal improvements bypass	bypass	
S6d	Other bypasses on route (including Nairn and Keith) with demand management & provision of space for passenger transport / cycling through settlements, plus bus priority on approaches and P&R							demand management / local internal improvements bypasses	bypasses	bypasses
S6e	Dual carriageway options on A96									
S6f	Variants of the above option would include providing dual carriageway sections only									
A83 and Argyll & Bute Sea Crossings to A82 for Glasgow										
S7a	Modern 2-track standard Campbeltown to A82									
S7b	Address pinch points on route									
Far North Line										
S8a	New station at Conon Bridge									

Map ID ³⁵	Link	KEY	Strategy objectives					Provisional programme		
			Enable the Region to <u>compete</u> and support <u>growth</u>	Enable people to <u>participate</u> in everyday life	Improve the <u>health</u> of the Region's people	Improve <u>safety</u> and security	Manage the impacts of transport on the Region's <u>natural and built heritage assets</u>	Short term (2007-12)	Medium term (2012-17)	Long term (2017-23)
	Option	<div> <div> Unambiguously positive contribution </div> <div> Lesser positive impact or distribution </div> <div> Negative impact </div> <div> Protected area </div> <div> research and scheme preparation </div> <div> delivery </div> </div>								
A9 North (Road)										
S9a	Berriedale Braes crossing									
S9b	Bypass settlements on route									
S9c	Provision of roadscape for passenger transport / cycling to north of Inverness & P&R facilities and services									
S9d	Route Action Plan to provide climbing lanes									
Oban A85 connections to A82 for Glasgow										
S10a	Oban Development Road and demand management measures in Oban									
S10b	Oban and Fort William Rail Line rail service enhancement / frequency increase									
Western Isles & Skye connections to A82 for Glasgow										
S11a	Skye air service to central belt									
Kyle Rail Line										
S12a	Commuter service to Inverness									

Map ID ³⁵	Link	KEY	Strategy objectives					Provisional programme		
			Enable the Region to <u>compete</u> and support <u>growth</u>	Enable people to <u>participate</u> in everyday life	Improve the <u>health</u> of the Region's people	Improve <u>safety</u> and security	Manage the impacts of transport on the Region's <u>natural and built heritage assets</u>	Short term (2007-12)	Medium term (2012-17)	Long term (2017-23)
	Option	<div> <div>☑ Unambiguously positive contribution</div> <div>⚠ Lesser positive impact or distribution</div> <div>✗ Negative impact</div> <div>⊠ Protected area</div> <div>▲ research and scheme preparation</div> <div>➡ delivery</div> </div>								
Moray connections to A9 for Edinburgh										
S13a	Elgin to Craigellachie A941 road improvements		☑			☑	✗	➡	➡	
S13b	A95 road improvements		☑			☑	✗	▲	➡	➡
Barra airport and flights										
S14a	Fixed landing strip and surface access strategy to deliver better integration		☑	☑		☑	✗	▲	➡	

TABLE 5.2 REGIONAL NETWORK OPTIONS FOR PRIORITY LINKS

Map ID	Link	KEY	Strategy objectives					Provisional programme		
			Enable the Region to <u>compete</u> and support <u>growth</u>	Enable people to <u>participate</u> in everyday life	Improve the <u>health</u> of the Region's people	Improve <u>safety</u> and security	Manage the impacts of transport on the Region's <u>natural</u> and <u>built</u> <u>heritage</u> <u>assets</u>	Short term (2007-12)	Medium term (2012-17)	Long term (2017-23)
		 Unambiguously positive contribution  Lesser positive impact or distribution  Negative impact  Protected area  research and scheme preparation  delivery								
Orkney inter-isle connections										
R15a	Inter-isle ferry and air service connectivity enhancements									
Easdale, Lismore, Luing and Islay-Jura ferry services										
R16a	Replacement vessels and / or infrastructure									
Raasay ferry terminal										
R17a	New terminal									
Western Isles spinal route										
R18a	Fixed links on the Sounds									
R18b	Faster, more frequent ferry crossings									
R18c	Road improvement options									
A816 Oban to Lochgilphead										
R19a	Road improvement options									
A848 & A849 Tobermory to Fionnphort and Iona Ferry										
R20a	Route enhancement of remaining five mile section									

