

4 Public Engagement

4.1 Introduction

To fully explore the transport and economic issues identified throughout this report, an extensive public engagement exercise was undertaken. The purpose of this outreach was to gather public views on the problems and opportunities facing the South West Scotland region, and to allow for public input to influence decision making and the direction of the A75/ A77 study.

4.2 Engagement Objectives

The public engagement exercise was guided by two sets of objectives. The first of these served to ensure communications were well-promoted and inclusive, with the aim of involving a wide audience and encouraging contributions, while the second served to direct communications to capture meaningful data/ responses.

4.2.1 Engagement Reach Objectives

The engagement reach objectives have been designed to get more people to see and engage with the overall A75/ A77 study. In doing so, the objectives also ensured the engagement process was fair and aimed to gather results reflective of the study area's wider population.

The established engagement reach objectives are as follows:

- To reach members of the public situated across the South, North and East Ayrshire, and Dumfries & Galloway Council areas
- To provide an online platform for engagement that is accessible to all
- To encourage contributions and gather feedback from a wide audience
- To gain support and buy-in from residents/ the local population

4.2.2 Data Collection Objectives

Data collection objectives were also developed to align the public communications and intended data collection. The principal data collection method comprised an online survey and, as such, the following objectives influenced the survey design:

- The main reasons for travel along the A75 and A77
- The main methods of travel along the A75 and A77
- The main issues along the A75 and A77
- The methods to improve actual and perceived safety for route users
- Where there are missing connections primarily relating to accessibility
- How the community feels improvements would impact them, both positively and negatively

4.3 Methods of Engagement

Several engagement methods were employed to ensure a wide audience was reached and to achieve a fair representation of the view of the study area's wider population. Participants were offered several ways to interact with the study and this was seen as an effective way to gather different forms of feedback, increase interest and offer alternatives to those who may find certain methods of engagement inaccessible.

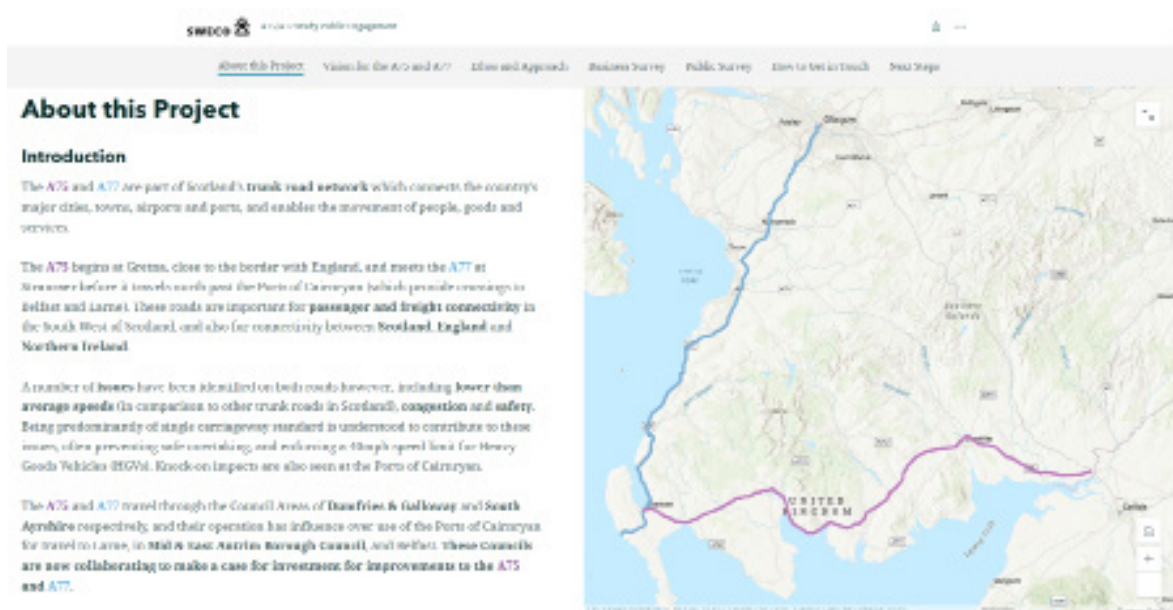
The methods of engagement, and indeed their promotion, aimed to be as accessible and inclusive as possible. Offering options for online, email and telephone feedback meant that members of the public could voice their opinions regardless of internet availability and technology skill level. A short email address (A75A77@sweco.co.uk) was also regularly promoted, offering further support to those that may require it.

The following sections describe the methods of engagement.

4.3.1 Digital Storytelling Platform

The ArcGIS StoryMaps builder was used to create a digital storytelling platform which was hosted online at <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/f02832874ebd4c78b892e46fccfb4ffe>. A sample of the end webpage is provided in Figure 4-1.

FIGURE 4-1: SAMPLE OF THE DIGITAL STORYTELLING PLATFORM



The webpage was clear in its origins from the outset, featuring the logos of the study's commissioning organisations and providing a clear introduction as follows:

"The A75 and A77 are part of Scotland's trunk road network which connects the country's major cities, towns, airports and ports, and enables the movement of people, goods and services.

The A75 begins at Gretna, close to the border with England, and meets the A77 at Stranraer before it travels north past the Ports of Cairnryan (which provide crossings to Belfast and Larne). These roads are important for passenger and freight connectivity in the South West of Scotland, and also for connectivity between Scotland, England and Northern Ireland.

A number of issues have been identified on both roads however, including lower than average speeds (in comparison to other trunk roads in Scotland), congestion and safety. Being predominantly of single carriageway standard is understood to contribute to these issues, often preventing safe overtaking, and enforcing a 40mph speed limit for Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs). Knock-on impacts are also seen at the Ports of Cairnryan.

The A75 and A77 travel through the Council Areas of Dumfries & Galloway and South Ayrshire respectively, and their operation has influence over use of the Ports of Cairnryan for travel to Larne, in Mid & East Antrim Borough Council, and Belfast. These Councils are now collaborating to make a case for investment for improvements to the A75 and A77."

4.3.1.1 Digital Design and Outreach

To ensure the webpage was inclusive, previous feedback from the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) on the South Ayrshire Active Travel Strategy was referred to. The RNIB recommended that an email address be provided to allow for further comment beyond any character limit in the associated survey.

The webpage was also designed in collaboration with Dumfries & Galloway Council's Community Planning and Engagement department to ensure the engagement process and material met with the National Standards for Community Engagement¹.

A webpage was deemed to be the most appropriate principal method of engagement for this study, primarily due to its geographic reach. Access to broadband is also high throughout the study area, meaning the webpage should be accessible to a large percentage of the population. Where internet access is not possible, the communications progressed as part of the promotional strategy crossed several media channels (including radio) and provided telephone contact details.

The public webpage received 1,162 visits in total.

¹ Scottish Community Development Centre (2022) National Standards for Community Engagement, accessed 23/08/2022 at <https://www.voicescotland.org.uk/national-standard>

4.3.2 Online Survey

A feedback survey was also created and linked within the digital storytelling platform. The survey was designed according to the data collection objectives featured at Section 4.2.2 and included questions on the themes of usage of the A75/A77, mode of travel and place of residence.

The survey also featured on the Councils' online Consultation Hubs. It was live for a period of 9 weeks, from 28th March to 30th May 2022.

4.4 Promotional Strategy

With the aim of reaching a wide and diverse audience, and ensuring fair representation across the region, an effective promotional strategy was vital. The promotion team, which included Council Officers, played a pivotal role in promoting the engagement exercise by circulating posters, running radio adverts, posting across social media, emailing lists and including promotions across the Council websites.

These media channels were used for promotional means as follows:

- **Radio**
Over a 7-day period beginning 14th May 2022, the advertising group Bauer Create transmitted a 30-second advert across the Absolute Radio, Magic, Kiss, Scala, GHR, Planet Rock, Kerrang! Radio, Heat and Jazz FM radio stations. This broadcast reached 3,285 listeners and Bauer Create reported a total impressions delivered of 17,058.
- **Social Media**
Facebook and Twitter were used to share the engagement exercise and feedback survey. Posts were shared from Council accounts on the 10th and 15th May 2022. Engagement statistics show the Twitter posts to have generated 1,840 impressions, Facebook posts to have culminated in 17,339 impressions and the feedback survey received 97 direct clicks.
- **Email and Telephone**
A promotional email was circulated to 4,800 Council staff across the region and 28 Ward Councillors and Chief Officers were sent a more comprehensive briefing note on the study. A further 11 South of Scotland MP's and MSP's were also contacted regarding the engagement.

