

Highland Local Transport Strategy

Ro-innleachd Còmhhdhail Ionadail na Gàidhealtachd

2025 – 2035



Pell Frischmann
Excellence through innovation

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Introduction

Ro-ràdh

This Local Transport Strategy (LTS) sets out the future policy direction and focus for how The Highland Council will maintain, manage and improve the transport system in Highland over the 10-year period from 2025 to 2035. It covers the movement of people and goods and considers all modes of transport across Highland.

The transport system, and this LTS, will have a key role in contributing to the delivery of the Our Future Highland Administration programme 2022-2027¹ which has five key priorities:



A Fair and Caring Highland

Working together to improve quality of life and opportunities for Highland people.



Resilient and Sustainable Communities

Helping our communities to be prosperous, sustainable and resilient, making a positive difference to the lives of people.



Accessible and Sustainable Highland Homes

Build houses to support communities and economic growth.



A Sustainable Highland Environment and Global Centre for Renewable Energy

Accelerate our response to the climate and ecological emergency. Making the most of the financial and environmental opportunities arising from the huge renewable energy potential in the Highlands.



A Resilient and Sustainable Council

Work with partners to address service delivery challenges with a positive approach to change.

The LTS also responds to national Net Zero commitments and other drivers that influence where, when and how both people travel, and goods are moved.

¹ The Highland Council Performance Plan 2022 – 2027 (The Highland Council, 2022)

www.highland.gov.uk/info/695/council_information_performance_and_statistics/381/our_priorities [Accessed November 2024]

Carbon emissions: definitions and terminology

Sgaoilidhean carboin: mìneachaidhean is briathrachas

For clarity and consistency across the Council, the LTS uses the following definitions:

Greenhouse gas

Any gas that contributes to the greenhouse effect by absorbing infrared radiation in the atmosphere.

Carbon emissions/emissions

Short-hand for greenhouse gas emissions (which, in addition to carbon dioxide, also includes methane, nitrous oxide and refrigerant gases).

Measuring and Reporting emissions

The Highland Council's Net Zero Strategy adopts a rigorous and transparent approach to measuring and reporting emissions, ensuring alignment with Scottish Government guidelines on greenhouse gas monitoring and reporting.

To provide an accurate and comprehensive assessment of emissions, the Council reports using carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) rather than solely CO₂ emissions. This methodology aligns with international best practice and Scottish Government reporting standards, allowing for a like-for-like comparison of different greenhouse gases based on their relative global warming potential.

CO₂e is determined by calculating emissions across the six key greenhouse gases included under the Kyoto Protocol:

- Carbon Dioxide (CO₂)
- Methane (CH₄)
- Nitrous Oxide (N₂O)
- Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs)
- Perfluorocarbons (PFCs)
- Sulphur Hexafluoride (SF₆)

Updates

Cunntasan às Ùr

Since the previous LTS was published in 2010, there have been a variety of improvements to the transport system in Highland across various modes and some examples of these are listed below.

It should be acknowledged within this period there has been a considerable shift within the national transport policy context primarily driven by climate change and public health concerns.

Highland Council In-House Bus Fleet

The Highland Council has established a growing fleet of buses to deliver services in-house. As well as providing transport for scheduled routes, the buses have provided hires to schools for trips to attend a wide range of activities and to community organisations. The project provides improved and more inclusive services for communities and financial savings.

Community Transport Across Highland

The Highland Council now supports 28 Community Transport projects with grant funding; each project uniquely serves the needs of their communities. These diverse projects cover the whole of the Highland area, ranging from schemes focusing on supporting those with a disability to minibuss hire and community car schemes. For example, from Autumn 2024 the Applecross Community Company has been delivering school transport services for the Council, with the vehicle fully available for community use out with those hours.

Pavement, Double and Dropped Kerb Parking Ban Across Highland

In January 2023, following the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, The Highland Council introduced a ban on pavement parking, parking at some dropped kerbs and double-parking to keep pavements and crossing points clear for those walking, wheeling or cycling. This also supports people with disabilities and those pushing prams or buggies and reduces damage to pavements. Public compliance has been significantly higher than expected, with the measures securing broad support across the area.

New Rail Stations

The expansion of the rail network has opened up Scotland's railway to new communities. For example, the opening of Inverness Airport Station in February 2023 was delivered by the Scottish Government as part of a wider rail network infrastructure investment.

Torvean Mobility Hub

This mobility hub, located west of Inverness beside the Caledonian Canal, is the first of its kind in Highland providing a seamless interchange between different modes of transport and making it easier for people to use public transport to travel in and around the city of Inverness. The hub includes a bus stop/shelter, public transport information display with real-time capability, cycle

parking, Hi-Bike dock, car parking (to support park and ride) as well as motorcycle, motorhome and coach parking.

Active Travel Delivery in Highland

This includes the delivery plans for The Highland-wide Active Travel Network and the Inner Moray Firth Active Travel Network which includes active travel masterplans for different communities, under the umbrella of The Highland Council's Active Travel Strategy 2024 – 2030. This aims to encourage modal shift and guide where new development proposals can be supported by active travel.

Examples of some of the active travel schemes that have been delivered include Riverside Way, Inverness, Spey Street, Kingussie, Sun Dancer Path, Nairn, Peffery Way Path between Strathpeffer and Dingwall alongside junction improvements at Dalfaber in Aviemore and an additional infrastructure such as dropped kerbs and pedestrian crossings improvement in communities throughout Highland.

Opportunities have also been taken through flood prevention schemes, such as Caol and Lochyside, Ullapool and River Ness, to improve active travel connections. This cross-departmental working within The Highland Council maximises resource efficiency, the delivery of objectives across different workstreams and is a key aspect of improving infrastructure.

Hi-Bike: Partnership Working in Fort William and Inverness

The HITRANS Hi-Bike schemes in Fort William and Inverness offer electric bike rental through a number of charging stations at key locations across the communities. The bikes offer a low cost sustainable transport option for locals and visitors. Uptake of both schemes has been higher than expected especially at the charging stations which are located close to bus and train provision. The Highland Council is a key partner and actively involved in supporting the scheme's planned expansion to offer e-cargo bikes.

Inverness Campus

The Campus is a state-of-the-art location for businesses, research organisations, students and residents with Phase 1 of the building design spanning 47,000sqm. The site is designed to enable easy access by foot and also includes accessible cycle paths as well as a dedicated bus lane plus car-share only parking spaces. These measures are underpinned by a Campus Travel and Transport Plan to improve sustainable travel choices and encourage journeys by active travel and public transport. This is a good example of integrating a sustainable transport provision from the outset of a development.

Raigmore Bus Gate and Wider Bus Priority Measures

Work on a new bus only link that connects Raigmore Hospital to Raigmore Estate was completed in April 2024. The project was funded by Transport Scotland's Bus Partnership Fund (BPF), prior to it being paused in 2024/2025, and delivered by the Bus Service Improvement Partnership (BSIP)

Group, comprised of The Highland Council, NHS Highland, HITRANS and Stagecoach. The new route has improved bus services to Raigmore Estate, Raigmore Hospital and the National Treatment Centre Highland as well as helped to reduce congestion on Old Perth Road and outside Raigmore Hospital by removing bus traffic from the already congested entrance of Raigmore Hospital onto the B9006 and Inshes corridor.

The bus gate is part of a suite of projects designed to encourage more bus use. This includes the prioritisation of buses at traffic lights in Inverness city centre on cross-city routes to help improve the reliability of services.

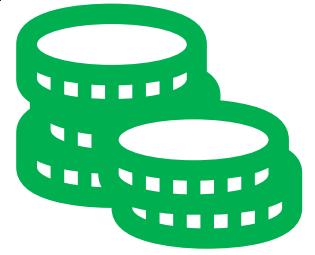
West Link

The West Link project has greatly improved infrastructure to support the future development, growth and prosperity of Inverness and wider Highland area. It has included the completion of the link from the Southern Distributor Road at Dores Road to the A82, including crossing the River Ness on the new Holm Mills Bridge, alongside new sports facilities at Canal Park which include a synthetic pitch, clubhouse as well as a relocated golf course.

Funding

Maoineachadh

The transport achievements set out in the previous section have been delivered against the backdrop of a tightening budgetary position and the availability of funding continues to influence the extent to which transport can be improved across Highland. For example, the pause by the Scottish Government to the Bus Partnership Fund during 2024/2025 impacted on the progression of much needed investment in bus priority measures in Highland.



Forthcoming changes to the active travel funding landscape, through the Scottish Government's Active Travel Transformation project which is expected to be fully in place by the end of 2025, have also created uncertainty in the short-term but the wider intention of the change is to adopt a de-centralised approach and through this allocate more funding direct to Local Authorities to help accelerate delivery.