Map ID	Link	KEY	Strategy objectives					Provisional programme		
			Enable the Region to <u>compete</u> and support <u>growth</u>	Enable people to <u>participate</u> in everyday life	Improve the <u>health</u> of the Region's people	Improve <u>safety</u> and security	Manage the impacts of transport on the Region's <u>natural and built heritage assets</u>	Short term (2007-12)	Medium term (2012-17)	Long term (2017-23)
	Option	<div> <div> Unambiguously positive contribution </div> <div> Lesser positive impact or distribution </div> <div> Negative impact </div> <div> Protected area </div> <div> research and scheme preparation </div> <div> delivery </div> </div>								
A941 Dufftown to A95										
R21a	Road improvement including addressing pinch points and providing overtaking opportunities									
A838 Kinlochbervie to Lairg										
R22a	Removal of single-track section at Laxford Bridge									
R22b	Route enhancement									
A890 Lochcarron to A832										
R23a	Route enhancement including single track sections and visibility improvements in vicinity of Achnashellach									
A939 Tomintoul to A95										
R24a	Road improvement options									
A98 from Elgin to Fraserburgh and A950 to Peterhead										
R25a	Road improvement options									
A832 Gairloch to Garve										
R26a	Road improvement options									

TABLE 5.3 HORIZONTAL THEME OPTIONS

Map ID	Link	KEY	Strategy objectives					Provisional programme		
			Enable the Region to <u>compete</u> and support <u>growth</u>	Enable people to <u>participate</u> in everyday life	Improve the <u>health</u> of the Region's people	Improve <u>safety</u> and security	Manage the impacts of transport on the Region's <u>natural</u> and <u>built heritage</u> assets	Short term (2007-12)	Medium term (2012-17)	Long term (2017-23)
	Option	<div> <div>✓ Unambiguously positive contribution</div> <div>⊖ Lesser positive impact or distribution</div> <div>✗ Negative impact</div> <div>⊠ Protected area</div> <div>▲ research and scheme preparation</div> <div>➔ delivery</div> </div>								
Active travel										
H27a	Clearer policy to promote in land use planning and development control processes across the region	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	➔	➔	➔
H27b	Active travel infrastructure audits in Regional Centres and other localities around the region		Would advance all					➔	➔	➔
H27c	Longer-term investment programme in response to audits	⊖	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	➔	➔	➔
H27d	Travel behaviour change programme	⊖	✓	✓	⊖	✓	✓	▲ ➔		
H27e	Bespoke Travel Plan elements and support	✓			✓	⊖	✓	➔	➔	➔
Aviation										
H28a	Evaluate economic and social opportunities of providing other / enhancing existing air connections around the region	✓	✓	✓			✗	▲	▲	
H28b	Evaluate the impacts and outcomes of Air Discount Scheme. Assess options for further development	✓	✓	✓			✗	▲		
H28c	Development of direct rail services between Inverness and Edinburgh airport	✓	✓	✓			⊖	▲	➔	
H28d	Passenger transport access to Wick airport			✓			⊖	➔		

Map ID	Link	KEY	Strategy objectives					Provisional programme		
			Enable the Region to <u>compete</u> and support <u>growth</u>	Enable people to <u>participate</u> in everyday life	Improve the <u>health</u> of the Region's people	Improve <u>safety</u> and security	Manage the impacts of transport on the Region's <u>natural</u> and <u>built heritage</u> assets	Short term (2007-12)	Medium term (2012-17)	Long term (2017-23)
	Option	<div> <div> Unambiguously positive contribution </div> <div> Lesser positive impact or distribution </div> <div> Negative impact </div> <div> Protected area </div> <div> research and scheme preparation </div> <div> delivery </div> </div>								
Congestion & urban issues										
H30a	Improve transport infrastructure									
H30b	Travel demand management package									
H30c	Package to increase the appeal of active travel and public transport									
H30d	Strategic Park & Ride sites and services									
H30e	Evaluate options for parking / pricing strategy for urban centres									
H30f	Enhance connectivity between Inverness Retail Park and the city centre									
Freight transport										
H31a	Freight Quality Partnership									
H31b	Addressing inefficiencies and constraints in the transport network									
H31c	Review of grant funding to better fit with market needs			Could advance all						
H31d	Evaluation of programme to reduce the cost of moving goods									