A project-specific Sweco email address was set up and promoted on all materials and communications, and dedicated phone numbers were provided for Council Officers at South Ayrshire and Dumfries & Galloway Councils.

4.5 Feedback Survey Results

4.5.1 Overview

The online feedback survey was live for a period of 9 weeks and in that time a total of 624 responses were registered.

Respondents were asked their regional location and postcode, and initial analysis was undertaken with this data to summarise where most respondents are in relation to the A75/ A77 routes. Figure 4 2 displays the centroids of postcodes which represent 5% or more of the total postcodes supplied.

FIGURE 4-2: MOST COMMON POSTCODES OF RESPONDENTS

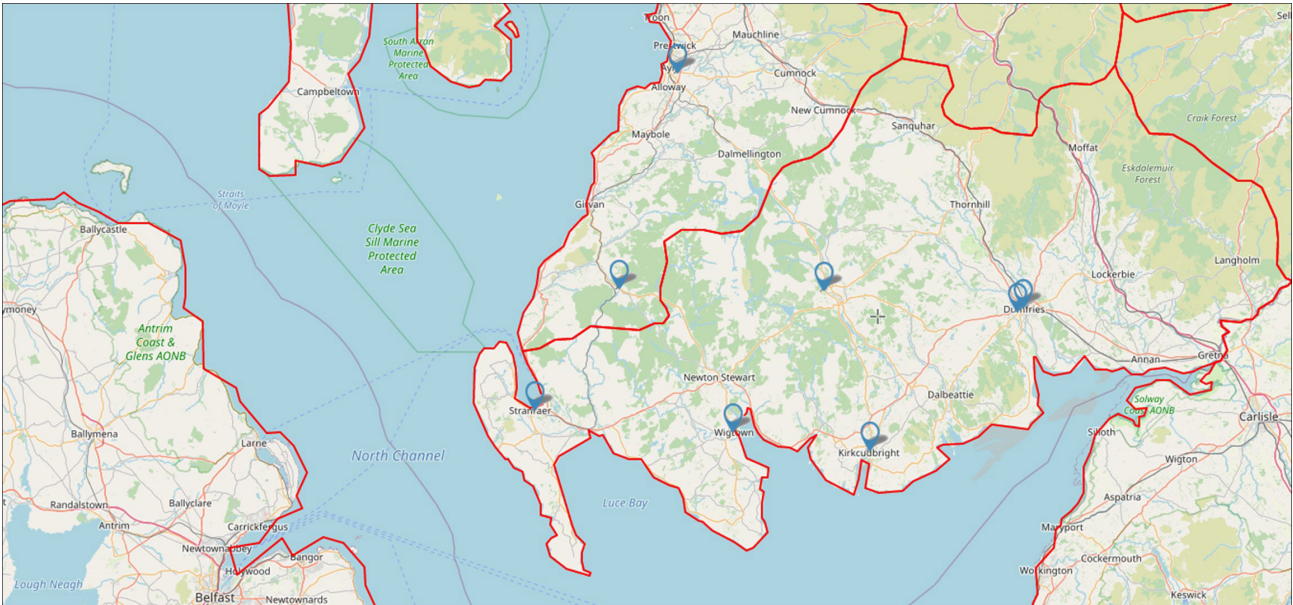


Figure 4 2 highlights most responses were received from residents of Ayr and Stranraer.

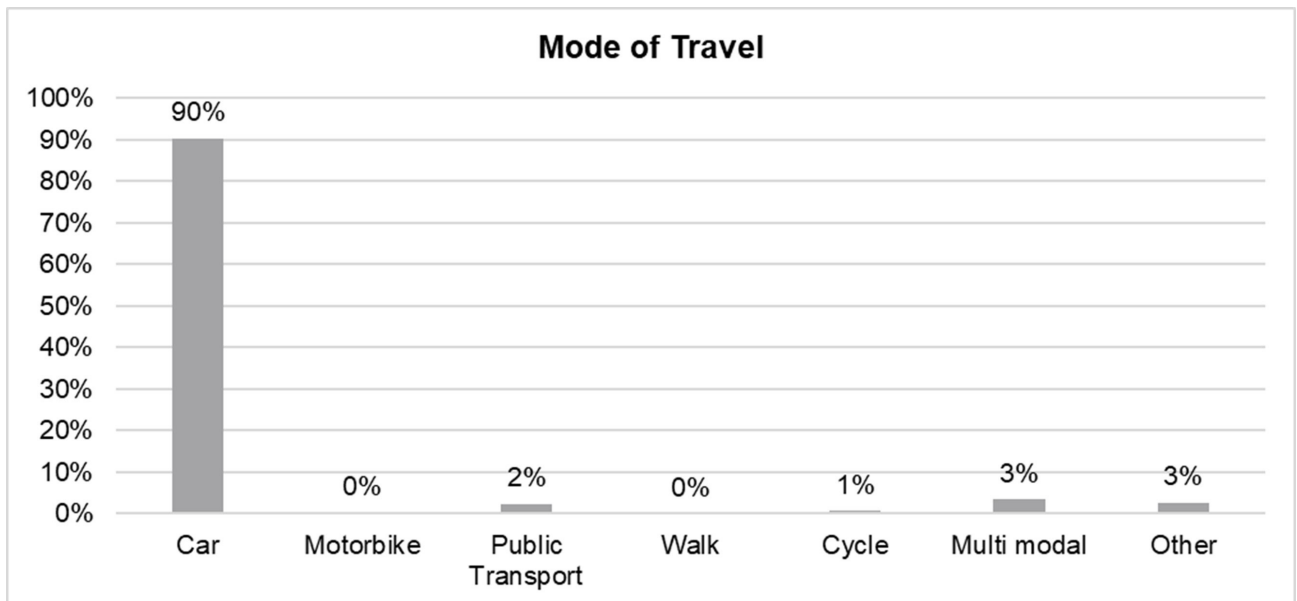
It should be noted that public engagement was not undertaken in Mid and East Antrim.

4.5.2 Quantitative Data Summary

4.5.2.1 Mode of Travel

All participants were asked their most common travel mode. The majority of respondents (90%) registered car. This percentage, while more than the regional average, is not unexpected as it is assumed such a roads-based survey, based on strategic trunk roads, would attract mostly private vehicle users. Figure 4 3 shows the complete modal split.

