Chapter 10 : Transport

Information required by the Act regarding the issue addressed in this section	Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended: Section 15(5)(d): • the infrastructure of the district. Section 15(5)(e): • how that infrastructure is used. Town and Country Planning (Development Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2023: Regulation 9 • (e) (vii) any regional transport strategy, • (e) (viii) any local transport strategy.
NPF4 LDP Requirements	NPF4 Policy 13: • LDPs should prioritise locations for future development that can be accessed by sustainable modes. The spatial strategy should reflect the sustainable travel hierarchy and sustainable investment hierarchy by making best use of existing infrastructure and services. • LDPs should promote a place-based approach to consider how to reduce car-dominance. This could include low traffic schemes, shared transport options, designing–in speed controls, bus/cycle priority, pedestrianisation and minimising space dedicated to car parking. Consideration should be given to the type, mix and use of development; local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods; car ownership levels; the accessibility of proposals and allocations by sustainable modes; and the accessibility for users of all abilities. • LDPs should be informed by an appropriate and effective transport appraisal undertaken in line with relevant transport appraisal guidance. Plans should be informed by evidence of the area's transport infrastructure capacity, and an appraisal of the spatial strategy on the transport network. This should identify any potential cumulative transport impacts and deliverable mitigation proposed to inform the plan's infrastructure first approach. Where there is likely to be an impact on the trunk road or rail network, early engagement with Transport Scotland is required.

	NPF4 Policy 18:
	• LDPs and delivery programmes should be based on an integrated infrastructure first approach. Plans should:
	  ○ set out the infrastructure requirements to deliver the spatial strategy, informed by the evidence base, identifying the infrastructure priorities, and where, how, when and by whom they will be delivered; and
	  ○ indicate the type, level (or method of calculation) and location of the financial or in-kind contributions, and the types of development from which they will be required.
	• Plans should align with relevant national, regional, and local infrastructure plans and policies and take account of the Scottish Government infrastructure investment hierarchy and sustainable travel and investment hierarchies in developing the spatial strategy.
	• Consistent early engagement and collaboration between relevant stakeholders will better inform decisions on land use and investment.

Links to Evidence	**(THC139)** STPR2 Highlands and Islands Appraisal Summary Table **(THC 323)** National Road Development Guide **(THC158)** HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy 2025 **(THC162)** HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy Draft Delivery Plan **(THC163)** Local Transport Strategy Case for Change **(THC185)** Local Transport Strategy Delivery Plan **(THC332)** Census 2022 Summarised Highland Origin Destination Data **(THC104)** Active Travel Counter Data for Inverness **(THC105)** Active Travel Counter Data for Fort William **(THC164)** Alness and Invergordon Active Travel Masterplan **(THC165)** Dingwall Active Travel Masterplan **(THC172)** Fort William Active Travel Masterplan **(THC166)** Inverness Active Travel Masterplan **(THC167)** Nairn Active Travel Masterplan **(THC168)** Portree Active Travel Masterplan **(THC169)** Tain Active Travel Masterplan **(THC170)** Thurso Active Travel Masterplan **(THC171)** Wick Active Travel Masterplan **(THC 324)** Inner Moray Firth Active Travel Network Planning

	(THC106) Sustainable Transport Team Update Paper **(THC107)** Inner Moray Firth Modal Shift Strategy **(THC118)** Route by Route Key Metric Assessment **(THC 325)** ScotRail Economic Impact Report 2024 **(THC 326)** Scotland's Railway Workstreams relevant to Planning in Highland **(THC095)** Fort Transit Appraisal Study **(THC096)** Evanton Station Technical Feasibility Study **(THC097)** Inverness Rail East - New Station Feasibility Study **(THC444)** Rail Freight Capability Study **(THC098)** Bus passenger numbers on THC Contract Services **(THC100)** Connecting Inverness STAG Report **(THC101)** Regional Transport Strategy Case for Change **(THC178)** Road Capacity, Needs and Deliverability **(THC 121)** Highland Trunk Road Baseline Traffic Counts and Journey Times by Corridor **(THC122)** Local Traffic Count Data Inverness **(THC442)** Skyfall Shared Road/Rail Clearway Proposal **(THC123)** Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey Factsheet **(THC125)** Road Asset Management Plan **(THC126)** Inverness Strategic Traffic Plan 2023 **(THC127)** Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2 Transport Appraisal **(THC128)** Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan Transport Appraisal **(THC108)** Inshes Junction Improvements Phase 2 Summary Report **(THC109)** A9/A82 Longman Junction Improvement DMRB Stage 2 Scheme Assessment Report **(THC129)** Caithness and Sutherland Monitoring Statement **(THC130)** West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan Transport Background Paper **(THC131)** Fort William Strategic Transport Study (pre-appraisal) **(THC 132)** Highland Delivery Programme **(THC 327)** Change in HGV Traffic Volumes in Highland **(THC 328)** Bottlenecks – Whisky Logistics Study **(THC 329)** Lorry Parking Strategy **(THC112)** Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategic Control Plan **(THC113)** Parking Penalty Charge Notices

(THC 114) Capacity of Highland Rail Station Car Parks
(THC115) Rail Station Car Parks Occupancy Surveys
(THC330) Transport - Draft Chapter Key Agency and Stakeholder Consultation Report
(THC135) Response from Transport Scotland
(THC402) Responses from HITRANS
(THC405) Response from Historic Environment Scotland - Draft 1
(THC406) Response from Moray Council - Draft 1
(THC407) Responses from Network Rail
(THC408) Response from Scotrail - Draft 1
(THC409) Response from CalMac - Draft 1
(THC410) Responses from Walk Wheel Cycle Trust (formerly Sustrans)
(THC411) Responses from HC Transport Planning 1 - Draft 1
(THC413) Response from HC Ferries - Draft 1
(THC414) Response from HC Access Officer - Draft 1
(THC415) Responses from HC Sustainable Travel Team
(THC088) Response from NatureScot
(THC089) Response from SEPA
(THC088)

Online Resources	Date Accessed
Highland Local Transport Strategy	10.06.25
National Transport Strategy 2	10.06.25
Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP) for Scotland	10.06.25
Infrastructure Delivery Pipeline 2026	17.03.26
Programme for Government	10.06.25
Strategic Transport Projects Review 2	10.06.25
STPR2 Highland and Islands Regional Page	10.06.25
Transport Poverty A Public Health Issue	29.08.25
Long Term Active Travel Vision in Scotland 2030	10.06.25
Active Travel Framework	10.06.25
National Walking Strategy	10.06.25
Cycling Framework for Active Travel	10.06.25
Cycling Action Plan	10.06.25
Cycling by Design	10.06.25
Rail Service Decarbonisation Action Plan	29.08.25

	Rail Recharged: Scotland's Fleet Transition Strategy	25.03.26
	Scotland's Railway Delivery Plan	29.08.25
	Our Principles of Good Design	29.08.25
	Sustainable Travel to Stations	29.08.25
	Islands Connectivity Plan - A Strategic Approach	10.06.25
	Climate Change Plan Update	10.06.25
	Route Map to achieve a 20 per cent reduction in car kilometres by 2030	10.06.25
	Renewed Policy Statement for Achieving Car Use Reduction in Scotland	29.08.25
	Scotland's Road Safety Framework 2030	10.06.25
	Road Safety Plan to 2030	10.06.25
	Hydrogen Action Plan	29.08.25
	Switched on Scotland Roadmap	29.08.25
	Switched on Scotland Phase 2: Action Plan for Growth	29.08.25
	A Network Fit For The Future: Vision for Scotland's Public Electric Vehicle Charging Network	29.08.25
	Local Transport Strategy	30.06.25
	Active Travel Strategy	30.06.25
	Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy	30.06.25
	Highland-wide Local Development Plan	30.06.25
	Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2	30.06.25
	Scotland's Census 2022	30.06.25
	Census 2022 Journey to Work Map	30.08.25
	Method of Travel to Work in Scotland and Highland 2011 and 2022	30.08.25
	Travel Mode to School in Scotland and Highland	30.08.25
	Distance Travelled to Work in Highland 2022	30.08.25
	Highland Council Core Paths	30.06.25
	Long Distance Routes	30.06.25
	Highland Local Development Plan Evidence Map	30.06.25
	Inverness Walking and Cycling Index 2023	30.06.25

Network Development Plan	30.08.25
North Coast Trail	30.08.25
Office of Road and Rail Data	30.08.25
Inverness East Development Brief	30.08.25
Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance	30.08.25
Scotland's Railway Climate Action Plan	30.08.25
Transport and Travel in Scotland 2023	25.06.25
Bus Infrastructure Fund	25.03.26
Passenger Traffic on Ferry Services in Highland	25.06.25
Terminal Passengers in Highland Airports	25.06.25
Scottish Transport Statistics 2024 – Road Lengths	25.06.25
Scottish Transport Statistics 2024 on Road Traffic	25.06.25
Drakewell	25.06.25
INRIX Roadway Analytics	25.06.25
Western Isles HVDC Link project	30.08.25
Highland Delivery Programme	30.08.25
Timber Transport Forum Agreed Route Map	30.08.25
Licensed ULEVs	30.08.25
EV Public Charging Infrastructure Statistics	30.08.25
THC News Centre	30.08.25
Reported Road Casualties Scotland 2023	30.08.25
Local Development Plan Guidance	30.08.25
Roads and Transport Guidelines for New Development	30.08.25
Developer Contributions Supplementary Guidance	30.08.25
Planning circular 4/2025: Planning obligations and good neighbour agreements	13.12.25
Torvean and Ness-side Development Brief	13.12.25
Local Development Plans – Evidence Reports and Gate Checks Action Plan and Advice	18.03.26

In order to avoid repetition of content contained elsewhere within the Evidence Report, this chapter should be read in conjunction with

	other chapters. We recognise that there are relevant crossovers between Transport and other topics including: • **Chapter 4: Climate and Energy** • **Chapter 5: Nature and** • **Environment** • **Chapter 6: Coastal Development and Aquaculture** • **Chapter 7: Flood Risk Management** • **Chapter 8: Business, Economy, Tourism and Productive Places** • **Chapter 9: Housing** • **Chapter 11: Infrastructure** • **Chapter 12: Historic Assets, Brownfield Land and Empty Buildings** • **Chapter 13: Design, Wellbeing, Local Living and Placemaking** Where apparent, the Council has referenced relevant linkages between policies areas throughout the chapter.

Summary of Evidence

10.1 The Council's vision for transport in Highland is that communities, business and visitors will be served by a low carbon transport system that is sustainable, inclusive, safe, resilient and accessible (Highland Local Transport Strategy). The Council, alongside other key transport stakeholders, and based on evidence, need to 'decide and provide': decide what our transport system should look like and provide infrastructure and services accordingly. Given the critical relationship between land use and transport, the LDP has an important role to play in helping to achieving this vision. It is important that these documents provide a framework for decisions to be made that ensure appropriate infrastructure and services are provided for new development.

10.2 Given that transport-derived carbon emissions comprise such a large share of Highland's overall carbon emissions (as highlighted in **Chapter 4: Climate Change and Energy**), transport policy will continue to play a vital role in responding to the climate crisis through mitigation measures. This chapter of the Evidence Report allows the integration of land use and transport to be considered from the earliest stage of LDP preparation and provides a baseline that will inform the transport appraisal and the HLDP.

10.3 The Council considers it has undertaken thorough engagement with stakeholders for this chapter and collected sufficient evidence on transport, including the transport elements of infrastructure first (data on other infrastructure types is provided in **Chapter 11 Infrastructure**), to inform the content of the HLDP. This Summary of Evidence focuses on information relating to:

- **Policy Context**
- **Travel Patterns and Methods**
- **Active Travel**
- **Rail Based Transport**
- **Bus Based Transport**
- **Water Based Transport**
- **Aviation**
- **Road-based Transport**
- **Cross Boundary Transport Considerations**
- **Current Approach to Transport Related Developer Contributions**

Policy Context

10.4 This section provides an overview of national, regional and local policy and strategies relevant to transport that will help to inform the approach the HLDP will take to contribute towards the delivery of a low carbon transport system.

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)

Policies

10.5 Policy 13 – Sustainable Transport and Policy 18 – Infrastructure First are both the key policies in focus and the LDP requirements of these policies have been outlined at the outset of this chapter. Other polices with a relevance to transport include Policy 1 – Tackling Climate and Nature crises, Policy 2 – Climate mitigation and adaption, Policy 15 – Local Living and 20-minute neighbourhoods and Policy 16 – Quality Homes.

10.6 These policies reinforce the Climate Emergency and the need for a fundamental shift in the way people travel, promoting the National Transport Strategy 2 (NTS2) sustainable travel and investment hierarchies (see Figure 10:1 and Figure 10:2) and the need to reduce the dominance and reliance of the private car to reduce emissions and seek modal shift. They promote place-based planning,

ensuring places are well connected to each other and to local amenities and services by sustainable travel modes.

10.7 There is a greater focus on the delivery of infrastructure, ensuring the spatial strategy can be facilitated with appropriate and deliverable infrastructure.

National Developments

10.8 NPF4 contains eighteen national developments that will help to deliver NPF4's spatial strategy.

10.9 A number of these apply to the whole of Scotland and are relevant to Highland and its transport network, such as number 8 – 'National Walking, Wheeling and Cycling Network.' This facilitates the shift from vehicles to walking, cycling and wheeling for everyday journeys contributing to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transport and it is highly beneficial for health and wellbeing. It will significantly support modal shift and deliver multiple outcomes including the Scottish Government's commitment reducing car kilometres, associated emissions reduction, health and air quality improvement.

10.10 In particular, national development (3) 'Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure' has implications for demand and maintaining the integrity and safety of the transport network in Highland.

Spatial Strategy

10.11 NPF4's Spatial Priorities for both 'North and West Coast and Islands' and 'North' are relevant to Highland. Important transport related extracts of these areas spatial planning priorities are:

North and West Coast and Islands

- Identifies key centres that provide access to islands, including Wick, Thurso, Ullapool and Mallaig.
- Recognises significant challenges that will continue in the area, including fuel and transport poverty.
- Continued expansion of electric vehicle charging facilities will support further decarbonisation.
- Communities in this area will continue to rely to an extent on the private car, and low carbon solutions to the provision of services will need to be practical and affordable.

- Key strategic sites for industrial investment and associated port infrastructure and facilities include plans for: Wick; Scrabster; Gills Bay and Kishorn. Other key nodes on the ferries network, including Ullapool, Uig and Mallaig, will continue to act as important hubs to support communities, investors and visitors.

North

- Key centres listed in this section within Highland are Inverness, Fort William, Ullapool and Dingwall.
- It recognises car dependence in this area and that more limited access to services creates disadvantage.
- Improvements to the Highland Main Line through electrification and delivery of new stations including at Inverness Airport, will help to create a sustainable commuter network for Inverness and open up more rural areas to lower carbon development.
- A continued modal shift to rail for both passengers and freight will bring significant environmental benefits over time.
- Roads will continue to be arteries upon which local communities and businesses depend.
- There will be a need to adapt key routes due to the impacts of climate change alongside creating a strong network of charging points, including improvements to the A96 to improve safety and to the A9 to maintain a resilient road link from Thurso and Inverness to the central belt. There are also resilience challenges for other key routes such as the A82.
- Continued investment in the national long distance walking and cycling network provides an opportunity to assist in decarbonising tourism and recreation across the area, whilst also providing, and acting as a spine for, sustainable active travel connections for everyday travel in the vicinity of towns and villages.
- Inverness and Oban airports are hubs for air connections to dispersed communities and Wick John O'Groats Airport and Broadford Airstrip on Skye are key connections.
- Key ports include the Cromarty Firth (including Port of Cromarty, Nigg and Highland Deephaven), Corpach, Ardersier, Gills Bay, Inverness and Kishorn.

National Transport Strategy 2 (NTS2)

10.12 NTS2 sets out an ambitious vision for Scotland's transport system for the next 20 years. The vision is underpinned by four interconnected priorities: Reduces

Inequalities, Takes Climate Action, Helps Deliver Inclusive Economic Growth and Improves Health and Wellbeing. To achieve these priorities, NTS2 embeds the Sustainable Travel Hierarchy (shown in Figure 10:1) by promoting walking, wheeling, cycling, public transport and shared transport options in preference to single occupancy private car use for the movement of people.

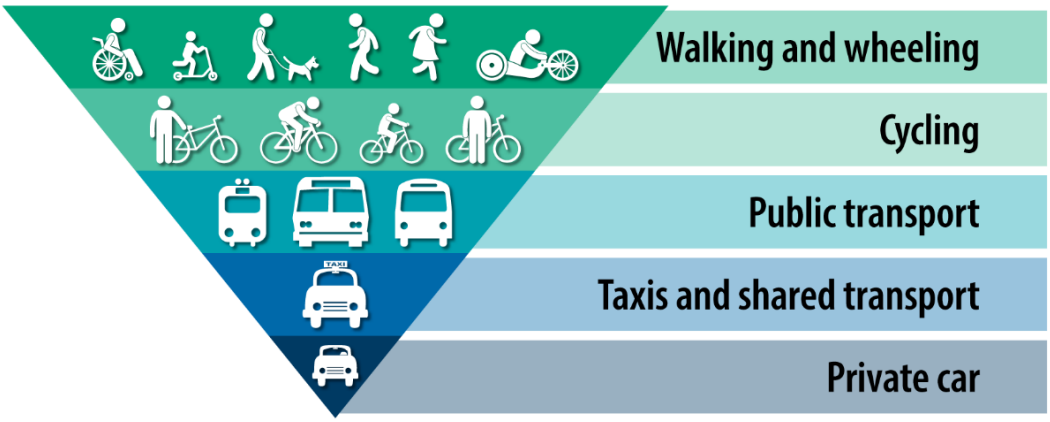

Figure 10:1 NTS2 Sustainable Travel Hierarchy

10.13 NTS2 recognises that planning and development have a major influence on our transport system and emphasises that planning decisions should give consider the impacts on transport. In addition, the Sustainable Investment Hierarchy shown in Figure 10:2 will be used to inform future investment decisions and ensure transport options that focus on reducing inequalities and the need to travel unsustainably are prioritised.

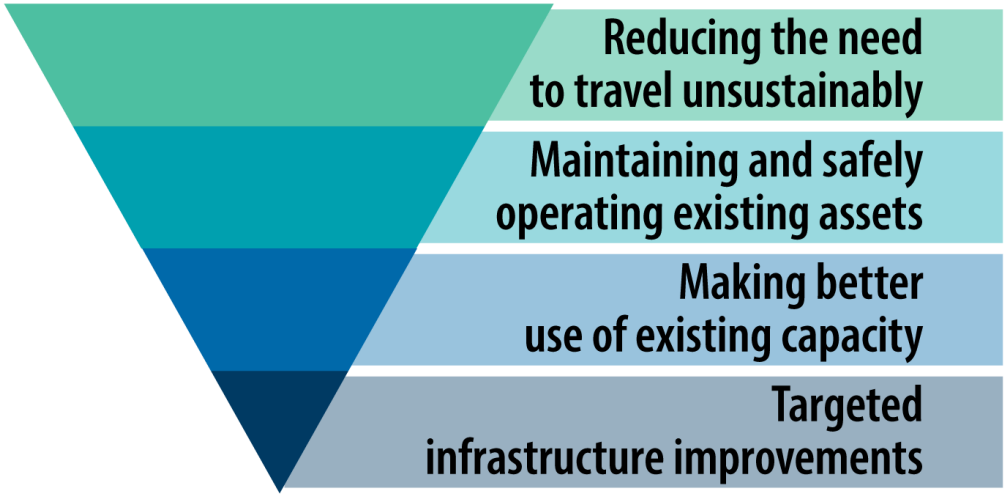

Figure 10:2 NTS2 Sustainable Investment Hierarchy

Infrastructure Investment Plan for Scotland 2021-22 to 2025-26 (IIP)

10.14 The IIP sets out the context for future investment in transport. The vision of the IIP is to ensure Scotland's infrastructure supports resilience and enables inclusive, net zero and sustainable growth.

10.15 Transport related investment projects relevant to Highland are listed in IIP:

- Support for Sustainable and Active Travel, including active freeways.
- Future Transport Fund – capital to support low / zero carbon investments.
- Future Transport Fund – Bus Priority Investment.
- Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal, supplemented by complementary and additional investment in key road sections and links: Longman junction with the A82; and the A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton connection.
- A9 Dualling Programme – phased improvements to A9 Perth to Inverness.
- A96 Dual carriageway – phased improvements to A96 Inverness to Aberdeen (including the Nairn Bypass).
- Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd (CMAL) – Two new 100 metre ferries to provide a year round service to the Isle of Arran and the Uig Triangle.
- CMAL – Voted Loans – For procurement of vessels. Proposals include, Small Vessel Replacement Programme and Mallaig-Lochboisdale.
- Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd Air Traffic Control Services - modernising air traffic control, improving service resilience and air traffic provision through the introduction of surveillance at six HIAL airfields.

Infrastructure Delivery Pipeline 2026 (IDP)

10.16 The IDP was published in January 2026, alongside a consultation on the Scottish Governments 10-year Infrastructure Strategy. The IDP is a continuation of the pipeline set out in the 2021 IIP.

10.17 The Infrastructure Pipeline contains projects over £5 million and programmes over £20 million with agreed business cases and agreed funding. The following transport projects relevant to Highland are listed:

- A9 Dualling Programme - Tomatin to Moy.
- Low Carbon and Sustainable Travel Programme - Including active travel and bus infrastructure, zero emission buses and fleets, smartcard programme and electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

- Vessels, Ports and Harbours - including Freight flex vessels – Northern Isles and Lord of the Isles replacement.
- Green Freeports (co-investment with UK Government).
- Cities Investment and Strategy (core deal) – co-investment with UK Government and Local Government.
- Cities Investment and Strategy (Corran Ferry) – co-investment with UK Government and Highland Council.

10.18 The IDP also sets out projects in the Development Pipeline. These are projects and programmes where a strategic outline case has been made and are Government commitments. Outline business cases are in development, programme/project is being further defined. The following transport projects relevant Highland are listed:

- A96 programme – A96 Dualling Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn Bypass), A96/A9 Inshes to Smithton and A96 Corridor.
- Major road investment programme – A9/A82 Longman Improvement Scheme.
- Rail services improvement and decarbonisation programme – Rural rail renewal project (incl. Highland Mainline).
- Vessels, ports and harbours investment programme – Mallaig Port Improvements.

10.19 A Future Pipeline is also included, the IDP explains these are interventions being explored to determine if there is a case for investment. For transport, examples listed include the Fort William Integrated Transport Plan and local road or rail improvements to support the delivery and operation of the renewables energy sector.

Programme for Government 2025 to 2026 (PfG)

10.20 The PfG outlines the Government's priorities for 2025-2026. PfG includes priorities on decarbonising transport and a safe, sustainable transport system, including measures to support people and businesses to reduce their emissions and support the transport network becoming more available, affordable and accessible. Spatial priorities relevant to sustainable transport in Highland are summarised below:

- Supporting three Masterplan Consent Areas including for development associated with the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport (ICFGF).
- Continuing to deliver the major vessels programme.

- Making it easier for people to walk, wheel, and cycle on everyday journeys by delivering projects through our 2025-26 sustainable travel programmes, including the new Bus Infrastructure Fund.
- Continue to dual the A9 as set out in its delivery plan.
- Progressing work to determine the most suitable procurement option for delivering the A96 Dualling Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn Bypass).

Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 (STPR2)

10.21 STPR2 details how it will help to deliver the vision, priorities and outcomes set out in NTS2 and aligns with other national plans including the Climate Change Plan and NPF4. It sets out 45 recommendations which will help inform potential transport investment opportunities for the period 2022-2042.

10.22 Recommendations 1 and 3 – 10 are applicable across the whole of Scotland with the aim to encourage a behaviour change to more sustainable modes of travel. Recommendations 21 – 23, 25 – 28 and 30 - 38 are also relevant to decarbonise transport, improve public transport and increase safety and resilience on the network. Recommendations specific that have particular benefits to the Highland and Islands region are shown in Table 10:1.

Table 10:1 STPR2 recommendations related to the Highlands and Islands Region (STPR2 Highland and Islands Regional Page)

Specific to the Highland and Islands Region	
15	Highland Mainline Rail Corridor Enhancements
32	Trunk Road and Motorway Renewal for Reliability, Resilience and Safety includes reference to the development of an integrated transport plan for Fort William.
41	Potential Sound of Harris, Sound of Barra Fixed Links and Fixed Link Between Mull and Scottish Mainland
Applicable to multiple regions but have particular benefit to the Highlands and Islands	
2	Active freeways and cycle parking hubs
18	Supporting integrated journeys at ferry terminals
24	Ferry vessel renewal and replacement, and progressive decarbonisation

42	Investment in port infrastructure to support vessel renewal and replacement, and progressive decarbonisation
43	Major station masterplans, including Inverness
44	Rail Freight Terminals and Facilities

10.23 The STPR2 package outlined in the STPR2 Highlands and Islands Appraisal Summary Table **(THC139)** is expected to boost active travel in the Highlands, raising the share of walking journeys from 17% to 20% and cycling from 1.6% to 15%. This aims to make walking and cycling more convenient, encouraging people to choose these modes over driving.

