

REPORT TO: East Lothian Council

MEETING DATE: 22 February 2022

BY: Executive Director for Place

SUBJECT: Draft Regional Transport Strategy – Consultation Response

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to advise Members of the Council of the proposed response to South East Scotland Transport Authority's (SEStran's) consultation on the draft Regional Transport Strategy 2035 (RTS) and to seek the Council's approval to endorse the draft Strategy.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Council:

- 2.1 Approves the response to the draft Regional Transport Strategy (Appendix 1);
- 2.2 Endorses the draft Regional Transport Strategy with the following caveats:
- that any policy amendments that change the nature of the partnership, increasing their scope or functions of statutory duties must be considered by East Lothian Council;
 - that all projects and programmes are developed appropriately with sound business cases and financial support provided to East Lothian Council from appropriate government funding sources linked to an overriding presumption of "Infrastructure First".
- 2.3 Notes the aim across the Scottish Government to develop and deliver a suite of transport interventions and the role, which the Regional Transport Strategy will play to in providing a regional context for these, to inform transport investment across the region over the next 13 years. Also to note that all proposed interventions will conform to Transport Scotland's investment hierarchy and align with other National plans – including the draft National Planning Framework (NPF4) and the Climate Change Plan.
- 2.4 Recognises the work done by the Heads of Development and Infrastructure in engaging with SEStran, Transport Scotland, the City Region Deal and other

transport partners, through the various groups, and that a collaborative unified approach across services is necessary to succeed in developing and supporting both the emerging short term programme and longer term goals.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 At the special Partnership Board meeting on 29 October, East Lothian Council as a constituent authority of SEStran, agreed to the proposal to consult on the draft Regional Transport Strategy to 2035, which is the third iteration of regional transport policy. Subsequently, SEStran published the draft regional strategy in November 2021 for consultation. The closing date of the consultation is 11 February 2022. A short extension has been granted to accommodate East Lothian Council's formal response.

3.2 The draft RTS provides a strategic framework to help address significant challenge on climate change, but with engrained emphasis to grow the economy, provide a fair and equitable transport system and promote health and wellbeing through active travel opportunities. The draft provides a series of policies and actions to tackle the 12 regional mobility themes. The policies and actions have been designed with climate action as a core principle. The strategic objectives are:

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

3.4 The strategy takes a co-ordinated approach, recognising the national objectives to support renewable energy and decarbonisation across the transport industry. Key targets are net zero emissions by 2045 and a 20% reduction in car kilometres by 2030.

3.5 Throughout the pandemic, the Scottish and UK Governments' health messaging included avoiding public transport, keeping physical distance and staying local. Whilst inter-regional travel has restarted with significant numbers visiting East Lothian during the summer months, public transport use remains low. This is likely to persist for a considerable time; with people being cautious about returning to public transport, the likely continuation of high levels of working from home and with public attitudes to risk meaning that behaviour may become deep-rooted in car based trips. Therefore, a focus on staying local, walking and cycling, reducing dependence on the car must take priority.

3.6 East Lothian Council adopted its Local Transport Strategy (LTS) in October 2018. Although the ELC LTS precedes the draft RTS, our transport planning objectives align closely with the draft RTS:

1. To deliver a more attractive and safer environment for pedestrians and cyclists;
 2. To reduce the overall dependence on the car and the environmental impact of traffic;
 3. To promote the availability and use of more sustainable means of travel;
 4. To locate new development where it reduces the need to travel;
 5. To maximise accessibility for all and reduce social exclusion;
 6. To promote integration and interchange between different means of travel; and
 7. To maintain the transport network to a suitable standard to ensure it meets the needs of all users.
- 3.7 At the national level the National Transport Strategy (NTS2) published February 2020 prioritised taking climate action, helping deliver inclusive economic growth, improving health and wellbeing and reducing inequalities. Accordingly, the RTS strengthens the policy portfolio and adds value with a vision for the south-east of Scotland to have an integrated transport system that will be efficient, connected and safe, This will contribute to creating inclusive, prosperous, and sustainable places to live, work and visit, with travel being affordable and accessible to all, enabling people to be healthier and delivering the region's contribution to net zero emissions targets.
- 3.8 In conjunction with the draft RTS, Transport Scotland has recently published the draft Strategic Transport Project Review (STPR2) and a route map to achieve a 20% reduction in car kilometres by 2030. The aim is reducing car use for a healthier, fairer and greener Scotland.
- 3.9 Adding further support, the draft National Planning Framework (NPF4) Scotland 2045 looks to establish principles of sustainable, liveable, productive and distinctive places, provides the framework to develop resilience, net zero, and prosperous communities with transport outcomes core to their success, through aligning land use planning with accessible transport infrastructure.
- 3.10 Finally, the Regional Prosperity framework identifies a better connected region as one of 9 'Big Moves' to ensure employment, business access, training and education, which can be accessed by all through delivery of a sustainable transport network, being a consideration of the regional transport strategy.
- 3.11 As a consequence of the pandemic, digital connectivity enabled people to work from home. As we move to a 'new normal', accelerating Scotland's digital strategy will help ensure the pace for change reducing peak journey times and the need to travel through remote working.
- 3.12 In review, the transport ambitions of national, regional and local government to deliver a sustainable transport and place-making future is clear, with national, regional and local policy and strategies aligned. The debate will now move from why to how, with significant challenges placed on all delivery partners including local authorities.