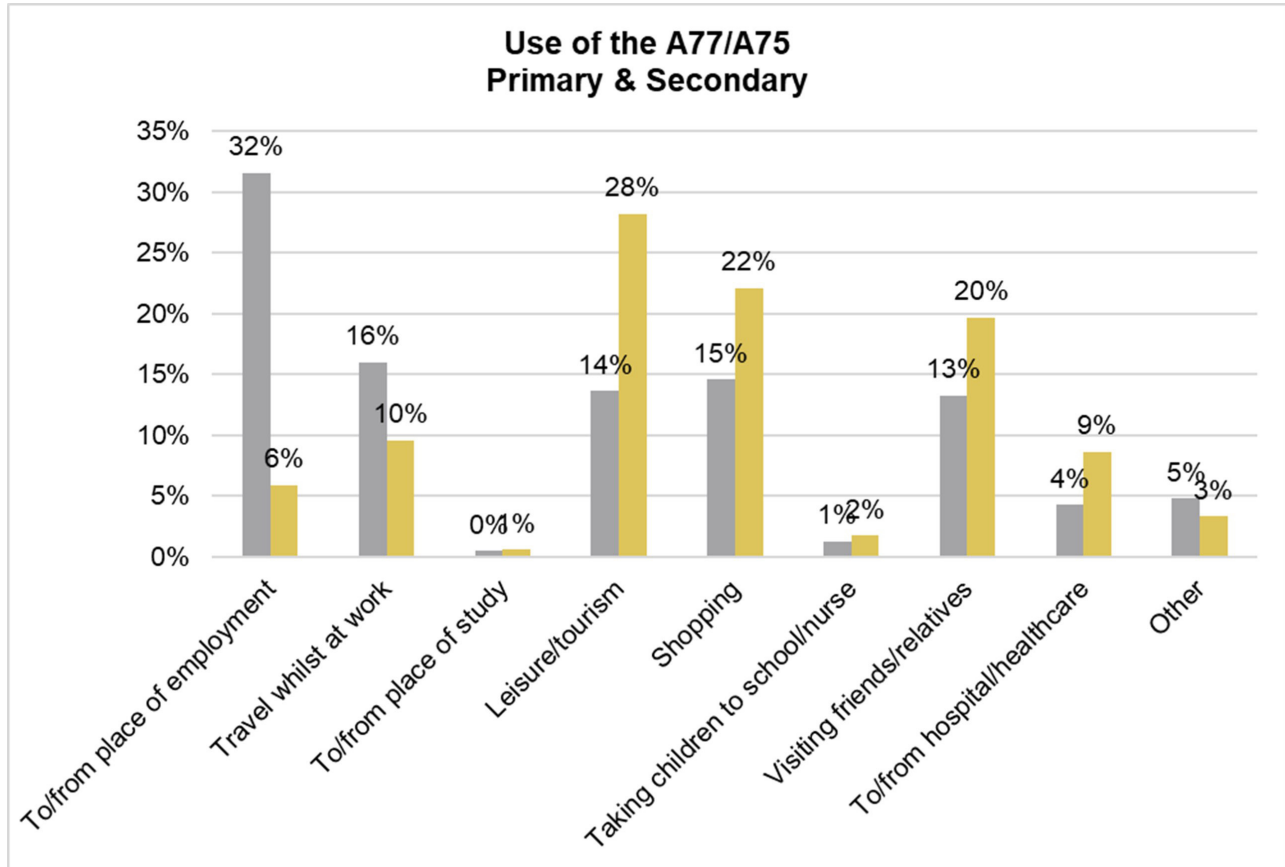
FIGURE 4-3: PUBLIC FEEDBACK SURVEY - MAIN MODE OF TRAVEL



4.5.2.2 Reason for Travel

Respondents were also asked their typical reasoning for using the A75/ A77 routes, covering both their primary and secondary reasons. The primary uses of these routes were found to be work related, while secondary uses were most commonly related to errands and leisure/ social activity. The results are shown in Figure 4.4.

FIGURE 4-4: PUBLIC FEEDBACK SURVEY - PRIMARY AND SECONDARY USES OF THE A75/ A77 ROUTES



4.5.3 Qualitative Data Summary

All respondents were provided the opportunity to write a closing comment. Initial analysis of the comments provided has categorised them based on the following themes/ areas:

- Dualling
- Bypassing villages
- Improving safety on the routes
- Improving road conditions on the routes
- Sustainable travel options
- Improving services along the routes
- Economic benefit/ risk of changes

Table 4-1 shows a selection of comments received under each category. Most comments received relate to the need to dual the A75 and A77, and/or add extra passing places/ overtaking opportunities.

TABLE 4-1: PUBLIC COMMENTS ACCORDING TO IDENTIFIED THEMES

Category	Comment
Dualling	Any future improvements should be to dual carriageway standard, with a view to linking all upgrades in future creating fully dualled roads.
	Both roads need dualling. Roundabouts are a stupid idea because they just increase journey times. That's before you take in to account the environmental impact of HGVs having to slow/stop and build up speed again
	More overtaking lanes
	Needs to be more dual carriageways and the bad corners at Kirkcowan need to be addressed
Bypasses	By-Pass the remaining towns and villages (Girvan, Kirkoswald, etc)
	The stretch between Girvan South and Smyrton, 3-miles south of Ballantrae, badly needs something done to straighten out some of the bad corners. There have been far too many avoidable deaths. Ballantrae should be by-passed too
	Bypass the remaining 2 villages on the A75 Crocketford and Springholm I believe there is another junction being added to the a75 in the village of Springholm this will cause more problems
Safety	Long overdue for this upgrade will make journey safer, faster connectivity and keep traffic away from towns where possible
	Make it less dangerous- winter it's terrifying with huge lorries - dual or motorway
	Upgrade to dual carriage way would be safer for all who use the road on a regular basis, also would be more beneficial for all emergency services
	The road through Cairnryan is in constant state of disrepair, and the village is heavily impacted by the amount of trucks going through - often breaking the speed limit. Other vehicles are also often racing through to try to meet the ferries
Road Condition	Fix the potholes and standing water in a lot of places
	Are potholes/ruts in road going to be improved from what they are at present?
	Both road surfaces are badly in need of repair/replacement, the potholes are very damaging to my car and make driving more hazardous
	The entire road needs a massive resurface and could possibly benefit from relocations due to blind corners and impatient commuters
Sustainable Travel	A new railway constructed parallel to the A75 would be desirable, complete cycle path
	Please re-instate the Dumfries to Stranraer railway to take some of the freight lorries off the road
	More cycle paths/paths to help the safety by providing alternate route Bring back train line instead of more trucks on A75
Services	May I suggest considering a couple of service stations along the A75 between Annan and Stranraer? Preferably with public toilets please?
	More laybys to allow HGV/LGV to take mandatory breaks & for tourists/visitors the chance to take a break
Economy	Village shops, the pub, the Inn on the Loch and others rely on the passing trade to survive
	Make it dual carriageway to help improve the economy, links within the regions but mostly to make it safer to pass & cope with volumes of traffic, reduce driver frustrations & save lives
	Dualling the A75 would make the road safer bring more accessibility to the port and other parts of the region attracting jobs firms and people of working age
	It's not worth it - a worthwhile and effective use of the money would be to drastically improve public transport across the region, especially Dumfries & Galloway

4.6 Summary

The following key messages can be extracted from the public engagement undertaken to date:

- The most popular primary reason for travelling along the A75 and A77 routes is for work
- The most popular secondary reason for travelling along the A75 and A77 routes is for running errands and/or for leisure/ social activities
- The A75 and A77 are heavily used, with 79% of respondents using these corridors weekly and 34% using them daily
- There is an overarching feeling amongst the population that dualling of the A75 and the A77 is needed. However, if this could not be achieved, extra passing places and overtaking opportunities could relieve some issues experienced
- Road safety along both routes is a serious concern amongst the public. Creating bypasses around villages along the A75 and A77 corridors would go some way in improving safety for these settlements
- Improvements to the A75 and A77 would help support the local economy, through increased tourism, trade, and port accessibility
- Increasing capacity along the A75 and A77 will lead to increased HGV movements. Targeted investment in alternative freight transport, such as rail, will better future proof the region.

It is recommended that as the study progress, additional targeted consultation should be completed to ensure that up-to-date public contributions are used in a meaningful way.



5 Business Engagement

5.1 Introduction

To achieve a wider understanding of how transport connectivity impacts business operations in the region, an important task in the wider study was to carry out a business survey. The business survey targeted firms located across the South, East and North Ayrshire and Dumfries & Galloway Council areas.

5.2 Engagement Objectives

The business engagement exercise, like the public engagement, was guided by a set of objectives. The first of these served to ensure communications were well-promoted and inclusive, with the aim of involving a wide audience and encouraging contributions, while the second served to direct communications so as to capture meaningful data/ responses.

5.2.1 Engagement Reach Objectives

The engagement reach objectives have been designed to involve the maximum number of businesses and encourage their participation with the overall A75/ A77 study. In doing so, these objectives also ensured the engagement process was fair and aimed to gather results reflective of the study area's business population.

The established engagement reach objectives are as follows:

- To reach businesses based across the South, North and East Ayrshire, and Dumfries & Galloway Council areas
- To provide a clear survey that is accessible to all
- To encourage contributions and gather feedback from a wide audience
- To engage with key decision makers within businesses.

5.2.2 Data Collection Objectives

In addition to the engagement reach objectives, data collection objectives were also created to guide the business engagement process. The principal data collection method comprised an online survey and, as such, the following data collection objectives influenced the survey design:

- The main sectors that operate in the vicinity of the A75 and A77
- Current businesses freight activity
- Current business views on the A75/ A77 routes
- Business attitudes to improvements, such as dual carriageways, bypasses and rail stations and lines
- Key drivers behind sustaining and growing a business in the region.

