Scottish Parliament’s Local Government and Regeneration Committee Inquiry into the Flexibility and Autonomy of Local Government – SPT Response to Call for Evidence

Committee Strategy and Programmes

Date of meeting 28 March 2014 Date of report 4 March 2014

Report by Assistant Chief Executive (Operations)

1. Object of report

To recommend approval of SPT’s response to the Scottish Parliament’s Local Government and Regeneration Committee Call for Evidence regarding its Inquiry into the Flexibility and Autonomy of Local Government\(^1\). SPT’s draft response is attached at Appendix 1 and the closing date for responses is 28 March 2014.

2. Background

The Scottish Parliament’s Local Government and Regeneration Committee has launched a Call for Evidence as part of its Inquiry into the Flexibility and Autonomy of Local Government in Scotland. The aim of the inquiry is to learn lessons and inform the ongoing debate on whether there is a need to strengthen and enhance local democratic structures and government in Scotland.

Specifically the inquiry will:

- Contrast the position of local government with the constitutional and legal framework in neighbouring EU jurisdictions;
- Examine the level of public engagement and interaction with local government, including turnout at local elections;
- Consider the legal and constitutional funding mechanisms available to local government;
- Consider how remote, peripheral or island communities are accommodated within the local government structures; and
- Consider the level of legal flexibility, and autonomy from central government, which local government enjoys.

3. Outline of proposals

In its response to the Inquiry, SPT has set out the continuing benefits of a regional approach to transport, specifically:

- City regions are at the core of productivity growth in modern economies and investment in urban transport networks can deliver high economic and social returns.²
- Evidence shows that more integrated transport networks return greater benefits in economic growth.³
- Regional coordination and planning of transport is normal practice across Europe. Examples of the success of a regional approach to transport across the UK and Europe are provided.
- The cross boundary nature of transport makes regional planning critical to ensure an effective and efficient network.
- The fragmented nature of current transport arrangements make it essential that some form of regional transport planning continues and is strengthened. Current arrangements tend to undermine attempts at integration.
- Regional planning and delivery brings economies of scale, and indeed, SPT has for many years been a model for ‘shared service’ delivery of integrated transport solutions which could be built on in future;
- SPT has a successful track record of delivery and have been particularly successful at developing and delivering projects in partnership with local authorities and other stakeholders e.g. the health sector.
- Even relatively minor changes to legislation could improve transport delivery for people and communities across Scotland, for example, in relation to bus policy.
- There is legal provision within the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 which enables, by ministerial order, the transfer to Regional Transport Partnerships of a range of statutory functions relating to transport. To SPT’s knowledge this legal mechanism has not been utilised to date but it presents a future opportunity should it be required.
- SPT has a very good track record in securing external funding, particularly from Europe.
- SPT as ‘key agency’ in the development planning process, is ideally placed to lead on the integration of transport and land-use planning. Evidence shows that agglomeration benefits occur when transport investments encourage industries to cluster together, promoting linkages between firms, access to labour and knowledge transfers.⁴
- SPT is ideally suited to leading in addressing transport issues for remote, peripheral and island communities.
- SPT is both a democratically accountable body and statutory Community Planning partner. As such we are ideally placed to reflect local needs and priorities in transport provision. Our Transport Outcomes Report demonstrate how we are aligned to local outcomes.⁵

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⁴ Graham D (2006) Investigating the Link between Productivity and Agglomeration for UK industries London: Imperial College
⁵ Transport Outcomes Reports at www.spt.co.uk
SPT has clear plans for the future that will deliver significant benefits for people and communities across Scotland. With more powers and investment we could do even more to deliver for communities across the west of Scotland.
4. Conclusions

SPT’s response to the Call for Evidence sets out the benefits of continuing and expanding a regional approach to transport planning, investment, coordination and delivery in the west of Scotland.

5. Committee action

The Committee is recommended to approve SPT's draft response attached at Appendix 1.

6. Consequences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy consequences</th>
<th>SPT’s response is in line with the RTS and makes use of evidence from across UK and Europe.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legal consequences</td>
<td>None</td>
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<td>Financial consequences</td>
<td>None</td>
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<td>Personnel consequences</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social inclusion consequences</td>
<td>SPT’s response reflects its critical role in protecting communities and providing transport solutions for vulnerable individuals.</td>
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<td>Risk consequences</td>
<td>None</td>
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Name | Eric Stewart | Name | Gordon MacIennan
Title | Assistant Chief Executive (Operations) | Title | Chief Executive

For further information, please contact Bruce Kiloh, Head of Policy and Planning on 0141 333 3248.
Scottish Parliament Call for Views on Inquiry into the Flexibility and Autonomy of Local Government (Local Government and Regeneration Committee)
Response by Strathclyde Partnership for Transport
28 February 2014

SPT has focused its comments on highlighting the ongoing need to preserve and expand a strong regional transport component as part of any emerging proposals to strengthen and enhance local democratic structures in Scotland.