Rising costs also mean that any increase in budget is struggling to keep pace rather than enabling delivery at pace of an expanded transport offer in Highland.

In response, The Highland Council has sought to proactively address the funding challenges and work constructively with partners. This has resulted in the increased investment of £40m between 2024 and 2027 to address ongoing challenges in maintaining the local road network. In addition, in 2024 The Highland Council successfully worked with partners to agree the reallocation of £28m from the Highland City Region Deal to replace the Corran Ferry. The Highland Council is also exploring innovative funding models, such as green bonds, renewable energy integration for transport funding underpinned by a Social Value Charter and the Tourism Levy.

Achieving the Vision and objectives set out later in this LTS will not be achieved by The Highland Council in isolation. The involvement of other public and private organisations will be required, such as the delivery model approach to be adopted going forward in the expansion of the EV charging network in Highland. Operational and financial partnership working is something The Highland Council will continue to explore and seek opportunities to engage with partners to support investment to improve the transport system for all in Highland.

The Highland Council would also welcome greater certainty from funders and partners about the availability of future transport funding alongside a return to multi-year funding to support the delivery of schemes in a manner that directly improves the transport system in Highland and provides sustainable travel choices that are safe, reliable, resilient and efficient for more people.

The Transport System in Highland

An Siostam Còmhdhalach sa Ghàidhealtachd

Demographic Context

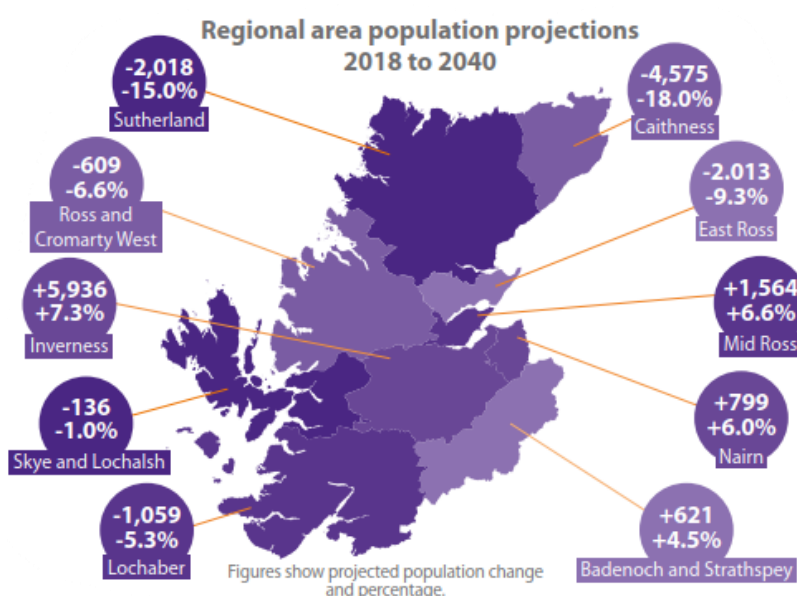
Highland is the largest council area by geography in Scotland, spanning an area of 26,484 square kilometres and the seventh largest in Scotland by population, with 236,330 residents (National Records of Scotland mid-2023 population estimates)². Beyond the concentrated city region of Inverness and Inner Moray Firth, Highland is a predominantly rural area with dispersed communities and an average population density of approximately 9 people per square kilometre.

Between the 2011 Census and 2022 Census, Highland's population increased by 1.4 %, compared to the Scotland average of 2.7%³. This compares to a 12.8% increase between 2001 and 2022 (Scotland average of 7.6%)⁴.

This overall population growth is, however, not experienced across the region with an ongoing pattern of increases in urban areas around the Inner Moray Firth alongside a falling population in the western

Highlands, Sutherland and Caithness. Population projections to 2040, as illustrated in the figure above, show the greatest decline anticipated in Caithness and Sutherland while growth is forecast in the more urban areas of the region⁵.

The 2022 Census also shows an ageing population with a 5.2% increase in over 65-year-olds in Highland over the last 10 years compared to a 3.3% increase across Scotland. Between 2001 and



² Mid-2023 Population Estimates (National Records of Scotland, 2024)

<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/publications/mid-2023-population-estimates/#> [Accessed December 2024]

³ Highland Local Development Plan – Emerging Evidence (The Highland Council, October 2024)

www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/development_plans/1101/highland_local_development_plan_hldp [Accessed November 2024]

⁴ Highland Council Area Profile (National Records of Scotland)

www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/statistics/council-area-data-sheets/highland-council-profile.html [Accessed November 2024]

⁵ Our Future Highland – Performance Plan 2022 to 2027 (The Highland Council, March 2024)

www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/4620/performance_plan_2022-27 [Accessed November 2024]

2021, the 0 to 15 age group in Highland saw a decrease of -8.9%, while the 75+ age group saw an increase of +65.4%.⁶

Transport System Overview

The varied demographics and geography of Highland requires a diverse transport system that includes walking, wheeling⁷ and cycling routes, rail, bus as well as ferry and air services and road network comprising local routes, plus an extensive trunk road network operated and maintained by Transport Scotland.

This demographic context is of importance as it raises specific considerations for the transport system, with an ageing population potentially more dependent on public transport and access to health and care services can be expected to form a greater need. It is also of importance in terms of the accessibility of services and infrastructure. Furthermore, the transport system has an important role in providing access to employment and education and therefore in encouraging younger people to stay in the region. Being active for everyday journeys supports physical and mental health for all, helping to reduce the load on health and care systems. Travel independence also helps reduce the risk of isolation and supports community cohesion.

Together the different modes of transport strive to meet the varying travel needs of the region to provide access to employment, education, health and other services as well as offering connectivity to family and friends. They are also vital to businesses that operate in Highland, both in terms of the movement of goods and the accessibility of the labour market. The transport system in Highland is important for tourists who come to visit the natural beauty of the area and different attractions throughout the region.

The wider transport system also has a role in encouraging sustainable travel choices when in and travelling to and from Highland for example enabling visitors to be able to travel to/from the region by public transport with their bikes.

As a snapshot, the Highland transport system can be characterised by the following travel mode specific elements:

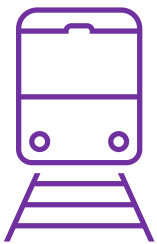
⁶ Highland Council Area Profile (National Records of Scotland)

www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/statistics/council-area-data-sheets/highland-council-profile.html [Accessed November 2024]

⁷ Wheeling refers to an equivalent alternative to foot/pedestrian-based mobility. This includes wheeled mobilities such as manual self- or assistant-propelled wheelchairs, including wheelchairs with power attachments or all-terrain attachments (such as the “Freewheel”), powered wheelchairs, mobility scooters (three and four-wheeled) and rollators. Source: Wheels for Wellbeing <https://wheelsforwellbeing.org.uk/walking-wheeling-and-cycling-definitions/> [Accessed January 2025]



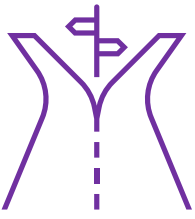
There is a mix of existing on and off-road **active travel infrastructure** for walking, wheeling and cycling in Highland. The National Cycle Network (NCN) passes through to the south of the region, including NCN 1, 7 and 78, alongside local routes to support walking, wheeling and cycling within and between communities where distances and other factors permit this to be a feasible option. The active travel network also has a role in supporting the tourism sector and enabling visitors to fully experience the region. Within Highland there are three designated long-distance routes – The Great Glen Way, Speyside Way and West Highland Way – as well as other routes that give the opportunity to explore the region.



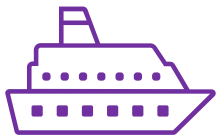
Highland is served by five **rail** lines, including the Far North Line (Wick/Thurso – Inverness), Kyle Line (Kyle of Lochalsh to Inverness), Inverness to Aberdeen line, West Highland Line (Glasgow to Fort William/Mallaig) and Highland Main Line (Inverness to Perth). The rail network enables the movement of goods and people within and to/from Highland with services provided by different operators. ScotRail operate passenger services for shorter-distance journeys within Highland for commuting and to access education, health and other services as well as to visit other areas of the region and operate longer distance services to wider Scotland. LNER and Caledonian Sleeper services provide UK-wide connectivity from Highland as far south as London. There are a total of 60 passenger stations in Highland and several rail freight facilities including Needlefield Yard in Inverness, Georgemas Junction strategic rail freight and transport hub in Caithness, the Fort William Alumina Freight and Wester Fraser rail link to a timber processing facility in Dalcross.



