



Restrictions of Road Use (Road Closures)

Committee Operations

Date of meeting 09 November 2018

Date of report 1 November 2018

Report by Assistant Chief Executive

1. **Object of report**

To brief the Committee on the volume of promoted restrictions of road use (road closures) instructed by Local Authorities and National Agencies within SPT's area, inform of the impact on the local bus service network and highlight SPT's supporting role.

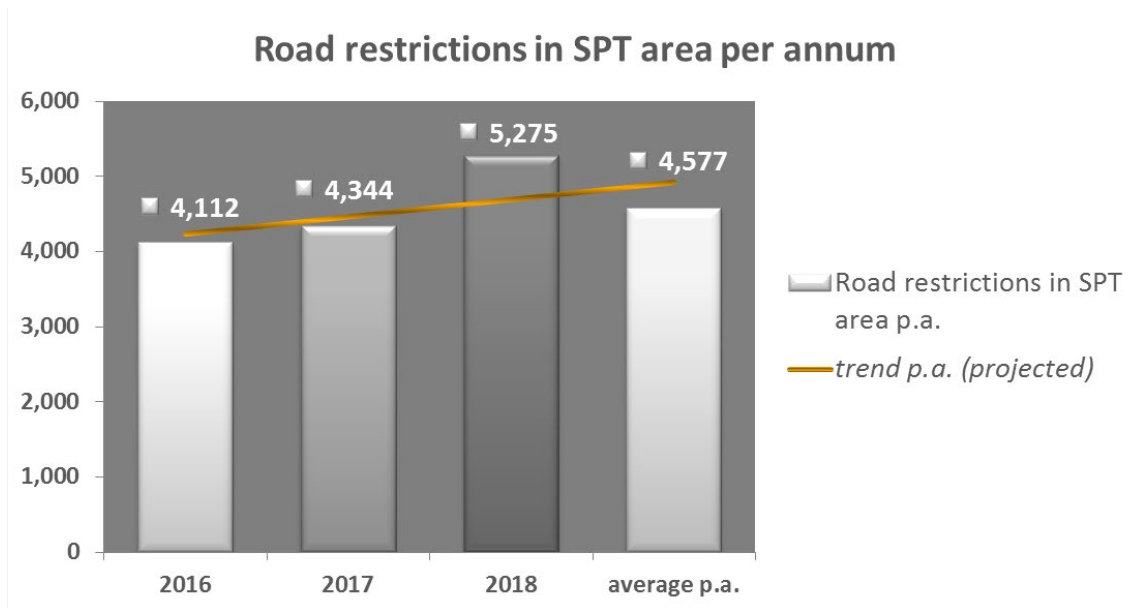
2. **Background**

SPT acts as a conduit for its member Councils in the administration of road closures in the Strathclyde area through dissemination of information to bus operators, assessment of the impact on local bus service provision and action, where required, to maintain adequate service levels. It also acts in an advisory capacity when called upon in terms of future roads developments and legislative changes.

Restrictions in road use vary in terms of category, impact, duration, resource implication and cost, if intervention is required in order to maintain some level of residual bus provision. SPT reviews each individual notification of works and circulates details to all affected local bus operators. In doing so it seeks to mitigate any negative impact on existing local subsidised bus services. In the most extreme circumstances, where customers may be left with no public transport links whatsoever, the action SPT takes to mitigate this may be to consider the diversion of existing subsidised bus services or to seek funding from the body responsible for the closure for the provision of a 'shuttle bus' to fill the gap. For closures of more than 21 days, the Office of The Traffic Commissioner for Scotland requires amended registration paperwork and the costs of this can fall to the subsidised local bus budget in respect of SPT supported services.

Based on 2018 data analysis, SPT is in receipt of over 20 road restriction notices per working day, or 5,275 per annum, the resulting analysis and action of which consumes a considerable level of staff resource.

The following table highlights trends in numbers of road closures within SPT's operating area and is based on 3 years' worth of data.



The figures noted within the table are lower than is actually the case because some local authorities choose not to forward details of temporary traffic management where the road remains open but operates under a temporary traffic restriction. The result of this is that the effect on the local bus service network is not recognised until implementation of the temporary traffic management, which can result in traffic congestion, delays and ultimately to poor passenger service.

It is apparent that year-on-year trends associated with carriageway and maintenance projects impact negatively on local bus services and the ability of the sector to offer customers a reliable journey proposition. Journey times continue to be adversely affected by restrictions to road use, be it complete carriageway, lane or bus stop closures. These restrictions impact on local bus, on-demand MyBus, community bus and home-to-school transport services.

Providers of local bus services operated on a commercial basis continue to express concerns in relation to both the volume of road closures and the perceived lack of consultation by local authorities, national agencies and utility companies, with some providers viewing the recent upturn in restrictions as having a detrimental effect to their entire business plan. Given the well-publicised challenges that the commercial bus market is facing, companies affected by closures frequently seek provision of 'shuttle bus' services in order to minimise any revenue loss.