10.24 It also explains that STPR2 promotes health by encouraging more walking and cycling. The WHO Health Economic Assessment Tool was used to measure these benefits, including reduced premature deaths and improved air quality. In the Highland region, increased active travel from STPR2 is estimated to prevent 10.6 premature deaths per year by reducing lifestyle-related health risks.

10.25 Transport and health share an important relationship, encompassing health impacts such as air quality, noise pollution, active lifestyles, road safety and transport poverty. Public Health Scotland's Transport Poverty A Public Health Issue states, "addressing transport poverty is particularly important for Scotland at a time when life expectancy and healthy life expectancy are falling, [and] health and social inequalities are widening…". The evidence in relation to these is fully detailed separately in **Chapter 13: Design, Wellbeing, Local Living and Placemaking.**

Long Term Active Travel Vision for Scotland 2030

10.26 The Long Term Active Travel Vision for Scotland sets out how Scotland will look in 2030 if more people are walking and cycling for short, everyday journeys. This vision is supported by the Active Travel Framework and the Cycling Framework for Active Travel, which work together to shape communities around people and place, prioritising active travel.

10.27 This document is relevant to both urban and rural areas of Highland. For more urban areas it highlights the importance of a planning focus on the concept of walkable neighbourhoods and viable public transport services. In rural areas it recognises the potential for rural roads to have low speed limits, linking with nearby communities and services so opening up new travel opportunities and

choices. It also explains national walking and cycling networks, core paths and local cycle networks will link settlements, places of interest and public transport hubs.

Active Travel Framework

10.28 The Active Travel Framework brings together key policy approaches to improving the uptake of walking and cycling in Scotland. Drawing on the long-term shared vision and strategic objectives for active travel, its ambition is that by 2030, Scotland's communities are shaped around people and place, enabling walking and cycling to be the most popular mode of travel for short, everyday journeys.

10.29 It contains five high level outcomes relevant to the whole of Scotland and capable of being delivered in large parts of Highland.

National Walking Strategy

10.30 The National Walking Strategy outlines the Scottish Government's vision for a Scotland where everyone benefits from walking as part of their everyday journeys, enjoys walking in the outdoors and where places are well designed to encourage walking.

Cycling Framework for Active Travel – A Plan for Everyday Cycling

10.31 The Cycling Framework builds upon previous iterations of the Cycling Action Plan and sets out strategic priorities and shared actions to maximise cycling's contribution to realising the Scottish Government's Long Term Vision for Active Travel in Scotland. The top priority for the vision is for the delivery of more dedicated, high quality, safe cycling infrastructure, effectively resourced, where fair access is ensured and uptake is supported with training and education. It recognises that the provision of a high-quality network in both urban and rural areas is key to increasing rates of cycling for transport.

10.32 It contains a delivery plan with actions relevant to the whole of Scotland that are intended to be delivered by a series of partners, including Local Authorities.

Cycling by Design

10.33 Cycling by Design is a comprehensive guide for planning and designing cycling infrastructure in Scotland. It intends to make cycling a practical and attractive

option for all users and provides detailed guidance on various aspects of cycling infrastructure, including cycle links, crossings, junctions, and trip end facilities in existing and new developments.

Rail Service Decarbonisation Action Plan

10.34 This action plan focusses on decarbonising transport through modal shift to rail, and decarbonising rail traction energy through the removal of diesel passenger trains from the Scottish network by 2035.

10.35 For lines that lie either wholly or partially in Highland the following timescales and actions are outlined:

- Scotland's rural network - based on fleet expiry dates, and rolling stock interworking, the Far North Line, West Highland Lines and Kyle Line are considered appropriate for the early introduction of an alternative traction technology as a permanent solution. This workstream will be expedited and routes considered together as a package whilst taking account of the distinct requirements of each of the lines.
- Connecting Inverness to the Central Belt - By 2035 plan to have fully electrified routes from the central belt to Inverness. This is a complex project that requires significant planning and development before passenger trains could enter into service.
- Inverness to Aberdeen - Plans to electrify the entire route, but only limited part (Aberdeen to Inverurie) may be complete by 2035 to due complexities. However, as innovative approaches develop, the pace of implementation and may increase and allow for full electrification by 2035. As that increased pace is currently unknown the planning assumption is that alternative bi-mode traction, will be required to operate as an interim measure with an expectation that the route, with an extension to Tain, will be fully electrified in the years shortly after 2035.

10.36 It is understood that a refresh of this plan is underway. Within it will be an extended timescale that is expected to delay full decarbonisation to 2045.

Rail Recharged: Scotland's Fleet Transition Strategy

10.37 This publication updates the Rail Service Decarbonisation Action Plan by setting out the steps the Scottish Government are taking to replace trains that are reaching the end of their useable-life. This will sustain the long-term resilience

and reliability of passenger services to encourage more people to make sustainable travel choices.

Scotland's Railway Delivery Plan

10.38 This is document outlines projects and investments to improve Scotland's rail network, focusing on enhanced, reliable, and sustainable passenger and freight services, increased resilience to weather, and decarbonisation.

Our Principles of Good Design

10.39 Network Rail's Principles of Good Design is a strategic framework for developing railway assets that are sustainable, community-focused, and deliver long-term value, based on a set of nine core design principles: Identity, Passengers, Community-focused, Collaborative, Inclusive, Connected, Contextual, Enhancing heritage, and Innovative. These principles ensure projects are holistically planned to benefit users, the environment, and the wider community while integrating with national design goals and addressing the needs of a diverse and aging population.

Sustainable Travel to Stations

10.40 The vision of the Sustainable Travel to Stations strategy is to grow the number of journeys passengers make to, and from, local neighbourhoods to the railway station by healthy and sustainable modes of transport: walking, wheeling, cycling, on-demand transport and the bus. Integrating stations into the communities by improving access to public transport, increasing opportunity to travel sustainably and delivering improved safety and social justice are key elements of the strategy.

Islands Connectivity Plan - A Strategic Approach

10.41 The Strategic Approach is part of the Islands Connectivity Plan and provides a strategic context to Transport Scotland's approach to islands connectivity including ferries, aviation and fixed links. It also sets a vision and four priorities, supported by outcomes for the future of ferry services.

Route Map to achieve a 20 per cent reduction in car kilometres by 2030

10.42 Scotland's target of reducing car Km by 20 per cent by 2030 was set out in the Climate Change Plan Update (CCPu). The Route Map to achieve a 20 per cent

reduction in car Km by 2030 outlines that reducing car use is essential for the transport system to be decarbonised at a pace.

10.43 The four key desired behaviours identified are: reducing the need to travel, living well locally, switching modes and combining / sharing car trips. It acknowledges the role of planning system, particularly with the delivery of development that embeds the principles of local living.

10.44 In June 2025 a Renewed Policy Statement for Achieving Car Use Reduction in Scotland was published. This document reaffirms the commitment to reducing car use, shifting from the previous 2030 target to a longer-term approach focused on wider benefits, including public health and reduced inequality. Key next steps outlined include revising targets, reviewing regulations for potential road user charging, developing regional delivery plans, and launching a national engagement campaign.

Scotland's Road Safety Framework 2030

10.45 The framework sets out a vision for Scotland to have the best road safety performance in the world by 2030 and a compelling long-term vision for road safety, Vision Zero, where there are zero fatalities and serious injuries on Scotland's roads by 2050. In Highland, this national vision has been embedded in the Council's Road Safety Plan to 2030. Its focus is on the 'Safe System' approach and meeting national targets.

Hydrogen Action Plan

10.46 The Scottish Government's Hydrogen Action Plan referred to in **Chapter 4: Climate and Energy** aims to establish Scotland as a leading nation in hydrogen production and use, with a goal of 5 GW of renewable and low-carbon hydrogen by 2030 and 25 GW by 2045. It has a significant focus on decarbonising transport, recognising the potential of hydrogen and its derivatives to reduce emissions in various transport sectors, including road freight, hydrogen trains, buses, and shipping. It outlines specific actions to facilitate the development of a hydrogen transport infrastructure and encourage the uptake of both hydrogen and battery-electric vehicles.

Switched on Scotland Roadmap

10.47 The Scottish Government's Switched On Scotland Plug-In Vehicle Roadmap, establishes a vision that by 2050, Scotland's towns, cities and communities will

have been freed from the damaging emissions of petrol and diesel fuelled vehicles. Switched on Scotland Phase 2: An Action Plan for Growth contains a set of 10 outcome-focussed actions, which will collectively help deliver three important impacts: reducing the cost of owing and driving an EV; making EVs a convenient fit with the needs and lifestyles of drivers; and promoting a change in culture where by EVs are widely recognised as a preferred alternative to fossil fuelled vehicles.

A Network Fit for the Future: Vision for Scotland's Public Electric Vehicle Charging Network

10.48 Transport Scotland published A Network Fit for the Future: Vision for Scotland's Public Electric Vehicle Charging Network in 2023. Its vision is for local communities, businesses and visitors to have access to a well-designed, comprehensive and convenient network of public charge points, where these are needed.

National Road Development Guide

10.49 The National Road Development Guide (**THC323)** was published in 2014. It provides guidance on the design and construction of roads, supporting the Scottish Government's Designing Streets policy. It assists developers to design effective development layouts that reduce vehicle speeds and are not vehicle dependent.

Regional Transport Strategy (RTS)

10.50 Ministerial approval was given for the Highland and Islands Transport Partnership (HITRANS) RTS **(THC158)** on 13 May 2025. **THC158** sets the strategic framework for the development of transport in the HITRANS area over the next 20 years.

10.51 The vision of the RTS is as follows: "Our transport networks and services will act to realise the economic potential of our region through reducing the actual and perceived impacts of distance, poor resilience and low population density. By doing this, they will facilitate economically and socially valuable activities for all, provide equality of opportunity, enable people to live active and healthy lives and allow our region to contribute fully to the national net zero emissions target."

10.52 The RTS also contains a series of strategy objectives that define the outcomes that the RTS is trying to achieve. These are:

- Strategy Objective 1: To make a just transition to a post-carbon and more environmentally sustainable transport network.
- Strategy Objective 2: To transform and provide safe and accessible connections between and within our city, towns and villages, to enable walking, wheeling and cycling for all. A key policy within this objective is to reduce road-based severance in our communities.
- Strategy Objective 3: To widen access to public and shared transport and improve connectivity within and from / to the region.
- Strategy Objective 4: To improve the quality and integration of public and shared transport within and from / to the region.
- Strategy Objective 5: To ensure reliable, resilient, affordable and sustainable connectivity for all from / to our island, peninsular and remote communities.
- Strategy Objective 6: To improve the efficiency, safety and resilience of our transport networks for people and freight and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

10.53 To guide implementation of the RTS, its Delivery Plan **(THC162)** sets a series of actions including an ongoing programme of physical and non-physical interventions which will help deliver the objectives. Elements of **THC162**, with relevance to the Evidence Report are referenced elsewhere in this Chapter.

Local Transport Strategy (LTS)

10.54 The Council published a new 10-year LTS in early 2025. It plays a key role in setting out the future direction and policy focus for transport in Highland. The LTS was informed by a Case for Change **(THC163)** published in 2023 as well as early drafts of this Evidence Report chapter. The LTS objectives are:

- invest in the safety, maintenance and resilience of the transport system to support the future prosperity of communities and businesses;
- improve public or shared transport options that meet different user needs;
- improve walking, wheeling and cycling choices for everyone to encourage active and healthy journeys; and
- reduce emissions from the transport system.

10.55 The LTS is an important consideration for the LDP. Figure 10:3 illustrates how the LTS and HLDP (including its cumulative transport appraisal) are intended to complement each other.

10.56 The LTS Delivery Plan **(THC185)** was published in early 2026 and is a key document that will help to enable important infrastructure provision, consistent with infrastructure first principles, as well as informing the HLDP Delivery Programme and aiding the delivery of its strategy and policies.

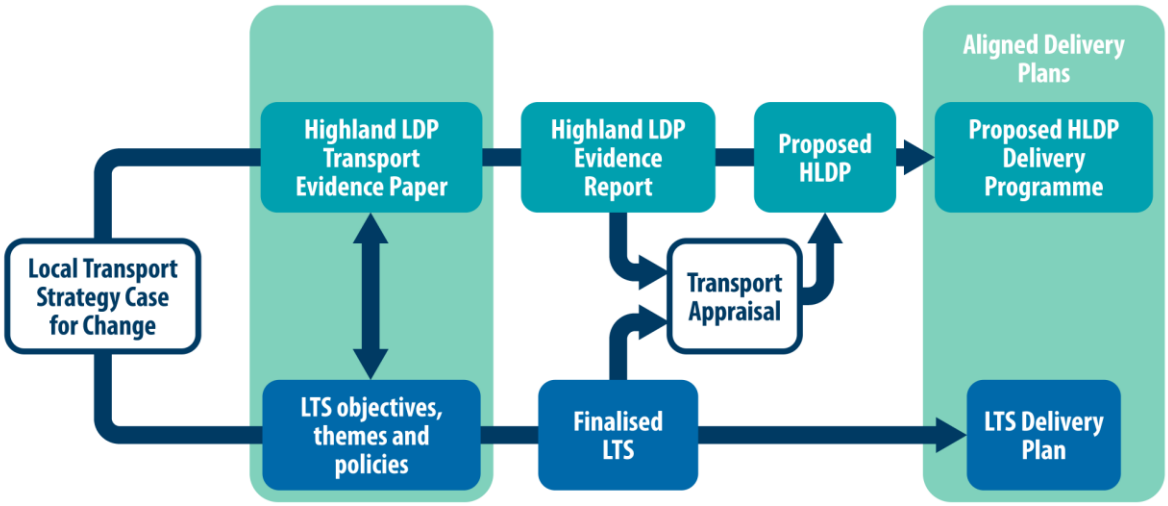

Figure 10:3 Relationship between HLDP and LTS

Active Travel Strategy and Active Travel Masterplans

10.57 The Active Travel Strategy was published in 2024 and outlines the Council's vision to make active travel an attractive and realistic choice for more people, more often, for more their everyday journeys.

10.58 Active Travel Masterplans, that identify a series of actions that intend to contribute towards the transition to low carbon transport locally, have been published for nine of Highland's largest settlements. In addition, the Inner Moray Firth Active Travel Network Planning **(THC 324)** identifies a future active travel network connecting the main settlements within that area of Highland. Further detail on Active Travel Masterplans is provided in the **Active Travel Projects** section of this chapter.

Road Safety Plan 2024-2030

10.59 The Council's Road Safey Plan seeks to improve Road Safety activity in Highland, alongside creating and maintaining partnerships which will help to

develop prevention and intervention activities and initiatives. It sits within the Scottish Government publication Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2030.

Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy (IRSS)

10.60 The Council developed an IRSS **(THC173)** in 2020 as part of its response to NPF4 that was in preparation at that time. This IRSS showcased the unique set of assets and resources that the Highlands will contribute to the national setting and how the Council will collaborate with the Scottish Government and partner agencies to deliver on strategic national development priorities, national outcomes and delivery mechanisms to achieve a long-term sustainable vision for Highland in the period to 2050. It identified key transport improvements essential to facilitating growth in Highland, including major and other trunk and strategic road improvements, rail corridor improvements and important ferry routes.

Local Development Plans

10.61 An integral component of the Council's current HwLDP and three adopted area LDPs is the desire to integrate transport and land use planning. The most recently published area LDP, the IMFLDP2, is supported by an ambitious transport strategy that aims to ensure the creation of a modern, sustainable transport network through robust policy and the delivery of spatially defined transport interventions.

10.62 Different levels of information relating to transport were prepared to support the area LDPs, reflective of the different natural, demographic and development pressures faced in each area.

Travel Patterns and Methods

10.63 Scotland's Census 2022, specifically its education, labour market and travel to work topic provides valuable up to date information on several transport related topics. A summary of this data relevant to Highland is provided below.

Travel Patterns

10.64 High level origin-destination data for Highland from Scotland's Census 2022 is shown in Figure 10:4. This shows a high proportion of people (44.7%) either work from home or at no fixed place. A significant proportion (51.4%) travel within Highland to their place of work, only a very small proportion travel to

another local authority (1.6%). Excluding those who either work from home or at no fixed place, 93% of people (58,914 people) travel within Highland to work.

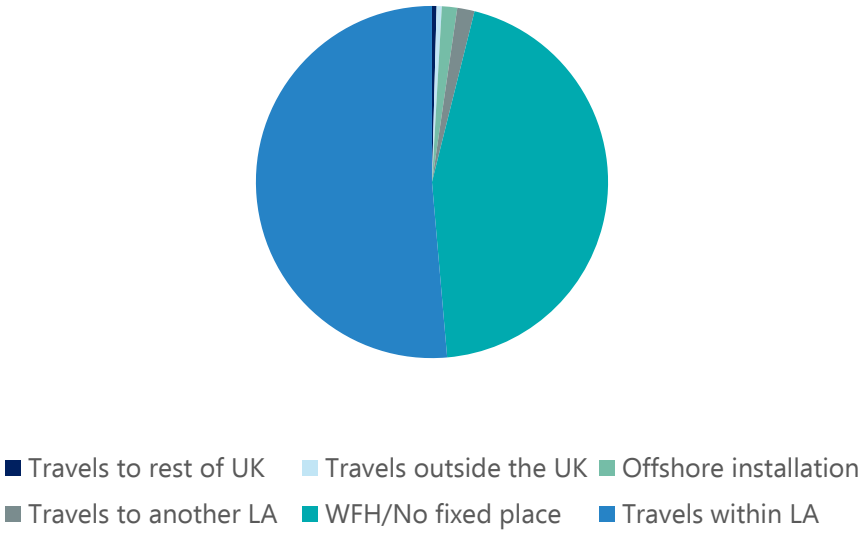

Figure 10:4 Location of usual residence and place of work (all Highland people) (Scotland's Census 2022)

10.65 Some analysis of Census 2022 data has been undertaken to help understand the origins and destinations of usual residence to place to work in Highland. The findings are presented in an online Census 2022 Journey to Work Map. This map uses symbology to show the number of journeys where residents travel within the data zone they reside in. It also illustrates a detailed spatial breakdown of the number of journeys between different data zones from residents usual place of residence and place of work. This data is shown at both Highland and settlement level. **Chapter 9 Housing** presents more detailed travel to work data for the Inner Moray Firth area, focussing on evidence relating that areas Hinterland.

10.66 At a high level, the map shows that the majority of people in Highland tended to travel shorter distances from where they live to where they work, but also that there are people making trips to the larger settlements from all parts of Highland.

10.67 More detailed key findings are summarised below and presented in **THC332.**

- The highest journey volumes within the same Inverness data zones occur in Central, Raigmore and Longman (1,497), followed closely by Inshes (1,494), Westhill (1,446), and Lochardil and Holm Mains (1,347), indicating these areas have high concentrations of homes and employment opportunities.

- Central, Raigmore and Longman is the most popular destination from the five top origins where travel is between different data zones within Inverness (Inshes 930, Westhill 902, Lochardil and Holm Mains, East Rural 602, Slackbuie 575). This indicates key residential commuter areas within Inverness.
- The highest number of journeys between different data zones are concentrated in north Highland, with the highest number of movements being between Thurso East (866), Thurso West (638) and Caithness North East (438) to Caithness North West. This is likely owing to the presence of a significant employer, Nuclear Restoration Services Dounreay within that data zones, alongside other associated organisations.

10.68 A Travel to Work Area (TTWA) is an area where a large proportion of workers both live and work. This is a national dataset prepared by the ONS. It is understood that the ONS are considering whether to update the 2011 TTWA using 2022 census data, and therefore only Census 2011 TTWA map is available at this time.

10.69 The LTS Case for Change **(THC163)** presented Highland Travel to Work areas based on 2011 census data. Whilst now 14 years old, this data provides a consistent indication of people's travel behaviour between home and work at that time. Figure 10:5 illustrates that there are discrete sub-areas of Highland for travel between home and work. An obvious consideration to this data, given its age, is a greater proportion of home working, and how this may influence current and future work patterns.

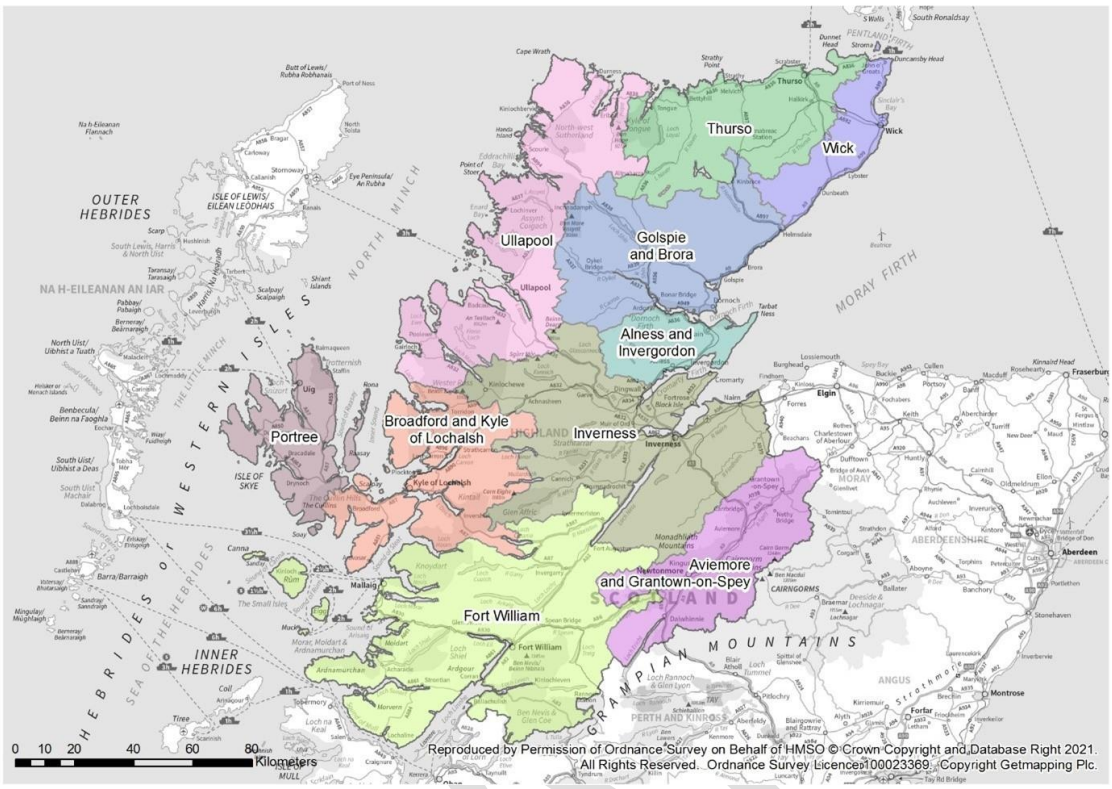

Figure 10:5 Highland Travel to Work Areas ***(THC163)***

Method of Travel

10.70 Method of travel data from Scotland's Census 2022 provides data for all people aged 16 and over in employment including full-time students and those who work from home. The proportion of people working mainly from home in Highland in 2022 was 31%, this is a significant increase since the 2011 census which reported 16% (**THC174)**. Scotland's Census 2022 explains that a marked increase in working from home was largely driven by changes in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It notes that some changes in response to the pandemic were temporary whilst others are likely to be longer lasting.

10.71 Figure 10:6 shows the dominance of car-based travel in Highland, with the 2022 results showing an increase of around 8% since 2011. Also notable is that those travelling on foot and by bus have decreased since 2011.