Bus services, both local and long-distance, operate within the region. The bus network covers almost all strategic routes and a significant number of settlements in Highland; however, many have a limited timetable which can impact on accessibility. In some areas the scheduled bus network is complemented by community transport schemes that operate minibuses and car share services, providing a lifeline for some who are unable to drive or don't have access to a car and live more rurally. The services help provide people with access to essential services as well as to other transport modes including scheduled bus services. Longer distance services to other parts of Scotland, including Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Perth with connections available for onward travel to other destinations including the wider UK.



The Highland area has an extensive **road network** with a core trunk road network linking the main settlements and providing connections to major towns and cities out with Highland. Over a quarter of the total trunk road network in Scotland is within Highland and managed by Transport Scotland. The Highland Council manages all other adopted roads which equates to almost 7,000km and 1,400 bridges. This extensive road network also hosts traffic management systems, various signage, footways and cycleways alongside adopted roads, drainage, road markings, road restraint systems and a range of street furniture.



Ferry services are a key part of the transport network in Highland. The principal services include those operated by Caledonian MacBrayne (CalMac) from the Highland mainland and Skye to the Western Isles, Mull, the Small Isles and Raasay, and from Mallaig to Skye. The Highland Council operates the Corran Ferry and has contracts for ferries on the Cromarty – Nigg, Camusnagaul – Fort William and Mallaig – Inverie – Tarbet routes. Pentland Ferries and John O’Groats Ferries operate other ferries to Orkney. The Highland Council is responsible for over 90 **harbour/marine infrastructure facilities**, which are mostly of a smaller scale, whilst a range of private and trust organisations operate larger-scale facilities such as Glensanda (marine-access only super-quarry freight). Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport supports the movement of goods and people in and out of the region. The Cromarty Firth Port accounted for 483,000 tonnes of the 55,832,000 tonnes of traffic at major ports in Scotland in 2022⁸ and also enables significant cruise ship passenger numbers to visit the Highlands with 221,793 seaborne tourists arriving between April 2023 and mid-October 2023. This represents a 23% increase compared to 2022 and the highest passenger figures in Scotland, bringing a boost of around £20m to the local economy⁹.

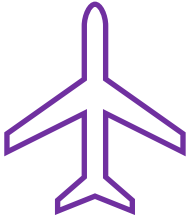
There is one navigable **Canal** in Highland – the 60-mile Caledonian Canal, which connects the Fort William area (Banavie) with Inverness (Clachnaharry and Muirtown Basin). The canal is predominantly used for leisure purposes, however there could be a future role for it to handle freight associated with the development of pumped storage hydro schemes.

⁸ Scottish Transport Statistics 2023 (Transport Scotland, 2024)

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/scottish-transport-statistics-2023/chapter-9-water-transport/> [Accessed January 2025]

⁹ Port of Cromarty Firth – Annual Review 2023

<https://pocf.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/POCF-Annual-Report.pdf> [Accessed January 2025]



Aviation in Highland provides both international connectivity to/from the region and regional connectivity to more remote and rural parts of Highland and the rest of Scotland as well as to other UK airports. There are two airports from which commercial flights operate in Highland - Inverness and Wick John O'Groats. Other airfields operate within Highland, including at Ashaig, Dornoch and Plockton that are owned and operated by The Highland Council. These operate as unlicensed, unstaffed aerodromes and have no Air Traffic Control/Flight Information Service or Rescue/Fire Fighting services available.

The Policy Context

An Co-theacsa Poileasaidh

The LTS must seamlessly align with broader local policies, including planning, economic development, environmental, and health initiatives, as well as Scottish national and regional strategies.

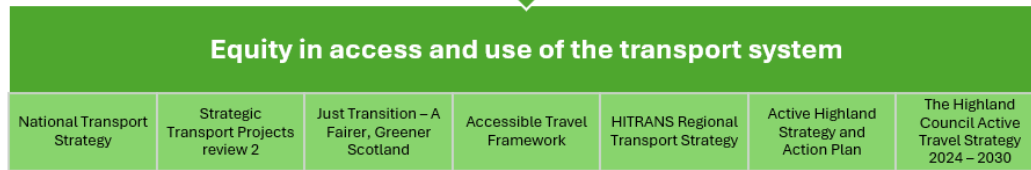
By doing so, the LTS will play a crucial role in enhancing other local policy areas while contributing to the vision and ambitions outlined in the National Transport Strategy (NTS). The NTS shows transport as an enabler, supporting priorities to reduce inequalities, take climate action, deliver inclusive economic growth and improve health and wellbeing. The LTS also has an important role in positively contributing to the HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy. This alignment ensures a cohesive approach to achieving sustainable and impactful outcomes for communities in Highland.

The policy setting has changed since the previous LTS was published in 2010. Most notably, The Highland Council declared a climate emergency in May 2019 and as a public body the Council is legally bound to contribute to Scotland's 2045 Net Zero target. Furthermore, The Highland Council's Net Zero Strategy has interim target dates that have been agreed to by Elected Members.

The Highland Council is very aware of the need to balance the climate emergency, Sustainable Travel and Investment Hierarchies (see overleaf) as well as the national target to reduce car vehicle-kilometres by 2030 (compared to 2019 levels) in the context of Highland. Specifically, this relates to Highland being a predominantly rural area and what this means for the transport system and the travel options that are available to users.

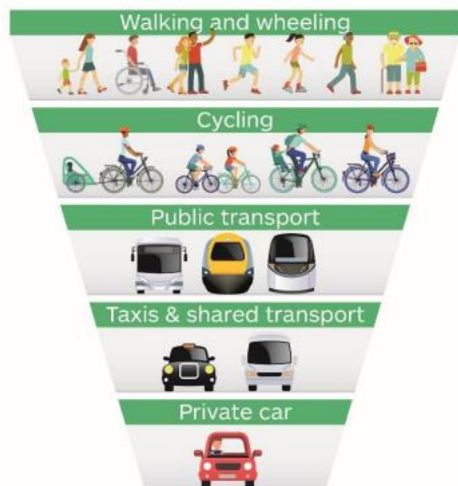
It should be highlighted that there is a co-ordinated approach between the LTS and the emerging Highland Local Development Plan (HLDP) to ensure that the inter-relationship between these two documents is addressed.

The following diagram shows some of the key local, regional and national policy and strategy documents, and categorises the main messages of the wider policy context.



Linked to the policy context are the **Sustainable Travel Hierarchy** and **Sustainable Investment Hierarchy** as set out in the Scottish Government's National Transport Strategy¹⁰ and summarised below.

Sustainable Travel Hierarchy



Promotes walking, wheeling, cycling, public transport and shared transport (i.e. sustainable modes) over single occupancy private cars. Also promotes efficient and sustainable freight transport for the movement of goods, particularly the shift from road to rail.

Sustainable Investment Hierarchy



Transport options focus on reducing inequalities and the need to travel unsustainably are prioritised. Also need to focus on maintaining and safely operating existing assets, taking consideration of the need to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Investment to make better use of existing capacity is then considered followed by consideration of targeted infrastructure improvements.

With transport a derived demand i.e. people typically travel to access employment, education, services, visit friends and family and for other leisure purposes rather than for the journey itself, it is important that the LTS is set in a wider access context to meet requirements.

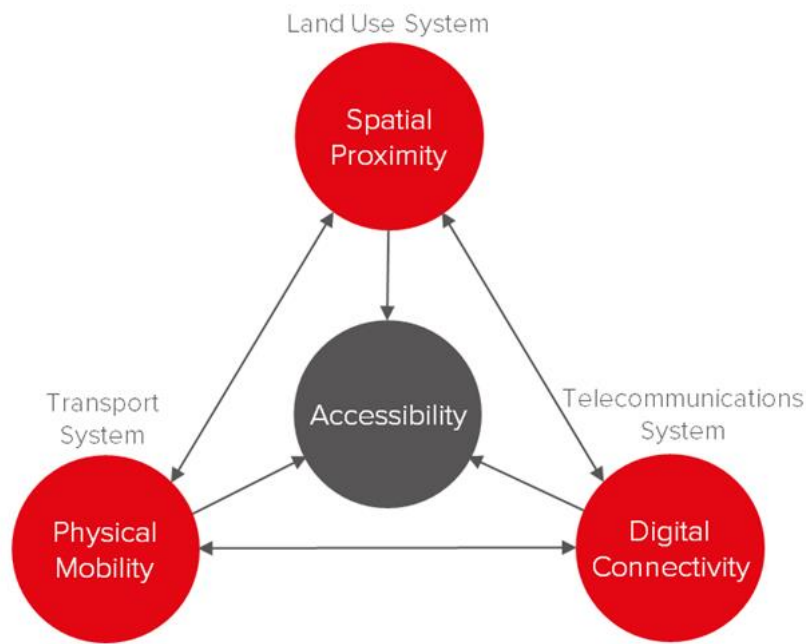
Triple Access Planning¹¹ recognises the contribution of spatial proximity and digital connectivity as well as physical mobility to meet different access needs more sustainably as illustrated in the figure below.