Map ID	Link	KEY	Strategy objectives					Provisional programme		
			Enable the Region to <u>compete</u> and support <u>growth</u>	Enable people to <u>participate</u> in everyday life	Improve the <u>health</u> of the Region's people	Improve <u>safety</u> and security	Manage the impacts of transport on the Region's <u>natural</u> and <u>built heritage assets</u>	Short term (2007-12)	Medium term (2012-17)	Long term (2017-23)
	Option	<div> <div> Unambiguously positive contribution Lesser positive impact or distribution Negative impact Protected area </div> <div> research and scheme preparation delivery </div> </div>								
Locally significant network & road maintenance										
H32a	Attract additional funding									
Mainstream passenger transport										
H33a	Multi-modal / operator ticketing system									
H33b	Comprehensive and user-friendly information and mapping									
H33c	Consistent standard for supporting infrastructure									
H33d	Integrated timetabling across the region									
H33e	Hub and spoke interchange network, including infrastructure									
H33f	Targeted support for socially excluded groups to improve access opportunities. This could include tackling any aspect of accessibility – physical, awareness, affordability, acceptability and availability.									
H33g	Development of taxi sector as part of passenger transport network									
H33h	Bus Quality Partnerships / Contracts									
H33i	Invest in poor quality transport terminals and vehicles (including continued investment in accessible vehicle fleet)									

Map ID	Link	KEY	Strategy objectives					Provisional programme		
			Enable the Region to <u>compete</u> and support <u>growth</u>	Enable people to <u>participate</u> in everyday life	Improve the <u>health</u> of the Region's people	Improve <u>safety</u> and security	Manage the impacts of transport on the Region's <u>natural</u> and <u>built heritage assets</u>	Short term (2007-12)	Medium term (2012-17)	Long term (2017-23)
	Option	<div> <div> Unambiguously positive contribution </div> <div> Lesser positive impact or distribution </div> <div> Negative impact </div> <div> Protected area </div> <div> research and scheme preparation </div> <div> delivery </div> </div>								
H33j	Rail service enhancement / frequency increase – incremental programme of improvements to the region's rail network									
Ports, ferries and waterways transport										
H34a	Understand origin and destination patterns for passengers and freight			Could advance all						
H34b	Rationalise the waterborne transport network									
H34c	Enhance ferry services and develop fit for purpose timetables									
H34d	Evaluate alternative pricing mechanisms			Could advance all						
H34e	Develop a regional investment strategy									

Further prioritisation and finalising the Strategy

- 5.11 The programme presented in the preceding tables has been prepared without regard for cost or issues associated with deliverability. Therefore, in tandem with consultation on this draft Strategy, a further stage of prioritisation of options will be undertaken by the Regional Transport Partnership. The final stage of prioritisation will consider how each of the interventions performs in terms of its deliverability. The Scottish Executive supplementary guidance on prioritisation for the Regional Transport Strategies advises that this stage should consider the following elements, the principles of which are also embodied in the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance approach:

- Feasibility and deliverability.
- Effectiveness.
- Acceptability.
- Policy fit.

Key steps in refining and finalising the Strategy

- 5.12 There are a number of key steps to refining and finalising the Regional Transport Strategy. There are set out below:

- **Public and Stakeholder Consultation.** The issuing of this draft RTS forms a key part of the consultation process. In addition, Partnership representatives will be meeting with a number of key stakeholders to gather views on the draft Strategy over the coming months.
- **Collation of responses** from the public and stakeholder Consultation will feed into the refining of options and Step 2 Prioritisation work.
- Final stage of **refinement of options**, and prioritisation of options to be taken forward in the final RTS. This will take into account outcomes of the consultation exercise, refinement of cost estimates and further assessment of the feasibility and deliverability of each option.
- Alongside the Strategy development, a Strategic Environmental Assessment has been carried out; the **Environmental Report** is appended to this draft Strategy. This Environmental Report is being submitted to the statutory Consultation Authorities in Scotland for comment and approval. A final Environmental Statement will be prepared to accompany the final Strategy.
- A strategic **Health Impact Assessment and Equality Impact Assessment** will be carried out and reported with the final Strategy.
- The final Regional Transport Strategy and supporting documents (Consultation Report, Scottish Transport Assessment Guidance Assessment Summary Tables, Environmental Report, Strategic Environmental Assessment Statement and Implementation Programme) will be **submitted to Scottish Ministers** by 31 March 2007.