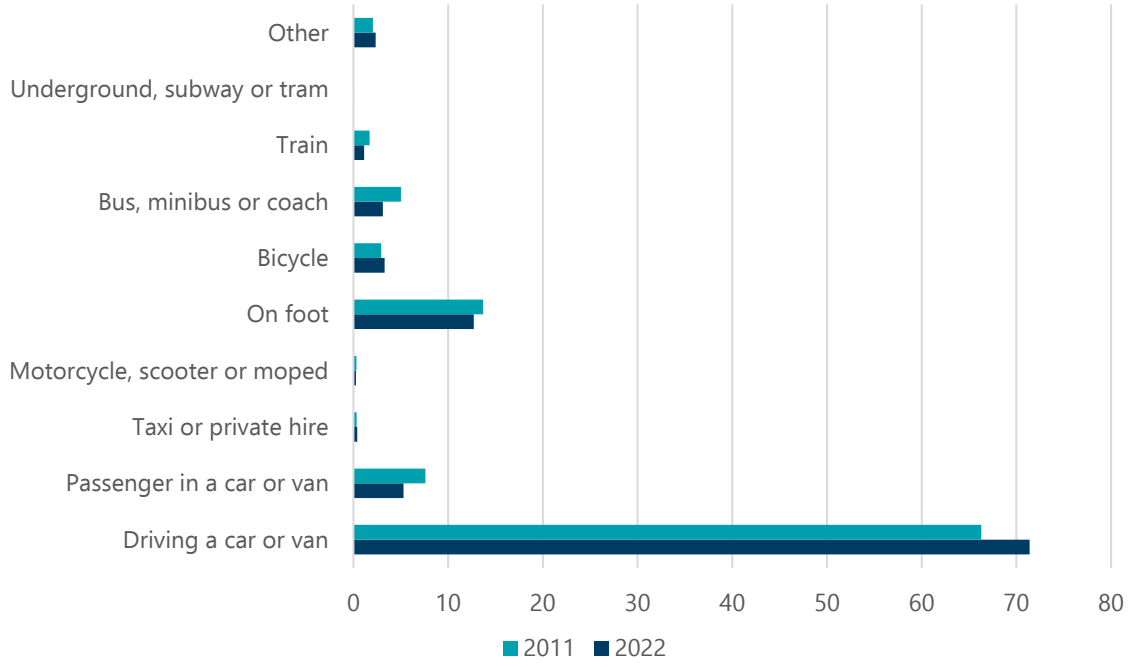

Figure 10:6 Method of Travel to Work 2011 and 2022 in Highland (%) (Scotland's Census 2022)

10.72 Figure 10:7 also shows the dominance of car-based travel, as Highland has a higher share of people driving to work in comparison to Scotland.

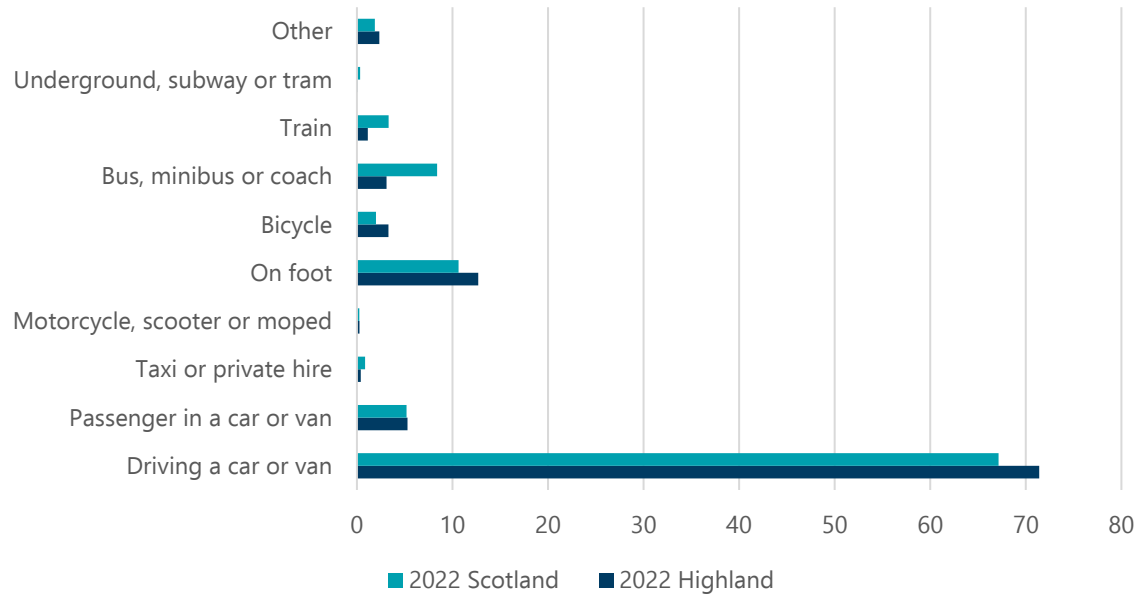

Figure 10:7 Method Travel to Work in Scotland and Highland 2022 (%) (Scotland's Census 2022)

10.73 Walk Wheel Cycle Trust (formerly Sustrans) undertakes annual surveys that look at how pupils across Scotland travel to school, entitled the Hands Up Scotland Survey. Figure 10:7 shows proportions of active travel and motorised travel to school in Scotland and Highland. Whilst trends have not changed significantly during the survey period, it is evident that those travelling actively in Highland has decreased slightly and the proportion using private motorised travel has increased slightly. When comparing Highland to Scotland as a whole, a lower proportion of Highland pupils travel by active modes and a higher proportion use private motorised transport.

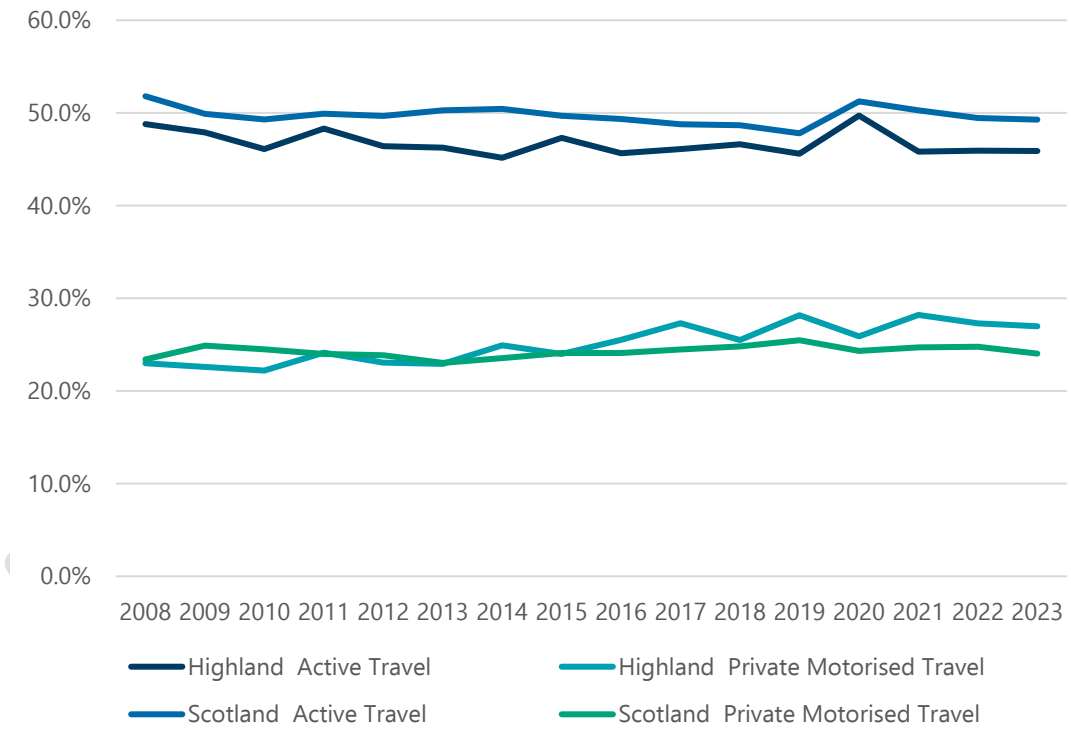

Figure 10:8 Travel Mode to School in Scotland and Highland (Walk, Wheel, Cycle Trust)

Distance Travelled

10.74 Figure 10:9 shows that almost half of (46.6%) Highland residents either work from home or have no fixed place or are working abroad. Of those who do travel to work, a significant proportion (32%) travel less than 10km to reach their place of work.

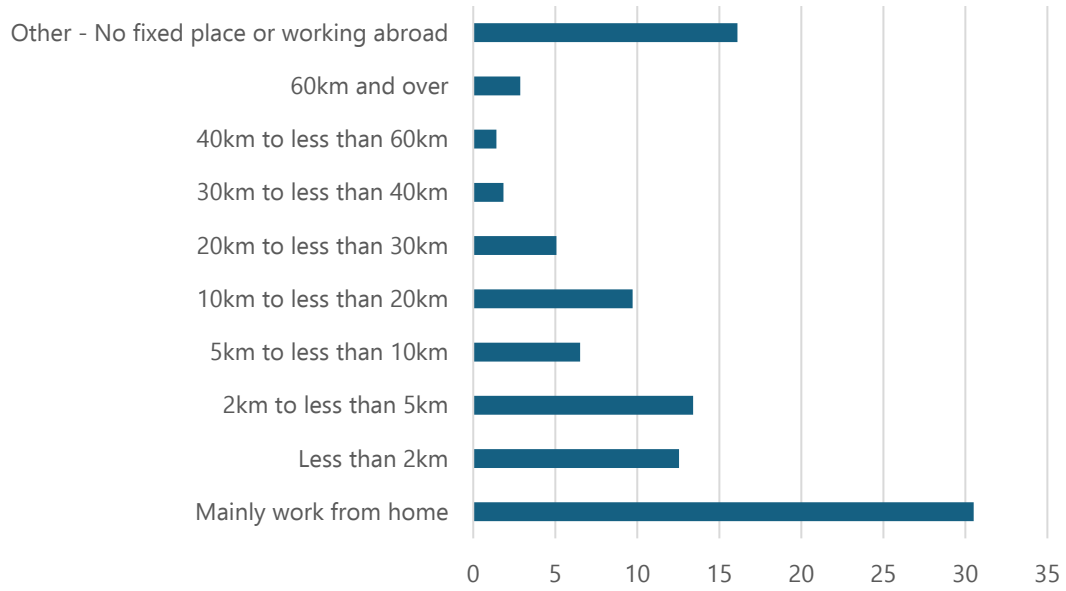

Figure 10:9 Distance Travelled to Work in Highland 2022 (%) (Scotland's Census 2022)

Active Travel

10.75 Active travel refers to any mode of travel which is all or mostly people-powered, including walking, wheeling, using a mobility aid, and cycling, including e-bikes. The focus of this section is on active travel for everyday journeys, on paths that provide some level of accessibility for all users. Whilst reference to longer distance paths is made, many of these serve different markets, including tourism, and do not provide a minimum level of accessibility.

Infrastructure

10.76 The Highlands has an extensive network of active travel routes. The Council manages almost 1,700km of footways and many more are maintained and managed privately. These routes are in a number of forms, including shared use paths, rights of way, core paths and national cycle network routes within urban and rural areas.

10.77 Core paths can be paths, waterways or any other means of crossing land to facilitate, promote and manage the exercise of access rights under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, and are identified as such in access authority core paths plans. A Core Path Plan provides a basic framework of routes for the purpose of giving the public reasonable access throughout a particular area for

walking, cycling, horse riding and other non-motorised activities. Records of Highland Council Core Paths are available publicly.

10.78 There is no definitive map of public rights of way in Highland but a Catalogue of Rights of Way is maintained by the Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society (Scotways).

10.79 There are three designated Long Distance Routes wholly or partially within Highland which promote multi day recreational routes, they are:

- The Great Glen Way (79 miles)
- The Speyside Way (84 miles)
- The West Highland Way (96 miles)

10.80 These routes are also promoted as three of Scotland's Great Trails, as well as the Great Glen Canoe Trail and the Dava Way (partially within Highland). There are other popular, unmarked, long distance routes in Highland, including the Cape Wrath Trail.

10.81 The following National Cycle Network (NCN) routes are partially within Highland:

- National Route 1 – Dover to north of Scotland (in HLDP area passes through Nairn, east and central Inverness, North Kessock, Tore, Conon Bridge, Maryburgh, Munlochy, Cromarty, Dingwall, Evanton, Alness, Tain and Seaboard Villages.)
- National Route 7 – Sunderland to Inverness (rural route that does not pass through any larger settlements in HLDP area.)
- National Route 78 – Campbeltown to Inverness (in HLDP area passes through south Inverness, Dores, Fort William, North and South Ballachulish.)

10.82 These routes are shown in Highland Local Development Plan Evidence Map.

10.83 In recent years, funding for active travel in Scotland has been at record levels. Places for Everyone, Active Travel Infrastructure Funding, United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Funding, Network Development Funding for National Cycle Network development, Highland Council Active Travel Capital Budget and other funding streams allowed current, new and emerging projects to be developed whilst prioritising future workflow linked to the priorities of Active Travel Masterplans. A number of projects have been completed in recent years, including new and improved paths in Nairn, Fort William, Thurso and several in Inverness, in particular at Riverside Way. Significant sections of active travel

routes linking settlements have also been delivered between Dingwall and Strathpeffer (Peffery Way) and Beauly and Inverness.

Capacity

10.84 The **Travel Patterns and Methods** of this chapter illustrates key statistics relevant to active travel:

- Figure 10:6 Method of Travel to Work 2011 and 2022 in Highland shows:
  - the proportion of those travelling by foot to work dropped slightly from 13.7% in 2011 to 12.7% in 2022.
  - the proportion of those travelling by bicycle rose slightly from 12.7% in 2011 to 13.7% in 2022.
- Figure 10:7 Method Travel to Work in Scotland and Highland 2022 shows:
  - the proportion of those travelling by foot to work in Scotland was 10.6%, this is lower than the Highland figure of 12.7%.
  - the proportion of those travelling by bicycle to work in Scotland was 2%, this is lower than the Highland figure of 3.3%.

10.85 The Inverness Walking and Cycling Index 2023 found that 49% of residents walk or wheel, and 9% cycle, on five or more days a week. These results are broadly similar to 2019 and 2021 findings.

10.86 There are numerous travel counters in Highland that monitor pedestrian and cycle movements. Currently the counters are mostly concentrated in Inverness, with a small number elsewhere including on Skye, Lochaber and Nairn. The counters are operated and maintained by several different organisations including the Council and Walk Wheel Cycle Trust (formerly Sustrans). Data from the counters has been obtained from a number of sources, including Chambers, Usmart and VivaCity. Many counters have been installed in recent years and include likely invalid data (for example when a counter may be out of use), these factors limit the usefulness of the data available for analysing trends. Despite this, the counters do provide a useful baseline and insight to early trends:

10.87 Data for certain counters in Inverness is available from 2015 to 2024 **(THC104)**. These counters show that, whilst there are fluctuations between individual years, the number of active travel trips has remained fairly constant at count locations.

10.88 Some data is available from count locations in Fort William **(THC105)** from 2021 to 2024, these show the number of active travel trips are broadly similar each year.

Projects

10.89 Active Travel Masterplans, that identify a series of actions that intend to contribute towards the transition to low carbon transport locally, have been published for the settlements listed below.

- Alness and Invergordon **(THC164)**
- Dingwall **(THC165)**
- Fort William **(THC172)**
- Inverness **(THC166)**
- Nairn **(THC167)**
- Portree **(THC168)**
- Tain **(THC169)**
- Thurso **(THC170)**
- Wick **(THC171)**

10.90 In addition, the Inner Moray Firth Active Travel Network Planning **(THC324)** identifies a future active travel network connecting the main settlements within that area of Highland. The delivery of masterplan actions is prioritised by the Council's Sustainable Transport Team, referenced with existing LDPs and actions in the Inner Moray Firth area are also included within the Highland Delivery Programme. There is potential for such improvements to be delivered directly by developers or part or fully funded by means of developer contributions.

10.91 The Sustainable Transport Team Update Paper **(THC106)** provides an overview of a range of planned active travel projects throughout Highland, including funding sources. Key projects, included in **THC106** and other sources, including development plans, expected to make a significant contribution towards a transition to a higher proportion of journeys being made by sustainable transport are listed below:

- Alness to Invergordon shared use path extension.
- Culbokie Active Travel Village.
- Wick High Street.
- Raigmore Interchange improvements.
- Inverness East - West Active Travel Corridor.

10.92 As part of a Network Development Plan, the Walk, Wheel, Cycle Trust are improving and developing a number of routes, these are outlined below.

10.93 In 2020 parts of National Cycle Network (NCN) routes were declassified to remove busy, high speed on road sections, including several routes in Highland.

Whilst these routes are no longer part of the NCN, some do continue to form part of valued named routes and are still shown on relevant maps as dashed lines and intended for experienced users. This includes the Loch and Glens Way from Aviemore to Inverness and the Far North Way north of Inverness. Two routes that are planned for reinstatement to NCN standards are Route 1 north of Tain along the A9 corridor and Route 78 alongside Loch Ness.

10.94 Other NCN projects currently in progress include:

- Realignment of Route 78 in Inverness via Ness Walk and Ness Bridge.
- Realignment of Route 1 between Balloch and Nairn via Tornagrain, via Millburn Road (Inverness) and via Invergordon and upgrade on Longman Drive (Inverness).
- Realignment of Route 7 and upgrades as part of A9 Dualling Project.

10.95 There are also aspirational plans to upgrade NCN1 in Dingwall and to realign NCN7 south of Daviot via Bridgend.

10.96 Three new NCN routes are proposed for future long-term development in Highland, these are:

- Route to the Isles via Mallaig.
- Route to the Isles via Ullapool.
- Glencoe Way from Ballachulish to Tyndrum.

10.97 Other active travel projects are being pursued by a range of organisations, these include: the North Coast Trail, Skye Cycle Network, Ullapool to Braemore, Roy Bridge to Spean Bridge, Spean Bridge to Fort William via the Nevis Range.

10.98 An Inner Moray Firth Modal Shift Strategy **(THC107)** was commissioned by the Council and HITRANS in 2019 to understand the travel mode share in the IMF plan area and investigate what the most viable, effective options are for achieving a shift towards sustainable travel. The aim of this work was to provide evidence to root the IMFLDP2 **(THC003)** in the sustainable travel hierarchy reflected in NTS2.

10.99 Part of this study calculated ratios of walk/public transport journey times between key towns and main employment centres, using Google journey planner. Figure 10:10 shows that that some local centres, such as Beauly had ratios below 1.5 for travel to central Inverness. At ratios below four, walk/PT starts to become attractive and at ratios below 2.5 walk/PT starts to become highly competitive. However, it also found that ratios of travel times by bus or rail from most central locations such as the Retail Park in the east of Inverness, are more commonly over 10. At ratios over 10 public transport is rarely used.

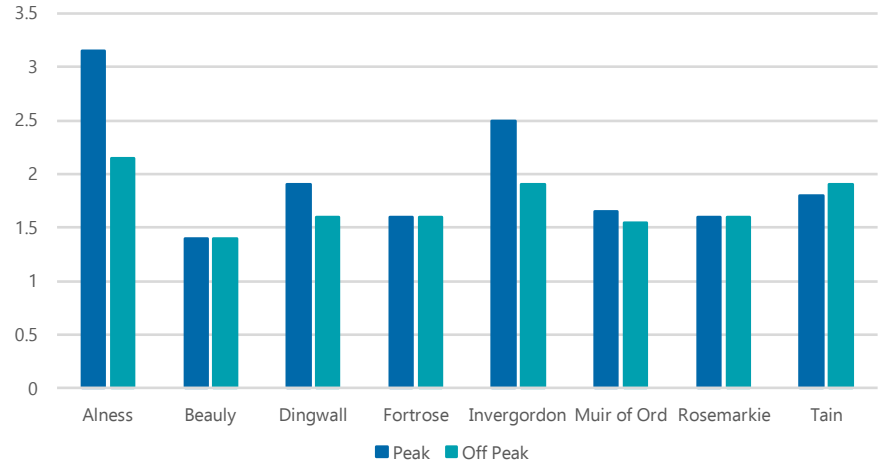

Figure 10:10 Ratio of travel times by walk/public transport from towns to Inverness City Centre ***(THC107)***

10.100 The study concluded that, due to the combined effects of an increase in average age and a decrease in car ownership because of a shift to demand responsive transport services, there was potential for 42% of all trips in Inverness to be by non-car modes by 2030. This represents a significant increase in comparison to current trends and provides a robust analysis of the potential for modal shift in the IMF area.

Rail Based Transport

Infrastructure

10.101 The rail network connects many settlements in the HLDP area and beyond, across five different railway lines with 53 passenger stations in the Plan area. These can be viewed on the Highland Local Development Plan Evidence Map. The rail network moves goods and people for both long-distances with ScotRail, LNER and Caledonian Sleeper Services providing UK-wide connectivity from Highland as far as London, as well as shorter-distance commuter services within Highland.

Capacity

10.102 Rail travel was profoundly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, with restrictions on travel and daily activity in place for large parts of 2020. While passenger journeys have been recovering, for many parts of Highland they remain less than 2019 (pre-pandemic) (Office of Road and Rail Data).

10.103 **THC117** taken from Office of Road and Rail Data (ORR) shows passenger entries and exits in Highland stations between 2021-22 to 2023-24. It shows

that during this period entries and exits increased by approximately 54%. All stations in Highland saw increases in passengers during that period, with the highest percentage increases seen mostly in popular rural tourist destinations. It is noted however the external factors may have influenced these figures, for example rail industrial action and for Glenfinnan and Fort William due to the Jacobite Train not running during summer 2023 and 2024. A number of commuter stations, particularly those in the Inner Moray Firth area also saw significant increases in entries and exits, including Invergordon (115%) and Inverness (55%).

10.104 Two new stations have opened in Highland since the HwLDP was adopted in 2012. Conon Bridge Station re-opened in 2013 and until the COVID 19 pandemic saw a steady increase in passengers (Office for Road and Rail Data). Inverness Airport Station opened in February 2023, and most recently available data (2023-24) shows that during that period it had the seventh highest number of entries and exits of all stations in Highland (53,920) (Office for Road and Rail Data).

10.105 To support regional rail connectivity, Network Rail has undertaken a £1.7 million platform extension project in 2024 for the West Highland Line, increasing capacity at two stations within the Highland Council area—Tulloch and Roy Bridge. These extensions aim to enhance service quality and capacity in the region. The Spean Bridge platform has also recently been extended to allow ScotRail to be more flexible in what trains the active travel carriage is used on.

10.106 Scotrail's Route by Route Key Metric Assessment **(THC118)** presents information on seat utilisation. Table 10:2 shows that on all rail lines in Highland seat utilisation was significantly below capacity throughout the length of each line in 2019/20. Whilst this information was only available for 2019/20 it is expected that given many station entries and exits in Highland remain below pre-pandemic levels seat utilisation may have become lower in recent years. Despite this, it is understood there may be some localised seasonal fluctuations, for example seat utilisation is understood at or close to capacity between Invergordon and Inverness on days cruise ship dock in Invergordon.

Table 10:2 Route Capacity by Seat and Miles 2019/2020 ***(THC118)***

Route	Weekday Seat Utilisation	Weekday Seat Miles Utilisation
Far North Line (Wick/Thurso – Inverness	30%	17%

Kyle Line (Kyle of Lochalsh to Inverness)	38%	23%
Inverness to Aberdeen Line	36%	18%
West Highland Line	36%	26%
Central Belt to Perth and Inverness	58%	38%

10.107 In terms of future commercial viability, **THC118** found that the only route where the revenue covered the costs, excluding Network Rail's Fixed Track Access Charges, was a route between Edinburgh and Glasgow. However, the continued operation of the network is due to the wider economic benefits, these are outlined in ScotRail Economic Impact Report 2024 **(THC119).**

10.108 **THC119** explains that:

- Kyle is Scotrail's most seasonal route but the same service level is operated all year round, it anticipates that the summer market could support additional services if resources were available;
- Invergordon is the northern limit of where rail is competitive with road for travel to Inverness;
- Journey time to Wick and Thurso means day trips are not practicable, and it is challenging to explore Caithness by public transport during longer stays.

10.109 The Local Transport Strategy Case for Change **(THC163)** similarly found that journey times outwith sub-regions in Highland tend to be longer than the equivalent time required to travel by private car.

10.110 Network Rail provided information on travel markets on rail corridors in Highland and where opportunities for modal shift might be likely **(THC326)**. This is provided in Table 10:3.