¹⁰ National Transport Strategy (Transport Scotland, 2020)

www.transport.gov.scot/media/47052/national-transport-strategy.pdf [Accessed October 2024]

¹¹ Lyons, G., Marchau, V., Paddeu, D., Rye, T., Adolphson, M., Attia, M., Bozovic, T., Bylund, J., Calvert, T., Chatterjee, K., Comi, A., Cragg, S., Fancello, G., Lenferink, S., Mladenović, L., Piras, F., Svensson, T. and Witzell, J. (2024). Triple Access Planning for Uncertain Futures – A Handbook for Practitioners (Summary version), March.

www.uwe-repository.worktribe.com/output/11751967/ [Accessed November 2024]



Key principles of Triple Access Planning include¹² the following which the LTS will work within:

- Consideration of non-transport measures is required to tackle transport problems. In the Triple Access System there are credible and attractive alternatives to car use for some journeys for some people some of the time. Digital accessibility measures are increasingly being introduced and evolved beyond the typical remit of transport planning or mobility planning. Spatial proximity and digital connectivity measures accompany physical (motorised) mobility measures in making a strategy suitable, acceptable and feasible to deliver successfully.
- It opens greater co-benefits whereby reduced car use arises from greater availability and usage of alternatives. This introduces both more flexibility into people's lives and changes the experience of access for everyone.
- It offers opportunity to support urban and rural living in ways which assist economic activity and social justice and are compatible with a need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. By planning for this system, we provide society with the support it needs to fulfil access requirements while encouraging redistribution of access demand. Digital accessibility (having access to activities through digital infrastructure) can help to ease demands placed upon the transport system by viewing mobility through the triple-access lens.

¹² Lyons, G., Marchau, V., Paddeu, D., Rye, T., Adolphson, M., Attia, M., Bozovic, T., Bylund, J., Calvert, T., Chatterjee, K., Comi, A., Cragg, S., Fancello, G., Lenferink, S., Mladenović, L., Piras, F., Svensson, T. and Witzell, J. (2024). Triple Access Planning for Uncertain Futures – A Handbook for Practitioners (Summary version), March.
www.uwe-repository.worktribe.com/output/11751967/ [Accessed November 2024]

- Key to the success of Triple Access Planning is being able to bring different perspectives and administrative functions together into participatory dialogue, shared learning and united action. A triple-access strategy requires joined-up planning and decision making across transport, land-use and telecommunications.

National Targets and Statutory Duties

Targaidean Nàiseanta is Dleastanasan Ro-innleachdail

Within the policy context there are **national targets of relevance** to the transport system, and which the LTS for Highland should contribute towards. A number are linked to climate change and the target of Net Zero by 2045. While not intended to be exhaustive, some national targets of note include¹³:

20% reduction in car veh-km by 2030 against a 2019 baseline.

Phase out the need for new petrol and diesel cars and vans in Scotland by 2030.

Phase out the need for public bodies to have any new petrol and diesel light commercial vehicles by 2025 and phasing out the need for petrol and diesel vehicles in Scotland's public sector fleet by 2030.

Decarbonisation of scheduled flights within Scotland by 2040. Plus aim for Highland to be the world's first zero emission aviation region.

Phase out new petrol and diesel heavy duty vehicles by 2035.

Majority of new buses are zero-emission by 2024.

Zero fatalities and serious injuries on Scotland's roads by 2050.

Air quality objectives not to be exceeded on local pollutants including NO2 and particulates.

Local Transport Strategies to have proper appreciation of needs of climate change, and the impact of road users, including public transport operators, disabled motorists, cyclists and pedestrians.

¹³ A Route Map to Achieve a 20% Reduction in car-km by 2030 (Transport Scotland, 2022)

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/50872/a-route-map-to-achieve-a-20-per-cent-reduction-in-car-kms-by-2030.pdf> [Accessed January 2025]

Climate Change Plan 2018 – 2032 – Update (Scottish Government, 2020)

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/securing-green-recovery-path-net-zero-update-climate-change-plan-20182032/pages/9/> [Accessed January 2025]

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Projections: Phase 1 and Phase 2 Modelling Results (The Scottish Government, 2024)

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/greenhouse-gas-emissions-projections-scotland-results-phase-1-phase-2-modelling/pages/8/> [Accessed January 2025]

Road Safety Framework to 2030 (Transport Scotland, 2021)

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/scotland-s-road-safety-framework-to-2030/> [Accessed January 2025]

Local Air Quality Management: Policy Guidance (The Scottish Government, 2024)

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/local-air-quality-management-policy-guidance-2/> [Accessed January 2025]

Securing a Green Recovery on a Path to Net Zero: Climate Change Plan 2018–2032 – update ((The Scottish Government, 2020) <https://www.gov.scot/publications/securing-green-recovery-path-net-zero-update-climate-change-plan-20182032/pages/9/> [Accessed January 2025]

There are also **statutory duties** of relevance in relation to the transport system which The Highland Council must fulfil. Statutory duties of relevance with little discretion include:

- To provide free school transport or travel support in line with the Council's school transport policy.
- To reduce carbon emissions and report on these.
- To produce local development plans.
- To respond to and manage planning applications.
- To undertake annual air quality reviews.

Further details on other statutory duties with discretion and discretionary functions of The Highland Council can be found [here](#).

In 2024, The Highland Council introduced the Integrated Impact Assessment as a new approach to understand the impact service changes, policies and strategies could have on individuals, groups of people or geographical communities. In addition to enhancing the way The Highland Council reviews and designs services, there are a range of legislative requirements that necessitate the Council to take forward this approach as summarised below.¹⁴

Impact Assessment	Legislative Background
Equalities	Equality Act 2010 – Public Sector Equality Duty to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the proposal does not discriminate. • Consider how the proposal might better advance equality of opportunity. • Consider whether the proposal will affect relations between different groups.
Poverty/socio-economic	Fairer Scotland Duty 2018 to actively consider how public bodies can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage.
Islands	Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 – to undertake impact assessment to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider these challenges properly. • Ensure islands received fair and equitable treatment. • Policy, strategy and service outcomes are tailored to islands' unique circumstances.
Mainland rural communities	There is no legislative requirement to undertake an impact assessment for mainland rural areas but in recognition of the Highland geographical area, the Council chose to adopt this approach a number of years ago.
Human rights	Human Rights Act 1998 – incorporates the rights of the European Convention on Human Rights into British Law. Public bodies must respect your rights.

¹⁴ Integrated Impact Assessment (The Highland Council, June 2024)

[www.highland.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/5003/highland_council_\(Item_14\)](http://www.highland.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/5003/highland_council_(Item_14)) [Accessed November 2024]

Impact Assessment	Legislative Background
Children's rights and wellbeing	<p>United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (1991) – to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing the UNCRC and incorporate it into Scots Law to make it unlawful for public authorities to act incompatibly with the UNCRC. • Use the Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) to ensure that our policies and legislation protect and promote the rights and wellbeing of children and young people.
Climate change	<p>There is no legislative requirement to undertake a Climate Impact Assessment but to support the Council's Net Zero Strategy it has been agreed through the Climate Change Committee to undertake climate impact assessments to embed climate change into decision-making processes.</p>
Data protection	<p>UK General Data Protection Requirement requires the Council to implement data protection by design and default. Data Protection Impact Assessment is the mechanism for ensuring this is met and is included as a requirement in the Council's Data Protection Policy.</p>

Transport Problems, Opportunities and Challenges in Highland

Duilgheadasan, Cothroman is Dùbhlain Còmhshalach sa Ghàidhealtachd

A LTS Case for Change was completed by The Highland Council in 2023. This presented an analysis of the problems and opportunities affecting the transport system within Highland and feedback was sought from stakeholders and the public at the time.

The varied geography of Highland brings diverse and unique considerations for the transport system which form a focus to this new LTS to make further positive change to meet the needs of those who live in, work in and visit Highland and address transport inequalities across the Region. In taking this forward:

The LTS is not about forcing people out of their car. It is about improving choices for sustainable transport including active travel, public, community and shared transport to be an option for more people, so they are not being forced into their car / to purchase a car and so non-drivers have more transport independence.

The LTS provides a pragmatic policy framework, recognising the different options that may be available to people. For example, it is not about suggesting sustainable and active travel for all journeys, rather about improving choices for this to be an option where other factors such as distance permit.