Executive Summary

In many respects, the opportunity of RTPs as statutory, democratically-accountable legal entities that are partnerships of local authorities has not been fully explored and exploited since their establishment in 2006. The response will highlight some of the evidence on which the creation of RTPs were based, look at best practice elsewhere and demonstrate why regional planning and coordination of transport is vital to sustainable economic growth, sustaining our communities and maximising transport investment.

- City regions are at the core of productivity growth in modern economies and investment in urban transport networks can deliver high economic and social returns.¹
- Evidence shows that more integrated transport networks return greater benefits in economic growth.²
- Regional coordination and planning of transport is normal practice across Europe. Examples of the success of a regional approach to transport across the UK and Europe are provided.
- The cross boundary nature of transport makes regional planning critical to ensure an effective and efficient network.
- The fragmented nature of current transport arrangements make it essential that some form of regional transport planning continues and is strengthened. Current arrangements tend to undermine attempts at integration.
- Regional planning and delivery brings economies of scale, and indeed, SPT has for many years been a model for ‘shared service’ delivery of integrated transport solutions which could be built on in future;
- SPT has a successful track record of delivery and have been particularly successful at developing and delivering projects in partnership with local authorities and other stakeholders e.g. the health sector.

• Even relatively minor changes to legislation could improve transport delivery for people and communities across Scotland, for example, in relation to bus policy.

• SPT has a great track record in securing external funding, particularly from Europe.

• There is legal provision within the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 which enables, by ministerial order, the transfer to Regional Transport Partnerships of a range of statutory functions relating to transport which Minister’s think fit. To SPT’s knowledge this legal mechanism has not been utilised to date but it clearly presents a future opportunity should it be required.

• SPT as ‘key agency’ in the development planning process, is ideally placed to lead on the integration of transport and land-use planning. Evidence shows that agglomeration benefits occur when transport investments encourage industries to cluster together, promoting linkages between firms, access to labour and knowledge transfers.³

• SPT is ideally suited to leading in addressing transport issues for remote, peripheral and island communities.

• SPT is both a democratically accountable body and statutory Community Planning partner. As such we are ideally placed to reflect local needs and priorities in transport provision. Our Transport Outcomes Report demonstrate how we are aligned to local outcomes.⁴

• SPT has clear plans for the future that will deliver significant benefits for people and communities across Scotland. With more powers and investment we could do even more to deliver for communities across the west of Scotland.

About SPT

SPT is the Regional Transport Partnership for the west of Scotland and is a partnership of twelve councils across the area. SPT is responsible for the planning and coordination of transport, operation of the Subway and the provision of socially necessary bus services. We procure schools transport for our partner Councils and, on their behalf, administer the Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme. SPT also administers the Zonecard multi-modal ticket and we recently introduced smartcard on the Subway. More information on SPT and the services we provide is available at www.spt.co.uk.

SPT is a statutory Community Planning partner and is committed to working with our partner councils, local communities, Transport Scotland, public transport operators, Health Boards and other key stakeholders to deliver its vision of a world class transport system for the west of Scotland.

³ Graham D (2006) Investigating the Link between Productivity and Agglomeration for UK industries London: Imperial College
⁴ Transport Outcomes Reports at www.spt.co.uk
SPT's Track Record

SPT, in one form or another, has been delivering transport solutions for our partner Councils and communities across the west of Scotland for over forty years. SPT played a critical role in reinvigorating rail travel across the region and ensuring effective bus services, including for people in the most disadvantaged communities. In effect, SPT has been a ‘shared service’ for delivering integrated transport solutions for many years – a model which could be expanded in future.

SPT has invested over £100m in the bus network over the past five years including the upgrading of bus stations and facilities at Hamilton, Greenock and Port Glasgow. SPT also invests in the rail network and has worked with Glasgow City Council, Clyde Gateway, Transport Scotland and Network Rail to upgrade Dalmarnock rail station ahead of the Commonwealth Games 2014. This followed a successful bid for European funding.