Table 10:3 Travel Markets and Opportunities for Modal Shift on Highland Rail Corridors

Route	Overview and Opportunities
Far North Line	Offers tourism connections and an essential lifeline service to those who live on the route. The markets on these routes include commuter markets to Inverness, which link areas to the north, up to Alness and with the longest distance leisure markets between Tain and the city. There is

	also an end-to-end market, linking Inverness to the North, but this is a smaller market with less clear opportunities.
Kyle Line	End-to-end market linking Inverness with Kyle and beyond to Isle of Skye, as well as some lifeline connections at the intermediate stations.
Inverness to Aberdeen Line	Line provides a mix of longer and shorter distance markets to the Highlands. The key travel markets are the intercity Inverness to Aberdeen market, and the Keith to Inverness commuter market. The Intercity travel market is relatively small, reflecting a limited number of end-to-end journeys on the route between the two cities, although the share of those using rail for the journey is relatively high. The Keith to Inverness travel market is larger and reflects commuting and leisure travel into the city. There are likely opportunities for modal shift through better aligning the needs of the market with rail services, but it currently offers a competitive journey time. Potential improvements to the A96, may impact on the use of rail in the future, and may encourage more passenger and freight traffic to road.
West Highland Line	Scenic railway that is very well used for tourism and leisure in the summer, but also provides lifeline services to those living on the route throughout the year. The markets specifically serving Highland include the large market which links Fort William to Glasgow, serving tourist traffic, in addition to smaller routes linking Fort William to the surrounding areas. The seasonal nature of the route means that capacity challenges exist in the summer months, although recent platform extensions on the route will support longer trains and thus passenger capacity. The seasonal focus includes the Jacobite, which is a major rail tourist attraction and brings people to Highland, as well as the significant number of charter trains which operate on the route. Peak percentage growth in users during the summer was 194% compared to winter. Line has challenges from issues such as rockfall and vegetation, impacting on the reliability of the line and potentially impacting on whether people choose to travel by rail.

Highland Main Line	Key route connecting Inverness to the central belt and beyond. The key market for consideration on this route is therefore the Intercity market, connecting Inverness to Glasgow and Edinburgh. This is a large travel market, and rail modal share on both the Inverness to Glasgow and Inverness to Edinburgh is high. The other potential travel market is the shorter distance commuter and leisure market into Inverness. This market links Kingussie, Aviemore and Carrbridge to Inverness.

10.111 Network Rail have also looked at travel markets that exist between corridors. Having reviewed the cross-Inverness markets (i.e. from Far North Line to Aberdeen to Inverness line), it was found that these markets are relatively small and drop off quickly. For example, between Alness and Elgin where the overall appetite to travel between these two areas is very small and modal shift to rail is unlikely, should the opportunity be provided.

Condition

Stations

10.112 The Railway for Everyone strategy **(THC326)** provides a holistic view of the passenger experience as an end-to-end journey. The strategy identifies four pillars of accessibility to illustrate where potential passengers might face barriers using the railway, these are: (1) reaching the station; (2) getting to your platform; (3) moving around the station; (4) boarding and finding your space.

10.113 Stations in Scotland have been assessed against each of the pillars to identify whether they are accessible and meet the needs of all passengers who would use them. Key stations on each of the routes in Highland, and how much they meet the accessibility requirements laid out is provided in **THC326.** In summary, it found that Fort William, Inverness, Kyle of Lochalsh, Thurso and Wick stations all scored amber for pillar 2 (moving around the station) and pillar 4 (boarding and finding your space) and green for pillar 3 (getting to your platform). A pillar one overview is not yet available.

Projects

10.114 Planned strategic rail improvement projects are summarised below:

- Redevelopment of Inverness Railway Station – aims improve regional access, enhance the travel experience for passengers, and strengthen connections within the Highland area as part of Scotland's broader station improvement efforts. The Inverness Station Masterplan is a transformational initiative with a 30-year outlook that prioritises the needs of both passengers and freight. The plan aims to improve operational functionality and integrate various transport offerings, enhancing the station's role as a key regional hub. It also emphasises placemaking opportunities to engage and involve the local community, fostering a sense of ownership and connection. Additionally, there is a focus on identifying economic and commercial opportunities to support growth and development. (STPR2 recommendation 43 Major Station Masterplans) Further information has been provided from Network Rail that is outlined within **THC326.**
- Highland Mainline Rail Corridor Enhancements - focuses on upgrading this line between Perth and Inverness to improve train speed, service frequency, and reliability for both passenger and freight transport. These upgrades aim to enhance connectivity, making travel to and from Inverness more efficient and accessible. Improved rail services will offer a better travel option for residents and visitors, supporting economic and tourism growth in the Highland region while reducing reliance on road travel. (STPR2 recommendation 15). Currently it is understood that there are no funding commitments in the Scottish Governments Programme for Government for further phases of this project. Replacement trains are currently being procured for trains on this line, as well as the Inverness to Aberdeen Line.
- Far North Line Review Team - remit to identify potential opportunities to improve connectivity, operational performance and journey time on the line. Have implemented a number of improvements and further improvements are planned.

10.115 The only Highland area LDP that references the potential for new rail stations is the IMFLDP2. It identifies opportunities at the following locations:

- East Inverness (referenced in with Inverness East Development Brief).
- Evanton – passenger station and siding to serve industrial operations at Highland Deephaven.
- Tomatin.

10.116 The IMFLDP2 acknowledges that a Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) study would be required to explore potential for reinstating/creating these stations.

10.117 HITRANS have and continue to commission a number of studies that explore the potential for improved provision of rail services across the HITRANS area. Brief details of relevant studies are listed below:

- Fort Transit Appraisal Study (2023) **(THC095)** – explores potential options for local rail services in the Fort William area.
- Evanton Station Technical Feasibility Study (2024) **(THC096)** – investigation of the technical and operational feasibility of introducing a new rail station at Evanton on the Far North Line.
- Inverness Rail East (2020) **(THC097)** – New station initial feasibility study.
- Route and Branch: HITRANS Rail Strategy is intended to be commissioned in 2025/26. The study will identify shortcomings in the rail network and areas for development so that the railway plays its role in the move to Net Zero. Key to this will be decarbonised rolling stock and efficient freight on rail. To include review of West Highland Line to consider timetable improvements, infrastructure options and potentially promote appropriate projects for future investment for passengers and freight.

10.118 Rail also serves a wider public transport integration function in the network, where multi-modal journeys often involve rail travel. This means Highland could further benefit from supporting infrastructure to integrate rail more with other modes, including active travel, bus, demand-responsive transport, ferries at Mallaig and Scrabster, and private car, where appropriate.

10.119 Scotland's Railway Climate Action Plan outlines actions planned for the railway network to help address the climate crisis. This includes five priority areas - Climate Ready, Net Zero, Environmental Management, Biodiversity and Social Value, some of which may have spatial implications.

Rail Freight

10.120 Rail freight contributes to removing heavy goods vehicles from the road and creating efficiencies in the distribution network. Rail freight is an important aspect of decarbonising the network, particularly in light of the Scottish Government's Rail Services Decarbonisation Plan. It also offers the opportunity to reduce the impacts of road-based freight for maintenance and congestion, which are particularly important, given the length of roads that require to be maintained in Highland and the extent that do not facilitate safe over-taking of slower vehicles such as HGVs. It is a successful mode of transport for freight for the Highland region and has further potential, despite limitations in the existing rail network.

10.121 The HITRANS Rail Freight Capability Study **(THC444)** whilst now significantly dated due to being published in 2010, continues to provide useful information to aid understanding of the freight related capacity of the rail network in the HITRANS area.

10.122 A brief description of existing and potential freight locations is provided below and shown on the Highland Local Development Plan Evidence Map.

10.123 Existing Freight Locations:

- Needlefield Rail Yard, Inverness – used by organisations including Tesco freight service and Tarmac to transport cement to Inverness from Dunbar, potential for further integration.
- Georgemas Junction strategic rail freight and transport hub, Caithness – used to support the movement of materials from the former Dounreay Nuclear Power Station and Vulcan Naval Reactor Test Establishment. The Caithness and Sutherland LDP recognises potential for growth as a rail freight and transport hub.
- Fort William Alumina Freight – used for transportation of alumina powder from Blyth to Fort William for processing.

10.124 Potential Freight Locations:

- Altnabreac Lineside Freight Facility, Caithness – potential for development of loading area for timber haulage, received planning consent in 2021.
- West Fraser, Dalcross – rail link to timber processing facility completed in 2023, rail sidings and other additional infrastructure currently under construction and expected to become operational in mid-2026.
- Evanton – the IMFLDP2 explains there is potential for a spur off the Far North Railway Line and rail halt to be created to serve industrial operations at Highland Deephaven.
- Lairg – previously used for oil transport, connection to sidings remains operational. Potential destination for electricity upgrade and renewable energy materials to reduce pressure on road network.
- Invergordon – potential for connection to former smelter site associated with ICFGF.
- Kinbrace – potential for timber.
- Corpach – potential for timber and aquaculture materials.

10.125 There are also potential future opportunities for lineside loading of timber at a number of other locations in Highland.

Potential for Disused Railway Infrastructure

10.126 As part of the LDP planning authorities should have regard to the desirability of preserving disused railway infrastructure for the purpose of ensuring its availability for possible future public transport or active travel requirements.

10.127 There are several disused railway lines across Highland. It is understood it would be significantly challenging for disused railway infrastructure in Highland to be reused for public transport purposes due to locations being largely out with large centres of population, fragmented landownership and level of investment required. However, some routes are already being used for the purposes of active travel and potential remains for improvements to many of these routes.

10.128 A brief description of how existing routes are used and where relevant opportunities and constraints to improvement is provided in Table 10:4.

Table 10:4 Disused Railway Lines in Highland

Route	Description
Speyside Way	Uses sections of the old Strathspey Railway. Currently used sections are Tormore to Cragganmore, Nethy Bridge to Spey Bridge and Cromdale to Easter Pollowick. Challenges to using other sections. A small section of this route is within the HLDP area.
Dava Way	Complete active travel route on the former Highland Railway between Grantown and Forres. A small section of this route is within the HLDP area.
Dornoch Branch Line	Former Mound (north side of Loch Fleet) to Dornoch branch line. Northern half from the Mound is useable in places but some sections are missing or been subsumed by the road or for agricultural use. Southern half is used for recreation and is a core path. The John O'Groats Trails is promoting a section near Cambusavie which has opportunities for improvement.
Great Glen Way	Uses sections of the old Invergarry and Fort Augustus Railway between Fort Augustus and Spean Bridge. Currently used section Laggan to Aberchalder. Other sections are interrupted by development, missing bridges and other constraints.
Lybster Branch line	Former Wick to Lybster branch line. Some clear sections but mostly lost. No known recreational use.

Black Isle Railway	Former Muir of Ord to Fortrose Railway. Used in parts, other sections are interrupted by various constraints. There is potential for improvements to the link between Avoch and Fortrose. There is also potential for development of the section from Muir of Ord to Blairdhu for active travel, crossing the A832 to connect to the popular Redcastle – North Kessock minor road and onwards to Inverness.
Peffery Way	Former Dingwall to Strathpeffer Railway. Opportunities for reopening this branch line were explored in the past. In recent years it has become a high-quality active travel route that, with the exception of a small section, is complete. In early 2026 the Highland Council successfully obtained a Public Path Order to enable that section of the path to be completed. Timescales for this work are dependent upon funding.
Puggy Line	Old Lochaber Narrow Gauge Railway from the Fort William Aluminium Smelter to the River Cour south of Spean Bridge. Limited sections currently in use for active travel, other sections are interrupted by broken bridges and other constraints.

Bus Based Transport

Infrastructure

10.129 Bus services across Highland and beyond are provided by several operators. Some operators provide longer distance services to other Scottish cities and towns, including Citylink and recently FlixBus. Stagecoach operates local and medium-distance bus services commercially, and several companies, including Stagecoach, operate other services under contract to the Council. Notably, the Council has also operated a growing number of local services since 2023, saving costs compared to external contracts. Several bus operators provide a significant number of buses to service cruise ship passenger ships arriving into Invergordon, this can have implications for the availability of buses for the purposes of public transport.

10.130 Bus routes cover almost all the strategic routes and significant settlements in Highland. On main inter-urban routes around the Inner Moray Firth, services tend to be hourly (or more frequent within Inverness), but many in the remoter areas have limited timetables which can make travelling to work impractical. In certain areas the timetabled network is supplemented by demand responsive transport for example dial-a-bus services.

10.131 Stagecoach's Inverness City services are entirely operated by electric buses, with charging facilities at Stagecoach's depot in the city.

10.132 The Council currently supports 28 community transport projects with grant funding; each project uniquely serves the needs of their communities, through for example, the delivery of community car schemes, minibus hire, minibus projects or a combination of these. Increasingly, the Council are looking to Community Transport to provide transport contracts on behalf of the Council; typically, these are home-to-school transport contracts, though a small number of groups are operating dial-a-bus contracts in addition to their other work. Community Transport provides a valuable service to many members of the community who might otherwise experience isolation and the consequences of transport poverty. Although the perception of Community Transport is that it focusses mainly on the needs of older people, the Council is encouraged by the broad range and diversity of community needs that are served by the sector. There have been challenges with implementing on-line booking of journeys, though this has been successfully introduced on some schemes and there are encouraging signs elsewhere.

10.133 There is one mobility hub in Highland located at Torvean in west Inverness, it opened in May 2024. It includes a bus stop, cycle parking (to support park and ride), electric vehicle charging points and a HI Bike dock.

Capacity

10.134 **THC163** explains that bus patronage is declining and trends show that this pattern of decline is also true for the extent of services available. Long before the negative impacts of Covid-19 on public transport were experienced, decline was evident, although there were some local exceptions. This is particularly problematic for Highland because lower patronage results in a negative pattern of further decline. However, after a severe drop during the pandemic, patronage has typically returned to the level of the pre-Covid trend line.

10.135 The size of the network is constrained by financial pressures, affecting both the level of service which can be provided by operators commercially and the extent of contracts which can be funded from Council budgets. Most Council bus contracts are built around home to school transport provision as the peak use, with additional journeys provided by the same vehicles in the off-peak.

10.136 The **Travel Patterns and Methods** section of this chapter illustrates key statistics relevant to bus use:

- Figure 10:6 Method of Travel to Work 2011 and 2022 in Highland shows the proportion of those using bus, minibus or coach as a method of travel to work dropped from 5% in 2011 to 3.1% in 2022.
- Figure 10:7 Method Travel to Work in Scotland and Highland 2022 shows that in 2022 the proportion of those using bus, minibus or coach in Highland as a method of travel to work in Scotland was 8.4%, this is significantly higher than the Highland figure of 3.1%.

10.137 The Council collects data on passenger numbers for bus services that are contracted by the Council. A summary of this information provided in **THC098** indicates rising passenger numbers between 2021/22 and 2023/24 on the majority of routes. Data on the utilisation of Council run commercial services and Council in Highland has been sought but not yet provided by operators. Efforts to obtain insights of this this data will continue to be pursued.

10.138 Transport and Travel in Scotland 2023 shows that 80% of Highland respondents had not used a local bus service in the past month. This is significantly higher than the national rate of 62%. This is reflective of Transport and Travel in Scotland 2023 findings that bus use is higher in urban areas and lower in rural areas.

10.139 The Inverness Walking and Cycling Index 2023 showed over a third of residents would like to use public transport more, and almost a third would like to drive less.

Projects

10.140 A number of projects have been completed and are planned to improve bus services and infrastructure in Highland. The Council secured Bus Partnership Funding (BPF) for a number of projects and subsequently delivered a new bus gate connecting Raigmore Hospital and Raigmore Housing Estate, installation of enforcement cameras at Rose Street and city centre traffic light priority in Inverness. The BPF was then paused for financial year 2024/25.

10.141 The Scottish Government Introduced a new Bus Infrastructure Fund (BIF) in 2025 to replace the BPF. The Council secured BIF funding towards a range of projects, including those listed below:

- Inverness - Millburn Road Corridor
- Inverness - Bus Station Relocation/integration
- Fort William – Blar Mhor Bus Only Link
- Fort William – Upper Achintore Bus Only Link

- Fort William – A82/ Nevis Terrace / Middle Street Junction Reconfiguration
- Fort William - Relocation/Reimagination of the Bus Station
- Mobility Hub Implementation Plan

10.142 A partnership project between operators, the Council and HITRANS commenced in December 2024 to improve the maintenance of bus stop information. It is also intended to introduce a multi-operator ticketing scheme.

10.143 A survey of passenger needs was undertaken in Caithness in early 2025, assisted by Caithness Chamber of Commerce. The results are intended to help inform redesigning the bus network in the county, taking account of both local needs and connections with ferries.

10.144 The Council's Sustainable Transport Team commissioned a 'Connecting Inverness STAG Report' in 2023 **(THC100)**. This report is an appraisal of bus focussed options in Inverness and its immediate surrounds and will inform the location of any future mobility hubs in the area.

10.145 The IMFLDP2 Transport Strategy identifies park and ride/share opportunities east and southwest of Inverness and north and west of Tore, and planning permission in principle is in place for a park and ride facility, as part of a larger mixed-use development, in East Inverness. No specific areas for these facilities are identified in the Council's existing area LDPs.

10.146 The HITRANS RTS Delivery Plan **(THC162)**, includes actions to develop a regional mobility hubs hierarchy and to undertake a number of mobility hubs pilots across the HITRANS region. Highland LTS, Policy 2.17 outlines that opportunities and funding options for mobility hubs in Highland will continue to be explored to support connectivity between different public, community and shared transport options as well as with active travel modes.

Water Based Transport

Infrastructure

10.147 Water based transport is a key part of the transport network in Highland. **Chapter 6: Coastal Development and Aquaculture** outlines the significance of the Highland coast, including its expansive network of marine infrastructure. An overview of water-based transport is provided below.

10.148 The principal ferry services that operate in Highland are:

- Caledonian MacBrayne (CalMac) operate ferries from the Highland mainland and Skye to the Western Isles, Mull, the Small Isles and Raasay, and from Mallaig to Skye.
- Highland Council operates the Corran Ferry and has contracts for ferries on the following routes Cromarty – Nigg (seasonal), Camusnagaul – Fort William and Mallaig – Inverie – Tarbet.
- Northlink operate the Scrabster – Stromness (Orkney) route.
- Pentland Ferries operate Gills Bay – St Margaret's Hope (Orkney) route.
- John O'Groats Ferries operate a seasonal passenger ferry to Orkney.
- Other services also operate, some on a seasonal basis.

10.149 There is one navigable Canal in Highland – the circa 65-mile Caledonian Canal, which connects the Fort William area (Banavie) with Inverness (Clachnaharry and Muirtown Basin). The canal is predominantly used for leisure purposes. The HITRANS RTS Case for Change **(THC101)** identifies there could be a future role for the Caledonian Canal in the handing of freight associated with the development of pumped hydro storage schemes.

Capacity

10.150 **THC163** explains that ferry services provide for a mix of day-to-day travel and the movement of goods focussed on island residents and businesses, and seasonal tourist travel, both by island residents themselves travelling more in the summer and visitors to the islands. This leads to a highly seasonal demand profile on many routes in the region.

10.151 Summer demand can cause capacity problems on many routes with summer carryings five to seven times that of winter. Ferry services are not easily 'scalable' to this extent which means that it is challenging to meet this summer demand without providing substantial excess capacity in the winter months. Capacity constraints on the ferry network are overwhelmingly associated with the carriage of vehicles. Increasing numbers of campervans often compete for deck space with commercial vehicles. Passenger capacity is very rarely a problem.

10.152 On many routes however, capacity is inadequate at peak times. Whilst emergency short notice travel by island residents is almost always accommodated by operators, island residents can on occasions find that they are unable to secure a booking as, for example, tourists can often book much further in advance. This can limit access to mainland services.

10.153 Scottish Transport Statistics 2024 provides data on passengers and vehicles carried on ferry routes operating in Scotland. An overview of several major routes is provided in Figure 10:11. It shows that the Corran Ferry (with the exception of 2023 when the vessel was out of service for significant periods) has the highest passenger traffic of any ferry service in Highland. More widely it shows an increase in passenger numbers on most services.

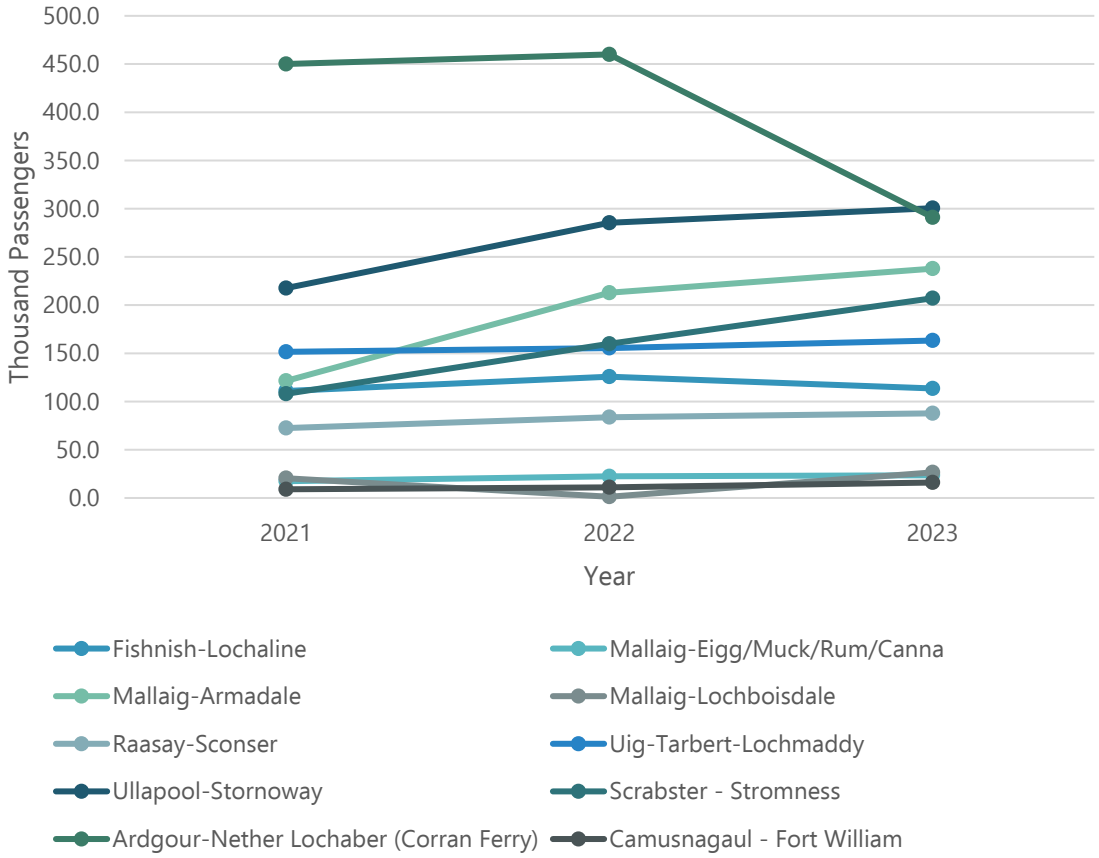

Figure 10:11 Passenger Traffic on Ferry Services in Highland ***(THC102)***

Projects

10.154 A number port and harbour and ferry service improvements are underway and planned. These are described in the paragraphs below.

10.155 STPR2 recommendation 18 'Supporting Integrated Journeys at Ferry Terminals' by improving connectivity and integration at ferry terminals and enhancing travel experiences for passengers aligns with the Islands Connectivity Plan (ICP) . The themes of Onward and Connecting Travel / Integration set out in the Strategic Approach paper and in the ICP Vessels and Ports Plan are of relevance

which notes amongst the live projects underway the Council's major port upgrades project at Uig to enhance capacity for the Little Minch routes (Uig-Tarbert and Uig-Lochmaddy), reducing congestion, including the addition of a second summer vessel to improve network reliability during busy periods. Local authorities have a key role to play in achieving a well-integrated onward and connecting travel for local communities.

10.156 Ferry Vessel Renewal, Replacement, and Progressive Decarbonisation - focuses on upgrading Scotland's ferry fleet with modern, low-emission vessels to improve service reliability and sustainability (STPR recommendation 24). Key new vessel initiatives with relevance for ports in Highland as per Islands Connectivity Plan - Vessels and Ports Plan include:

- "Islay Class" Vessels for Little Minch Routes: Two new vessels are being built to serve these routes (Uig-Tarbert and Uig-Lochmaddy), increasing capacity and improving connectivity to Highland for Western Isles communities. These are 2 of 6 new major vessels being delivered during the next 2 years, with the first being the MV Glen Sannox delivered November 2024.
- Mallaig-Armadale Route: The Vessels and Ports Plan highlights capacity challenges on this route, especially during peak travel seasons, and notes recent increased service frequency as a measure to accommodate higher passenger demand. Future vessel replacements are also planned (currently under phase 2 of the Small Vessel Replacement Programme) to maintain a reliable and resilient service, particularly during busy summer months.
- Mallaig-Lochboisdale Route: This route was introduced as part of the government's expansion of ferry services to improve connectivity for the Highlands and accessibility to South Uist. A replacement vessel is currently in development for this route, though not yet funded, aiming to improve service reliability for the communities that depend on it.
- Small Vessel Replacement Programme port upgrades, including shore power connections.
- To further enhance network resilience, when new vessels are delivered, one of the current major vessels will be retained as a resilience vessel to provide support across the network during disruptions, benefiting island routes linking the Highland region to the Western Isles.