- 3.13 Uncertainty remains over the public's acceptance of national and regional temporary transport interventions, as recent temporary interventions through 'spaces for people' and rapid deployment bus priority measures evoked concern due to the re-purposing of road space and some speed limit changes. Public engagement and consultation will be paramount to delivery, to gauge community support going forward. Succinct unambiguous messaging and national promotional campaigns need to accompany the level of change planned.
- 3.14 Although revenue spending commitments are out of scope in the response to the RTS, questions remain over funding and the affordability of the interventions with new revenue generation models being required to maintain a high quality transport service with low maintenance overheads and operational costs. An understanding of future funding mechanisms, income generators and costs are necessary to maintain high standards, securing continued public use.
- 3.15 Upfront investment by Scottish Government is welcomed through the Bus Partnership Fund to drive forward change but this must be accompanied by re-prioritising capital renewals and refurbishment, maintenance to balance everyday local journeys with strategic transport movement. Investment in the longevity of strategic assets should now include the associate local infrastructure strategic assets. That might require a rebalancing of funding ring fenced to ensure prioritisation of those assets.
- 3.16 Local authority capabilities and capacity may have to be strengthened with strong collaborative cross boundary working. Regional alliances, such as regional city deals are appropriate vehicles to deliver change but resilience through improved procurement arrangements should be considered as a priority.
- 3.17 High quality data is essential to make informed decisions, to monitor and evaluate progress to meet government targets. The development of robust data sets needs to be part of the systems being considered and made available across industry.
- 3.18 The draft consultation response is provided in Appendix 1. This follows the consultation format sought by SEStran. Questions 15-37 seeks to understand the Council's priority for mobility themes. Each item is considered to be of equal importance but the Council's weighting has been gauged on our ability to influence and deliver those outcome.

The full Regional Transport Strategy is available in the Members' Library (Ref: 17/22, February 2022 Bulletin).

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 These proposals will contribute towards The East Lothian Plan – 2017-27 focusing on health and wellbeing, safety, transport connectivity, sustainability and protecting our environment.
- 4.2 This proposals will contribute to the Local Outcome Improvement Plan to deliver a high quality environment and that people in East Lothian are enjoying healthier lives.
- 4.3 The proposals contribute to the delivery of the Local Transport Strategy key objectives.

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The subject of this report does affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy. An independent Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) accompanies the RTS.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial – None
- 6.2 Personnel - None
- 6.3 Other - None

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 Members' Library Report (ref: 17/22, Feb22 Bulletin) - Regional Transport Strategy, Draft for Consultation November 2021

AUTHOR'S NAME	Michaela Sullivan
DESIGNATION	Head of Development
CONTACT INFO	Peter Forsyth, Project Manager – Growth and Sustainability pforsyth1@eastlothian.gov.uk
DATE	25 January 2022

Appendix 1

Sustran Regional Transport Strategy Consultation Response.

Transport Challenges and Problems

7. In Chapter 3 the draft RTS has identified 29 individual transport challenges and problems, do you agree or disagree that these provide an appropriate focus for the RTS?

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neither

East Lothian Council supports the inclusion of the 29 individual challenges and problems. However, we would reflect that in reality there is unlikely to be a single problem or challenge but a combination of many or combined impacts from multiple issues that will require a unified approach, as part of a portfolio for change across the Sustran area, with appropriately government funding, interconnected and deliverable within the timeframes stipulated.

9. Do you feel there are any other transport challenges and problems which have been missed?

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neither

East Lothian Council notes public resistance to recent change programme such as 'Spaces for People' and suggests that the document provides recognition that public attitude and behavioural change is needed to support modal shift. To achieve successful outcomes and bring forward change, effective communication and consultation is essential.

10. The RTS vision is set out in Chapter 4. Do you agree or disagree that this should be the vision for the new RTS?

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neither

East Lothian Council supports the vision of the Regional Transport Strategy, which aligns with East Lothian Council plan.

12. The Strategy Objectives are outlined in Chapter 4. Do you agree or disagree that these should be the Strategy Objectives for the new RTS?