There is a need to recognise and keep in mind that transport is a derived demand i.e. people travel to access opportunities, services, goods etc rather than for the sake of travelling. Therefore, the LTS alone will not meet user needs nor overcome existing problems and challenges. Rather the LTS also needs to be embedded in wider policy, particularly that which has an intrinsic impact on why, when and to where people travel, and goods move between.

An overview of the problems and opportunities as well as challenges follows, and further information can be found in the LTS Case for Change available on The Highland Council's website [here](#).

While there have been several achievements with the transport system since the previous LTS was published, it is recognised **problems** remain and need to be addressed. These include:

- **Net Zero** – The Highland Council is committed to achieving Net Zero by 2045 and potentially sooner. Car travel, however, dominates the transport network within Highland and the transport sector is a key contributor to Ss accounting for over 25% nationally. Adequate provision of electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure, supported by grid infrastructure, is required to enable a smooth transition to EVs and support Net Zero targets together with investment in schemes to improve travel choices. The Highland Council's fleet and staff travel emissions represent 21% of corporate carbon emissions, whilst the Council operated public ferry route, Corran Ferry, accounts for a further 3% of emissions¹⁵.
- **Car Dependence** – The predominance of car travel is reflective of a lack of available alternative options leading to dependence on and forced car ownership for some. Congestion in more urban areas affects the reliability of bus services and can also lead to real and perceived safety concerns for those who walk, wheel and cycle.
- **Public Transport** – Public transport and lifeline connections have a key role for equality of access to employment, education and services as well as rural re-population and attracting younger people to stay in or return to the area. The ability of bus operators to meet different needs is challenging, for example fulfilling school bus contracts can impact service availability at commuting times and other times of the day. The physical constraints of the rail network impact the service offer that can be provided and ability to flex to integrate with other travel modes at times. The community transport sector plays an important role in operating minibus and car share services, this often serves as a lifeline for some to access services and provides a key function against the backdrop of an ageing population. Demand does though in some locations exceed available capacity. Lifeline ferry and air services are vital to the region with the reliability of ferries a factor. The physical accessibility of services for those with disabilities and lack of integrated onward connections can also present barriers to use.
- **Expenditure** – In terms of transport expenditure, the rural nature of the region and longer travel distances mean that transport costs can account for a larger proportion of expenditure for residents. Analysis undertaken as part of STPR2¹⁶ identified that most people in Highland spend between 17% to 18% of their budget on transport, compared to the national average of 14%. The Fair Fares Review, published in 2024, is part of a broader

¹⁵ Net Zero Strategy (The Highland Council, 2023)

https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/download/2297/net_zero_strategy [Accessed November 2024]

¹⁶ STPR2: Case for Change Highlands and Islands Region (Transport Scotland, 2021)

www.transport.gov.scot/media/49100/initial-appraisal-case-for-change-highlands-and-islands-report.pdf [Accessed December 2024]

package of work referred to as the Future of Public Transport being undertaken by Transport Scotland. Aspects of the review consider affordability and make several related recommendations¹⁷.

- **Active Travel** – The active travel network comprises National Cycle Network routes as well as local routes. The variable quality, missing links and accessibility of infrastructure significantly impacts use alongside physical factors relating to for example distance.
- **Network Demand** – The transport system is experiencing pressure from demand associated with new development, including residential, renewables sector as well as tourism which plays a major role in Highland, with the region attracting 7 million visitors, generating around £1.6 billion of economic impact each year and supporting around 25,000 jobs¹⁸. The road network in the region is particularly susceptible to seasonal congestion and delay associated with increased visitor numbers, particularly during the summer months, holiday weekends and at times of major events. Analysis undertaken as part of STPR2¹⁹ noted the A82 in Fort William and A830 as being areas where this is experienced with other problems known to be experienced on the North Coast 500 and at key tourist destinations throughout the region.
- **Resilience** – The transport system in Highland is compromised by the lack of alternative options which result in long diversions in the event of a road closure. Diversions or delay have an impact on the reliability of all journeys, including trips by bus and freight as well as private car.

This impacts the A82, A87 and A9 north of Inverness on the strategic road network, as also highlighted in STPR2, as well as routes on the local road network. Analysis undertaken as part of STPR2²⁰ highlighted four of the longest diversion routes are on the A82 and the fifth longest diversion route on the A87.

STPR2 also noted the impact of ferry and air service cancellations for islanders, limiting access to employment, healthcare and other services as well as adversely impacting the supply of goods and limiting economic development opportunities, including tourism. Improved integration between passenger services could assist together with a general

¹⁷ Fair Fares Review (Transport Scotland, 2024)

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/our-approach/strategy/fair-fares-review/> [Accessed December 2024]

¹⁸ Highland Local Development Plan Evidence Gathering Committee Report (The Highland Council, October 2024)

[www.highland.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/5070/economy_and_infrastructure_committee_\(item_12\)](http://www.highland.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/5070/economy_and_infrastructure_committee_(item_12)) [Accessed November 2024]

¹⁹ STPR2: Case for Change Highlands and Islands Region (Transport Scotland, 2021)

www.transport.gov.scot/media/49100/initial-appraisal-case-for-change-highlands-and-islands-report.pdf [Accessed December 2024]

²⁰ STPR2: Case for Change Highlands and Islands Region (Transport Scotland, 2021)

www.transport.gov.scot/media/49100/initial-appraisal-case-for-change-highlands-and-islands-report.pdf [Accessed December 2024]

broadening of improving transport choices in turn providing more resilience in the event issues arise with a particular part of the transport system. Providing an alternative mode of travel for freight reduces reliance on the road network to transport goods and materials from the region, improving the resilience of the sector.

The resilience of the transport system is also heightened by the impacts of climate change and the predicted increase in intensity and frequency of extreme weather events that will adversely affect the transport system and ability to make journeys. For example, in Winter 2024 flooding closed parts of the rail network in Highland and landslips also resulted in road closures.

- **Network Condition** – The condition of the existing transport system, including the road network, public transport infrastructure and the active travel network is also a factor. This reflects the challenge of maintaining existing assets within a constrained budgetary position combined with increasing demand from different uses. This impacts all users of the network, including those who walk, wheel, cycle, use public transport and drive. Maintenance of existing assets is also of importance to supporting the resilience of the transport system to the impacts of climate change and more extreme weather events experienced.

While there are problems for the transport system to overcome, **opportunities** are available to build on. These include:

- The **existing fabric of the transport system in Highland** provides the opportunity to make further improvements, supporting modal shift to more sustainable alternatives. This includes expansion of existing port infrastructure and rail freight facilities to transition more freight from road as well as improvements to the active travel network including potential use of disused railway lines.
- The region is at the **centre of both onshore and offshore renewables expansion**. The attractiveness of the region supports a thriving **tourist sector**. This vibrancy supports the potential for a prosperous future supported by a transport system that is safe and reliable with needs served by the availability of sustainable travel choices.
- The Highland area is characterised by a **strong community spirit**. This is reflected in the breadth of the volunteer run community transport services currently on offer, as well as the activities of groups to take forward developing Local Place Plans to help shape and improve their communities across the region.
- Linked to this, a further opportunity to build on is the **existing partnership working** across the region. This includes national, regional and local Government as well as locally through, for example, community planning partnerships.

- While Highland serves a third of the land area of Scotland, including the most remote and sparsely populated parts of the UK, this masks the fact that most people live in some form of settlement. Linked to this national, regional and local planning policy reflects a **local living focus** whereby people can access many of their daily needs within a reasonable distance, thereby providing a spatial context supportive of active travel and public transport. These factors provide a basis from which to encourage more sustainable travel choices for people to access services and facilities, supported by the necessary infrastructure and service provision.
- The expansion of the **EV charging network** in Highland will help facilitate the switch to electric vehicles and support progress towards national Net Zero commitments as well as interim targets of The Highland Council. The Highland Council has collaborated with Aberdeen City and Shire Councils and Moray Council to identify a preferred delivery model through the Pathfinder Project, that can attract private sector investment. A project delivery partner will be appointed with responsibility for the adoption of existing assets, repair and maintenance service and investment in extending the network.

The unique character and scale of Highland presents significant challenges for the delivery, operation and maintenance of the transport system. **Challenges** of relevance in Highland include:

- A **constrained public sector funding landscape** means a reduction in budgets and slower decision making to release funds. This has a direct bearing on the delivery of new transport schemes, maintenance of existing infrastructure as well as the provision of transport services with less budget to go further.
- **Decisions taken by other sectors which impact on transport.** An example of this is the centralisation of health services leading to longer distances people need to travel to access specialist services and other types of treatment.
- **Constraints on the public transport network** influence service operations and integration between modes. For example, the rail line north of Perth and throughout Highland is predominantly single track which directly influences service operations.
- **Existing travel trends** being **counter to** local, regional and national **policy**, including in relation to mode shift to sustainable travel choices and Net Zero commitments. This has a direct bearing on **inequalities** as well as **travel independence** within Highland.
- An **older and ageing population** in Highland compared to the Scottish average raises considerations for the transport system such as mobility requirements of new infrastructure as well as access to services and increasing reliance on non-car transport to do so.