APPENDIX A

PRIORITY LINKS IN THE STRATEGIC AND REGIONAL NETWORKS

A1. NATURE OF THE PRIORITY LINKS – STRATEGIC NETWORK

Introduction

- A1.1 The Strategic Network makes up the principle links between Regional Centres and the National Gateways of Scotland.
- A1.2 The efficiency and effectiveness of the Strategic Network is vital to the social and economic vitality of the region. Efficient transport network support the economy in a number of ways. For example by improving access to jobs, thereby increasing employment opportunities and extending labour markets; improving access to education and training opportunities, so improving the skills of the workforce; supporting tourism, by ensuring access to the region; and by closing the distances between companies and their customers and suppliers.

A82 and Fort William and Oban Rail Lines

- A1.3 The A82 is the main route from Glasgow to Inverness which runs along the west side of Loch Lomond to Tarbet, north from Tarbet (through Glencoe) to Fort William and on to Inverness. The A82 is the principle link to the west of Scotland and the main commercial corridor for goods and services being transported into and out of the Western Highlands, Skye and the Western Isles.
- A1.4 The journey time on the route is long and unreliable as a result of the narrow and circuitous route with bottlenecks and limited overtaking opportunities. There are also a number of pinch points on the route. The route has a poor accident record, particularly on the section between Invergarry and Inverness.
- A1.5 The A82 Tarbet to Fort William Economic Appraisal describes that the current standards on the A82 fall well short of the transport expectations of both businesses and residents in the West Highlands and Islands which are set out in *A Smart Successful Highlands and Islands*, and this is also borne out by the business survey that was carried out for the economic appraisal.³⁶
- A1.6 Journey time on the Fort William and Oban Rail Lines is long, and frequency is limited (three and four departures per day respectively). There is poor integration between coach and rail timetabling, with departures often competing rather than complimenting.

A9 and Highland Main Line

- A1.7 The A9 was upgraded in the 1970s and exhibits a variety of standards including dual and single carriageways and a variety of junctions and minor accesses which intersect with the road along the entire route.

³⁶ A82 Tarbet to Fort William: Economic Appraisal, Main Report, September 2005.
<http://www.hitrans.org.uk/downloads/A82%20Final%20Report.pdf>

- A1.8 The connectivity of this corridor to the central belt is essential to the attractiveness and function of the region. The road and rail corridor is the principal route between Inverness and the central belt. The corridor is the main route for the movement of people and goods from Orkney and Caithness and is the principle connection from Moray and west Highland to the National Gateways.
- A1.9 A recent study of the perceptions of the A9 (and A96) in the business community found that the upgrading of the A9 is a priority. The main issues for the A9 were viewed as overtaking opportunities and efficiently dispersing platoons, rather than greatly reducing journey times. Improvements were seen as having the potential benefit of reducing stress and thus making driving the A9 less “hard work”.³⁷
- A1.10 On the Highland Main Line the journey time is long (3hrs 20mins to 4hrs 10min) and the service pattern irregular (6 direct services per day to Edinburgh and 3 direct to Glasgow). On the road the journey time is also long as a result of limited overtaking opportunities. This results in convoying. The route has a poor fatality record.
- A1.11 Journey time on the A9 north is long and unreliable. There is a prevalence of slow moving vehicles on the route and limited opportunities for safe overtaking. To the immediate north of Inverness congestion is significant on the Kessock Bridge and at the Longman roundabout. The Far North Line is a single track line and there are 24 stations along the route. Journey times are very long and frequency is very limited.
- A1.12 An increase in demand on the route is expected through continued growth of the inner Moray Firth and growth in visitors to the areas, especially at Aviemore associated with the Aviemore Highland Resort initiative³⁸. Unreliability of journey times south of Inverness will increase.

Inverness airport

- A1.13 Inverness has direct connections to Edinburgh and a number of other UK destinations. There are opportunities for interlining at Edinburgh, Manchester and London airports for international travel. There is constrained capacity at the airport and a high dependence on the car to access the airport. Passenger transport schedules are not adequate to meet the hours of operation of the airport, and the bus service experiences delay, making passenger transport an unattractive option.
- A1.14 Inverness airport is an important link to the Western Isles and Orkney. The terminal building and air-side facilities at the airport are inadequate to deal with current and future demands.

A96 and Inverness – Aberdeen rail line

- A1.15 The A96 is a multi-modal corridor that provides local and long-distance connections along its route. Road and rail both have long journey times. On the road, congestion is

³⁷ Perceptions of the A9 and A96 among business organisation and businesses, final report to Highlands and Islands Enterprise, March 2006.