The Scottish Roads Work Commissioner is responsible for monitoring performance, promoting and encouraging good practice across both utilities and road authorities. The Commissioner also has powers to impose financial penalties on roads authorities who systematically fail in their duty to coordinate, and upon utilities who systematically fail to cooperate when undertaking road works. The organisation website has a live update of all road works by council area.

3. Outline of proposals

Road closures and lane restrictions are inevitable – roads require to be repaired, infrastructure requires to be installed, and utility companies continue to upgrade drains, fibres and cables. In isolation, these are manageable. However, it is essential that SPT highlights the volume of road closures and restrictions, and the increasing number. It is

this cumulative position which is causing problems for the bus market sustainability and customer provision. In turn this results in the public sector being requested to provide services and further funding.

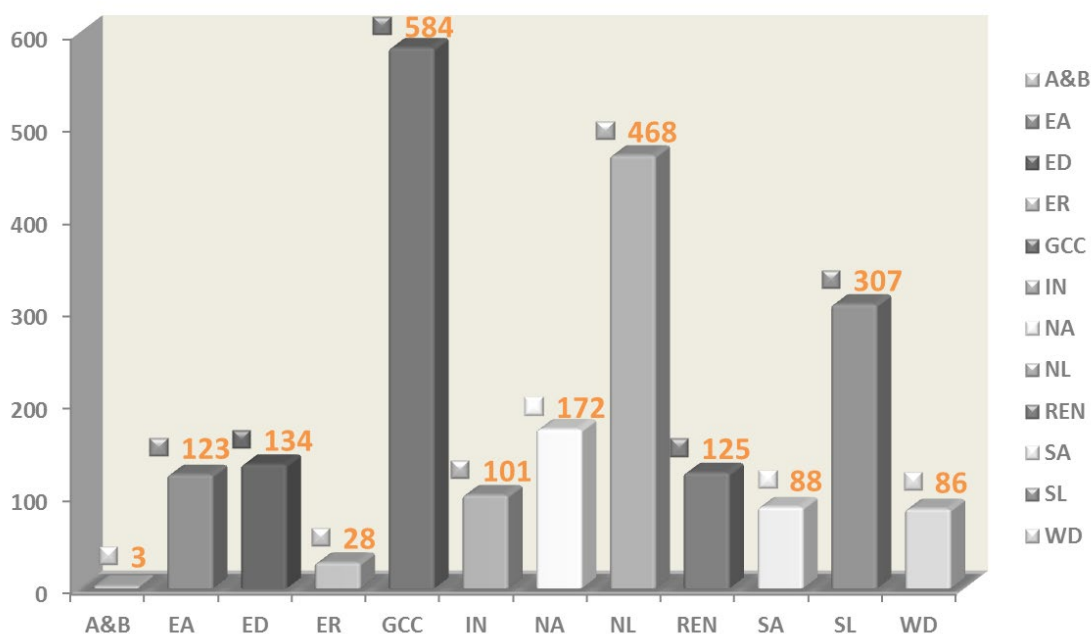
SPT will continue to make every effort to mitigate the impact of road closures on bus services it supports and will seek to develop digital platforms to disseminate information about them more easily to bus operators and, in turn, the travelling public.

However, as can clearly be seen from the chart above, there can be no doubting the extent of the problem itself, or the adverse impact that road closures have on the bus network and, in consequence, the daily lives of passengers. The extent of the problem is such that neither SPT nor any other agency can solve it in isolation and, for there to be a measurable improvement on the current position, there needs to be a greater emphasis on partnership working from all involved, whether that be local authority roads departments, utility companies or national infrastructure agencies.

Without doubt, most programmes of works that impact upon the road network are required but early notification of upcoming closures and effective consultation and engagement with bus operators would help to identify possible mitigations that would maintain a service for the passenger and avoid adding to the already high levels of road congestion which are proving so damaging to bus services throughout the UK and which are making bus travel less attractive to both current and potential passengers.

The following table highlights the recent trend in numbers of road closures within SPT's operating area in each Local Authority area and is based on 6 months' worth of data.

**Number of road restrictions per local authority area
(April - September 2018)**



The recent Transport Bill consultation included additional powers for the Scottish Roads Work Commissioner, including the power of inspection and ancillary powers in support of inspection, plus a specific power to publish and provide Ministers with a report on anyone who is failing to comply with their obligations, or follow good practice in the

carrying out of road works. Further amendments relevant to the commencement and completion of works and fixed penalties have also been proposed.

The SPT response to the Transport Bill confirmed SPT's support to the proposed amendments.

4. Committee action

The Committee is requested to note the content of this report, and that progress will be taken forward with further digital initiatives and stakeholder engagement., including liaising with the Road Works Commissioner to seek improvements in the planning and coordination of road works.

5. Consequences

Policy consequences: *Review of SPT's guideline criteria in respect of subsidised local bus services and impact encompassing restrictions of road use persist.*

Legal consequences: *None directly.*

Financial consequences: *No financial consequences at present.*

Personnel consequences: *None directly.*

Equalities consequences: *Seeks to mitigate the incidence of social exclusion by supporting the delivery of local bus services.*

Risk consequences: *None directly.*

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