- The transport system in Highland is at risk from the predicted increase in intensity and frequency of extreme weather events due to the **impact of climate change**, including flooding and erosion, temperature extremes, slope and embankment failures and subsidence. These impacts can damage as well as speed up the deterioration of the road, rail and active travel networks making maintenance more costly and challenging. Regular and targeted maintenance is critical, as are ongoing adaptation and resilience efforts, to ensure the transport system in Highland can continue to withstand the current and future impacts of climate change. The Highland Council is working with partners, including through Highland Adapts and with the North of Scotland Regional Resilience Partnership, on climate adaptation planning and related risk assessments, and the identification of adaptation and resilience measures.
- **Uncertainty about national infrastructure projects** with The Highland Council awaiting confirmation of several strategic road improvements that have a direct bearing on future development proposals. This includes the A9 Perth to Inverness Dualling, A96 Corridor, A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton (also known as East Link), A9/A82 Longman Junction Improvement Scheme and A9 North Kessock to Tore. Several strategic rail improvement projects within Highland were also identified in the second Strategic Transport Projects Review, such as electrification²¹, a programme of new and longer passing loops with more flexibility and permissible speed increases on the Highland Main Line²² and Inverness Rail Station Masterplan²³. The uncertainty could have a significant impact on the future growth of the area and raises considerations for the transport system in terms of impact on the local network and potential improvements required underpinned by an infrastructure first approach.

²¹ STPR2 Recommendation 25: Decarbonisation of the Rail Network (Transport Scotland, 2022)

www.transport.gov.scot/media/52529/recommendation-25-rail-decarbonisation.pdf [Accessed January 2025]

²² STPR2 Recommendation 15: Highland Main Line Rail Corridor Enhancements (Transport Scotland, 2022)

www.transport.gov.scot/media/52519/recommendation-15-highland-main-line-rail-corridor-enhancements.pdf [Accessed January 2025]

²³ STPR2 Recommendation 43: Major Station Masterplans (Transport Scotland, 2022)

www.transport.gov.scot/media/52547/recommendation-43-major-station-masterplans.pdf [Accessed January 2025]

Local Transport Vision, Objectives, Themes and Policies

Lèirsinn, Amasan, Cuspairean is Poileasaidhean

Còmhhdhalach Ionadail

The understanding of the problems and opportunities and wider policy context detailed earlier in the LTS have informed the LTS Vision and objectives set out below, as well as the themes and policies that follow.

The **Vision** of the LTS is that:

“Our communities, businesses and visitors in Highland will be served by a low carbon transport system that is sustainable, inclusive, safe, resilient and accessible.”

The Vision is supported by **four objectives** that set out the outcomes we want to achieve through the LTS. These include:

To invest in the safety, maintenance and resilience of the transport system to support the future prosperity of communities and businesses within Highland.

To improve public, community and shared transport options that meet different user needs across the Highland geography.

To improve walking, wheeling and cycling choices for everyone living in or visiting Highland to encourage active and healthy journeys.

To reduce emissions from the transport system.

Under each objective are several **themes** to frame the policies of the strategy. The themes also help to ensure the coverage of the strategy is sufficient, recognising the varied geography of the region ranging from an urban city environment to rural and remote rural areas. The **policies** in turn set out the principles that will guide the actions of the strategy within the accompanying Delivery Plan to be developed in early 2025. The relationship between the LTS vision, objectives, themes and policies is shown overleaf.

OBJECTIVES

To invest in the safety, maintenance and resilience of the transport system to support the future prosperity of communities and businesses within Highland.

To improve public, community and shared transport options that meet different user needs across the Highland geography.

To improve walking, wheeling and cycling choices for everyone living in or visiting Highland to encourage active and healthy journeys.

To reduce emissions from the transport system within Highland.

THEMES

- Maintenance of the existing transport system.
- Strengthening consideration of maintenance needs and costs in design.
- Targeted road infrastructure improvements.
- Safety of the transport system.
- Resilience of the transport system.
- Climate change adaptation.
- Supporting access needs for economic growth.

- Competitiveness of journey times, operating schedules, attractiveness and cost.
- Reliability of services.
- Behaviour change.
- Role of community transport.
- Integration within the transport system.
- Supporting local living.

- Invest in active travel infrastructure which is inclusive for all.
- Behaviour change.
- Integration within the transport system.
- Supporting local living.

- Provide opportunities for people to have the choice to travel less where practical.
- Provide opportunities for people to have the choice to travel shorter distances to access employment, education and services.
- Provide opportunities for people to have less reliance on the car, both for the entire or as part of a journey.
- Reduce emissions from motorised journeys.
- Reduce emissions from construction and maintenance.

POLICIES

Local Transport Strategy Policy Framework

Objective 1: To invest in the safety, maintenance and resilience of the transport system to support the future prosperity of communities and businesses within Highland.

Draft Themes	Draft Policies	
Maintenance of the existing transport system.	P1.1	Undertake investment decisions with consideration of the Sustainable Investment Hierarchy which focuses on reducing the need to travel unsustainably, then maintaining and safely operating existing assets, then making better use of existing capacity, and finally targeted infrastructure improvements.
Strengthening consideration of maintenance needs and costs in design.	P1.2	Deliver a safer road network in Highland, adopting the Safe System approach and related five pillars - Safe Road Use, Safe Vehicles, Safe Speeds, Safe Roads and Roadsides and Post-crash Response. This approach aligns with that adopted by the Scottish Government to achieve Vision Zero where no one is seriously injured or killed on our roads by 2050.
Targeted road infrastructure improvements.	P1.3	Strive to reduce the impact of traffic on communities and reduce casualties through various means, such as speed and traffic reduction measures as well as education in line with The Highland Council's Road Safety Plan to 2030.
Safety of the transport system. Resilience of the transport system.	P1.4	Maintain, improve and manage adopted roads, bridges and associated infrastructure in line with The Highland Council's Road Asset Management Plan and projects forming part of the Highland Investment Plan – Roads Infrastructure and Improvement Programme. Investment and maintenance decisions will be taken with cognisance of The Highland Council's Road Network Hierarchy.
Climate change adaptation.	P1.5	Public transport projects will be subject to an asset management approach, ensuring maintenance and replacement strategies are in place for any ageing infrastructure such as bus shelters as well as bus priority infrastructure such as signage and road markings.
Supporting access needs for economic growth.	P1.6	Active travel projects will be subject to an asset management approach, ensuring maintenance and replacement strategies are in place for any ageing infrastructure such as signage and lining. Active travel infrastructure will also be designed with consideration of access for maintenance purposes and associated costs to maintain.
	P1.7	Maintenance of active travel infrastructure will be underpinned by an understanding of what parts of the existing network are adopted by The Highland Council and which aren't. This will help inform the planning of maintenance needs and delivery going forward.
	P1.8	The Highland Council will consider ways to lever in funding for the maintenance of adopted assets across all modes, taking into consideration funding already obtained through external means such as developer contributions. This could also include potential efficiencies in pooling resources between partners.
	P1.9	The Highland Council will continue to engage with partners nationally and regionally on strategic road improvements including the A9 dualling, A96 corridor, A82 and upgrades to other regionally significant routes to improve the quality and safety of the road network for all users and unlock regional economic potential.
	P1.10	The Highland Council will work with partners to enhance the trunk road network that passes through communities to ensure safe, inclusive and sustainable travel options for all. This includes continuing to work with partners to progress the Fort William Integrated Transport Plan as part of the wider FW2040 project.
	P1.11	The Highland Council will continue to work with partners to improve the resilience of the transport system. This includes response to closures requiring the use of diversionary routes that impact on the movement of passengers and goods and the ability of different parts of the transport system to flex to meet needs when one experiences issues (e.g. rail network blocked by a landslide and alternative options available to passengers). Seasonality of demand and operational impact on the system is also a factor, such as the varying journey times experienced at different times of the year in locations such as Fort William which is linked to the Council continuing to support activities such as progress of the Fort William Integrated Transport Plan.
	P1.12	The transport system will be designed with adaptation in mind to help build resilience against weather related impacts of climate change, including increased incidences of flooding, erosion, temperature extremes, slope and embankment failures and subsidence.