10.157 STPR recommendation 42 'Investment in Port Infrastructure to Support Vessel Renewal and Replacement' - focuses on upgrading port facilities to accommodate new vessel technologies and ensure service resilience and reliability. Key upgrades in the Highland Council area are listed below.

- Uig Port (Isle of Skye) – upgrade of port facilities, including new terminal buildings, to accommodate a new ferry vessel to support the Little Minch routes (Uig-Tarbert and Uig-Lochmaddy) by enhancing port capacity and improving connectivity, reducing congestion during peak travel periods. Planned completion spring 2025.
- Mallaig Port: Mallaig Harbour Authority (MHA) has indicated that significant works will be required to the port assets supporting current ferry services.
- Armadale Port on Skye: Redevelopment by CMAL is aimed at supporting reliable ferry services for the Mallaig-Armadale route, addressing high travel demand, particularly during the summer season.
- Scrabster Port: Recognised as an important link for ferry services to Orkney (Stromness) to ensure service continuity, reliability and resilience.
- Corran Narrows Crossing – construction of new infrastructure on the Ardgour and Nether Lochaber sides of the Corran Narrows to improve the Corran Ferry service and support the operation of a new electric vessel. New infrastructure was granted planning permission in September 2025 and completion is expected by 2027. The new vessel is scheduled for delivery in late 2028 or early 2029.
- Islands Programme funding was awarded to Staffin Harbour in October 2024 for the construction of a 3,000sq onshore hardstanding area, new onshore facilities, an upgraded access road and provision of electricity.

10.158 Ports associated with the ICFGF are likely to be required to be upgraded to facilitate growth. Proposals are at various stages, including Ardersier Port where construction is underway of a quay wall and quayside and Port of Nigg and Port of Cromarty Firth where further significant upgrades are at planning stages.

Aviation

Infrastructure

10.159 Aviation in Highland provides both international connectivity to the region and lifeline regional connectivity between more remote and rural parts of Highland and the rest of Scotland. There are two airports from which commercial flights operate in Highland: Inverness and Wick John O'Groats.

10.160 Inverness Airport acts as a vital link to many Scottish communities and visitors to the region. It provides a route network to the Scottish islands, a number of major cities in the UK and to Amsterdam. It also provides seasonal flights to Majorca and Gran Canaria.

10.161 Wick John O'Groats Airport is supported by a Public Service Obligation, similar to those in place for island communities; this supports lifeline connectivity to a region which would otherwise not be served by commercial air services, enabling those living and working in the region to access employment, education, healthcare and social opportunities which would not otherwise be available to them. The airport has previously had substantial investment made in its infrastructure, including reinforcement of runways and aprons, and supporting infrastructure for sustainable aviation pilot projects. This means it is well placed to service a substantial additional volume of traffic (including large aircraft which cannot be handled by other regional airports), and to support future development of sustainable aviation within the region.

10.162 Wick John O'Groats currently operates flights to Aberdeen and recent work by the Wick John O'Groats Airport Working Group has identified significant opportunities for delivery of additional services to the region, most notably to support offshore wind projects through the ScotWind Leasing Round, and to enable significant onshore transmission works in the region.

10.163 Other airfields operate within Highland, including at Ashaig, Dornoch and Plockton that are owned and operated by the Highland Council. These operate as unlicensed, unmanned aerodromes and have no Air Traffic Control/Flight Information Service or Rescue / Fire Fighting services available.

10.164 Further information on aviation in Highland can be found in **Chapter 8 Economy, Business, Tourism and Productive Places**.

Capacity

10.165 Figure 10:12 Terminal Passengers in Highland Airports shows changing passenger numbers between 2021 and 2023 at Inverness and Wick John O'Groats Airports. Inverness Airport experienced a 124% increase in passenger numbers between 2021 and 2023 (Scottish Transport Statistics 2024), this is likely to accountable to continuing recovery from COVID restrictions as passenger numbers begin to reach pre COVID levels. Wick John O'Groats Airport saw the relaunch of scheduled services in 2022 through the provision of a Public Service Obligation to Aberdeen. Passenger numbers increased from 7,000 to 11,000 during its first two years of reopening (Scottish Transport Statistics 2024).

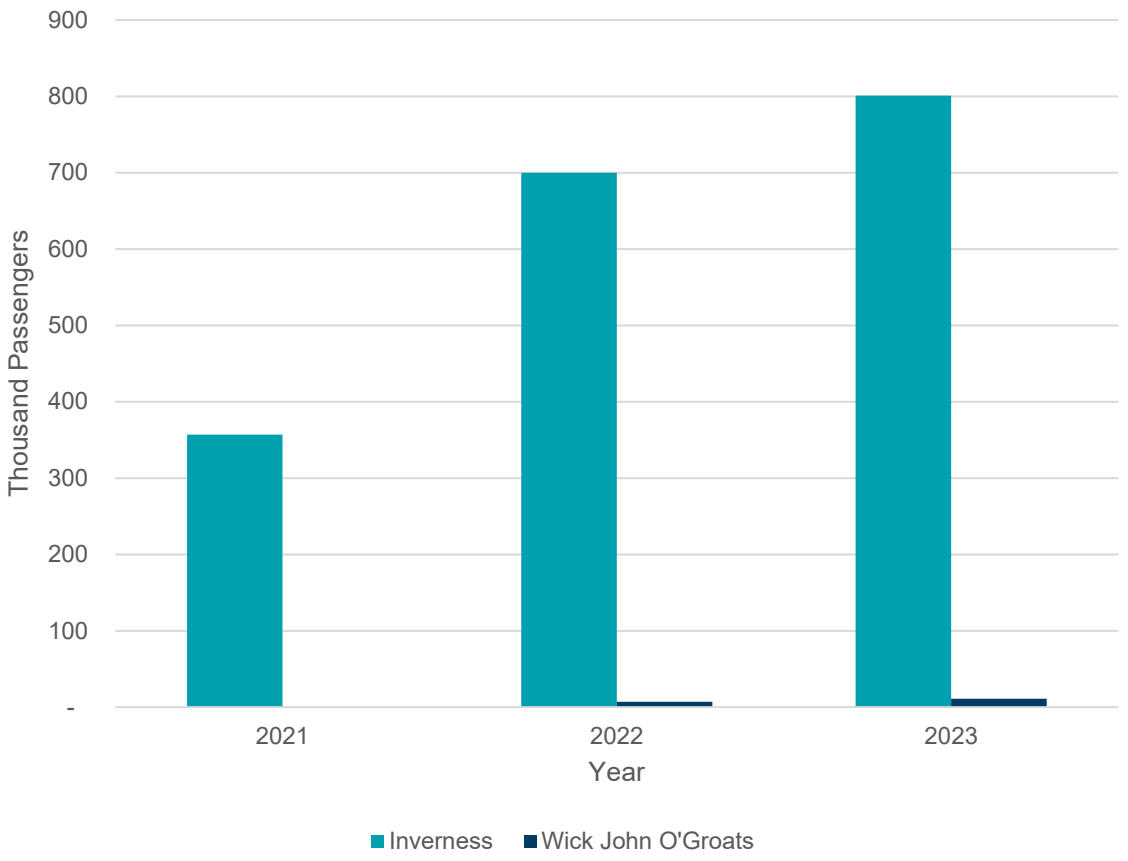

Figure 10:12 Terminal Passengers in Highland Airports ***(THC103)***

Projects

10.166 Inverness Airport Masterplan – expansion of airport facilities including passenger terminal, land-side and surface access and airfield infrastructure.

10.167 Ashaig Airport, Skye - Airstrip improvements to accommodate reintroduction of scheduled air services.

10.168 Low Carbon Aviation - investigation of the feasibility of deploying six hybrid airships on Highland and Islands services.

Sustainable Aviation Test Environment (SATE)

10.169 SATE supported by the UKRI Future Flight Challenge, is the UK's first low-carbon aviation test centre based at Kirkwall Airport on Orkney. Led by the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership (HITRANS), SATE brings together a national consortium of industry partners, public sector bodies and academia which work with a range of regional businesses and stakeholders to apply state-of-the-art aviation technology to deliver targeted economic growth.

10.170 While SATE facilities are based at Kirkwall Airport, the current phase of SATE is working across several Highlands & Islands communities and matching the new technology with practical use cases to benefit the region.

10.171 Other relevant aspects include Windracers test flights across different parts of the Highlands & Islands, trialling their self-flying cargo aircraft to develop faster, more convenient and more reliable delivery services to residents and businesses in remote and rural locations.

10.172 HITRANS is also working closely with Cranfield Aerospace, Loganair, HIAL, EMEC and OIC to bring operational flight trials of a hydrogen powered Islander aircraft to the region.

10.173 In addition, Hybrid Air Vehicles has reserved early production slots for six Airlander 10 aircraft for HITRANS to improve regional passenger and freight transport by air. A full business case is being developed to understand the commercial operation and deployment potential.

10.174 SATE is focusing on a range of emerging sustainable aviation solutions that will benefit the Highland region, providing improved connectivity and services whilst also working towards net zero ambitions. Technologies being focused on include:

- Sub-regional low or zero emission passenger aircraft (hydrogen electric & hybrid electric)
- Hybrid air vehicles
- Amphibious aircraft (hydrogen electric & hybrid electric)
- Advanced air mobility (electric vertical or short take-off and landing)
- Heavy lift drones (conventional and vertical take-off and landing)

Road-based Transport

Infrastructure

10.175 The Council area has an extensive road network with a core trunk road network spanning 961km **(THC177)** which equates to over a quarter of the total trunk road network in Scotland, linking main settlements and providing connections to major towns and cities outwith Highland. Trunk roads wholly or partially within Highland are shown in Highland Local Development Plan Evidence Map and listed below:

- A9 Perth to Thurso
- A835/A893 Tore to Ullapool
- A96 Inverness to Aberdeen

- A86 Kingussie to Spean Bridge
- A889 Dalwhinnie to Laggan
- A82 Dumbarton to Inverness
- A828 Oban to Ballachulish
- A830 Fort William to Mallaig
- A95 Aviemore to Keith
- A99 Latheron to Wick
- A87 Invergarry to Uig
- A887 Invermoriston to A87

10.176 Scottish Transport Statistics 2024 – Road Lengths shows that there are almost 7,000 kilometres of local road network in Highland that is managed by the Council. This is alongside an extensive network of other transport infrastructure including traffic management systems, various signage, footways and cycleways alongside adopted roads, drainage, road markings, road restraint systems and a range of street furniture.

Capacity

10.177 Various sources of data provide an indication of road capacity in Highland. **THC178** provides an overview of road capacity within different areas of Highland in terms of traffic volumes, journey times and other known issues. A high-level summary of known areas of concern on the road network are:

- Inverness City experiences the most road congestion in Highland with particular issues at the Raigmore interchange, A9/A82, A82/Harbour Road, Inshes corridor and the A862 Telford Street.
- Safety concerns concerning turning movements at most A835 and A9 trunk road junctions particularly at Munlochy (B9161) junction.
- Capacity and safety of the A832 and B9161 as it passes through narrow main streets of Cromarty, Fortrose & Rosemarkie, Avoch and Munlochy.
- Local safety concerns about Conon Bridge A835 junction and Muir of Ord village centre junctions.
- Most A9 junctions in Easter Ross, particularly those at Evanton, Alness, Invergordon and Tain have safety and capacity issues.
- In Skye there is significant congestion within parts of the road network, particularly in summer months due largely due to increases in tourist traffic.
- Fort William suffers from significant congestion for most of the year along and connecting to the A830 and A82 trunk roads.

- Nairn town centre suffers from localised congestion at key time periods.
- In Wester Ross, Lochalsh and Lochaber many roads are lifeline facilities to remote rural communities with no practicable alternative route. The South Strome to Lochcarron section of the A890 which has a history of closing due to rockfall, with highly disruptive impacts for local communities.

10.178 Scottish Transport Statistics 2024 on Road Traffic provides data for local authority areas of traffic volumes on trunk and local authority roads, this is shown in Table 10:5 and illustrates that the number of vehicle Km travelled in Highland has increased between 2021 and 2023.

Table 10:5 Traffic on trunk roads and on local authority roads in Highland (Scottish Transport Statistics 2024 on Road Traffic)

2021	2022	2023
Trunk Roads (million vehicle km)		
1,561	1,740	1,845
Local authority roads (million vehicle km)		
1,163	1,244	1,274
All roads (million vehicle km)		
2,723	2,984	3,119

Traffic Volumes

10.179 Data on traffic volumes was extracted from Transport Scotland's Traffic Data database (Drakewell). Average annual daily traffic (AADT) from 137 count sites on or in proximity to trunk road corridors in Highland were extracted for years 2022/2023, 2023/2024 and 2024/2025. The percentage change during this period was calculated where sufficient data was available for each count site. This data is presented in full in **THC121,** summarised by area in **THC178** and a high-level overview is shown in Table 10:6. Full AADT data is not available for some traffic counters, in these instances the data has either been discounted or the percentage change calculated between the two most recent available years.

*Table 10:6 Average Change in traffic volumes on selected road corridors in Highland **(THC121)***

Corridor	Average % Δ 2022/23 – 2024/25
1: A96 Inverness ⇋ Nairn	2.8%

2: A82 Inverness ⇋ Fort Augustus	3.3%
3: A830 Fort William ⇋ Mallaig	-1.2%
4: A835 Inverness ⇋ Ullapool	5.7%
5: A862 Inverness ⇋ Beauly	No count data available
6: A87: Inverness ⇋ Portree	15.2%
6: A9N Inverness ⇋ Wick	5.8%
7: A9S Inverness ⇋ Perth	6.8%
8: Inverness City	1.5%

10.180 Average growth in traffic volumes on trunk corridors in Highland is 5%, this represents a significant increase between 2022/2023 and 2024/2025. Most corridors saw traffic volumes increase, the highest being the A87 at 15.2%.

10.181 Significant increases were also seen on the A835 and the A9 between Inverness and Wick and Inverness and Perth. Traffic volumes tend to be highest in the summer tourist season, and this is thought to be a driver of many increases observed (see **Chapter 8 Economy, Business, Tourism and Productive Places**). The only corridor where traffic volumes fell is on the A830, albeit this reduction was marginal.

10.182 The format and coverage of traffic count sites on the local road network differs in comparison to the trunk network. Count sites are very limited in terms of distribution across Highland, and often collect data for only specified periods. Very little meaningful data was obtained from local road counters that would help to illustrate trends in recent years. Data was available from two counters in Inverness, one on Sir Walter Scott Drive close to Inshes and the other on the Southern Distributor Road at Ness-side. Both these counters showed increases AADT during the period data was available **(THC122)**. Further information on the local road network, as part of a settlement capacity review, may be provided as part of **Chapter 11 Infrastructure** and/or the transport appraisal to inform the HLDP.

Journey Times

10.183 Journey time data was extracted for a series of road corridors from INRIX Roadway Analytics. Average journey times and variation on each corridor to selected destinations data is presented in full in **THC121**, summarised by area in **THC178** and a high level overview is shown in Table 10:7. For most routes the average journey time for a year is provided, for longer routes average journey for six alternate months in presented due to the volume of data. Where six

months alternate data is associated charts are not presented in **THC121** due to clarity issues. Data for some longer corridors, specifically Inverness to Wick, Inverness to Perth and Inverness to Kyleakin, is not provided as it remains subject to review.

10.184 The data presented in Table 10:7 shows that the average journey time variation on most corridors in Highland is below five minutes over a 24 hour period. Whilst this data suggests there are limited congestion issues across Highland, it is known that there are localised issues during peak periods, and times of disruption (for example due to road traffic accidents or road works) certain locations within the corridors do experience more significant congestion. It is also known that more lengthy delays to journey times are likely for those travelling short distances within settlements.

10.185 Due to the limited delay in journey times often much of the day, or much of the morning, for all corridors is showing as the peak period.

Table 10:7 Journey Times on Strategic Trunk Road Corridors in Highland ***(THC121)***

Corridor	Daily Average (mins)	Variation Daily Av (mins)	Peak Period
1: A96 Inverness ⇋ Nairn (weekdays)			
Inverness to Nairn	22.34	2.23	15:00 – 17:00
Nairn to Inverness	18.66	2.27	15:00 – 17:00
Inverness to Inverness Airport	11.82	0.94	15:00 – 16:00
Inverness to Inverness Airport	13.92	1.91	15:00 – 16:00
2: A82 Inverness ⇋ Fort Augustus			
Weekdays			
Inverness to Fort Augustus	55.48	3.93	09:00 – 12:00
Fort Augustus to Inverness	56.79	4.2	13:00 – 16:00
Inverness to Drumnadrochit	28.37	2.15	08:00 – 11:00
Drumnadrochit to Inverness	29.55	2.3	13:00 – 16:00
Weekends			
Inverness to Fort Augustus	53.28	3.38	09:00 – 14:00
Fort Augustus to Inverness	54.63	3.54	11:00 – 16:00
Inverness to Drumnadrochit	27.1	1.86	08:00 – 14:00
Drumnadrochit to Inverness	28.1	2.04	12:00 – 16:00
3: A830 Fort William ⇋ Mallaig (all days)			
Fort William to Mallaig	63.92	4.91	08:00 – 10:00
Mallaig to Fort William	66.75	4.88	13:00 – 15:00

4: A835 Inverness ⇋ Ullapool			
Weekdays			
Inverness to Ullapool	73.64	6.07	10:00 – 12:00
Ullapool to Inverness	71.70	5.67	03:00 – 04:00*
Weekends			
Inverness to Ullapool	71.56	4.71	09:00 – 12:00
Ullapool to Inverness	69.1	4.33	00:00 – 01:00*
5: A862 Inverness ⇋ Beauly (all days)			
Inverness to Beauly	24.22	1.92	07:00 – 16:00
Beauly to Inverness	23.93	1.86	08:00 – 16:00
6: A87 Inverness ⇋ Portree (all days)			
Broadford to Portree	37.39	2.89	10:00 – 16:00
Portree to Broadford	38.49	3.27	09:00 – 12:00 13:00 – 18:00

Corridor	Daily Average (mins)	Variation Daily Av (mins)	Peak Period
7: A9 Inverness ⇋ Wick (all days)			
Inverness to Alness	25.9	2.65	07:00 – 14:00
Alness to Inverness	23.1	2.3	08:00 – 14:00
Inverness to Dingwall	17.25	1.97	07:00 – 17:00
Dingwall to Inverness	16.98	1.63	07:00 – 16:00
Inverness to Invergordon	30.53	2.94	06:00 – 12:00
Invergordon to Inverness	29.68	2.67	10:00 – 15:00
Inverness to Tain	43.82	3.67	06:00 – 15:00
Tain to Inverness	44.14	3.52	09:00 – 16:00
8: A9S Inverness ⇋ Perth			
Weekdays			
Inverness to Aviemore	38.28	3.63	22:00 – 01:00*
Aviemore to Inverness	37.90	4.06	14:00 – 17:00
Weekends			
Inverness to Aviemore	36.69	3.18	04:00 – 06:00*
Aviemore to Inverness	36.40	3.12	02:00 – 08:00* 13:00 – 16:00
9. Inverness City (weekdays)			
Longman RB to Culloden	6.67	1.2	16:00 – 17:00
Culloden to Longman RB	8.45	1.56	16:00 – 17:00
Longman RB to Torvean	9.88	0.76	15:00 – 17:00

Torvean to Longman RB	9.59	0.89	13:00 – 17:00
Longman RB To Clachnaharry	7.49	0.62	12:00 – 17:00
Clachnaharry to Longman RB	7.52	0.69	10:00 – 17:00
Inshes to Queens Park	11.46	0.81	16:00 – 17:00
Queens Park to Inshes	11.46	0.94	07:00 – 09:00 12:00 – 17:00

** To be reviewed*

10.186 Journey time variation provides an indicator of journey time reliability along the corridors. The daily average delays along most corridors are relatively small, but it is accepted that during peak periods, tourist season and during periods of construction, journey times along some corridors can be heavily impacted beyond these annual daily averages.

10.187 Many roads in Highland are lifeline facilities to remote rural communities. Road closures can occur on these routes for a number of reasons, most commonly due to accidents, severe weather or rockfall. During closures journey times can be significantly impacted due to lengthy diversion routes. Key roads that have been subject to closures include the A890 Stromeferry Bypass due to rockfall and A835 and A9 due to accidents. Other closures that can affect journey times include the A9 Kessock Bridge where traffic is diverted via the A862 and closures as part of electricity upgrade schemes, for example on the A832 as part of the Western Isles HVDC Link project where disruption is envisaged to last for a number of months. Journey times for HGVs can be acutely affected as many diversion routes are not suitable for these types of vehicles.

10.188 With regards to the A890 Stromeferry Bypass, rock falls have been an issue since the road opened in 1970 resulting in lengthy diversions and disruption to road users. An extensive appraisal process was carried out to identify a solution, and a preferred option was recommended to provide a new section of road to the south of the existing Stromeferry Bypass. However, it is understood further transport appraisal work would be required and no funding is currently identified. Currently, the road is frequently inspected, and other longer term options are being considered, including the HITRANS and Network Rail 'Skyfall' project which involves a road/rail sharing arrangement. The technical challenges and next steps of this work are outlined in Skyfall Shared Road/Rail Clearway Proposal **(THC442)**.

Condition

10.189 The Council's Roads Factsheet January 2024 **(THC123)** uses the annual Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey which assesses the condition of the

adopted road network. It is used to calculate a Road Condition Indicator (RCI) that is used by Audit Scotland. Highland's results are shown in Table 10:8. It should be noted that the condition indicator is limited to the carriageway; no data is available on the condition of any adjacent active travel infrastructure.

Table 10:8 RCI Highland 2011 – 2022 ***(THC123)***

Year	2011	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
RCI	32.0%	38.6%	37.8%	39.1%	36.7%	36.5%

10.190 **THC123** outlines a significant deterioration in Highland's RCI over the last 11 years, but there has been recent improvements from the 2021 result. In 2011 Highland had an RCI of 32.0% and was ranked 9th best Council. In 2022 the Highland RCI was 36.5%, ranking 25th in Scotland. During this period, the overall Scottish RCI has improved from 36.1% to 33.6%.

10.191 Scotland's Transport Statistics 2024 on Road Lengths provides data on the condition of existing public roads. Table 10:9 shows the condition of existing public roads in Highland in the period 2023/2024.

Table 10:9 Road Network Condition in Highland 2023/24 (Scotland's Transport Statistics 2024 on Road Lengths)

A Roads Condition		B Roads Condition		C Roads Condition		Unclassified Condition		All Roads Condition	
Red	Amber	Red	Amber	Red	Amber	Red	Amber	Red	Amber
4%	25%	8%	30%	11%	32%	11%	31%	9%	30%

10.192 The Council's last published Road Asset Management Plan ran for the years 2016-2019 **(THC125)**. It is understood, that due to resourcing issues, it is unlikely to be updated in shorter term.

Existing Studies

10.193 The Council and other organisations have prepared and commissioned a number of transport related studies in the past to inform LDPs, and other documents, including the LTS. These are listed below and their continued relevance will be reviewed during the plan preparation process, including its transport appraisal.

- Inverness Strategic Traffic Plan (2023) **(THC126)** - series of workstreams including a review of existing traffic focussed data; network analysis; parking best practice and development and mode shift (findings subject to review).
- IMFLDP2 Transport Appraisal (2022) **(THC127)** - appraisal of the cumulative impacts of the spatial strategy on the transport network. This appraisal was based primarily on qualitative information and informed by the Transport Appraisal undertaken for **THC128**.
- IMFLDP Transport Appraisal (2013) **(THC128)** - as above but with the addition of transport modelling work (using the Moray Firth Transport Model) to assess the quantitative impact of the spatial strategy.
- Moray Firth Transport Model - regional multi-modal transport Visum model that covers the main road and public transport network of the Inner Moray Firth area around Inverness, however, it does not consider active travel. Originally developed for the Council by AECOM with a base year of 2009 to cover a period from 2010-2030, it has subsequently been re-based to 2018 for further studies including the modelling for Inshes Junction design undertaken by JACOBS for the period 2024-2037 **(THC108)**, and A9/A82 Longman Junction Improvements **(THC109)**, undertaken by JACOBS for Transport Scotland.
- Caithness and Sutherland Monitoring Statement (2014) **(THC129)** - includes the outcome of a study commissioned by the HITRANS on Internal Transport Connectivity in Caithness.
- West Highland and Islands LDP Transport Background Paper (2016) **(THC130)** - highlights transport issues in the plan area and provides an overview of potential transport improvements.
- Fort William Strategic Transport Study (pre-appraisal) (2018) **(THC131)** - established evidence for problems and issues linked to transport, developed initial transport planning objectives and possible options to tackle identified problems.