Bus services are the largest provider of public transport services carrying over 180 million passengers in Strathclyde 2012/2013 (423 million across Scotland)\(^5\). High levels of deprivation and associated low car ownership levels in the west of Scotland make bus services a vital component of the transport network. Through its Step Change for Bus initiative, SPT has invested over £100 million to improve and sustain vital bus services over the past five years.

But SPT’s investment is not restricted to bus projects. SPT is currently undertaking the £300m modernisation of the Subway and along with Glasgow City Council and Renfrewshire Council is investing up to £40m in rolling out the Fastlink bus system from the city centre to Braehead and the new South Glasgow Hospitals site.

Other specific examples where the regional transport planning has delivered or currently is delivering transport benefits across local authority boundaries include:

- **Smartcard ticketing and ZoneCard**: The recent introduction of Smartcard ticketing on the Subway is a significant milestone in achieving seamless travel. The scheme has the potential to be a forerunner for smart ticketing across the public transport network. The ZoneCard multimodal ticket, is one of the largest integrated ticketing schemes in the UK.

- **My Bus**: SPT established the MyBus (formerly Dial-a-Bus) demand responsive bus service for people who find accessing mainstream transport difficult and we are continuing to invest in new buses to ensure people can access public transport at times and in places where commercial bus operators cannot.

\(^5\) Scottish Transport Statistics 2013 Edition
• Promoting Community Transport - SPT is working with community transport operators to increase the effectiveness, efficiency and quality of the service provided. In 2013 we established the Community Transport Network to drive standards, investment and training across the sector. SPT is currently developing a Social Partnership model with community transport providers to make best use of community transport and plug gaps in the bus network.

• Access to healthcare services: Bus services to major hospitals are used by some of the most disadvantaged people in society. With the continuing consolidation of many important health services in larger modern hospitals, these services are becoming even more important.

• Promoting active travel: SPT works with local Councils, Health Boards, Colleges and Universities and major employers to encourage active travel over car use. We recognise the benefits which active travel can bring in terms of improved health outcomes but also reducing pollution, carbon emissions and congestion.

Benefits of a Regional Approach to Transport

Public transport services are critical to helping people access jobs, education, training, health services and keep people in touch with friends and family. Investment in the transport network is central to supporting communities and to achieving both local and national outcomes.

Above all else, good transport makes an essential contribution to urban economic success. Sir Rod Eddington’s report\(^6\) for HM Treasury on the contribution on transport to economic performance emphasised the importance of transport investment in the larger city regions.

Research shows that targeted investments in city region transport networks can add millions of pounds to the local economy each year, especially when access to city centre high-value jobs and services is improved.\(^7\)

Local Democratic Accountability

SPT is a partnership of the twelve west of Scotland local authorities covering a population of 2.1 million people across a diverse geography from urban towns and Glasgow city to remote rural and island populations.

SPT has a Partnership Board consisting of twenty elected members representing the twelve constituent authorities in the west of Scotland and between seven and nine appointed members. The Board sets the policy

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direction for SPT and these policies are put into practice by SPT’s Management Team and staff.

In its current form SPT was established along with six other Regional Transport Partnerships covering Scotland under the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005. The establishment of RTPs had cross party support.

Consultation responses ahead of the 2005 Act demonstrated “wide agreement that any new arrangements should build on the achievements and incorporate the strengths of SPT”, and that “in particular the skills and experience of SPT staff should be retained by any successor arrangements (para 5.2.1). As a result, the Scottish Executive concluded that:

“It is our clearly-stated intention to preserve the strengths of Strathclyde Passenger Transport, and the skills and experience of its workforce, and build upon these. We are therefore determined to see a strong regional transport partnership in the west of Scotland to which SPT’s powers would transfer” (para 5.2.2).

**Shared Approach to Delivery**

SPT has aligned its investment programme and policies to fit with the Single Outcome Agreements of the twelve Community Planning Partnerships across its area and publishes annual Transport Outcome Reports (TORs) for each CPP which set out in detail how our policies and projects help meet local and national outcomes. TORs have set something of a model for Community Planning partners and demonstrate SPT’s commitment to ensuring public transport meets local need.

SPT is working with the eight councils who form the Clyde Valley Community Planning Partnership in the west of Scotland to develop a shared service model to improve the efficient use of social transport fleets which are critical to keeping people, including some of the most vulnerable, connected to their communities whether it be accessing local community hubs, accessing training, social outings and sports events.