Draft Themes	Draft Policies	
	P1.13	Integrate blue-green infrastructure into the design of transport schemes. This includes the 'green' and 'blue' features that can provide environmental benefits and contribute to quality of life. Examples include woodlands, street trees, play spaces, allotments, community growing spaces, playing fields, road verges, swales, green walls and living roofs, rivers, canals, streams, wetlands, sustainable drainage. Active travel routes are another example, but in the context of this policy the focus is on non-transport blue-green infrastructure to complement the transport system.
	P1.14	Safe and personally secure environments for all will be considered in the design of transport schemes, recognising that some groups suffer particular personal security issues in our built environment and on public transport services.
	P1.15	Maintain the safety and integrity of the local road network while supporting existing and future access needs from different demands/sectors, including renewables, the timber industry, the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport and tourism. This includes The Highland Council working with developers to support the future growth of the region. The Highland Council also expects developers to support the transport requirements of their developments and contribute appropriately to the transport system, supported by robust guidance.
	P1.16	Investigate options to manage tourist traffic at popular destinations in Highland and work with partners to implement schemes.

Objective 2: To improve public, community and shared transport options that meet different user needs across the Highland geography.

Draft Themes	Draft Policies	
Competitiveness of journey times, operating schedules, attractiveness and cost. Reliability of services.	P2.1	Bus service operations will be underpinned by a clear understanding of existing needs and service provision.
	P2.2	Maintain and develop an efficient home-to-school transport system for those pupils entitled to it. From the point of view of bus services, this requires The Highland Council to work with operators to balance, as far as possible, the scheduling of services around the start and end of the school day with the needs of other users such as those dependent on public transport for commuting and to access health appointments.
Invest in behaviour change to encourage mode shift to public, community and shared transport options for all or part of a journey.	P2.3	Continue to develop and participate in the Highland Bus Service Improvement Partnership (BSIP) to support improvements in bus services by partnership working with operators and HITRANS. Through this The Highland Council will continue to explore opportunities to invest in initiatives such as bus lanes and traffic signal priority, and other measures designed to support bus use. A further aspect will be to work with partners to progress bringing forward a minimum acceptable standard for bus services in Highland that is part of the BSIP Plan to support getting the basics right to complement investment in service expansion and measures to improve the reliability of operations.
Role of community transport alongside scheduled public transport services to connect communities and provide access.	P2.4	Fully utilise the powers given to local authorities through the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, where Section 2A was added to the Transport (Scotland Act) 2001, where the creation of an Arm's Length External Organisation (ALEO), would support in the delivery of the objectives of the Local Transport Strategy and its associated delivery plan, further facilitating contribution towards the achievement of objectives of the emerging Bus Service Improvement Partnership alongside wider national and regional transport policy objectives to ultimately achieve overall efficiencies for the Highland Transport Network.
Integration of the public transport network within the transport system, including between different public transport modes as well as with active travel and private car/vehicles.	P2.5	Work with local providers of community bus and car share schemes to help support the activities of groups as well as plan and integrate services with other public transport operations, recognising the valuable role of community transport to the transport system in Highland.
	P2.6	Public transport schemes will be designed with consideration of different road users, including those who walk, cycle and wheel, bus operators and passengers, drivers of cars and other private vehicles as well as access requirements of businesses and other services local to a route.
	P2.7	Work with partners to improve options for using public, community and shared transport options to attend health appointments, particularly between more rural areas of Highland and Inverness. This includes looking at the scheduling of appointments from a timing and geography point of view, therefore requiring wide participation from partners to improve travel choices and support their more efficient delivery.
Public, community and shared transport will support local living where people can meet the majority of their daily needs within a reasonable distance of their home if walking, wheeling or cycling not a feasible option.	P2.8	Work with partners to continue to progress line speed and capacity improvements to the rail network in Highland and to support the planning & delivery of new railway stations supporting both the movement of passengers and freight. This will also involve working with partners to ensure the rail network which directly passes through communities, such as at level crossings, is safe for all users of the community, including those who walk, wheel, cycle as well as drive.
	P2.9	Work with partners to support the case for investment in ferries infrastructure and service improvements that meet the needs of communities and businesses in Highland. This includes completing the next stages of the Corran Ferry replacement project.
	P2.10	Continue to work with partners to encourage sustainable land access to and from ferry services in Highland.
	P2.11	Continue to work with partners to encourage sustainable surface access to and from airports in Highland.

Draft Themes	Draft Policies	
	P2.12	Work with partners to support the case for improvements to air travel, including enhancements to existing services and the establishment of new services recognising the role of aviation within Highland in getting people to hubs and across the region as well as supporting economic development. This should include consideration of using the Public Service Obligation (PSO) contracting system.
	P2.13	Public, community and shared transport services will be complemented by fit for purpose infrastructure. Examples could include the provision of safe, accessible and comfortable waiting facilities and information underpinned by a sound understanding of passenger requirements.
	P2.14	Work with partners to ensure that the public, community and shared transport network in Highland is inclusive in line with policy, guidance and standards set out in the Equality Act 2010. This includes access to vehicles (including taxis) and stops/stations as well as information and communications about services, fares etc. This includes ensuring all groups with protected characteristics are considered and have the opportunity to input to proposals. A factor to this is also the ageing population as well as users of the transport system who experience hidden disabilities in Highland and what this means in terms of provision.
	P2.15	The public transport system will be developed with account taken of the needs of both younger and older people to give them access to sustainable, safe and affordable options.
	P2.16	Encourage integration between different public, community and shared transport options as well as with walking and cycling routes to help connect communities with these services. This includes integration of services/routes as well as ticketing and how services can be booked, harnessing the opportunities presented by technology and different types of service delivery. From a service point of view, it will be important to consider the impact of any service changes on access for existing users. In the adoption of technology, it will be important to ensure there is not digital exclusion, such as how people can access information and take advantage of a more integrated offer.
	P2.17	Continue to explore opportunities and funding options for mobility hubs in Highland to support connectivity between different public, community and shared transport options as well as with active travel modes, building on the experience of existing hubs such as at Torvean.
	P2.18	The Highland Council's approach to development planning and development management will be in line with the Sustainable Travel Hierarchy. The Highland Council therefore expects that public transport is incorporated into development layouts from the start and not designed in retrospectively.
	P.19	Work with partners and operators to promote awareness of lower public transport fares options, such as the Highland Railcard and bus offers. This also links to The Highland Council supporting continued work in the area of integrated ticketing across different modes and operators within Highland and to/from the area.
	P2.20	Invest in behaviour change initiatives to promote the use of public, community and shared transport. This covers awareness raising of available services, ticketing information, journey information and opportunities to connect with different types of services/modes as well as opportunities to access by foot and bike. This will also require The Highland Council to continue to work with partners to support people being able to travel to/from Highland by public transport.
	P2.21	Work with partners to promote public transport options for business travellers and visitors to get around Highland. From a tourism point of view this includes scenic routes being accessible by bus and/or rail, and in the delivery of options to help manage demand on the road network at tourist hotspots. This will also require The Highland Council to continue to work with partners to support people being able to travel to/from Highland by public transport.
	P2.22	Work with HITRANS and other partners to ensure fairness in the funding of rural transport. This links to the concessionary travel system operated by the Scottish Government, both in relation to the level of reimbursement received by more rural areas such as Highland and to the uncapped fare mechanism for reimbursement in relation to affordability for fare paying passengers.

Objective 3: To improve walking, wheeling and cycling choices for everyone living in or visiting Highland to encourage active and healthy journeys.