³⁸ <http://www.hie.co.uk/Default.aspx.LocID-0finewd73.RefLocID-0fihiesv500b00d.Lang-EN.htm>

a problem as well as unlimited opportunities for safe overtaking resulting in convoying. There are significant capacity constraints between Inverness and Inverness Airport access and worsening conflict between long-distance and local traffic at Fochabers, Elgin, Keith and Nairn.

- A1.16 The rail journey on the corridor is slow and infrequent. Rail is therefore not an attractive alternative to road, despite road transport also being slow and unreliable. The rail line has significant capacity constraints as it is predominantly single track.
- A1.17 There is significant growth in housing and employment development along the corridor, especially to the east of the Inverness and Elgin.

Argyll & Bute Sea crossings and A83 to A82

- A1.18 Coll, Tiree and Colonsay do not have a daily connection throughout the year - in the winter timetable, the connection is reduced to just three sailings per week. Islay is one of the most populous islands, yet on most days during the winter the last sailing from the mainland is at 12:50. Between Mull and Oban there are many variations to the ferry timetable over the week and year, for this short crossing.
- A1.19 On the A83 between Campbeltown and Lochgilphead single track sections remain, which constrain capacity and lead to slow journey times and limited opportunities for safe overtaking. There are also a number of pinch points that restrict movement of commercial traffic to and from the area.

Western Isles sea crossings to Uig and the A87 to the A82

- A1.20 Harris & North Uist connections to mainland via Uig to the A82 corridor for onward travel to all gateways and beyond. There is no breakwater at Uig, which constrains connectivity. The Harris and North Uist services share the same vessel, restricting the maximum number of return sailings to either island to two per day in summer, with a lower frequency actually provided on most days. The sailing frequency is reduced in winter, with Harris having less than one return sailing per day. Return sailings are in the early afternoon in the winter, so a day trip is not possible in either direction.
- A1.21 The A87 through Skye is poorly aligned on the stretch between Portree and Broadford. The stretch at Glen Garry on the mainland is below standard and on the A887 Torgoyle Bridge is a pinch point.
- A1.22 Road (including coach travel) is the only journey option from Skye to national gateways. This comprises very long journey times (6½-7½ hours by coach and 5½ hours by car) between Skye and the Glasgow / Edinburgh.

Stornoway to Ullapool sea crossing and the A835 to Inverness

- A1.23 The crossing from Ullapool is a key trade route for the Western Isles. There is concern from hauliers as to the reliability of the current services. There is no Sunday service to Lewis. The Garve to Contin stretch of A835 is not to a good standard.

A85

- A1.24 The A85 connects Oban to the A82 for onward routes to the national gateways. Oban is a gateway to the ferry services to the Inner Hebrides, Mull and the Western Isles. There is increasing congestion through Oban itself, particularly at peak times and in line with ferry arrival / departure times.

A941 and A95 Moray connection to A9

- A1.25 Moray is connected to the A9 for journeys to the central belt via the A941 and A95. The A941 links from Elgin and the A95 from Keith, merging at Craigellachie, with the A95 continuing on and joining the A9 just north of Aviemore.
- A1.26 There are limited overtaking opportunities on the routes which results in convoying and slow journey times. The A95 also has alignment constraints and a number of pinch points.

Kyle Rail Line

- A1.27 Three trains operate each way daily on the route with a fourth service operating in the summer peak. For the east end of the line, the arrival time into Inverness is too late, and the afternoon departure time poorly timed, for a working day.

Barra air service

- A1.28 The air service between Barra and Glasgow uses a beach landing at Barra, and so the schedule depends upon timings of the tides. This changeable timetable means that undertaking a days' business on or away from the island is not a possibility. The Barra air service operates under a Public Service Obligation, and passenger numbers grew by 13% in 2005 following the introduction of the reduced fares in 2004.

A2. NATURE OF THE PRIORITY LINKS – REGIONAL NETWORK

Introduction

- A2.1 The Regional Network connects Local Centres to Regional Centres. These links therefore ensure that communities centred around Local Centres and their hinterlands are able to access the services and functions that are provided in the 12 Regional Centres around the region. Each of these Regional Network routes tend to be the main and only connection between the Local Centre and Regional Centre, and so the availability and efficiency of the link is directly related to the social and economic outcomes of each Local Centre. Research³⁹ has shown that accessible rural areas have performed better than remote rural areas in the past. Hence, there is potential for enhancing links in the Regional Network delivering benefits such as improving accessibility and reversing population decline.