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neither

East Lothian Council supports the vision of the Regional Transport Strategy, which aligns with East Lothian Council plan.

14. Do you think any other Objectives should be considered for the new RTS?

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neither

Mobility Themes

15. We have identified 'Shaping development and place' as one of the key themes for the RTS in Chapter 5. How important is this theme to you?

- Very High
- High
- Medium
- Low
- Very Low

16. Please provide any thoughts and comments on the policies and actions in the box below if you wish

East Lothian Council agrees with the principles of place making, 20 minute neighbourhoods and shared mobility through journey hubs and Mobility as a Service (MaaS) concepts. However, the scale, arrangements and character of the concepts are highly influenced and interdependent on existing environment, population density, and public realm layout. Irrespective, East Lothian is currently partnering Sustran on a pilot Demand Response Transport (DRT) MaaS initiative funded by Transport Scotland around the Brunton journey hub.

17. We have identified 'Delivering safe active travel' as one of the key themes for the RTS in Chapter 6. How important is this theme to you?

- Very High
- High
- Medium
- Low
- Very Low

18. Please provide any thoughts and comments on the policies and actions in the box below if you wish.

Inter-regional active travel infrastructure linking key destinations is paramount to encourage modal shift. The Musselburgh active Toun proposals looks to provide arterial connections to public facilities but also through connections to the City of Edinburgh and Midlothian. Further town centric and county wide accessibility analysis will accompany future local development transport appraisal considerations.

19. We have identified 'Enhancing access to public transport' as one of the key themes for the RTS in Chapter 7. How important is this theme to you?

- Very High
- High
- Medium
- Low
- Very Low

20. Please provide any thoughts and comments on the policies and actions in the box below if you wish.

East Lothian Council would support an independent street audit to identify any deficiencies in accessibility requirements. However, funding source should be identified prior to conclusion to manage expectations and works programmes.

East Lothian believes fair fares are necessary across public transport to encourage patronage, which are equivalent to car based transport costs.

21. We have identified 'Enhancing and extending the bus service' as one of the key themes for the RTS in Chapter 8. How important is this theme to you?

- Very High
- ✓ High
- Medium
- Low
- Very Low

22. Please provide any thoughts and comments on the policies and actions in the box below if you wish.

In recognition of the City Region Deal partnership arrangements East Lothian welcomes the opportunity to improve bus journey times regionally and as part of the Midlothian Bus Alliance. The option to explore Transport Scotland Act 2019 related powers or model 3 PT delivery are functional matters requiring Council decision and would require careful consideration. Bus penetration in rural areas is challenging through the scarceness of population (supply), interconnectivity and varied demand / timing of service. Demand responsive transport initiatives may provide opportunity to connect some community needs but it is accepted in the rurality of East Lothian that private vehicular transport will be necessary for some smaller communities.

23. We have identified 'Enhancing and extending the train service' as one of the key themes for the RTS in Chapter 9. How important is this theme to you?

- Very High
- ✓ High
- Medium
- Low
- Very Low

24. Please provide any thoughts and comments on the policies and actions in the box below if you wish.

East Lothian supports and is partially funding the new rail halt at East Linton. East Lothian – Access Study – STAG Part 1 provides a package of potential rail interventions and the Council is working collaboratively with Transport Scotland and Network rail in the provision of new infrastructure to enhance line speeds.

East Lothian would welcome further discussions on Blindwells and Haddington rail connectivity, High speed rail and local service timetable enhancements.

25. We have identified 'Reallocating road space on the regional network' as one of the key themes for the RTS in Chapter 10. How important is this theme to you?

- Very High
- High
- ✓ Medium
- Low
- Very Low

26. Please provide any thoughts and comments on the policies and actions in the box below if you wish.

East Lothian Council supports the principles of re-allocating road space through evidence based project development, technical justification and public consultation. Parking management initiatives are critical to releasing space and should accompany such proposals. Fundamental to new housing developments the sustainable travel hierarchy must be supported and safeguarded through the planning process.

27. We have identified 'Improving integration between modes' as one of the key themes for the RTS in Chapter 11. How important is this theme to you?

- Very High
- ✓ High
- Medium
- Low

Very Low

28. Please provide any thoughts and comments on the policies and actions in the box below if you wish.

East Lothian recognises the benefits of integration between modes and is working jointly with SEStran, a local bus operator and Transport Scotland to develop DRT/MaaS project. Key will be the ability to incorporate the premise into town regeneration and place making projects and programmes. East Lothian wishes to work with partners to provide point to point ticketing, across modes, through seamless payment options, to promote and reward sustainable trip making.

29. We have identified 'Decarbonising transport' as one of the key themes for the RTS in Chapter 12. How important is this theme to you?