SPT has recently obtained funding from the Scottish Government to take forward improved coordination of non-emergency health transport in the west of Scotland through the establishment of a health transport hub to maximise efficient use of transport for healthcare. SPT is working on a pilot project with Lanarkshire Health Board to take this forward.

Initiatives such as those mentioned above once again demonstrate the benefits of a regional ‘shared service’ approach, which has been at the heart of many of SPT’s activities for many years. Indeed, there remains relatively simple legal provision through the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 for local authorities to transfer duties to their respective Regional Transport Partnerships should they wish to do so.
Contrast the position of local government with the constitutional and legal framework in neighbouring EU jurisdictions

SPT has no comment to make on the specific issue of constitutional and legal frameworks local government in different EU jurisdictions. However, we would like to bring to the Committee’s attention the findings of past research undertaken analysing the implications of different governance structures for the planning and delivery of urban transport. In particular research undertaken by, respectively, the former Commission for Integrated Transport (CfIT) and the Scottish Executive both demonstrate the importance of regional governance arrangements as the basis for successful organisation of urban transport.

The Commission for Integrated Transport’s 2001 examination of European Best Practice in the Delivery of Integrated Transport examined a number of cities across Europe, focusing on Barcelona, Munich and Graz. The research found that,

“A common feature of all the case study areas was a city-wide authority bringing together all of the bodies responsible for public transport... These umbrella organisations have been crucial in improving integration and marketing services, which have led to increased patronage. They have also helped to agree common policies and objectives between those involved in transport provision, and led to the adoption of (higher) common standards of transport infrastructure.” (para 5.7, 5.8, emphasis added).

The Transferability of Best Practice in Transport Policy Delivery research for the Scottish Executive in 2003 concluded that a condition for successful planning and delivery of high quality transport services was,

“....the existence of a regional body, most usually, for the direction of public transport, although in certain instances (London, Copenhagen), with some responsibility for roads as well. The key achievements of these bodies appear to have been, firstly, the introduction of integrated ticketing systems used by a high proportion of passengers and, secondly, the integration of public transport services – especially those that cross municipal boundaries. These two achievements have been accompanied by increasing ridership and, in some cases, economies of scale (with consequent reductions in subsidy requirement)... this research could not find an example of a region that had delivered these elements of transport policy across that region but without a regional body. This therefore implies that the chances of being able to deliver

these improvements are greater with rather than without a regional body in place.” (para 4.2.6, emphasis added).

Across metropolitan areas of Europe, transport arrangements are undertaken on a regional basis with transport authorities having significant powers over their local transport networks and many having combined transport and land use functions.

Other examples of regional transport arrangements in Europe:

**Germany** - Between 1990 and 2004 increased spending in Germany on transport and communications accounts for 2% higher GDP growth in Germany than in the UK.\(^9\)

**Copenhagen** – Has an established integrated transport network with through ticketing and an expanding metro service.

**Berlin-Brandenburg** – Has reversed falling public transport ridership since the creation of the regional body, but increasing since.

**Madrid** – Again falling public transport ridership prior to the creation of the regional body, but increasing since.

**Hamburg, Stockholm and Vienna** - have increased public transport demand over a long period by as much as 25 per cent, with a rate of increase per annum of around 1 per cent.\(^10\)

In the UK, Transport for London (TfL) has delivered a transformation in the quality of the capital's bus network, albeit through huge investment in the London Overground, the renewal of the Underground and the introduction of multi-modal Oyster card smart ticketing. However, TfL’s unique regulatory model means it is able to exert significant control and influence across all road and public transport modes.

In conclusion, SPT would therefore highlight that the most successful city/region based transport systems across Europe are those where the transport authority is empowered to integrate and co-ordinate the delivery of transport (e.g. bus services through a franchise or quality contract-style basis).

**Examine the level of public engagement and interaction with local government, including turnout at local elections**

SPT has no comments to make in relation issues of electoral turnout but we do recognise the critical and growing importance of public engagement in the design and delivery of public services as proposed by the Christie

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\(^10\) On the Move: delivering integrated transport in Britain’s citieshttp://www.centreforcities.org/assets/files/On%20the%20Move.pdf
Commission and now being taken forward through the Community Empowerment Bill.

SPT has effective collaborative arrangements with a range of community and third sector groups and local bus operators. Our approach to promoting improved community and healthcare transport is an example of effective partnership working. SPT works closely with communities across the west of Scotland to ensure public transport services are responsive to public need. As a statutory Community Planning partner we are well placed to understand and respond to local needs and we work closely with public transport operators, the community transport sector, Health Boards and a range of others.