Orkney inter-isle connections

- A2.2 Orkney Ferries operate nine ferries to 13 islands. Most islands currently receive at least a daily service throughout the year. The exceptions are, first, North Ronaldsay and Papa Westray, which receive very limited lift-on lift-off services and are served by the internal air service. The second group receiving less than a daily service are some of the smaller South Isles, although a daily service is maintained during the summer months.
- A2.3 Across the network there is however considerable variation in service frequency and crossing times. The inter-isles connectivity is threatened – capacity is inadequate and the vessels are at end of their life and have poor physical accessibility.

Easdale, Luing, Islay-Jura and Lismore ferry connections

- A2.4 Sailing frequencies are greatly reduced on Sundays. Replacement vessels and infrastructure are required in the medium term.

Raasay ferry connection

- A2.5 The island of Raasay, which lies off the east coast of Skye, is accessed by ferry from Sconser on Skye. The existing ferry terminal requires a significant upgrade to provide improved pier facilities in order to safeguard the ferry link to Skye.

Western Isles Spinal Route

- A2.6 The Spinal Route is the principal connection of the Western Isles arc of islands. The route includes the crossings of the Sound of Harris and Sound of Barra. The Sound of Harris is a difficult crossing and cannot operate outside of daylight hours.

³⁹

Factors Affecting the Competitiveness of Businesses in Rural Areas, DTZ Pieda.

- A2.7 The last remaining single track sections on the road between the ferry ports at Stornoway and Tarbert and from the ferry port at Lochmaddy to Clachan were funded by the Executive in 2004 (with remaining funding coming from CNES and European money). Forty miles of the Spinal Route remain single track or poorly aligned in Harris, the Uists and Barra.

A816

- A2.8 The A816 formed part of the trunk road network until 1996 linking A83 and A85 trunk roads. It provides the main transport artery south from Oban to Lochgilphead. The A816 links key settlements in Mid-Argyll, Kintyre and Islay to Oban, the regional centre for the area.
- A2.9 The A816 is also of industrial importance as it is the only route north from Kintyre suitable for timber extraction and vehicles serving the fishing industry.
- A2.10 There is poor alignment, in terms of width and geometry, on 28 miles of 38 mile route between Lochgilphead and Oban.

A848 and A849

- A2.11 These roads are the principal connections between the main town of Tobermory on Mull and the ferry terminal for the mainland ferry at Craignure. The route provides the opportunity for future development of island ferry services through Tobermory.
- A2.12 The final five mile section of this route to Tobermory is substandard.

A941

- A2.13 The A941 in this instance is the six mile connection from Lossiemouth to the A96. The town is increasingly popular for its beaches. The route is inadequate for the volume and type of traffic that uses it, including demand from the RAF.

A838

- A2.14 The A838 is the principle route between Kinlochbervie and Inverness via Loch Shin. The majority of the route is two-track carriageway, however some small sections remain single-track in the vicinity of Laxford Bridge. These single-track sections are of very poor standard and relate to a high accident record.

A890

- A2.15 The A890 (and A832) is the link between Lochcarron and Achnasheen, this is the principle Wester Ross connection for travel to Inverness. There are difficulties with single-track sections on the route, which also have very poor visibility in the vicinity Achnashellach.

A939

- A2.16 Sections of the A939, which links Nairn and Tomintoul to the A95, are poorly aligned and below standard. The route has a poor accident record. The route presents difficult winter conditions, and there are poor structural elements.

A98 and A950

- A2.17 The A98 and A950 link Moray to Fraserburgh and Peterhead. The A98 is a major coastal route beginning at Fochabers and proceeding north-east, passing close to Buckie, Findochty and Portknockie before passing through Cullen and Portsoy. After the junction with the A95 it passes through Banff and Macduff. The A950 joins the A98 near New Pitsilgo and passes through Mintlaw and Longside before crossing the A90 on route to Peterhead harbour.
- A2.18 The A98 and the A950 comprise some sections with poor alignment and the route has a poor accident record.

A832

- A2.19 The A832 connects Fortrose to the A9. A good number of people commute from Fortrose to Inverness. There are problems with traffic volumes and speeds in the villages on this route and bus stop and waiting facilities are of poor quality.