Draft Themes	Draft Policies	
<p>Invest in active travel infrastructure which is inclusive for all.</p> <p>Invest in behaviour change to encourage mode shift to active travel for all or part of a journey.</p> <p>Integration of the active travel network within the transport system, including between different active travel modes as well as to public, community and shared transport services and with private car/vehicles.</p> <p>Active travel will support local living where people can meet the majority of their daily needs within a reasonable distance of their home, preferably by walking, wheeling or cycling.</p>	P3.1	Deliver safe, direct, coherent, comfortable, attractive and adaptable active travel infrastructure that takes account of different user needs, including those with visible and hidden disabilities. This includes within communities to support local living as well as between settlements, particularly where distances allow active travel to be feasible in more populated and less remote areas of Highland. Network planning will take account of desire lines and “missing links” to meet needs and encourage use as well as opportunities to enhance access in relation to areas of deprivation. This will also include consideration of the integration of active travel infrastructure with other modes and maximising opportunities such as the redevelopment of Inverness Rail Station.
	P3.2	The Highland Council will strive to progress active travel scheme delivery on a network basis to support the rollout of a coherent network rather than individual schemes, subject to the current funding approach of being scheme based and single year.
	P3.3	Design new active travel infrastructure in line with policy, guidance and standards, such as the Equality Act 2010 and Cycling by Design. This involves ensuring all groups with protected characteristics are considered and have the opportunity to input into designs with the ageing population profile in Highland as well as users of the transport system with hidden disabilities captured as part of this inclusive approach.
	P3.4	Active travel infrastructure will be designed with consideration of different road users, including those who walk, wheel and cycle, bus operators and passengers, drivers of cars and other private vehicles as well as access requirements of businesses and other services local to a new route.
	P3.5	New cycle infrastructure (cycleways, parking and storage) will be developed, where possible, to accommodate non-standard cycles including adapted bikes and cargo bikes. This will also require the consideration of associated maintenance costs at the outset.
	P3.6	The Highland Council's processes across different workstreams will align with supporting active travel infrastructure, such as the position on the process for the consideration of new pedestrian crossings and their implementation.
	P3.7	The Highland Council's approach to development planning and development management will be in line with the Sustainable Travel Hierarchy. The Highland Council therefore expects that active travel is incorporated into development layouts from the start and not designed in retrospectively.
	P3.8	Continue to support walking, wheeling, cycling and scooting to school where this is a feasible choice for pupils to travel to school. Staff should also seek to travel actively where possible, aligning with The Highland Council's wider Sustainable Business Travel Action Plan.
	P3.9	Work with partners to promote access to cycling opportunities for those who do not own a bike and/or who wish to take their bike on public transport.
	P3.10	Work with partners to support the use of active travel by business travellers and visitors. From a tourism point of view this includes options to help manage demand on the road network at tourist hotspots as well as raise awareness of longer distance walking/cycling routes in the region. This will also require The Highland Council to continue to work with partners to support people being able to travel to/from Highland by sustainable modes of travel.
	P3.11	Continue to enforce the ban on pavement parking, double parking and parking at some dropped kerbs within Highland to support safe negotiation of footways by those walking, wheeling and cycling.
	P3.12	Invest in behaviour change initiatives to promote the use of active travel infrastructure and with consideration of different users. This covers awareness raising of both the physical and mental health benefits as well as education of active travel users and drivers around safety and using the network together (including consideration by cyclists of pedestrians and vice versa). Working with partners will be an important aspect, both to improve knowledge of need and access to active travel as well as

Draft Themes	Draft Policies	
		potential funding options. This will also require The Highland Council to continue to work with partners to support people being able to travel to/from Highland by sustainable modes of travel.

Objective 4: To reduce emissions from the transport system within Highland.

Draft Themes	Draft Policies	
<p>Provide opportunities for people to have the choice to travel less where practical. This will seek to provide opportunities for people to work and study remotely and access services online where feasible. It is not about mandating how and when people travel as it is recognised there are different reasons people travel including wider social well-being factors, rather the focus is on giving opportunities that remove or reduce the need to travel.</p> <p>Provide opportunities for people to have the choice to travel shorter distances to access employment, education and services.</p> <p>Provide opportunities for people to have less reliance on the car for journeys, both for the entire journey or as part of a journey.</p> <p>Reduce emissions from motorised journeys.</p> <p>Reduce emissions from transport related construction and maintenance.</p>	P4.1	The Highland Council will continue to support the roll-out of broadband and mobile networks to improve digital connectivity.
	P4.2	Continue to decarbonise The Highland Council's in-house fleet and replace vehicles with low emission alternatives. This includes buses operated by The Highland Council, fleet cars/vans and Heavy Goods Vehicles for gritting and refuse collections so far as is possible in terms of logistical considerations and associated cost. This links to the Council's Sustainable Business Travel Action Plan which includes a focus on rationalising the fleet and replacing vehicles with low emission alternatives. The Highland Council will also work with bus operators and other partners in the region to support decarbonisation of their fleet.
	P4.3	Continue to explore ways to reduce the carbon impact of Council-related travel, including both the journey to work as well as business travel. This links to The Highland Council's Sustainable Business Travel Action Plan which includes a focus on behaviour change and promoting sustainable travel as well as reducing the use of grey fleet (use of private vehicles for work purposes).
	P4.4	Invest in infrastructure to support travel by alternatively fuelled vehicles for those who live in, work in and visit Highland. This includes collaborating with the private sector and utility companies in the development of the public EV charging network as well as consideration of the requirements of homeowners who do not have private driveways but wish to charge at home.
	P4.5	The impact of transport investment on The Highland Council's Net Zero ambitions will form part of the Council's transport decision-making process.
	P4.6	The Highland Council's approach to development planning and development management will be in line with the Sustainable Travel Hierarchy and set out to ensure that developments contribute appropriately to the transport system to support the delivery of the Local Transport Strategy, supported by robust guidance.
	P4.7	The Highland Council shall strive to work with organisations, so they consider the impact of their decisions on how services are provided and where facilities are located. This includes consideration of accessibility in line with the Sustainable Travel Hierarchy and carbon implications of changes to where people need to access goods and services to support delivery of the Local Transport Strategy.
	P4.8	The transport system will support local living and the roll-out of The Highland Council's community Points of Service Delivery approach. Within more urban areas and larger towns in Highland this will focus on encouraging walking, wheeling and cycling for shorter everyday journeys. For more rural areas, it will be about connecting communities to public, community and shared transport hubs/points to access services and facilities in larger settlements utilising walking, wheeling and cycling routes at the start and end of their journey.
	P4.9	The Highland Council will continue to keep under review the approach to parking to support the efficient operation of the road network within Highland, including in both urban and more rural areas, as well as contribute to wider policies to support sustainable travel by all users of the transport network in Highland including visitors and to reduce emissions from the transport sector.
	P4.10	The Highland Council will continue to keep under review options for demand management to help optimise the operation of the existing transport system for all, including those who travel by public transport and non-motorised modes of transport.
	4.11	Freight movements should be as sustainable as possible and alternatives to road-based transport used where feasible, such as cargo bikes for last mile deliveries and railways and waterways for longer haul freight journeys.
	P4.12	The Highland Council will continue to support proposals of the Scottish Government to decarbonise the rail network within Highland.

Draft Themes	Draft Policies	
	P4.13	The Highland Council will continue to support partners in their work to build on the success of the Sustainable Aviation Test Environment (SATE) project and Scottish Government aspiration for the Highlands & Islands to be the world's first zero emission aviation region.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Sgrùdadh is Measadh

Monitoring the impact of the policies of the strategy is important. The table below shows key indicators to inform the monitoring of the strategy. There is a focus to employ indicators that cut across multiple objectives and to draw on existing data sources as far as possible. This is to provide a monitoring approach that is both proportionate to the strategy and feasible in terms of resource and cost requirements to deliver. The monitoring and evaluation of the strategy will be complemented by activities specific to individual actions and projects forming part of the LTS Delivery Plan.

Indicator	Source	Baseline	LTS OBJECTIVES			
			<i>To invest in the safety, maintenance and resilience of the transport system to support the future prosperity of communities and businesses within Highland.</i>	<i>To improve public, community and shared transport options that meet different user needs across the Highland geography.</i>	<i>To improve walking, wheeling and cycling choices for everyone living in or visiting Highland to encourage active and healthy journeys.</i>	<i>To reduce emissions from the transport system within Highland.</i>
Vehicle kms on the trunk and local road networks	Scottish Transport Statistics	2024; 5-year average 2019 to 2024		✓	✓	✓
Personal Injury Accidents (PIAs) on local road network	Department for Transport STATS19 data	5-year average 2019 to 2024	✓			
Mode of travel to work	2022 Census Scottish Household Survey	2022 Census	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mode of travel to education	2022 Census Scottish Household Survey	2022 Census	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mode of travel to school	Hands Up Scotland Survey	2024; 2014 to 2024	✓	✓	✓	✓
Car ownership levels	Scottish Household Survey	2024; 2014 to 2024		✓	✓	✓
No. Vehicles Licensed (total and no. cars)	Scottish Transport Statistics	2024; 2014 to 2024		✓	✓	✓
No. ULEV registered	Department for Transport	2024; 2014 – 2024				✓
The Highland Council carbon emissions tonnes CO ₂ e	The Highland Council Corporate Plan Indicator	2022/23 Financial Year				✓
Bus patronage (scheduled and community transport services)	Operator data (subject to availability)	2024 passenger number		✓		✓
Use of bus services	Scottish Household Survey	2024		✓		✓
Rail station entry/exit numbers	ScotRail	2024; 2014 to 2024 station entry/exit data		✓		✓
No. cyclists/pedestrians	Existing counters	2024; 2014 – 2024	✓		✓	✓
NO _x and PM _x emissions	Annual monitoring (statutory requirement)	2024 Air Quality levels		✓	✓	✓
Access to employment, education, services	SIMD ranking	2020 SIMD		✓	✓	