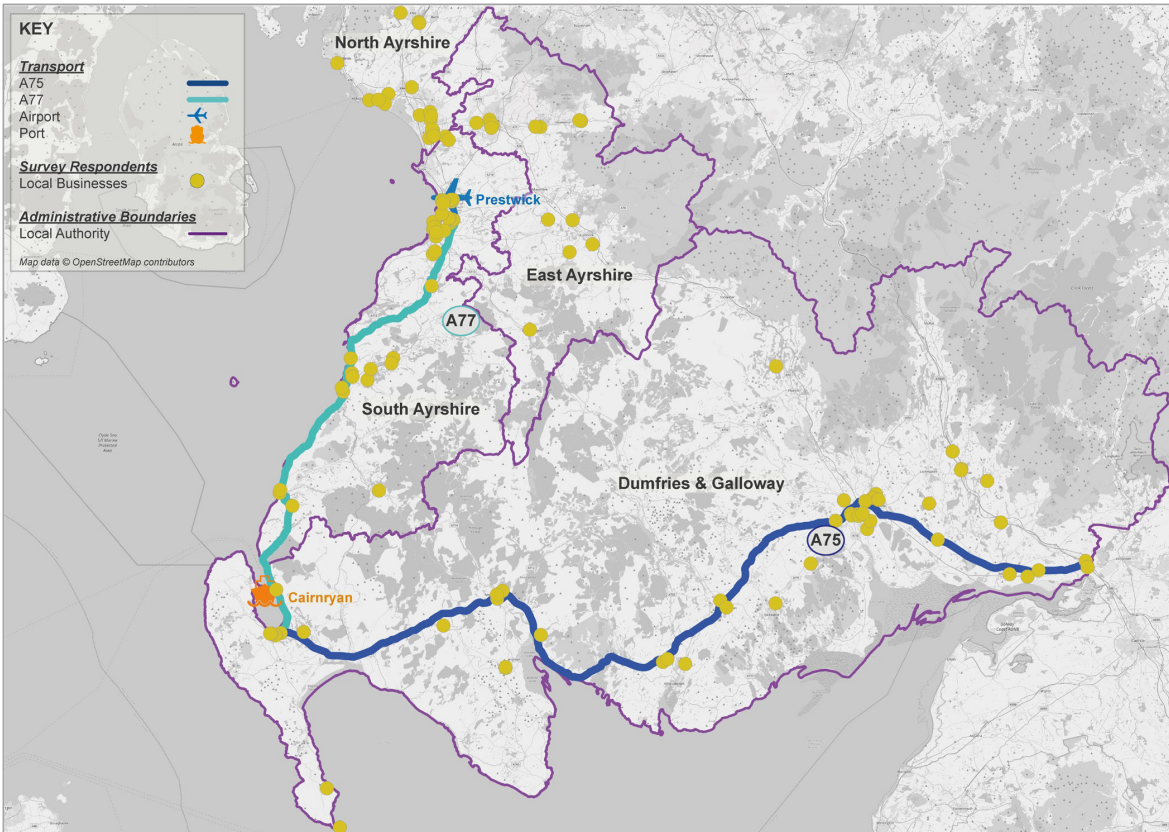
5.3 Business Survey

5.3.1 Overview

The business survey was carried out by telephone campaign during the 6-week period between 16th March and 27th of April 2022. A telephone campaign was chosen as the principal method of engagement as it was deemed the most direct and reliable way of reaching key decision makers in businesses.

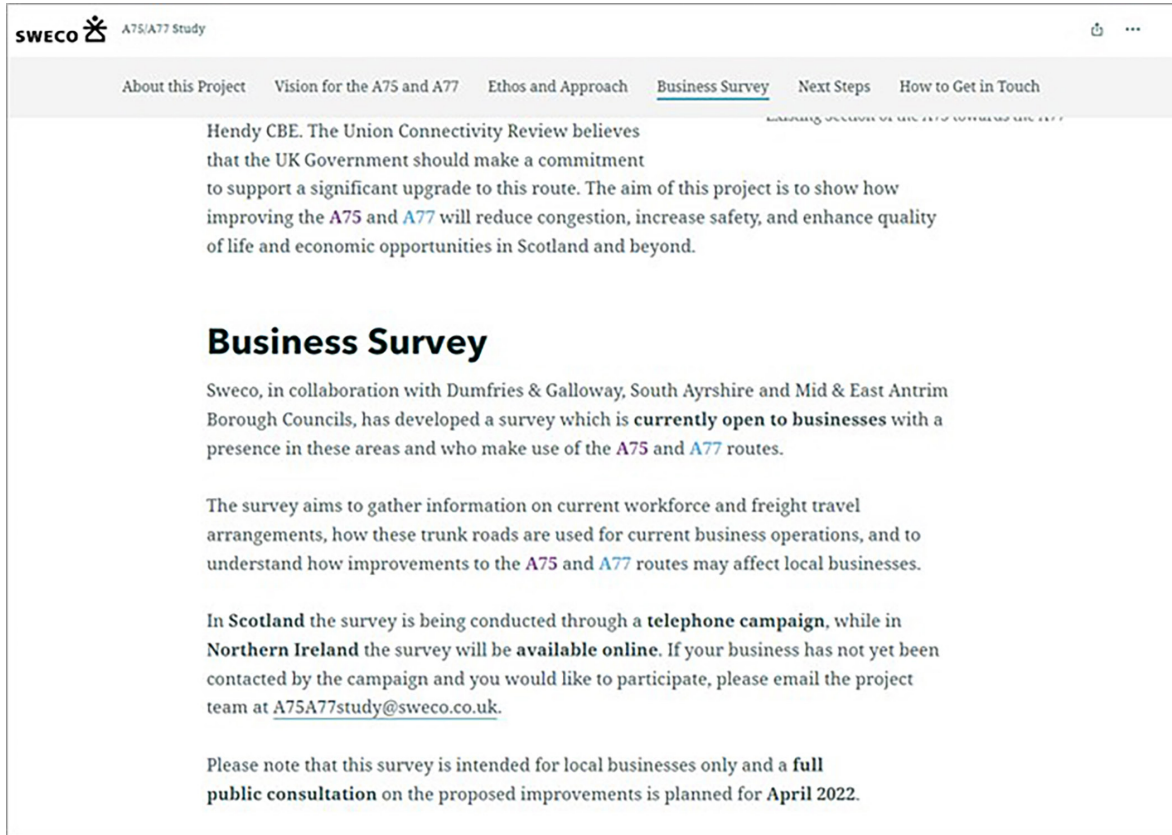
A total of 126 responses were registered from the business survey. The geographical spread of responses was found to be successfully concentrated along the A75 and A77 routes, as shown in Figure 5-1.

FIGURE 5-1: BUSINESS SURVEY - GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD OF RESPONDENTS



To support the telephone campaign, an online landing page for the study was made available for businesses wanting to understand more about the project. The landing page, hosted at <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/44fabcbce7dc4f918e8e494eee30c39e>, featured an introduction to the study, including the Councils' vision, next steps and contact details. A sample of the webpage is included at Figure 5-2.