Projects

10.194 Numerous road improvement projects are planned throughout Highland to help address existing congestion, road safety and condition issues and provide to additional future capacity. An overview of these projects by area, including deliverability, is provided in **THC178** and further details for several projects are provided in the Highland Delivery Programme. Key projects include:

- A9 Dualling.

- A96 Dualling (including Nairn Bypass).
- A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton and Inshes Junction Upgrades.
- A9/A82 Longman Junction Improvement Scheme.
- A9 Junction upgrades/improvements, including A9 Tomich Junction;
- South Loch Ness Road Improvement Strategy.
- Culbokie Active Travel Village project.
- Wick High Street Improvements.
- Integrated Transport Plan (ITP) for Fort William.
- Portree Link Road.

10.195 The above projects represent substantial investment in Highland infrastructure and have the potential to facilitate significant economic growth. As outlined in **THC178** however, there is uncertainty regarding the delivery of a number of these projects, in particular the timescales for nationally led infrastructure projects including the A96 Dualling and A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton.

10.196 Other, planned large scale developments also require significant investment in transport infrastructure to suitably mitigate impacts and provide sustainable connections. Whilst existing LDPs, Delivery Programmes, Supplementary Guidance and development briefs set out infrastructure and in some instances costs required to support development often funding gaps remain that can result in development being delayed or ultimately becoming unviable.

Road Freight

10.197 There has been increasing pressure on Highland roads due to freight movements by heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) and abnormal loads from a number of different industries. These include the movement of timber, minerals and whisky as well as components of large scale energy projects detailed in Chapter 4 Climate Change and Energy and Chapter 8 Business, Economy, Tourism and Productive Places.

Heavy Good Vehicles and Abnormal Load Traffic Volumes

10.198 Table 10:10 shows that HGV traffic volumes on trunk roads in Highland have risen between 2022 and 2024 have risen with the exception of the A830 where volumes have remained fairly stagnant. The most significant increases are on the A9, both north south of Inverness and the A87.

Table 10:10 Change in HGV traffic volumes on selected road corridors in Highland ***(THC327)***

Trunk Road Corridor	% Change 2022 – 2024
A96 Inverness ⇋ Nairn	6.2
A82 Inverness ⇋ Fort William	8.8
A830 Fort William ⇋ Mallaig	-0.5
A835 Inverness ⇋ Ullapool	9.9
A87: Invergarry ⇋ Portree	24
A9N: Inverness ⇋ Wick	29.8
A9S: Inverness ⇋ Perth	17.4

10.199 The Council receives between 3,000-4,000 abnormal load notifications per year. It is important to note that these figures will differ from the actual number of movements as some notifications do not take place, and others may involve multiple movements using the same route and load. Data was not available on specific routes, however a number of ports in Highland had the highest number of movements in 2024, including Ardersier, Invergordon, Kishorn and Nigg.

10.200 Many rural roads in Highland have evolved incrementally in response to changes in traffic with a range of low cost improvements, often relying on natural subgrade support. These roads typically handle low HGV volumes and have limited structural capacity. They may also have restricted alignments which makes them vulnerable to extraordinary wear and damage from sudden increases in heavy vehicle traffic.

Timber

10.201 The rise in timber extraction during the 1990s highlighted the fragility of rural roads, and lead to the creation of the Timber Transport Forum. The Forum's Agreed Route Map (ARM) is an arrangement between the forestry industry and local authorities that helps to identify roads which are suitable for heavy good vehicles (HGVs) traffic used for timber haulage. The ARM also highlights roads which are unsuitable in their current form for any increase in HGV traffic and these are spread throughout Highland. The map shows fragile the Council's network is.

10.202 Currently the ARM is the only spatial data available to help assess the suitability of the Highland road network to accommodate additional HGVs. This has lack of information, coupled with the poor structural integrity of many roads, has been highlighted when reviewing energy related planning applications. This has resulted in challenges, during the planning process and/or at construction stage.

Energy Projects

10.203 Rapid expansion of large-scale energy projects in Highland poses a significant risk to rural transport infrastructure that was not designed to accommodate high volumes of HGV traffic. This disruption has potential to seriously adversely impact rural communities who already experience a lower level of transport service and high transport costs. Certain large scale projects have already resulted in substantial damage from increased HGV traffic. In some cases this has necessitated extensive and lengthy repairs causing delay to projects and prolonged disruption to local communities, including road closures.

10.204 In particular the ICFGF is anticipated to bring significant benefits and economic opportunities, as well as increasing the number and diversity of jobs in Highland. With some 520 hectares of land for development the proposals are estimated to deliver over £6.5bn of investment over the next 25 years and create 11,300 long-term jobs in Highland.

10.205 This level of investment will clearly have implications for the transport network, both freight and workforce travel. Nationally led infrastructure projects – particularly the Tomich junction, the A9/A96 'East Link' project and the A9 and A96 dualling projects themselves – are critical to enabling infrastructure important for the delivery of the Green Freeport.

Whisky

10.206 Bottlenecks **(THC328)** is a whisky logistics study published in 2024 that identified barriers to growth in the Highland and Islands. A key constraint identified within the plan area is on the A9 between Invergordon and Tore. It also identified a number of schemes that would improve resilience of the transport network, within the plan area, including improving the A9, A96 and A82.

HGV Parking

10.207 A Lorry Parking Strategy **(THC329)** commissioned by HITRANS in 2011 found that in Highland, Inverness and Fort William, plus lifeline ferry routes all generate a significant number of HGV trips. It identifies opportunities for lorry parking facilities and infrastructure, including new lorry parks on the A9 and A96 and the upgrading of existing lorry parks. The RTS **(THC158)** supports increased

HGV-specific and general motorist rest areas / services, particularly on strategic long-distance routes such as the A9, A96 and A82.

Ultra Low Emissions Vehicles

10.208 Scotland seeks a leading role in promoting electric and other low-emission vehicles, with a commitment to phase out the need for new petrol and diesel cars and vans within by 2035. However, it is recognised that these vehicles will continue to generate congestion and private cars sit at the bottom of the NTS2 Sustainable Travel Hierarchy (see Figure 10:3).

10.209 The number of licensed ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEVs) has rapidly increased in Highland in recent years as shown in Figure 10:13 (Vehicle licensing statistics data table VEH0132).

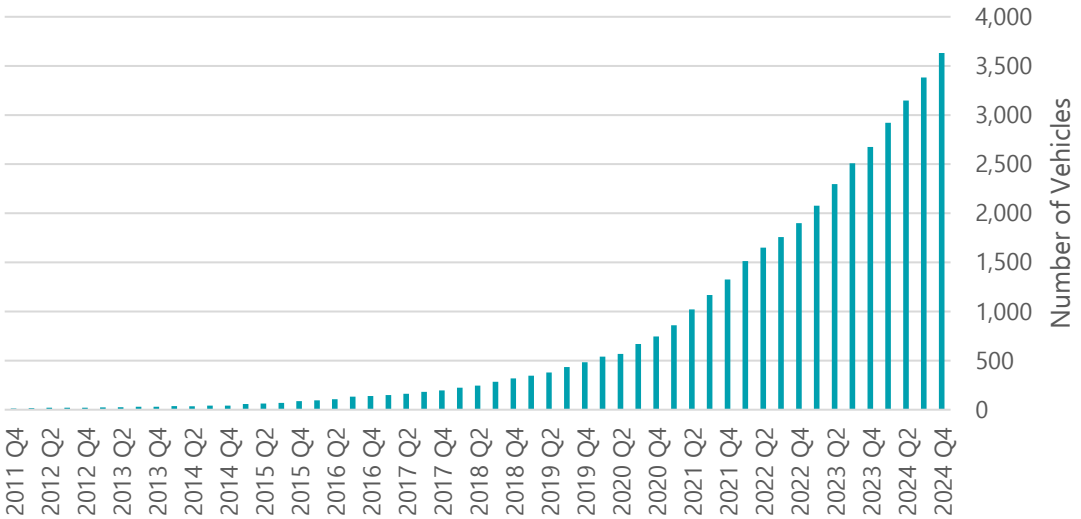

Figure 10:13 Licensed ULEVs in Highland (Vehicle licensing statistics data table VEH0132)

10.210 In April 2025 Highland had a total of 439 publicly available electric vehicle charging devices at all speeds (EV Public Charging Infrastructure Statistics) or 186.2 per 100,000 population, higher than the Scotland wide level of 123 per 100,000 population. Figure 10:14 shows that the number of devices in Highland almost doubled since January 2022. Locations of publicly available chargers can be viewed on the Zapmap website.

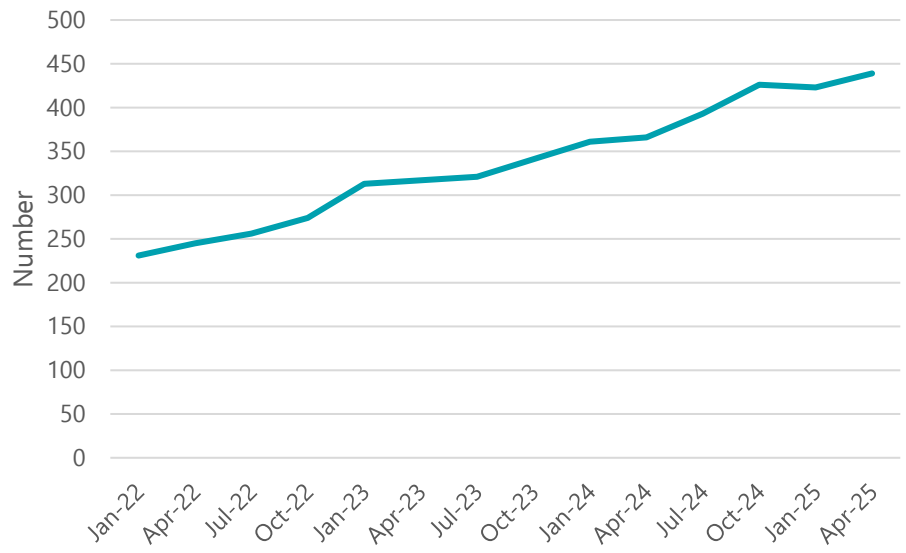

Figure 10:14 Public electric vehicle charging devices at all speeds in Highland (EV Public Charging Infrastructure Statistics)

10.211 Infrastructure needs for most electric vehicle charging can be met at home, where vehicles are parked in driveways for most of the time and where access to private chargers is easier. For those without off street parking, and where there will be need to charge in public places, including visitors to the region, further investment will be required. There is potential to increase the charging network through co-charging, where homes or work places could charge to provide their devices to others.

10.212 It is appreciated that in some rural areas of Highland reliance on private cars will continue. In such areas, there is potential for an increased number of electric taxis, and the provision of electric car clubs to help reduce emissions and help communities travel more sustainably.

10.213 The Council published its Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategic Control Plan **(THC112)** in 2021. 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 Council.

10.214 The Council announced in May 2025 that Highland, Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray Councils awarded 'EasyGo' a 20-year contract to provide EV charging infrastructure for the north of Scotland (THC News Centre). The contract is estimated to be worth £300 million. The large-scale EV infrastructure project will accelerate the region's transition to Net Zero and see 570 new charging points installed across the north of Scotland by 2028, more

than doubling the existing EV infrastructure and further enhancing the region's charging network.

10.215 Technology for the development of other electric vehicles is evolving, including trains, planes, vessels and HGV and passenger road vehicles. There is understood to currently be very limited infrastructure to support different forms of electric vehicles in Highland, in particular an absence of dedicated charging points for HGVs. It is understood that options are being explored for the provision of depot charging sites for larger road vehicles at key development locations in Highland, including at major ports.

Road Safety

10.216 The Council's Road Safety Plan sets out an action plan to improve Road Safety activity in Highland to the year 2030, alongside creating and maintaining partnerships which will help to develop prevention and intervention activities and initiatives. It sits within the Scottish Government publication Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2030.

10.217 The RSP explains that significant progress was made over the lifetime of the previous Scottish Government Framework which ran from 2010 to 2020. Figure 10:15 highlights this steady reduction in all injury severities in Highland which is line with the Scottish trend.

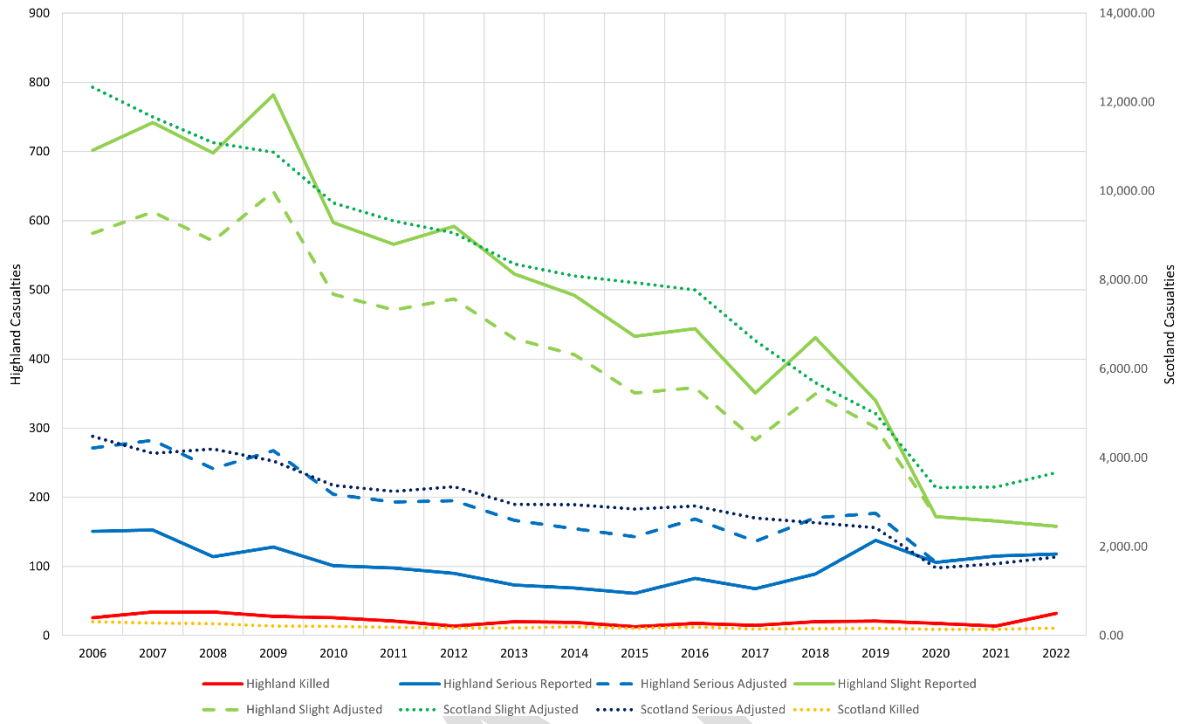

Figure 10:15 All Highland Casualties by Severity (Road Safety Plan 2024-2030)

10.218 Figure 10:16 shows that as the population of Highland has increased there has been a continued reduction in the recorded injury collisions.

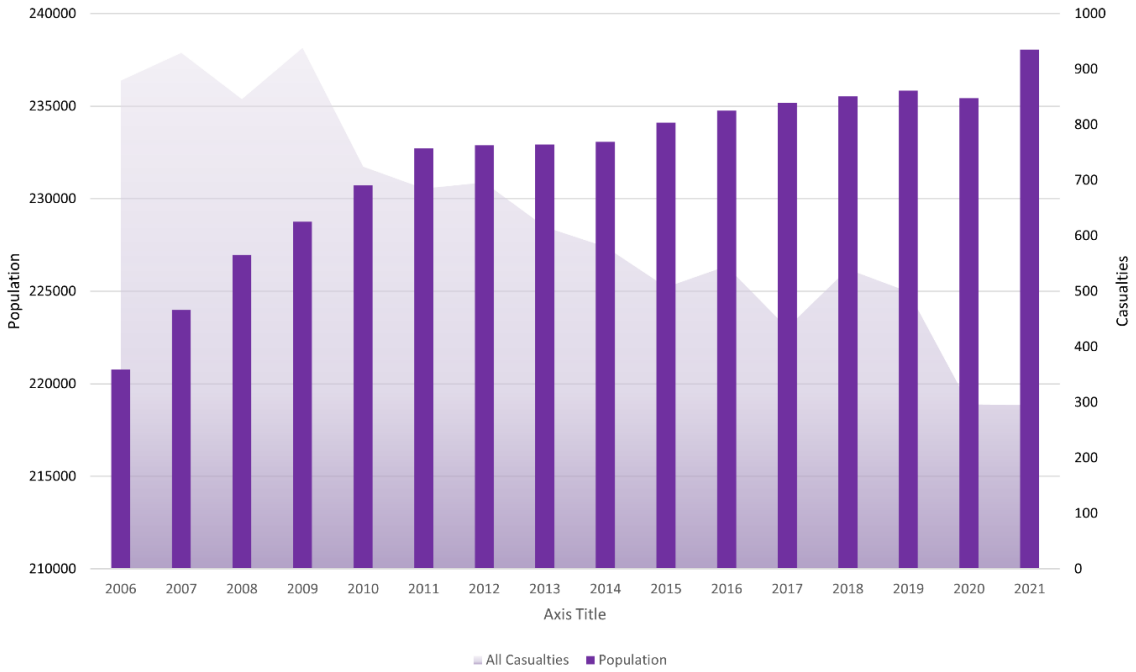

Figure 10:16 All Highland Casualties Against Population Growth (Road Safety Plan 2024-2030)

10.219 Transport Scotland monitors road safety initiatives undertaken by partners which contribute to the delivery of the Road Safety Framework to 2030. Its Reported Road Casualties Scotland 2023 report found that inexperience of driving on the left is a notable contributing factor of a number of collisions in Scotland and Highland.

10.220 The Road Safety Improvement Fund (RSIF) is an initiative by the Scottish Government to enhance safety across the local road network, with funding specifically for targeted casualty reduction schemes. The Council's RSIF 2025/26 programme is provided in **THC106** and includes safety measures for settlements on the NC500 and rural routes in Nairnshire, Inverness and Lochaber.

Parking

10.221 Provision of appropriate and well-managed parking is crucial to the transport network. The Council regulates 230 off-street car parks and approximately 10,000 parking bays. There are also numerous privately operated car parks throughout Highland.

10.222 With regards to car park occupancy rates, data was not available for Council or privately operated car parks. Other indicators of parking pressures are described below, including decriminalised parking enforcement and occupancy rates at selected rail station car parks.

Decriminalised Parking Enforcement

10.223 The responsibility for enforcing parking, waiting and loading restrictions was transferred from Police Scotland to the Council in 2016. The Council publishes data on Penalty Charge Notices (PCN) **(THC113)** issued. A summary of this data is provided in Table 10:11.

*Table 10:11 Number of Penalty Charge Notices Issued in Highland **(THC113)***

Area	2022	2023	2024	% Δ
Inverness	6553	7304	8056	23%
Lochaber	2720	2990	1925	-29%
Skye	3545	5563	7011	98%
Wick	62	76	207	234%
Thurso	176	171	528	200%
Dingwall	280	274	283	1%

Nairn	137	264	196	43%
Other	896	730	1459	63%
Total	14369	17372	19665	37%

10.224 In many areas of Highland the number of PCNs issued have risen significantly between 2022 and 2024. The volume of PCNs issued and the increase in Skye of 98% is particularly notable. More detailed data in **THC113** shows the number of PCNs issued in Skye was particularly pronounced during the summer months. This suggests there is a unique issue in Skye likely associated with tourism. The increase in Caithness towns of Wick and Thurso is also significant but appears to be spread throughout the year, suggesting more localised issues.

10.225 **THC113** provides a list of the top five contraventions in 2022. The number of parking without payment contraventions (1,173) is significantly higher than other contraventions. Other contraventions in the top five include wrong class of vehicle on Street, wrong class of vehicle off street, not parked correctly and parked in a restricted zone, these range from between 734 and 540 contraventions. Other than parking without payment, the other top contraventions may suggest pressure for parking at certain locations.

Rail Station Car Parks

10.226 The number of parking spaces at each rail station in Highland is provided in **THC114**. Scotrail periodically undertake rail station car park snapshot occupancy surveys. In 2024 up to four surveys undertaken in different months of the year and times of day at 26 Highland stations found **(THC115)**:

- Car parks at Glenfinnan, Inverness, Inverness Airport, Nairn and Tain were consistently to or close to capacity;
- The car parks at the following stations were over 70% capacity on at least one occasion: Ardgay, Beauly, Carrbridge, Dingwall, Georgemas Junction, Glenfinnan, Inverness Airport, Inverness Car Park 1, Inverness Car Park 2, Kingussie, Kyle of Lochalash, Mallaig, Nairn, Newtonmore, Tain, Wick;
- Some stations do not appear to experience any capacity issues, including Fearn, Invergordon and Thurso.

10.227 As parking in many Highland rail stations is unrestricted and free, and given the nature of snapshot surveys, this would benefit from a stronger evidence base.

National and Council Parking Policy and Guidance

10.228 NPF4 Policy 13 requires LDPs to promote a place-based approach to consider how to reduce car-dominance. The LDP Guidance encourages the lowest level of car parking appropriate in each location to be provided, with the aim of reducing reliance on the private car and minimising space dedicated to car parking, recognising what is appropriate will vary from place to place.

10.229 This includes Part (e) of the policy that supports development proposals that are ambitious in terms of low/no car parking, particularly in urban locations that are well-served by sustainable transport modes and where they do not create barriers to access by disabled people.

10.230 The Council's Roads and Transport Guidelines for New Development was published in 2013. Chapter 6 of this document provides information on car parking, including parking standards for different types of development. It recognises that where an area is well served by sustainable moves of travel, reduced parking standards may be appropriate but that in rural areas, where public transport is scarce, less restrictive standards are acceptable.

10.231 The parking standards set out are generally expressed as minimum standards for residential developments and maximum standards for other types of developments. It explains that for most new development the Council will usually require parking to be provided at or close to the maximum standards.

10.232 The Council's Developer Contributions Supplementary Guidance explains that in certain circumstances where the Council's parking standards cannot be achieved, a reduced level of parking may be acceptable for development located centrally within the Settlement Development Areas set out in the guidance. In such cases the developer may be required to provide developer contributions towards mitigating the transport impacts of the development.

10.233 NPF4 and IMFLDP2 policies do not place a quantitative limit on car parking provision only that such parking should be minimised, located in a less convenient place than cycle parking, and provide for disabled users. Instead, the management of that parking should promote modal shift to more sustainable modes and therefore minimise harmful emissions. The number, type, location, cost, and enforcement of parking provision and surrounding traffic management measures should all be coordinated to achieve a shift to more sustainable modes where these are (or can be made) an economically viable alternative by the public/private sector. Accordingly, the Council's quantitative parking standards as set out in **THC116** can still be applied but only as a

prompt for the developer and Council to agree a holistic approach to achieve modal shift.

10.234 To contribute towards meeting LTS Objective 4: To reduce emission from the transport system within Highland, Policy 4.9 explains that the 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 emission from the transport sector.

Cross Boundary Transport Considerations

10.235 Neighbouring road authorities to Highland by land are Moray, Aberdeenshire, Perth and Kinross and Argyll and Bute Councils. The Highland Council remains the roads authority for the parts of the CNPA that are within its boundary. Neighbouring authorities by sea are Orkney and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. Considerations relevant to the strategic and local network, including on active travel, public transport and roads and potential cross boundary issues are identified below.

Travel Patterns

10.236 Figure 10:4 Location of usual residence and place of work (all Highland people) (Scotland's Census 2022) shows that only 1.6% (1,820 people) of Highland residents travel to another local authority to their place of work. This small proportion can be understood due to the large land mass of Highland and its predominantly rural boundaries with other authorities. It is anticipated that the majority of Highland residents travelling to another authority is likely to be to Moray, given the relatively close proximity of larger Highland settlements to larger Moray settlements including Forres and Elgin.

Active Travel

10.237 A number of long-distance active travel routes cross boundaries into other authority areas, including NCN1, NCN87, NCN7, Speyside Way and the Dava Way.

Rail Based Transport

10.238 The Inverness to Aberdeen, Highland Main Line and West Highland rail routes cross boundaries into other authorities. Moray Council is of the understanding that some west Moray residents use rail to access employment opportunities in Inverness. Network Rail identifies Keith to Inverness as a travel market for commuting and leisure purposes due to competitive journey times.