APPENDIX B

DESCRIPTIONS OF HORIZONTAL THEMES

B1. NATURE OF THE HORIZONTAL THEMES

Active travel

- B1.1 Active travel refers to non-motorised travel, commonly walking and cycling, although horse riding and travel by waterway are also included. Active travel can be a means of travel in itself, and is also a key part of multi-modal journeys, for example at the beginning and end of bus and rail journeys. Active travel contributes to four public policy areas: health improvement; mode shift; environmental protection and growth in domestic and visitor tourism.
- B1.2 People in some parts of the region are more physically active than those in other parts. Physical activity is a key determinant of health outcomes. Creating the right environment (physical and cultural) to encourage more walking and cycling, has been shown to deliver excellent returns on investment.⁴⁰
- B1.3 Barriers to active travel have developed over a long period and it is important to work towards long-term changes to overcome these barriers. Barriers include:
- Planning and design that has not prioritised or provided for active travel.
 - Poor infrastructure and facilities to support walking and cycling.
 - A culture that promotes use of the car and a lack of understanding of the benefits of and the know-how to walking and cycle.
 - Maintenance funding issues that result in the deterioration of established and new infrastructure.
 - Constrained road space, limiting opportunities for providing walking and cycling infrastructure.
- B1.4 Active travel is a low cost means of travel compared to the car, and also leads to only few or no emissions of pollution. The health benefits potential from increasing levels of active travel in the region are massive.

Aviation

- B1.5 Aviation is of critical importance for the region, more so than for almost any other region of the UK. Being remote from all major domestic centres of commerce and Government, the importance of aviation in the region is evident. Three other features have a bearing on the importance of aviation in the region, each reflecting a different facet of the unique nature of the Highlands and Islands:
- Rail services are few and far between, and often poorly timed for day return trips to the National Gateways.
 - The indented coastline of the region and the mountainous topography makes road journeys slower (see Figure 2.3) in the region than elsewhere in the UK.
 - A significant proportion of the region's population resides on islands, for which

⁴⁰ Benefit to cost ratios in the order of 20:1 have been calculated. *Economic appraisal of local walking and cycling routes*, Sustrans, 2005.

surface journeys involve ferries that are generally slow, often infrequent and not always reliable, especially in winter.

- B1.6 Air services are vital in a region that is distributed over such significant distances, minimum surface journey times by comparison for routes in the region are four and a half to almost 15 hours.
- B1.7 Some areas are not well served by air and have extremely long surface journey times to the National Gateways. The existence of some current services are / have been threatened. The Air Discount Scheme has reduced the cost of air travel for island / remote residents. Affordability issues still exist, and the Air Discount Scheme does not address the cost of friends, family, tourists and business travel to these areas.

Congestion & urban transport issues

- B1.8 Around 30% of the region's population live in the inner Moray Firth, and 40% in urban areas or settlements with 5,000 people or more. The targeted management of congestion and traffic growth within the largest and fastest growing built-up areas is essential.
- B1.9 Within a number of Regional Centres, and including Inverness, the main trunk roads tend to provide a dual purpose, carrying both long distance through-traffic **and** providing local connections. This traffic competes for road space and often conflicts. Consideration will need to be given to physically removing extraneous traffic from some places as well as the contribution that can be made by challenging why and how people travel the way they do.
- B1.10 Congestion adversely affects all travellers, people walking and cycling, people travelling by car, those travelling by coach or bus and business travellers and heavy goods vehicles. Congestion affects the economy and left unchecked is a vicious circle.

Community and health transport

- B1.11 This theme covers services provided for community and health purposes, such as community and voluntary transport, local authority provision for transport to school and for social services, and transport provision by health boards and the Scottish Ambulance Service.
- B1.12 Provision across the region is varied. Provision is often developed by the community in response to inadequacies in mainstream passengers services.
- B1.13 There is rising demand for the sector from an ageing population across the region. Services tend to run with uncertain financial stability, and there can be underutilisation of vehicles and a lack of collaboration to deliver efficient services. There is a lack of clear understanding of the 'gaps' in accessibility right across the region.

Freight transport

- B1.14 Efficient freight transport is essential to the economy and quality of life in the region. Economic growth generates growing demand for freight transport. In order to meet the needs of business in the region, goods need to be transported easily, reliably and

efficiently. This is not always the case in the region. Much of the region's transport network is inadequate, and this adversely affects freight users as much as it does other users of the network.