FIGURE 5-2: SAMPLE OF BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT ONLINE LANDING PAGE



5.3.2 Business Survey Results

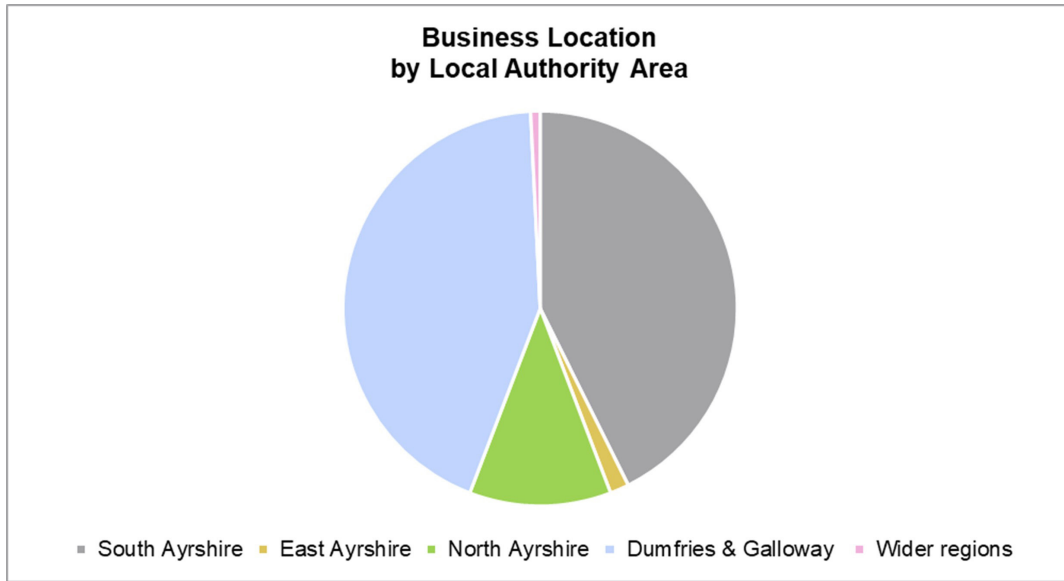
A summary of the business survey results is provided below and is set out according to key business characteristics and identified transport and economic themes. Where appropriate the results are analysed according to business sectors, as grouped by the 'freight intensive' and 'non-freight intensive' descriptors. Freight intensive sectors were established as follows:

- Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing
- Mining, Quarrying & Utilities
- Manufacturing
- Construction
- Retail

5.3.2.1 Location

The geographic spread of participating businesses fell equally within the South Ayrshire (43%) and Dumfries & Galloway (43%) Council areas, reflecting the survey's target audience. The businesses within these areas are currently most affected by the conditions of the A75 and A77 and would be anticipated to experience the greatest impact if an improvement package is progressed. A small pocket of businesses located in North Ayrshire also partook in the survey (12%), as well a handful of responses from businesses in East Ayrshire (2%) and the wider region (1%). These results are shown in Figure 5-3.

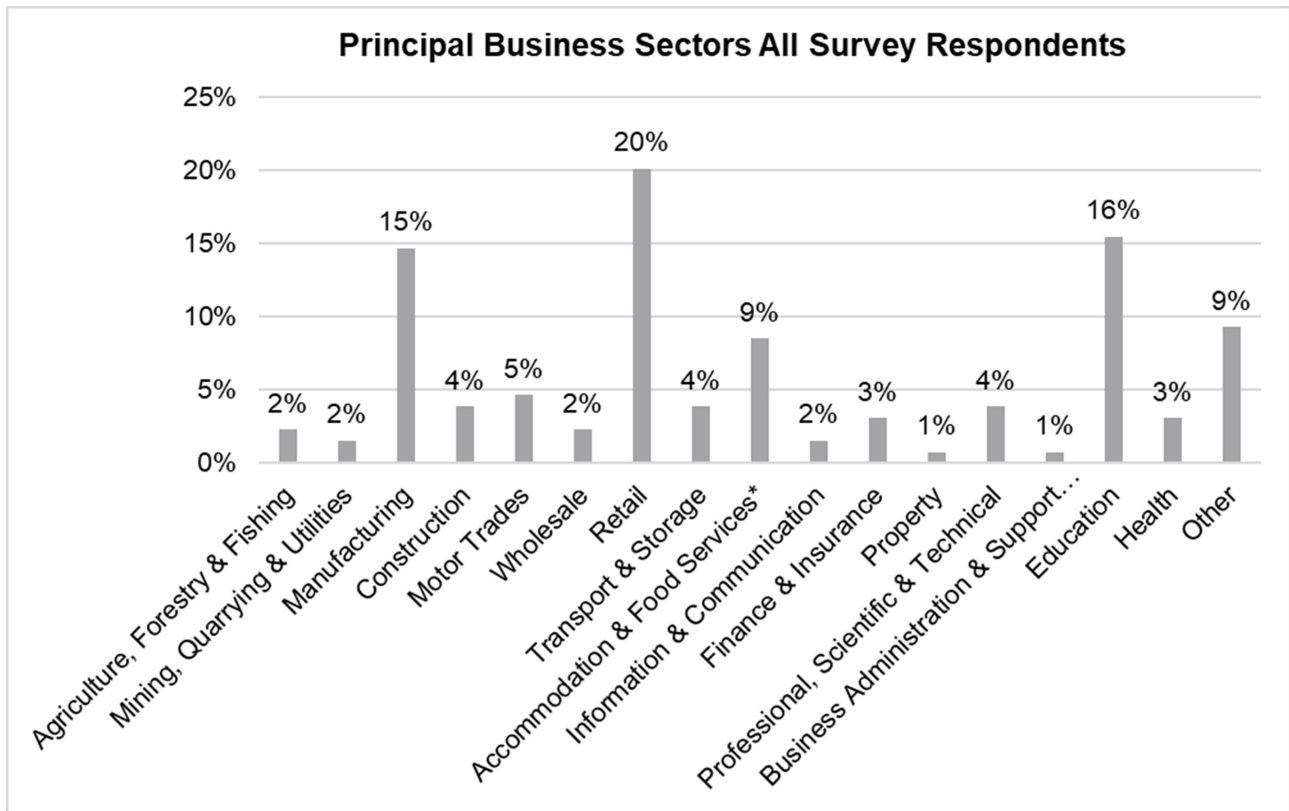
FIGURE 5-3: LOCATION OF PARTICIPATING BUSINESSES



5.3.2.2 Principal Sectors

Most of the participating business were found to operate in the retail (20%), education (16%) and manufacturing (15%) sectors. The survey was, however, able to reach a strong range of businesses operating in further sectors, as shown in Figure 5-4.

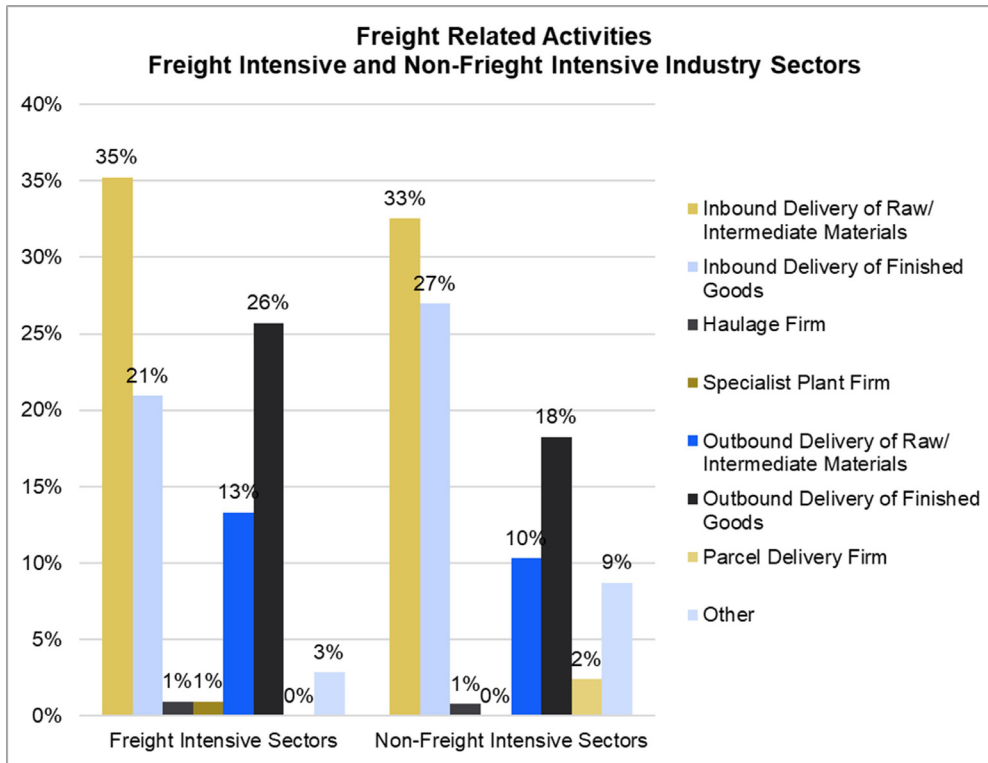
FIGURE 5-4: PRINCIPAL BUSINESS SECTORS, PARTICIPATING BUSINESSES



5.3.2.3 Freight Related Activity

Respondents were asked the nature of their main freight-related activities. The results, presented for freight-intensive and non-freight intensive industry sectors, are shown in Figure 5-5.