Bus Based Transport

10.239 Several longer distance bus services pass through local authority boundaries, including routes to Aberdeen, Perth and central belt.

Water Based Transport

10.240 Important ferry connections are provided from Highland to other local authority areas including to Orkney and nan Eilean Siar. There are understood to be challenges to the provision of electric vehicle infrastructure on the northern and western isles.

Road Based Transport

10.241 Key roads that cross local authority boundaries are the A96, A9, A82, A95, and the A828 as well as a number of local roads. The A96 and A9 dualling projects have potential cross boundary considerations for Highland with Moray and Perth and Kinross authorities. Moray Council has previously lobbied for improvements to the A95 due to the volume of HGVs accessing southern Scotland to/from Moray.

Current Approach to Transport Related Developer Contributions

10.242 The Council's approach to transport related developer contributions at a national level is underpinned by NPF4 Policy 18 Infrastructure First and Planning circular 4/2025: Planning obligations and good neighbour agreements. At the Highland level, the developer contributions framework includes HwLDP Policy 31 Developer Contributions and its Developer Contributions Supplementary Guidance, as well as area LDPs, the Highland Delivery Programme and a number of development briefs.

10.243 The Council's DCSG contains a chapter on transport contributions. It explains that all development is assessed in terms of its impact on the transport network. Contributions may be sought for standard transport requirements, including

towards walking/cycling provision and paths, public transport services and facilities and road improvements. Cumulative transport contributions may be also sought towards strategic transport projects. An overview of significant projects in the context of developer contributions is provided in Table 10:12, further detail on the projects listed is provided within **THC178**. The Council maintains and monitors developer contributions that have been collected.

Table 10:12 Significant Cumulative Transport Contribution Projects

Scheme	Developments required to contribute	Progress to date
Dingwall road and active travel improvements to relieve congestion and facilitate development in	Developments within Dingwall Primary catchment area may be liable. Rate set out in Highland Delivery Programme.	Early phases complete, cost and timing of future phases dependent upon a number of factors. Contributions continue to be collected.
East Link and Inshes Corridor (Inverness)	Developments within the Inverness East Development Brief area and any other site that brings impacts. Rate set out in Inverness East Development Brief.	Schemes at planning stages, some developer contributions committed.
Inverness West Link Road Scheme	Developments in the Torvean and Ness-side Development Brief area or within Southern Distributor Road Agreement Area. Rate set out in Torvean and Ness-side Development Brief.	Completed in 2021. Partly forward funded by the Council, contributions continue to be sought from relevant developments.
Inverness Retail and Business Park road improvements and sustainable transport	Developments within Inverness Retail and Business Park. Contribution rate dependent upon nature of project.	Scheme at planning stages, some developer contributions committed and continue to be collected.

Portree Link Road	Contributions may be required from any new development in Portree Settlement Development Area as shown in WestPlan. Rate set out in Highland Delivery Programme.	Scheme underway, forward funded by the Scottish Government Infrastructure Loan Funding, contributions to be sought from relevant developments.
South Loch Ness Road Improvements	All developments which put significant pressure on either B851, B862, B861 or B852 roads. Contribution rate dependent upon nature of project.	Incremental approach to improvements, some direct improvements provided and developer contributions collected.
Tomich Junction (A9 Trunk Road, Invergordon)	All allocations within Invergordon as shown in IMFLDP2 and any other developments which brings impacts. Any contribution rate yet to be determined.	Design and funding options being progressed by THC. No contributions secured at time of writing.

10.244 Table 10:12 demonstrates that developer contributions have and are likely to continue to make an important contribution towards the funding of transport projects. For example, the completion of the West Link Road in Inverness in 2021 enabled the continued delivery of large-scale housing sites at Ness-side and Westercraigs. The delivery of many of these projects continues to be essential to the delivery of homes and commercial development in Highland.

Summary of Stakeholder Engagement

10.245 A full breakdown of all stakeholder engagement undertaken to support the Evidence Report is provided within **Chapter 3: Statement of Engagement**. A summary of the key stakeholder engagement activities undertaken for this chapter are presented below.

Stakeholders and Key Agencies

10.246 All meetings and engagement exercises with stakeholders and key agencies are detailed within the Log of Engagement **(THC001)**. Prior to the drafting of the HLDP Evidence Report an early engagement exercise HLDP Evidence Consultation was undertaken from 31st January – 2nd May 2025. Responses to the HLDP Evidence Consultation (including from key agencies) are included in **THC006**. Drafts of the evidence presented in this chapter were then circulated to key agencies and other stakeholders on 30 June 2025, which included:

- NatureScot
- Scottish Water
- SEPA
- NHS Highland
- HIE
- HITRANS
- Transport Scotland
- Crofting Commission
- Sport Scotland
- Historic Environment Scotland
- Architecture and Design Scotland
- Walk
- Highland Community Planning Partnership
- Wider Council Services: Environmental Health, Transport, Community Development, Climate Change and Energy.
- Chamber of Commerce, inc; Caithness, Lochaber, Inverness.
- BID, inc; Fort William, Dornoch, Visit Inverness Loch Ness – Tourist, VisitNairn - Nairn, Inverness.
- Neighbouring Authorities – Moray, Aberdeenshire, Perth and Kinross, Argyll and Bute, Orkney, Western Isles, CNPA.
- Public transport operators and infrastructure providers: Calmac, Network Rail, Scotrail, Stagecoach.

10.247 Comments were received from 14 key agencies and other stakeholders, including Transport Scotland **(THC135)**, HITRANS **(THC402)**, Moray Council **(THC406)**, Network Rail **(THC407)** and other Highland Council Services, including Transport Planning **(THC411** and **THC412)** and Active and Sustainable Transport **(THC415).**

10.248 A second draft of this chapter that took into account comments received was distributed to key agencies and other stakeholders on 24 September 2025. A small number of comments were received on this draft from the HC Active and

Sustainable Transport Team **(THC426)** as well as statements of agreement as outlined in paragraph 10.312. Further minor changes and updates were made, and following this, a statement of agreement was received from the HC Active and Sustainable Transport Team **(THC442)**.

10.249 Following this, a further draft of the chapter was prepared to take into account newly available information, including detailed Census 2022 data releases. Consideration was also given to Local Development Plans – Evidence Reports and Gate Checks Action Plan and Advice published in February 2026, and as a result additional information was presented on developer contributions, intentions to prepare a transport appraisal and spatial implications of the evidence for the plan. This draft was shared with Transport Scotland and HITRANS in March 2026. Any feedback will be reported within the final version of this chapter that is submitted for Gate Check.

10.250 A summary of feedback from those who provided substantive comments on drafts of the chapter is presented in the tables below. Paragraph 10.252 provides an overview of those who simply provided statements of agreement, minor factual corrections or provided comments that are not directly relevant the content of the chapter.

10.251 Given the extensive nature of some comments that covered multiple aspects, a detailed Consultation Report has also been prepared for this chapter and is provided as supporting document **THC330.** All responses are listed within **THC###** Evidence Report Reference List and full responses are provided as supporting documents to the Evidence Report.

10.252 SEPA **(THC089)**, Moray Council **(THC406)** and the Highland Council's Access Officer **(THC414)** confirmed they were content with the evidence provided within this Chapter. The Council's Corran Ferry Project Manager **(THC413)** provided updated timescales for new Corran Ferry infrastructure that were incorporated into relevant parts of the Chapter. The CalMac Area Manager for North Hebrides **(THC409)** requested further information on projects listed in the Chapter for operational reasons, relevant contact information was provided in response.

Key Agency: Transport Scotland (THC135)	
Main views raised	Consider the chapter sufficient and in accordance with relevant policies. The chapter provides sufficient baseline data on strategic transport networks and identifies any constraints. As a result of welcomed engagement with Transport Scotland, the Council has addressed

	recommendations in earlier HLDP Evidence Consultation, including strengthening baseline data, details of transport trends and further information to how strategic infrastructure is used. Recognise the Council's key commitment to a transport appraisal.
Council's response	Following feedback on the earlier Evidence Consultation, the Council presented additional information requested within the Evidence Report and supporting documents.
Areas of agreement	The Council agree with the comments made during the earlier Evidence Consultation, as such Transport Scotland were content with this chapter, in terms of Transport and the transport elements of Infrastructure First.
Outstanding issues	No outstanding issues.
Is the agency content with the evidence?	Yes, Transport Scotland provided a statement of agreement provided in **(THC135).**
Implications for proposed plan	To ensure that the HLDP is informed by an appropriate and effective transport appraisal that is informed by continuous engagement with Transport Scotland.
Actions for proposed plan stage	Preparation of transport appraisal to inform the proposed plan.

Key Agency: HITRANS (THC402)	
Main views raised	**Draft 1:** 1. Considered the chapter was too roads focussed and that there were opportunities to present a more balanced chapter by presenting it in a different order and providing additional active travel data. 2. Requested that additional information should be added regarding the impact of HGV and abnormal loads on the roads network. 3. Suggested a range of additional information was added to the summary of evidence including, passenger and freight rail and ferry networks, potential impacts of the ICFGF, ferry freight and electric vehicles. **Draft 2:**

	Satisfied that changes incorporated into the second draft of the chapter address issues previously raised.
Council's response	1. The Council agreed and re-ordered the chapter to reflect the NTS2 Sustainable Travel Hierarchy and provided additional data on Active Travel, including increased emphasis on Active Travel Masterplans and NCN routes. 2. The Council agreed and a section was added on Road Freight that includes data on HGV traffic volumes and abnormal loads and a summary of industries that are putting pressure on the road network, including energy projects and timber transport. 3. The Council agreed and provided additional data was presented.
Areas of agreement	The Council agree with the comments made.
Outstanding issues	No outstanding issues.
Is the agency content with the evidence?	Yes, statement of sufficiency provided within **(THC402)**.
Implications for proposed plan	• The HITRANS response reinforced the requirement for HLDP to embed the principles of the NTS2 Sustainable Travel Hierarchy and Sustainable Investment Hierarchy. • Consider in greater detail Active Travel Masterplan actions and future plans for the National Cycle Network to allow the HLDP to assist with their delivery. • The HLDP will consider the implications of a range of likely future pressures on the transport network.
Actions for proposed plan stage	Ensure HITRANS are involved with the preparation of the transport appraisal that will inform the HDLP.

Key Agency: NatureScot (THC088)	
Main views raised	**Draft 1:** Request table noting all exact comments on the earlier HLDP Evidence Consultation and how these have been addressed within this chapter or within other chapters. Once comments have been addressed in a

	revised chapter then we can agree that the evidence will be sufficient on matters related to NatureScot. **Draft 2:** Confirm satisfied with the approach taken, content that comments have been addressed and agree sufficiency of Chapter 10.
Council's response	**Draft 1:** Comments received through the earlier HLDP Evidence Consultation have been used to inform this chapters and all other chapter's evidence. It was considered most appropriate to present and respond to comments from the earlier Evidence Consultation as a summary following the suggested Evidence Report Template, we considered it was clear from the Summary of Engagement section content of comments received and the council's response to them. (HLDP Evidence Consultations for all chapters were subsequently collated and can be found in **THC006**). **Draft 2:** Noted and agreed.
Areas of agreement	N/A, no material issues raised.
Outstanding issues	No outstanding issues.
Is the agency content with the evidence?	Yes, statement of sufficiency provided within **(THC088)**.
Implications for proposed plan	No additional implications.
Actions for proposed plan stage	No actions required.

Network Rail (THC407)	
Main views raised	**Draft 1:**

	1. Important to consider information provided on travel markets on rail corridors in Highland and where opportunities for modal shift might be likely. 2. Suggest reference to additional Network Rail publications, including The Sustainable Travel to Stations strategy and Scotland's Railway's Climate Action Plan. **Draft 2:** Confirm comments have been addressed and statement of agreement that evidence in this chapter is sufficient on matters relating to Network Rail.
Council's response	1. The Council considered this information to be important to informing the HLDP, it has therefore been summarised and included within the Rail Based Transport section of this chapter. 2. A summary of these documents are now included within this chapter. **Draft 2:** Agee and noted comments.
Areas of agreement	The Council agree with the comments made.
Outstanding issues	No outstanding issues.
Is the agency content with the evidence?	Yes, statement of agreement provided in **(THC407).**
Implications for proposed plan	Greater understanding of where opportunities for modal shift might be likely to inform spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy, including travel to stations.
Actions for proposed plan stage	Consider information provided on travel markets on rail corridors when preparing spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy.

ScotRail (THC408)

Main views raised	Notes that evidence presented shows on all rail lines in Highland, seat utilisation is significantly below capacity. Explains that given station entry and exit statistics remain below pre-pandemic levels, it is likely that seat utilisation has below lower in recent years. Provides most recent ScotRail statistics for the Highland Mainline that shows station usage increasing on most stations north of Perth with the exception of Inverness and Aviemore. Notes that ScotRail data will be different from the ORR's estimates.
Council's response	Noted ScotRail data differs from ORR, but ORR used as publicly available and as ScotRail data only shows one Highland rail station, it was considered insufficient in providing the best baseline data. However, some text has been diluted to suggest seat utilisation 'may' have become lower, rather than 'likely'.
Areas of agreement	The Council acknowledge the comments made.
Outstanding issues	The Council does not consider there are any outstanding issues.
Is the agency content with the evidence?	A request for a statement of sufficiency or dispute to be provided was issued following the distribution of the second draft of the chapter. None was provided.
Implications for proposed plan	Understanding there is likely to be sufficient seat capacity on train services in the HLDP area to accommodate any additional passengers as a result of development.
Actions for proposed plan stage	In the interests of helping to deliver modal shift, consider the role of settlements with train stations in the spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy.

Walk Wheel Cycle Trust (THC410)	
Main views raised	**Draft 1:** Suggest adjustment of AT definition. Pleased with inclusion of National Cycle Network, suggest discussions with NCN Planning Manager. Encourage reference to Network Development Plan for NCN rather than published routes in mapping, Walk Wheel Cycle Trust use collaborative GIS tool. Can provide narrative for future NCN projects. Suggest text

	relating to future NCN routes and funding of NCN developments be added. **Draft 2:** Happy to agree with the proposals in second draft.
Council's response	**Draft 1:** Amended AT text. NCN Planning Manager added to Transport circulation list. Added NCN data to Highland Local Development Plan Evidence Report Map. No additional narrative required for future NCN projects as evidence report has sufficient data however, will be considered in future stages of HLDP. Additional narrative on NCN projects and funding added. **Draft 2:** Agree with comments.
Areas of agreement	The Council agree with the comments made.
Outstanding issues	No outstanding issues.
Is the agency content with the evidence?	Yes, statement of agreement provided in **(THC410).**
Implications for proposed plan	Consider in greater detail future plans for the National Cycle Network to allow the HLDP to assist with its delivery.
Actions for proposed plan stage	Consider potential for identification of existing/improved National Cycle Network Routes, and any appropriate land safeguards/developer contributions required towards delivery.

THC Transport Planning (THC411)	
Main views raised	1. Suggest include National Road Development Guide (NRDG) and Timber Transport Forum Agreed Route Map. 2. Concerns with availability of shared information internally suggest better cross service information sharing. 3. Lack of accessible data on existing trip rate data, development trip relates and peak traffic flow meaning some development sites have not mitigated impacts on sensitive traffic routes.

	4. Suggest additions related to impact on rural transport infrastructure from major energy and industrial Developments.
Council's response	1. Added both documents 2. Noted and explained sources and availability of data presented. 3. Agree that Road Capacity Needs and Deliverability document doesn't include all localised issues, individual site developer requirements will be identified later in HLDP process. 5. Added new section on Road Freight within Road based transport section, that includes information about information about major energy development transport considerations.
Areas of agreement	Agree with the comments made.
Outstanding issues	There are not considered to be any outstanding issues.
Is the agency content with the evidence?	A request for a statement of sufficiency or dispute to be provided was issued following the distribution of the second draft of the chapter. None was provided.
Implications for proposed plan	The HLDP will consider the implications of a range of likely future pressures on the transport network.
Actions for proposed plan stage	Consider role of LDP in addressing anticipated pressures, for example developer contributions towards network improvements.

THC Active and Sustainable Transport (THC415)	
Main views raised	**Draft 1:** Considered the chapter was too roads focussed and that there were opportunities to present a more balanced chapter. Suggest a number of additional data sources throughout the document and mention areas for text to be amended. **Draft 2:** Suggest consideration of how trunk roads/local roads can split areas of communities and what is being done about this. **Draft 3:** This is all satisfactory.
Council's response	**Draft 1:** The Council agreed and re-ordered the chapter to reflect the NTS2 Sustainable Travel Hierarchy and provided additional data on Active Travel, including increased emphasis on Active Travel

	Masterplans and NCN routes. All suggested amendments and additional data sources have been included. **Draft 2:** Added reference to this within chapter. **Draft 3:** Agree, comment noted.
Areas of agreement	Agree with the comments made.
Outstanding issues	No outstanding issues.
Is the agency content with the evidence?	Yes, statement of sufficiency provided in **(THC415).**
Implications for proposed plan	• The response reinforced the requirement for HLDP to embed the principles of the NTS2 Sustainable Travel Hierarchy and Sustainable Investment Hierarchy. • Consider in greater detail Active Travel Masterplan actions and future plans for the National Cycle Network to allow the HLDP to assist with their delivery.
Actions for proposed plan stage	HLDP will require to include an updated network of active travel route proposals which will support the implementation of the Active Travel Strategy and associated Active Travel Masterplans and Inner Moray Firth Active Travel Network as well other identified routes. Safeguarding land required for the delivery of projects, and seeking developer contribution towards their delivery will be considered.

Summary of Local Place Plan Priorities

10.253 Ardgour Local Place Plan **(THC010)** has identified the following priorities relating to Transport:

- Need flexible GP catchments and primary/ secondary school transport.
- Need reliable and extended ferry services integrated with public/community transport that is safe for people to walk & cycle from their door.
- New fit-for-purpose Corran ferries, upgrade Camusnagaul ferry service and associated infrastructure.
- Improve active travel networks across the area

- Reduce/reassess speed limits within and between villages and improve maintenance & passing places for HGVs/buses, formalise the lay-by with postbox, bus stop and community noticeboard at Achaphubuil.
- Community filling station as in Morvern and Luss, include shop or vending machine.
- Provide public parking adjacent to school parking and seating/more pleasant shelter at the bus stops at Clovullin community hub.
- Add e-bikes & car charging at both ferry landings for locals & visitors and enhance road edges with traditional walking/verges/hedging characteristic of the area at North Corran.

10.254 Black Isle Local Place Plan **(THC011)** has identified the following priorities relating to Transport:

- Update/implement Black Isle Sustainable Tourism Plan & Chanonry Point Action Plan.
- Create fit-for-purpose Black Isle network of community/public transport, including community transport, buses, ferries, e-bikes, electric car club that are integrated with one another to encourage sustainable, safe travel within and between villages.
- Improved maintenance of roads & footways as the infrastructure for all modes of transport.
- The Green Freeport should take opportunity to deliver community aspirations, including public transport and active travel links to access work & training opportunities, including upgrading the Nigg ferry.
- Support for tackling visitor management pressures in Fortrose and Rosemarkie (including traffic, parking, improved public transport, disabled access and 'slow tourism').
- Ensure safe active travel within villages for all users especially at busy locations such as Tore Roundabout and Fortrose High Street.
- Improve footpath networks linked to natural & coastal features and including increasing awareness of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.
- Routes for priority action should include Rosemarkie, Avoch, Munlochy & between Culbokie & A9 bus stops.

10.255 Broadford and Strath Local Place Plan **(THC012)** has identified the following priorities relating to Transport:

- Skye Cycle Way: Active travel path from Skye Bridge to Broadford by BSCC and Sustrans / Transport Scotland.
- Encourage development of community transport service to improve access from outlying settlements to Broadford facilities. Coordinate with onward

transport services. Investigate low emission community transport options for outlying settlements.
- Encourage development of safe active travel routes to the new Broadford primary school from Lime Park, Black Park, Scullamus and surrounding residential areas.
- Create path to link new hospital site to existing Pier Path into Broadford.
- Accessibility improvements for pedestrians including crossing on A87 and improved signage.
- Increase number of bus stops along A87 including hail and stop system.
- Encourage development of off-road active travel link between Broadford, Strollamus and Luib.

10.256 Caol Local Place Plan **(THC024)** has identified the following priorities relating to Transport:
- Addressing traffic congestion through potential changes to the Caol Link Road corridor.
- New roundabout at the A830 (Banavie) exit.
- Enhanced bus routes.
- Hi-bike stations in Riverside/Old School Court.
- Improved walking/cycling paths, including: Canal Path and Mossfield connections; between back of houses to high school along Blar Mhor Industrial Estate; Caol Spit to provide direct link to Inverlochy/Fort William; entrance to St Johns Road, improved dropped kerbs throughout.
- Investigate options for summer water taxi from Corpach Marina to Fort William.
- Additional traffic calming.
- Campervan infrastructure.

10.257 Croy and Tornagrain Local Place Plan **(THC026)** has identified the following priorities relating to Transport:
- Improve public transport services connecting communities along the B9006 with the airport and railway station. Consider extending services to connect to West Nairnshire communities and Nairn.
- Improve access to strategic bus services using the A96 corridor including provision of bus stops near Mid Coul roundabout, and increase the number of services calling within communities.
- Upgrade road connecting Croy and Tornagrain to twin-track road.
- Upgrade B9006 at Sunnyside, install traffic calming measures and improve pavements.
- Encourage better integration of bus and rail services.

- Promote more affordable bus fares and expansion of the Highland Railcard scheme.
- Support the delivery of the short section of path from Croy towards Clephanton to link to the wider network.
- Support the delivery of the diversion and improvement of the Inverness and Nairn National Cycle Network through Tornagrain and Croy with connections to other settlements.
- Address missing links in routes and improve connections between local communities, services and facilities, including Cantraybridge College, the Highland Cycle Ability Centre, Tornagrain Church and the original Tornagrain village.
- Protect and enhance off-road networks through estates and woodlands.
- Seek improved maintenance and safety improvements of the A96 road crossing connecting communities to the station, airport and business park.
- Promote the preparation of an Active Travel Masterplan for Croy and Tornagrain.

10.258 Dores and Essich Local Place Plan **(THC013)** has identified the following priorities relating to Transport:

- Develop community 'Dial-a-Bus' service.
- Provide safe and viable bus stops with clear signages;
- Car parking opportunities: Development of car park at former church, provision of Dores beach parking.
- Introduction of speed limits and pedestrian crossings and footpaths;
- Improvement of Dores Inn's junction.
- Development of cycle route and provision of bike shelter.
- Provision of better signage.

10.259 Duror and Kentallen Local Place Plan **(THC014)** has identified the following priorities relating to Transport:

- Better transport links, in particular more frequent bus service with better timings of public buses through the village, including evening buses, signage and additional bus shelters.
- Join neighbouring village community car scheme – or create own scheme.
- Create car parking areas to support tourism pressures.
- Add electric car and e-bike charging points at community centre.
- More walking trails through ancient woodland with reinstated/extended tracks and more route maps.

- Address traffic speeds, poorly sited junctions, poor road/pathway/cycle path conditions and lack of safe crossing points for active travel and road users.
- Create a more cohesive village centre close to the principal village junction, subject to improvement of road access from the trunk road.
- Improve the internal connectivity of the village through improved active travel and green network links.
- Investigate opportunity for new/enhanced tourist facilities taking advantage of trunk road and national cycle network tourist routes.
- Create pathways behind the school.
- Create public parking at Dalnatrat.

10.260 Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston Local Place Plan (THC022) has identified the following priorities relating to Transport:

- Improve public transport: better reliability and space on Citylink buses, local services to Whitebridge & Foyers.
- Agree & deliver a public sector-led plan for pedestrian/vehicle movement, parking & visitor management in Fort Augustus, initially via HITRANS
- The recently expanded car park often has 15 coaches plus cars and smaller buses, equating to an influx of around 1,000 people at any one time. Meagre toilet facilities cannot cope.
- Only access to the village's attractions is along the A82, with numerous conflict points between pedestrians and vehicles: narrow footways and carriageways, river and canal bridges, the Penny Petroleum forecourt, and a lack of safe crossing points.
- Agree and deliver a plan with external partners for pedestrian/vehicle management on A82 in Fort Augustus and Invermoriston.
- Approach HITRANS, Highland Council and bus operators about bus timetabling, bus stops in Glenmoriston and community transport.
- Explore community transport with 3 Glens Community Care and neighbouring communities.
- There are no local buses to nearby settlements such as Stratherrick and Foyers. Difficult to get to work, study or hospital before 9am & return in the evening. Reduced bus frequency in the winter is also an issue.
- Free parking for local residents at local Forestry and Land Scotland car parks, similar to that at the main Fort Augustus car park.
- Maintenance of rural path network as and when required.
- Reinstate public access to Loch Ness along the existing path on the north bank of the River Moriston from Invermoriston public car park.