- B1.15 A diverse range of goods and items are transport around the region. This includes frozen goods, bulk, forestry and agriculture, fish, food and drink and manufactured produce. Specialist transport is often required, which in some cases is only required for very short periods of time over the course of the year. Because of the distances and the sea crossings that are often required, this disadvantages businesses based in the region compared to their counterparts located closer to the markets.
- B1.16 Rail is not competitive (economically or environmentally) for most of the traffic in the region due to lack of infrastructure access and / or uneconomical commodity characteristics.

Locally significant network and road maintenance

- B1.17 The Locally Significant Network has been defined as part of the assessment of the region's transport network (see Section 1). The Locally Significant Network connects communities to their local centres and onwards to the Regional Centres and National Gateways. The Locally Significant Network makes up a large part of the region's entire network, and in most cases these roads are the only connection that a community has. All roads are significant in the region; in most cases any given road is the only connectivity between communities and Local Centres, Regional Centres and National Gateways. This lack of an alternative route, particularly in the west, is a key factor that differentiates the region from many other areas across Scotland.
- B1.18 The adequacy of the network determines the adequacy of the walking and cycling environment, the adequacy of passenger transport and community and voluntary transport, and the adequacy of freight transport. The study of Lifeline Roads in the region in 2004 highlighted the generally poor condition of selected routes, with many of them presenting severe constraints to travel. The conclusion from the audit in this study was that the majority of lifeline roads were not considered to be 'fit-for-purpose'. Approximately 5,000 jobs are at stake due to the fragility of this network.⁴¹
- B1.19 Significant parts of the network suffer from a lack of appropriate funding levels, inadequate for even routine maintenance. This has led to a considerable backlog of identified maintenance work, especially in the west and north west of the region. Where parts of the network do not come up to a 6m wide standard (or wider as appropriate), damage can occur to structures, surfaces and verges when heavy vehicles need access, whether this be for short-term or for prolonged periods. In some instances weight restrictions or structures prohibit certain vehicles from using parts of the network. Such prohibitions mean that communities at the end of that route are isolated. There are weight restrictions on many single track roads around the region.

⁴¹ *Investment in Lifeline Rural Roads, Stage 2 Final Report*, September 2004.
<http://www.hitrans.org.uk/downloads/Final%20stage%20Two%20Report%204th%20Draft%20side.pdf>

Mainstream passenger transport

- B1.20 Mainstream passenger transport in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland comprises air, rail, local and long distance bus, coach and ferry services. To be effective these means of transport must integrate with one another to provide a network of services which offer a genuine alternative to the car. They must also integrate with community and voluntary sector transport and taxis, including in many rural areas where low population densities make conventional bus services unviable.
- B1.21 Subsidised bus services make up a large proportion of the network in the region. Frequencies of passenger transport tend to be limited away from all but the main routes. This limits opportunities for commuting and for travelling to other time-sensitive destinations.
- B1.22 There is a fairly limited and incomplete understanding of the passenger transport supply and demand around the region, how it integrates and how it compares from areas to area; and whether it is most effectively and efficiently meeting the needs of communities, business and tourists.
- B1.23 Gaps in passenger transport inhibit social and economic outcomes in the region. Some ferries, buses, coaches and air services are difficult to access for people with mobility difficulties. It is costly to access the region and to travel around it. Affordability of transport is a barrier to access to employment, education and training.

Ports, ferries and waterways

- B1.24 Ferry services operate in all parts of the region except Moray. Almost all services receive operating deficit finance, either directly from the Scottish Executive or via local authorities. Thirty per cent of the population of the Highlands and Islands⁴² live on more than ninety inhabited islands. Sea transport therefore forms a vital social and economic role in supporting the island communities, businesses and tourism. With the exception of a few relatively low capacity air services to some islands, ferries are responsible for carrying all passenger movements and the majority of goods traffic to, from and between the islands.
- B1.25 There is a poor understanding of the ultimate passenger and freight origins and destinations around the region⁴³. There is limited frequency on much of the network, with some islands being connected less than daily, and particularly so in the winter months. Interchange opportunities to other means of transport, including bus and rail, are lacking at some points in the network; ferries, road, bus / coach and rail sectors are managed by various different bodies / organisations.
- B1.26 There is limited life expectancy of vessels and infrastructure around the region and the network is at risk from the impacts of climate change and tidal surges, for example.

⁴² Highlands and Islands Enterprise area.

⁴³ A study is currently ongoing that is looking at ferry traffic origin and destinations. This research follows the recommendation of the Strategic Sea Crossing Study completed in 2005. The survey will be carried out in August and November 2006 on all strategic crossings.