FIGURE 5-5: BUSINESS FREIGHT RELATED ACTIVITIES

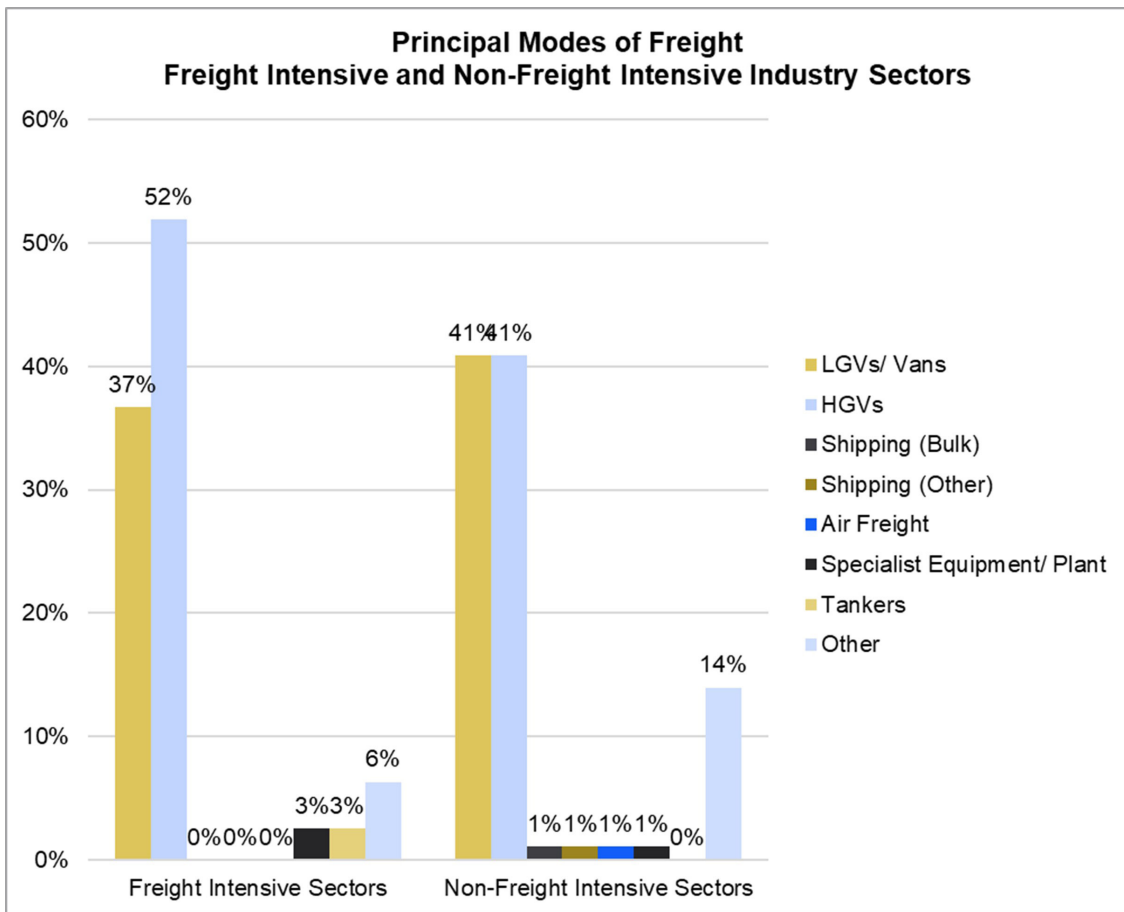


Most participating businesses, across the freight-intensive and non-freight intensive sectors, were found to use freight in the delivery of raw/ intermediate materials and finished goods. For freight intensive sectors, this is most apparent for the inbound delivery of raw/ intermediate materials (35%) and the outbound delivery of finished goods (26%) which accords with the well-represented manufacturing industry. Also significant for the non-freight intensive sectors is the inbound delivery of finished goods (33%) as sectors such as education and accommodation/ food services receive goods essential for their operation.

5.3.2.4 Freight Transportation Modes

An insight into the principal modes of freight used by businesses was also recorded. The results are presented for freight-intensive and non-freight intensive industry sectors in Figure 5-6.

FIGURE 5-6: PRINCIPAL MODES OF FREIGHT



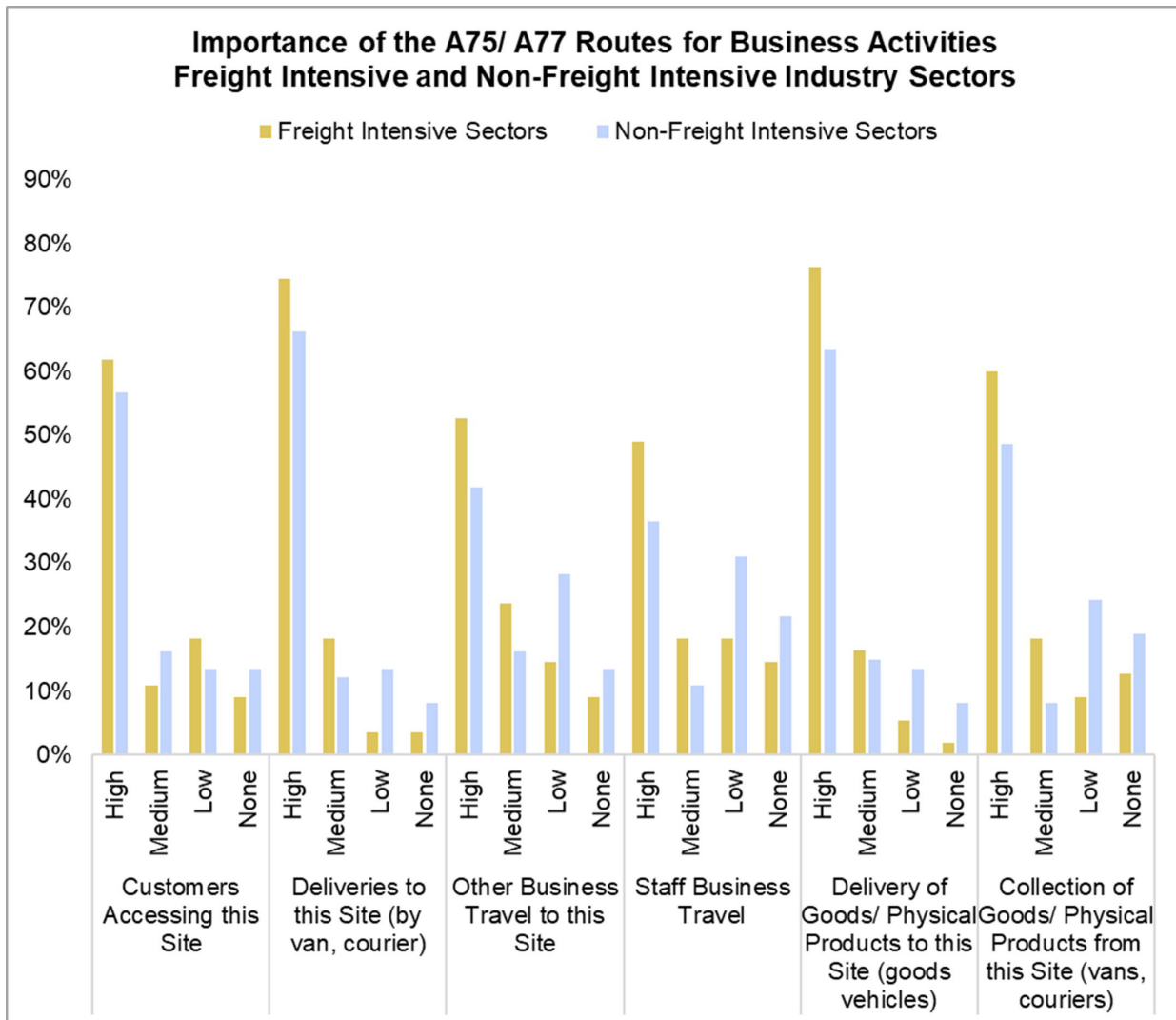
As per the national trend, road freight transport is shown to be the dominant mode amongst the surveyed businesses. For the freight-intensive sectors, HGVs (or lorries) are most-used (52%) while LGVs (or vans) represent a lesser but important mode for transferring goods (37%). The non-freight intensive sectors typically employ HGVs and LGVs equally (41%).