- Create a local path network at Convent Wood in Fort Augustus.

10.261 Gairloch Local Place Plan **(THC015)** has identified the following priorities relating to Transport:

- Provide safe pedestrian and cycle paths.
- Extend car parking facilities particularly for key leisure and recreation sites.
- Increase local bike hire provision.
- Improve road conditions an resurface pavements.
- Improve and maintain a variety of core paths.
- Extend network of cycling/walking routes.
- Improve public transport, including local connections to get to settlements.
- Support local car share initiatives.
- Improve signposting of bus stops.

10.262 Garve and District Local Place Plan **(THC016)** has identified the following priorities relating to Transport:

- Traffic calming measures needed in key locations,
- Support and enhance active travel in line with Active Travel Plan,
- New and enhanced path network, specifically to Garve War Memorial, Contin and Gorstan,
- Improved bus and rail services,
- Improved parking facilities and EV chargers.
- Welcome the proposed new community transport service.
- Suggest bike hire at the GD CORe.

10.263 Golspie Local Place Plan **(THC021)** has identified the following priorities relating to Transport:

- Need affordable and reliable transport (rail, bus, car, bike, walking (active travel)) and associated infrastructure (roads, safe pathways, cycle tracks and availability of fuel).
- The village hub could include provision and space for sustainable transportation (cycle hire for example).
- From Housing to Big Burn add active travel connection to Big Burn.
- Potential to add Green Gateway car park. Needs to be discreet, integrated green car park with a small footprint to keep the Glebe as a park. The positioning of the car park is intended to give people good access to recreational opportunities of walking and cycling in and around Golspie by locking into active travel connections and reducing congestion around the village hub.

- Add/improve path networks throughout the area making more accessible for all users.
- Add new crossings on Golspie's Main Street. Explore best crossing option allowing access and timing for all.

10.264 Kinlochleven Local Place Plan **(THC017)** has identified the following priorities relating to Transport:

- Improve public/community transport, including replacement of old community minibus.
- Improve and upgrade path routes making them safe for all users.
- Improve cycling connections and introduce a community e-bike scheme and initiatives like bike maintenance.
- Manage visitor parking.

10.265 Lochalsh Local Place Plan **(THC018)** has identified the following priorities relating to Transport:

- Implement traffic management and extend car park in Plockton.
- Improve public transport facilities and active travel link between and within villages.
- Extend 20mph speed limit in Dornie.

10.266 Nairnshire Local Place Plan **(THC023)** has identified the following priorities relating to Transport:

- Improving transportation infrastructure and connectivity for all modes of travel.
- Insufficient infrastructure, including transportation networks poses a barrier to business efficiency and growth.
- Address Nairn's challenges with the A96 running directly through its centre; including congestion, poor air quality, limited connectivity for active travel across the A96, and obstacles to high-quality placemaking along King Street.
- Reduce reliance on private cars by promoting improving public transport to all parts of Nairnshire and nearby towns, carpooling, providing ample parking for bicycles, and developing park-and-ride facilities.
- The Ardersier Port site, part of the wider Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport has the potential for over-capacity of transport network.
- Accessibility and connection between key assets to be considered including transport hubs, to town centre, to beach.
- Nairn Harbour requires real solutions to manage parking and meet demand from campervan-based visitors.

- Require second access road to Lochloy, linking residents to nearby facilities and to reduce the traffic bottleneck at Merryton A96 Junction.
- Consider future development of Riverside Park, including strengthening its use as for motorhome overnight parking.
- Assessment for development of Tradespark Woods and Culbin Forest should consider access, parking, capacity and impact on the neighbouring housing.
- Privately owned Library car park should be part of a community-led Town Centre Plan and buildings audit to safeguard established needs in the town centre. This must include protecting existing 82 parking spaces, part of the library building ownership structure, that support Nairn High Street viability.

10.267 Plana Àite Ionadail Shlèite/Local Place Plan for Sleat **(THC025)** has identified the following priorities relating to Transport:

Short-term Proposals (1-3 years)

- Public transport – enhanced bus service frequency; improved ferry service reliability; community transport expansion; integrated transport timetabling; better transport information systems.
- Active travel – extended walking path network; dedicated cycle routes; path maintenance programme; safe routes to school; promotion and encouragement of active travel.
- Infrastructure improvements – improved road maintenance programme; enhanced parking facilities; electric vehicle charging points; public transport infrastructure; traffic management measures.

Medium/Long-term Proposals (3-10 years)

- Comprehensive sustainable transport network.
- Enhanced ferry service capacity and short-notice access for residents.
- Integrated mobility solutions.
- Complete active travel network.
- Green transport infrastructure.

10.268 Stratherrick and Foyers Local Place Plan **(THC019)** has identified the following priorities relating to Transport:

- Safe walking and cycling: within villages (particularly linking schools, community facilities and bus stops) between villages (along minor roads and forest roads),
- Create mobility hub in Foyers at shop / car park / bus stops / public toilets,
- Potential ferry links from Inverfarigaig and Foyers piers.

- Exploring community transport possibility.

10.269 Torridon and Kinlochewe Local Place Plan **(THC020)** has identified the following priorities relating to Transport:

- Wester Ross Community Transport Scheme provides shared transport option to supplement the very limited public transport system in the area.
- New mountain bike tracks developed as part of hydro scheme tracks in Kinlochewe.
- Safe walking and cycle routes needed across the area and existing pavements are patchy and should be extended, or other safe routes signposted.

Summary of Implications for the Proposed Plan

Transport Appraisal

10.270 Discussions have taken place with Transport Scotland, where it was agreed that the HLDP has potential to impact the strategic transport network in certain areas of Highland. A transport appraisal that builds upon the data presented this chapter, and consistent with the requirements Development Planning Transport Appraisal Guidance (DPTAG), will be prepared to inform the content of the HLDP.

10.271 The scope of the transport appraisal was agreed with Transport Scotland in March 2026 **(THC094)**. The Council's Agreed Levels of Appraisal Paper **(THC093)** illustrates, and explains that the following levels of appraisal will be undertaken in Highland:

- High/medium level in the Inner Moray Firth and Fort William areas.
- No appraisal elsewhere (Caithness, Sutherland, Wester Ross, Lochalsh, Skye and wider Lochaber).

10.272 The Agreed Levels of Appraisal Paper **(THC093)** also provides an overview of the tools that will be used to undertaken appraisal, specifically regional and local transport models, and dependant on outputs additional localised modelling may be also required, alongside accessibility analysis and initial design and feasibility work.

10.273 Other key elements of the transport appraisal preparation process are set out in **THC093**, including:

- The approach to the consideration of the strategic rail and ferry network.
- The formation of a Project Working Group that will include officers from the Council's Development Plans and Transport Planning and HITRANS.

- That regular contact will be maintained with Transport Scotland, consistent with DPTAG figure 6 LDP Stages and engagement timeline.
- That the transport appraisal is intended to published as a separate report alongside the HLDP, and relevant outcomes will be incorporated into HLDP and its Delivery Programme.

10.274 The Council intends to commission a suitably experienced transport consultant to undertake the transport appraisal in spring 2026. It is anticipated to take at least six months to complete the appraisal. The appraisal will be completed in time to allow it to inform the content of the HLDP.

Policy Context

10.275 HLDP will have regard to the extensive range of national, regional and local plans, strategies and guidance set out in the **Summary of Evidence**.

10.276 HLDP will embed key principles, in particular: NPF4 LDP requirements; NTS2 Sustainable Travel Hierarchy and Sustainable Investment Hierarchy; The Route Map to achieve a 20 per cent reduction in car kilometres by 2030, including its Renewed Policy Statement; active travel publications; road safety targets; support for EV infrastructure and RTS and LTS visions and objectives. Existing approaches to transport in area LDPs will be reviewed, in particular potential for further development of the transport strategy in the recently adopted IMFLDP2.

10.277 In preparing the HLDP spatial strategy, key documents will be reviewed, and where appropriate spatial elements embedded, including relevant:

- NPF4 national developments.
- IIP and IDP investment projects.
- PfG priorities.
- STPR2 recommendations.
- Rail Service Decarbonisation Action Plan actions.
- RTS and LTS Delivery Plan physical interventions.
- Active Travel Masterplan actions.
- IRSS transport improvements.
- Existing area LDP transport interventions.

Travel Patterns and Modes

10.278 The HLDP will recognise the persistent dominance of car-based travel in Highland. Given large parts of Highland are rural and sparsely populated, the plan will accept that vehicles will always be needed, including private cars, in some capacity to enable movement of people, goods and services. Despite this,

the plan, consistent with the LTS, will recognise the real potential for modal shift in certain parts of Highland. This potential has been demonstrated by certain evidence presented, including Figure 10:9 that showed a significant proportion of Highland residents travel less than 10km to reach their place of work and the findings of the Inner Moray Firth Modal Shift Strategy.

10.279 Areas such as Inverness and main settlements that benefit from better public transport and active travel links have the greatest propensity to achieve modal shift away from car-dependency. The HLDP will consider the potential of promoting active and sustainable travel measures particularly within these settlements.

10.280 The HLDP will also need to consider a wider approach to help meet the needs of all current and future residents, particularly those with no access to private motorised transport, to be able to live a full life in all areas of Highland. This will require new and improved safe walking, wheeling, cycling, community transport and public transport options to access goods, services and leisure and social opportunities. Any improvements would also benefit visitors to Highland.

10.281 HLDP will require to consider appropriate locations for low/no car developments where mode shift to sustainable modes can be supported by good public transport and active travel connections and therefore have greater chance of success. A stronger evidence base is required to identify settlements that are currently over-provided for in terms of parking provision, in particular freely available parking. The Council aims to undertake this work in collaboration with wider Council services to inform HLDP.

10.282 A review of existing parking guidance may be required, reducing parking provision in areas where other options are available and any potential to reallocate under used car parks for another use.

Active Travel

10.283 Highland is characterised by significant areas of natural beauty which fuels leisure, recreational and tourist related active travel. However, lower proportions of Highland's communities use active travel modes for their immediate needs beyond the home such as work and education. HLDP will require to consider how development supports the sustainable transport hierarchy in making active travel the most convenient and attractive choice for daily needs. HLDP will recognise that high quality active travel infrastructure has significant potential to contribute towards modal shift. It will also recognise the importance of

segregated cycling infrastructure, including in rural areas, to enable more people to cycle safely and comfortably between settlements.

10.284 HLDP will require to include an updated network of active travel route proposals which will support the implementation of the Active Travel Strategy and associated Active Travel Masterplans and Inner Moray Firth Active Travel Network as well other identified routes. Safeguarding land required for the delivery of projects, and seeking developer contribution towards their delivery will be considered.

10.285 HLDP is likely to involve a more strategic approach to where development is situated in the first instance, but will also require considering planned improvements to active travel within and between settlements as noted within the Delivery Plan. Given that a significant proportion of trips undertaken within Highland are between adjacent settlements, the development of strategic active travel networks will be important to enabling active travel connections. To support their use, these will likely require to be designed for a range of users.

10.286 Ongoing work to promote more consistent high-quality design within developments to support active travel connections that are not fragmented, will be required in collaboration with Council colleagues in Transport Planning to progress a suitable framework for HLDP.

10.287 Provision for measures that support active travel such as designated active travel routes will need to be accommodated within HLDP to ensure a clear framework for when such infrastructure will be required and how it ought to be funded. A safer, more coherent, more comfortable, more accessible network of active travel routes would also help unlock the significant potential for tourists to travel by active travel and public transport.

Public Transport

10.288 HLDP shall be informed by the evidence presented in relation to public transport patronage and frequency of services. IMFLDP2 has previously identified a settlement hierarchy based on sustainable transport links which has directed the spatial strategy and the distribution of development across the Inner Moray Firth Area. HLDP will require to review the settlement hierarchy considering planned infrastructure improvements to public transport infrastructure, particularly where this has the ability to provide significant improvements to locations for new stations, or service frequency.

10.289 HLDP will also require to direct development to the most sustainable locations, recognising opportunities to support the patronage of public transport services. Facilitating mixed-uses in close proximity to existing mobility hubs and rail stations, offers the best mechanism to ensure that public transport services are supported throughout the day for a broad range of journey purposes beyond a traditional commuting pattern in the morning and afternoon periods. The HLDP will also consider those train lines and stations with the most potential for increasing passengers in commuter markets. Undeveloped land in close proximity to existing public transport connections, in particular rail stations will be favourably considered against other factors in site selection for HLDP.

10.290 Provision for measures that support public transport such as designated bus lanes and bus gates will need to be accommodated within HLDP to ensure a clear framework for when such infrastructure will be required and how it ought to be funded.

10.291 The HLDP will also consider if land is required for additional public transport infrastructure, for example a growing number of bus companies are now providing longer distance services from Highland, this may have implications for the number of buses using the road network, as well as infrastructure required to support services, for example suitable stopping points and depots.

10.292 It is important for the plan to recognise that integrated, affordable, accessible public transport offers an alternative to car-based tourism and leisure trips both within and between settlements, as well as offering alternatives to the car for everyday journeys.

Road Based Transport

10.293 Capacity data presented in the road-based transport section of the chapter illustrates that traffic volumes have increased throughout much of Highland. It is thought that a significant contributor to this is traffic associated with tourism. The HLDP will recognise the adverse impact of increased traffic on achieving increases in the proportion share of active travel, particularly in terms of perceived safety where there is no segregated infrastructure. It will also support measures to reduce road-based severance in communities, acknowledging the potential this could bring to the urban environment as well as human health. Fuller evidence in relation to transport and health is detailed separately in **Chapter 13: Design, Wellbeing, Local Living and Placemaking.**

10.294 The timing of the delivery of major infrastructure upgrades will fundamentally determine whether development can progress in certain parts of Highland, particularly in Inverness, the A9 and A96 corridors, including Easter Ross. There is concern about the inter-relationship between major employment developments such as the ICFGF, electricity grid upgrades and the ability to support the major infrastructure and housing need to keep pace. With such uncertainty in some areas different scenarios may need to be considered for future development. The HLDP will review this issue and aim to take an informed, balanced and proportionate approach.

10.295 With input from the Council's Road Safety Team, any implications directly related to land use planning will be identified and be considered during the site selection process, including any mitigation to reduce the risk of collisions occurring.

10.296 A number of other considerations will inform the assessment of options within settlements – for example how well a direction for growth or site fits with the current active travel masterplan, public transport network, and proposed improvements to such facilities and services. There is also a significant role for prospective developers to carry out work to demonstrate how they will align with transport policies, including the LTS. The Call for Sites requires such information to be provided to demonstrate the suitability of sites for development. Consideration will also need to be given to any identification of land for transport proposals and travel networks.

10.297 HLDP will consider the implications of increased HGV vehicles and abnormal loads particularly during construction of major developments. Mitigation is likely to be required such as traffic management and planned road improvements. Assessment together with identification, management and co-ordination of mitigation requires resource. There is potential for cumulative developer contributions to be collected towards required named road upgrades.

10.298 HLDP will consider identifying sites for HGV-specific and general motorist rest areas / services, particularly on strategic long-distance routes such as the A9, A96 and A82. Related to this, it will also consider implications for the plan with regard electric vehicle charging facilities, both for cars and commercial vehicles as well as considering retention of legacy fuel supply.

Cross Boundary Considerations

10.299 Key transport network infrastructure crosses HLDP boundaries into several other authorities, including paths, rail lines and roads. There are improvements planned to a number of these assets and other requirements may be identified as a result of planned development. It will be important for the HLDP to collaborate with neighbouring authorities to identify any spatial implications of cross boundary infrastructure, including ports linking to other authorities by sea. The HLDP will consider if additional electric vehicle charging sites are required at selected Highland ports that would help with charging challenges on the northern and western isles.

Spatial Implications

10.300 **Chapter 9: Housing** outlines that the Highland indicative Local Housing Land Requirement (iLHLR) is 17,100 homes. This figure is based on the methodology within the LHS 2023-2028 and is being used until the new HNDA is completed in the interests of allowing a draft to be circulated among key stakeholders.

10.301 This iLHLR represents a marked increased in comparison to adopted Highland LDPs. **Chapter 9: Housing** explains the methodology behind this increase in further detail. It outlines that there is a current estimated shortfall of just under 5,000 units in sites that are likely to deliverable within the next 10 years relative to the iLHLR. The final LHLR for Highland once informed by a completed HNDA will potentially exceed 17,100 units.

10.302 The HLDP spatial strategy will seek to allocate land to deliver the iLHLR. Baseline information presented in this chapter's Summary of Evidence assists with understanding from a transport perspective potentially suitable settlements/locations for allocations. It is important that these are in line with the infrastructure investment hierarchies and sustainable travel hierarchies, and based on an understanding of where intervention will be required to support future development. A summary of the implications of this information for different areas of Highland is presented below.

Inner Moray Firth Area

10.303 The Inner Moray Firth area is the most densely populated and accessible part of Highland and contains the majority of its largest settlements. **Chapter 8 Economy, Business, Tourism and Productive Places** and **Chapter 9 Housing** have outlined that this area has delivered many of Highland's housing completions, and anticipate this is likely to continue, alongside the creation of significant numbers of additional jobs.

10.304 For these reasons it is anticipated that much of the deliverable housing land supply will continue to be directed to this area in the HLDP. Key implications for the plan of this that will be explored further as part of the transport appraisal include:

- Potential for a greater proportion of journeys to be made by active travel due to existing networks and planned improvements, for example the realisation of Active Travel Masterplan actions and Inner Moray Firth Active Travel Network Planning; National Cycle Network projects and further potential for disused railway lines.
- Focusing development within settlements that benefit from the presence of train stations and/or are located on key bus corridors, including Nairn, Inverness, Beauly, Muir of Ord, Conon Bridge, Dingwall, Alness, Invergordon and Tain. Existing infrastructure and planned improvements present significant opportunities for modal shift.
- Ensuring that the impact of any increased pressure on known areas of constraint are fully understood, including the following key areas:
    - Inverness - Raigmore Interchange, A9/A82, A82/Harbour Road, Inshes corridor and the A862 Telford Street between the A82 Telford Roundabout and King Brude Road.
    - Black Isle and Easter Ross – safety and capacity issues on A9 junctions at Munlochy, Evanton, Alness, Invergordon and Tain, as well as the A832 and B9161 as it passes through narrow main streets of Black Isle villages.
    - Dingwall and Seaforth - Safety concerns about Conon Bridge A835 junction and Muir of Ord village centre junctions, as well congestion with Dingwall.
    - Nairnshire - within Nairn localised congestion at peak periods.

10.305 It will be important for the transport appraisal to take into account several significant improvement projects, including A96 Dualling (including Nairn Bypass), A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton and Inshes Junction Upgrades, A9/A82 Longman Junction Improvement Scheme and A9 Junction upgrades/improvements, including A9 Tomich Junction, that will provide additional capacity and/or safety improvements within Inverness and selected Inner Moray Firth settlements. However, the delivery pathway of many key improvement projects, particularly in terms of timescales, remains uncertain. The transport appraisal will test scenarios that reflect this uncertainty and where required identify additional mitigation measures.

Fort William

10.306 Fort William is located within south west Highland and is its second largest settlement. It suffers from long standing transport issues, such as trunk road resilience, journey time reliability and accessibility, particularly during the tourism season. It does however benefit from the presence of rail stations and is on a key bus corridor.

10.307 Currently, limited mitigation is planned to overcome existing transport issues, and, as such this may present constraints to development in Fort William. It will be important for the HLDP to be considered as part of the current ITP for Fort William. Dependent on the alignment of timescales for the ITP, relevant parts of its prioritised action plan maybe incorporated in the HLDP transport appraisal, the HLDP and within its Delivery Programme. The HLDP may have a role to play in establishing delivery pathways for selected ITP action plan priorities.

Elsewhere

10.308 Elsewhere in Highland, specifically Caithness, Sutherland, Wester Ross, Lochalsh, Skye and wider Lochaber are largely remote, rural areas. **Chapter 9 Housing** evidences relatively low levels of past and future programmed housing completions in these areas. This demonstrates limited pressure for growth in these areas of Highland.

10.309 The Summary of Evidence found that many of these areas do not suffer from development related transport issues. Often issues are that are experienced is a result seasonal traffic associated with tourism, or potentially in the future, as a result of construction traffic associated with energy projects. For these reasons, the transport appraisal will not assess the impact of the HLDP on the strategic road network in this part of Highland. Despite this, the spatial strategy for these areas will focus on the sustainable travel hierarchy and sustainable investment hierarchy. Additionally, local transport matters will be considered in the distribution of the iLHLR across settlements, and requirements specified in settlement and site statements in the HLDP and where appropriate within its Delivery Programme.

Transport Related Developer Contributions

10.310 The HLDP will continue to seek developer contributions towards transport improvements. It will seek to update the policy framework in a number of ways. This includes:

- Reviewing existing transport related developer contributions required by adopted LDPs, the Delivery Programme and summarised in Table 10:12.
- Incorporate relevant findings of the transport appraisal as part of its transport section and within settlement statements and its Delivery Programme.
- Ensure that any intentions to seek developer contributions are supported by robust evidence, including within the transport appraisal, in line with the requirements of Planning Circular 4/2025 Planning Obligations and Good Neighbour Agreements.
- Establishing the role of the HLDP and its Delivery Programme as part of delivery pathways for required mitigation.

Local Place Plans

10.311 It is clear from the validated and emerging Local Place Plans that transport is a fundamental issue for local communities. Many identify current transport issues and priorities for improvement, with common themes emerging on prioritising public and active transport enhancements. The HLDP will have regard to the content of Local Place Plans.

Statements of Agreement / Dispute

Agreement on Evidence

10.312 Key Agencies and stakeholders who responded and agreed with the evidence and content presented are Transport Scotland **(THC135)**, Historic Environment Scotland **(THC405)**, NatureScot **(THC088),** HITRANS **(THC402),** Network Rail **(THC407)**, Moray Council **(THC406),** Walk, Wheel, Cycle Trust (formerly Sustrans) **(THC410)** and HC Active and Sustainable Travel Team **(THC415)**.

10.313 SEPA **(THC089)** responded with no specific comments to make on this chapter as it only peripherally relates to their interests.

Disputes with Stakeholders

10.314 No disputes remain unresolved at the time of submission to Gate Check.

Information Gaps

10.315 It is considered that Highland Council's Area Place Plans would be informative evidence sources of relevance to this section of the evidence report, yet it is acknowledged that these remain in production at the time of writing. Place

Plans once approved will be considered in the production of the LDP if timeously available.

10.316 At the time of writing, 17 communities in Highland have Local Place Plans formally validated by the Council. A summary of their content relevant to transport has been provided within this chapter. For those communities without Local Place Plans, it is understood that a number are currently being prepared and these would also be informative evidence sources relevant to this chapter of the Evidence Report. Any additional Local Place Plans validated will be considered in the production of the LDP if timeously available.

10.317 The summary of evidence section of this chapter presented a wide range of detailed evidence relating to transport matters in Highland. There are, however, some data gaps, these are listed below:

Active Travel

- Limited data is available on people walking, wheeling and cycling both within and between settlements, for both residents and visitors;
- Data on the extent and condition of active infrastructure across Highland, both adjacent to and remote from adopted roads;

Public Transport

- Passenger numbers for commercial and Council-operated bus services.
- Community Transport data including passenger numbers for Community Transport, co-ordination, technology solutions and utilising underused vehicles.

Road Based Transport

- Coverage of trunk road traffic counters – full data is not available from many counters due to technical issues collecting data or the timing of their installation.
- AADT for much of the local road network due to limited traffic counters and technical issues.
- Journey time data for long distance road travel in Highland due to technical issues with the volume of data that is able to be downloaded from INRIX.
- HGV Journey time data.
- Spatial data available to help assess the suitability of Highland road network to accommodate additional HGVs, currently the ARM for timber haulage is the only source available.
- No up-to-date Highland Council Road Asset Management Plan.

- Timing of delivery of nationally led infrastructure projects including the A96 Dualling and A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton.
- Council and private car park occupancy rates.
- Data on uptake of shared car schemes and lift sharing.

These information gaps can have consequences for effective spatial planning as well as wider planning of transport services and infrastructure. The limited data available means there is a there is a risk of making decisions based on a partial picture of the movements of people and goods to, from and within the area.