- Very High
- High
- Medium
- Low
- Very Low

30. Please provide any thoughts and comments on the policies and actions in the box below if you wish.

East Lothian is an advanced exponent of electrical vehicle charging with over 100 units installed. The Council's continued pursuit of excellence in this area has drawn down substantial funding with a shared strategic direction with Energy Saving Trust and Transport Scotland. East Lothian would welcome further talks in the regional context to evolve a unified approach. Working across industry, we will continue to seek best practise, increase our EV fleet, explore alternative fuels and opportunities to decarbonise transport. Further work is needed to understand the impact of individual property EV charge points in new housing development, retrofitting existing public space, as well as energy provider investment to accommodate district heating, in broader societal energy load balancing terms.

31. We have identified 'Facilitating efficient freight movement and passenger travel' as one of the key themes for the RTS in Chapter 13. How important is this theme to you?

- Very High
- High
- Medium
- Low
- Very Low

32. Please provide any thoughts and comments on the policies and actions in the box below if you wish.

East Lothian Council accepts the principles of targeted infrastructure investment to augment sustainable growth, place making and infrastructure adaptation particularly to expedite climate change mitigation. The efficient movement of freight and goods is essential to the regional economy and must be sustainably facilitated by appropriate means, balancing access, safety and climate actions. A laudable ambition is to move freight from road to rail and generally should be supported. Consideration of distribution networks in a wider spatial context may define the scope and scale of depots, industrial re-charge units and the like but without a clear understanding of demand and HGV technological innovation this remains a fledgling area of development.

33. We have identified 'Working towards zero road deaths and serious injuries' as one of the key themes for the RTS in Chapter 14. How important is this theme to you?

- Very High
- High
- Medium
- Low
- Very Low

34. Please provide any thoughts and comments on the policies and actions in the box below if you wish.

East Lothian Council published its Road safety plan as part of its LTS in 2018. We supports the concept of demonstrable speed reduction measures and limits subject to stakeholder engagement and public consultation. To support local

decision making a national review with appropriate guidance to manage local arrangements would be welcomed in due course.

35. We have identified 'Reducing car kilometres' as one of the key themes for the RTS in Chapter 15. How important is this theme to you?

- Very High
- High
- Medium
- Low
- Very Low

36. Please provide any thoughts and comments on the policies and actions in the box below if you wish.

East Lothian recognises the ambition of national and regional transport partners and subscribes to the rationale to move from unsustainable single occupancy car use but also reflects that transport is derived from other sector activity, that the county is experiencing substantial growth, and that some of our communities are remote from PT networks, which compounds the simplicity of 20% direct reduction. The semi-rural nature of the authority requires a balanced approach to transport investment focusing on active travel and sustainable transport option with new road building generally avoided. To accomplish this objective a critical element will be to provide infrastructure first, increasing rail capacity, strengthening public transport and enhancing the public realm for active travel purposes. The Council is committed to work with partners to help deliver the national target of a 20% reduction.

37. We have identified 'Responding to the post-Covid world' as one of the key themes for the RTS in Chapter 16. How important is this theme to you?

- Very High
- High
- Medium
- Low
- Very Low

38. Please provide any thoughts and comments on the policies and actions in the box below if you wish.

The Council is aware of new ways of working and looks to explore opportunities through enhanced digital connectivity, AI data collection and reduced trip making. To enrich the potential for a positive 'post covid world' business leaders, politicians and influencers will have to contribute to the debate, accompanied with clear benefits for society.

39. In Chapter 17 the spatial strategy identifies two themes to direct where individual projects should be progressed. Do you agree or disagree that these themes provide an appropriate focus for interventions emerging from the new RTS?

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neither

40. Please provide any thoughts and comments on the policies and actions in the box below if you wish.

Agreed, transport corridor interceptors (nodes) are required to provide enhanced inter-connectivity between modes. This should be multi-modal catering for car, bus, rail, tram and active travel where the locus permits. Additional opportunities for private hire, car share and EV infrastructure should follow where demand exists. A clear understanding of orbital O-D north and south of the city must be collected to evidence journey time improvements, link capacity and accessibility to secondary destinations. A primary component for each and every node should be active travel infrastructure. Relative cost of sustainable choice in all cases should be cheaper than private car trips.

41. In Chapter 18 a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) linked to the Strategy Objectives are set out. Do you agree or disagree that these KPIs provide an appropriate means to monitor performance of the RTS?

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neither

42. We would recommend town specific data collection to monitor pedestrian, cycle and traffic movement to evaluate the impacts of 20 minute neighbourhoods, low traffic and town centre performance to report on economic performance in support of objective 4.

Statutory Assessments

If you have any comments to make on the Equalities or Strategic Environmental Assessment documents, please do so in the boxes below.

43. Equalities

No comment

44. Strategic Environmental Assessment

No comment