The 'other' responses were investigated for this question, considering the number returned. For the freight-intensive sectors, 'other' was found to mean alternative methods such as container shipments and shipping services such as UPS. For the non-freight intensive sectors, however, these responses were found to be from organisations, such as schools or those in the finance sector, who have no freight-related activities.

5.3.2.5 Importance of the A75/ A77 Routes to Businesses

Participants were then asked questions specifically relating to the A75/A77 routes. Figure 5-7 shows the responses to the question 'How significant are the A75/ A77 corridors to your business in the following respects?' and participants were provided with a list of select business activities.

FIGURE 5-7: IMPORTANCE OF THE A75/A77 ROUTES TO BUSINESSES

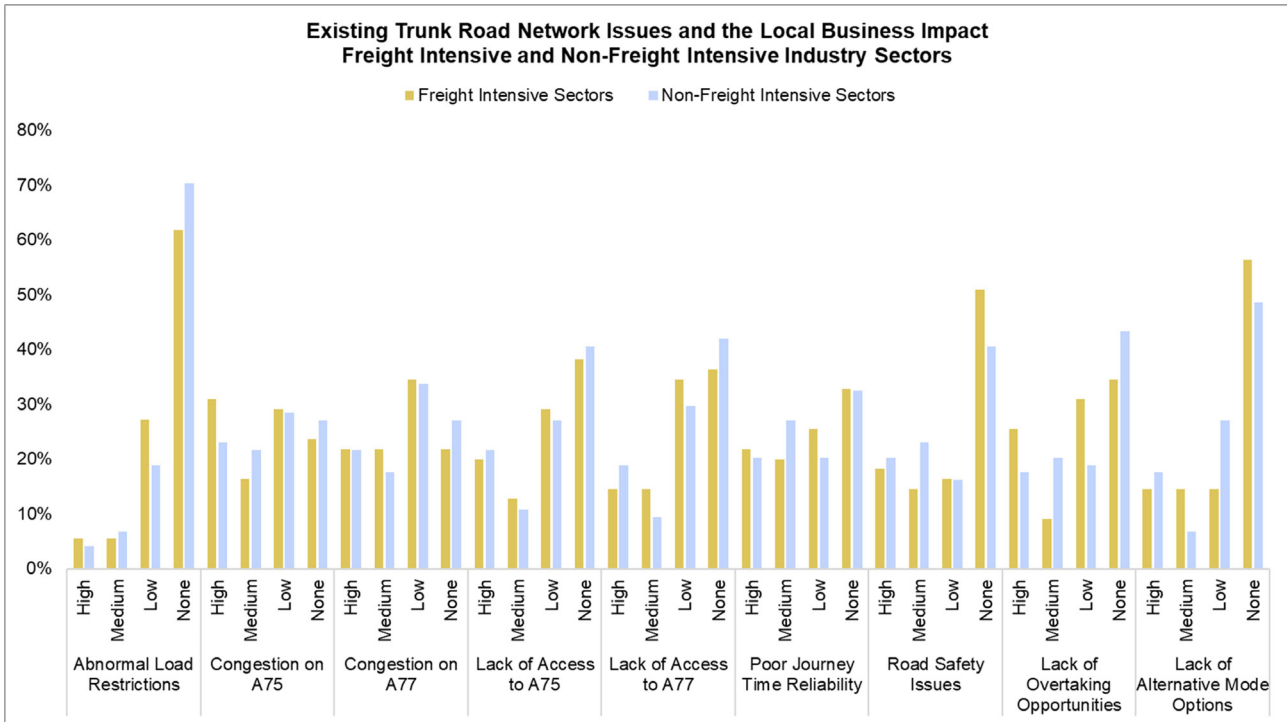


Across the respective industry sectors the A77/ A75 are found to be most important for the following activities: deliveries to site (by both LGVs and HGVs); collections from site; and customers accessing the site. The routes are considered less significant to business travel.

5.3.2.6 Existing Road Network Issues

The impact of existing road network issues on business operations was also questioned. Participants were presented with a range of problems regularly reported/ evidenced on the A75/ A77 trunk roads and were asked to describe the significance of these to their business. The results are displayed in Figure 5-8 for the freight-intensive and non-freight intensive sectors.

FIGURE 5-8: EXISTING ROAD NETWORK ISSUES & BUSINESS IMPACTS



Of the issues presented, the most impactful on business operations across the freight-intensive sectors were found to be: ‘congestion on the A75’ (47% high/ medium significance responses), ‘congestion on the A77’ (44% high/ medium significance responses), ‘poor journey time reliability’ (42% high/ medium significance responses). These results compound wider reports of freight inefficiencies experienced by businesses using the A75 and A77.

For non-freight intensive sectors, the most pertinent issues were found to be: ‘poor journey time reliability’ (47% high/ medium significance responses), ‘congestion on the A75’ (45% high/ medium significance responses), road safety issues (43% high/ medium significance responses), and ‘congestion on the A77’ (39% high/ medium significance responses).

‘Abnormal load restrictions’ and a ‘lack of alternative mode options’ were not considered a significant issue amongst the survey sample.

5.3.2.7 Road Network Improvements

Business perceptions on the proposed improvements to the A75/ A77 routes, specifically upgrading the routes to dual carriageway status, were captured in relation to a number of key success criteria. Figure 5-9 shows the results for the freight-intensive and non-freight intensive sectors.

FIGURE 5-9: ROAD NETWORK IMPROVEMENTS & RESULTING IMPACT ON BUSINESSES

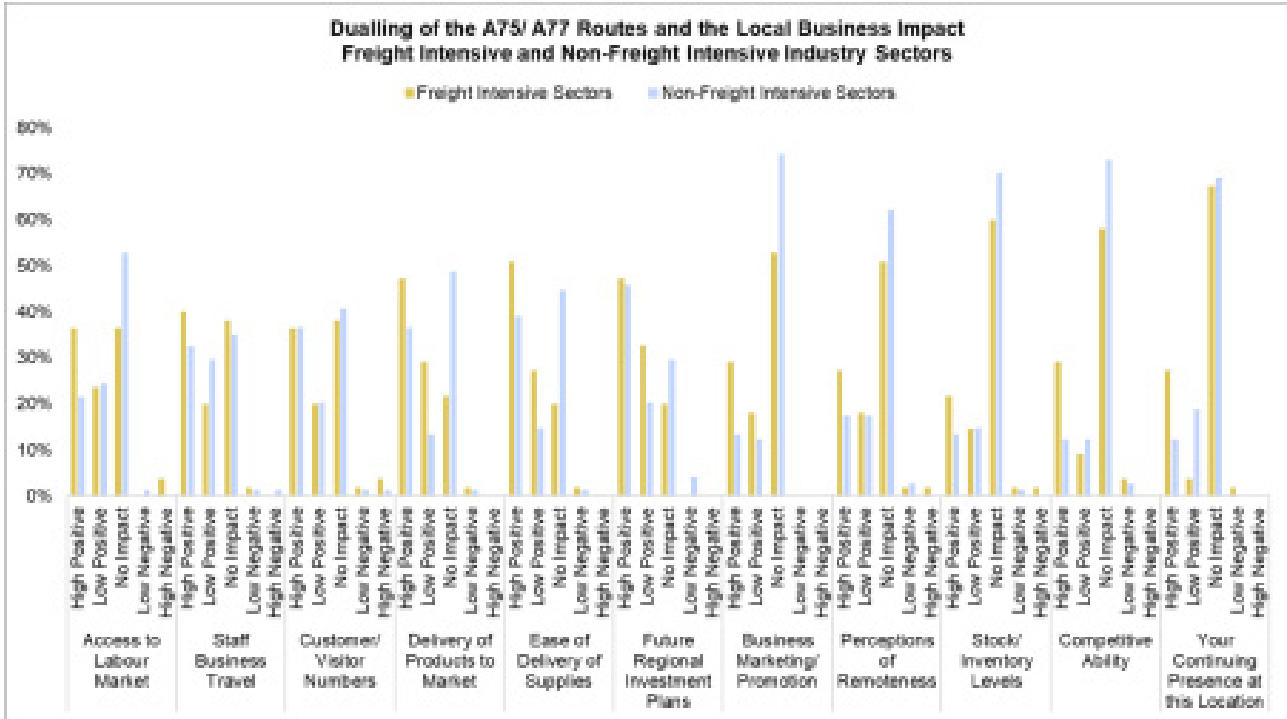


Figure 5-9 shows the freight intensive sectors anticipate dualling of the A75 and A77 trunk roads will benefit them most in terms of: ‘future regional investment plans’ (80% overall positive impact), ‘ease delivery of supplies’ (78% overall positive impact), and ‘delivery of products to market’ (76% overall positive impact). High positive results were also found across the ‘access to labour market’, ‘staff business travel’ and ‘customer/ visitor numbers’ indicators.

The non-freight intensive sectors were found more likely to anticipate no impact from this type of road-based intervention. Businesses within these sectors did, however, rate positive impacts on similar success criteria: ‘future regional investment plans’ (66% overall positive impact), ‘customer/ visitor numbers’ (57% overall positive impact), ‘ease delivery of supplies’ (54% overall positive impact) and delivery of products to market’ (50% overall positive impact).

The majority of businesses considered the upgrade would have no impact on stock and inventory levels, their ability to compete and their continuing presence at their location.

5.3.2.8 Rail Network Improvements

Business perceptions on the proposed rail-based improvements along the A75/ A77 route corridors were captured in relation to the same key success criteria. Survey respondents were asked on the business impact of rail connectivity parallel to the A75/ A77 trunk roads and the results are presented in Figure 5-10.

FIGURE 5-10: RAIL NETWORK IMPROVEMENTS & RESULTING IMPACT ON BUSINESSES

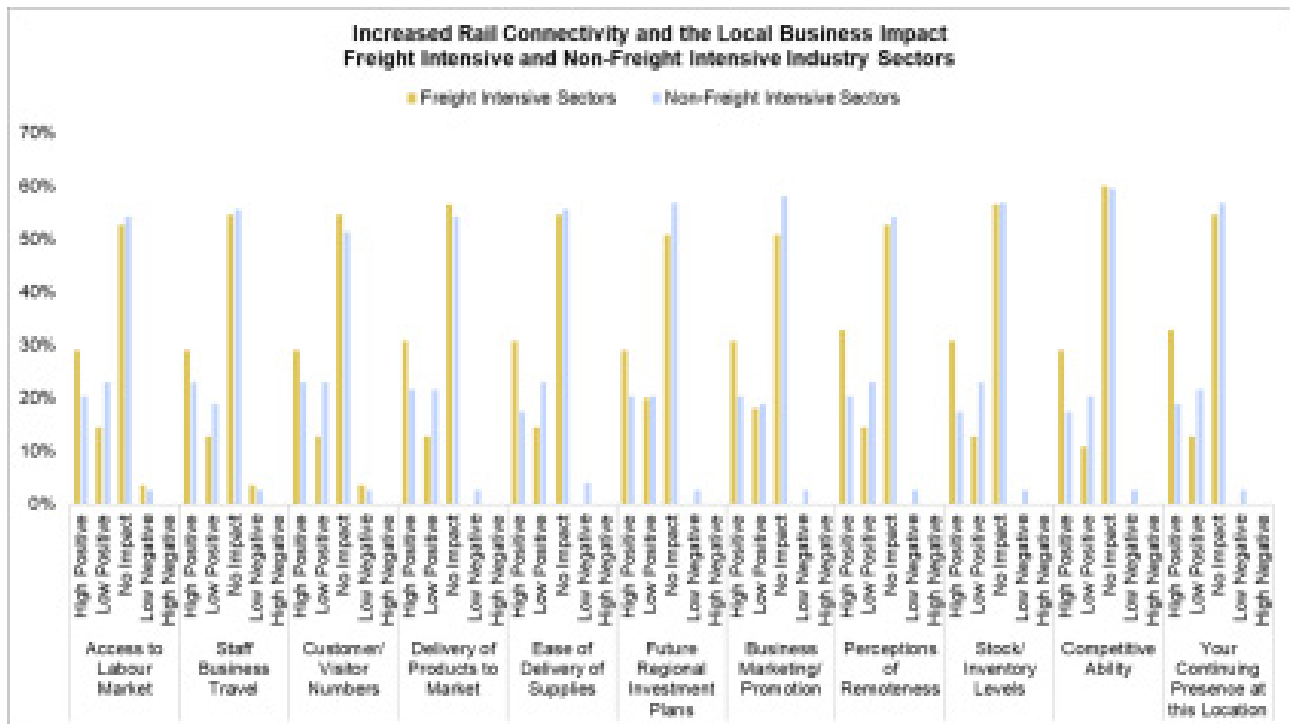


Figure 5-10 shows that, across most success factors, the majority of businesses anticipate no impact from rail-based interventions. This response isn't entirely unexpected as respondents comprise established businesses with existing, and likely vehicle-based, transportation plans/ strategies. Additionally, it is thought that without more detailed description or visualisations of this type of intervention, it may be difficult for respondents to fully understand the potential impact of rail-use on their business operations.

Within this, however, the freight intensive sectors are found to show a more positive reaction to rail interventions regarding 'your continuing presence at this location' and 'perceptions of remoteness' (both at 33% high positive impact). This response relays an appreciation for rail in terms of increased accessibility, and likely for the shorter journey times compared to road-based travel. Benefits are also anticipated for the 'delivery of products to market', 'ease of delivery of supplies', and 'stock/ inventory levels', showing positive indications for the use of rail-freight.

5.3.2.9 Closing Comments

Table 5-1 presents a summary of optional closing remarks left by some businesses. The closing remarks show there a consensus that improvements to the A75 and A77 are needed, and that any improvements delivered would bring significant benefits to businesses.

TABLE 5-1: TABLE 5 1: BUSINESS SURVEY - CLOSING COMMENTS

Closing Comments
A very welcomed addition to the South of Scotland, they have lots of volunteers who help out at the site, so improvements will be welcomed albeit stressful with diversions are in place
Bypasses need to be dual carriageway, widening of roads needed and overtaking opportunities essential
All improvements are eagerly welcomed
Any improvement is appreciated and beneficial
Consideration needs to be made about property access if dualling is to proceed
There is a lack of overtaking opportunities
Dual carriageway needed urgently

Closing Comments

Dual carriageway would definitely improve the roads in many ways

For business it will be a good thing, allow businesses to be more accessible and busier. May not be as beneficial for locals as it could lead to the area being busier and it losing its charm

Hoping the business survives and improvements are made

Huge environmental impact on building this dual carriageway

Investment in buses in more local areas

More information the better when roadworks start etc and traffic they will cause

Road quality currently is bad, potholes exist along significant sections of both routes

Road conditions are really bad, any upgrades on the roads would be positive and have a great impact on businesses and everyone locally

Something that needs to be done, there will be more potential for all the surrounding areas and businesses

Very much overdue and eager for any improvements

The A77 is not fit for purpose as a trunk road/major route to Europe and hasn't been for quite some time

A714 diversion due to an accident closing the A77 adds almost double the journey time. Another handful of times I've had to take a diversion for that diversion (north of New Luce) due to both roads being closed, which consists of a one lane track with cattle grids

We are left behind as a region and the transport infrastructure is a huge barrier to progress

5.4 Summary

Engagement with businesses found that the main issue associated with the A75 and A77, and indeed transport connections generally in South West Scotland, is that congestion and journey time reliability negative impacts business operations in the area. This is particularly for businesses whose customers/goods come from elsewhere. It was widely acknowledged that dualling of the A75 and A77 would have a significant positive impact, especially on future investment plans, ease of delivery of supplies, and delivery of final products to market. It is also believed that these improvements could transform the way in which South Ayrshire and Dumfries & Galloway in particular is viewed by external customers and suppliers.