As noted earlier, SPT has an elected Board comprising local councillors and non-elected members. This provides effective oversight and a clear route for the expression of community views and priorities.

Consider the legal and constitutional funding mechanisms available to local government

City regions in the UK outwith London do not have the statutory powers and fiscal responsibilities for transport that international research identifies as commonplace in Europe. As we have set out such arrangements deliver significant transport investment and economic benefits. In England, as a direct result of its regional remit and regulatory powers, TfL has been able to drive large scale investment projects and has the finance, authority and power to move effectively from policy formulation to implementation.

Whereas outwith London such powers have not been available to metropolitan regions, this is now changing. Increased powers over local transport are being devolved to the successor bodies to Passenger Transport Executives. The most notable change has been the creation of Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) and its incorporation into the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. TfGM has become the second most powerful and influential transport organisation in England after TfL. TfGM brought the previously fragmented governance arrangements over transport policy in the greater Manchester councils under one body.

The role of transport in Greater Manchester is strengthened by the existence of the Greater Manchester City Deal which among other investments includes a package of transport proposals including a partial devolution of the Northern Rail franchise11, bus improvement measures and more powers over local transport funding.

City Deals, which are becoming increasingly prevalent in England12, give cities new powers and freedoms to take charge and responsibility of decisions

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11 See www.railnorth.org for more information.
that affect their area. They aim to drive economic growth by enabling more localised decision about how public money is spent and aim to create more effective partnership arrangements between public and private sectors. SPT has been working with Glasgow City Council and adjoining councils to make the case for a City Deal across the Clyde Valley Community Planning Partnership area. City Deals offer a powerful opportunity to better coordinate and integrate economic, transport and land use policies in a way that drives growth and maximises jobs while promoting sustainable transport solutions.

Consider how remote, peripheral or island communities are accommodated within the local government structures

The SPT area covers many remote rural, island and peripheral communities which depend on public transport solutions to help support their economies and keep people connected. In addition, SPT provides transport solutions in many urban areas which suffer social exclusion.

As regards supplying rural services such as the entire Arran bus network, the Kilcreggan ferry, supporting rural bus services, administering the national bus and the Strathclyde-wide rail/ferry concessionary fares schemes, supplying MyBus services, Mobile Travel Centre and Community Transport facilitation, SPT specifically addresses issues regarding rurality as follows:

**Supporting bus services**
SPT provides socially necessary bus services across west central Scotland. This support is provided to operate services where it is not commercially viable to do so, and, in remote and rural areas, the majority of the local bus network is very often supported by SPT on behalf of the relevant local authority.

**Supporting ferry service**
The Kilcreggan ferry is subsidised by SPT. SPT will continue to work with all interested parties to ensure that this service is delivered in the most cost effective manner.

SPT has also contributed to the Scottish Government’s Draft Ferries Review and commented on proposed improvements to ferry infrastructure and service levels for the Rosneath Peninsula, as well as service linkages to the Isle of Bute, Isle of Cumbrae, Isle of Arran and the Cowal Peninsula. Proposed improvements over the next 5-10 years should help sustain the economies of these communities. SPT will continue to support public transport initiatives, in partnership with the Scottish Government and others, to ensure that access to and from these islands maximises opportunities for these rural areas. The SCTS is very important to these remote localities and SPT will continue to administer the scheme on behalf of the councils.

**Providing Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) – MyBus Services**
SPT manages contracts for demand responsive services operating in its area. My Bus operates across rural, suburban and urban areas and
helps keep some of the most vulnerable people in our communities connected by providing door to door transport available at the end of a phone line.

SPT has invested in a fleet of MyBus vehicles which are specially adapted to meet the needs of people with disabilities or who are elderly or infirm. The vehicles are also engineered to cope with challenging road surfaces in remote rural areas.

**Delivering school transport**
SPT, on behalf of its Councils, procures School Bus services, used by 40,000 school children across Strathclyde. This is particularly important in remote rural areas where commercial bus services are often not easily accessible or even available.

**Providing bus infrastructure**
SPT operates, manages and invests in bus stations and manages and maintains bus shelters and stops. SPT can maintain and service bus infrastructure and deliver economies of scale in terms of contractor labour rates, work planning, quick response times and emergency call outs out-with office hours and at weekends.

**Providing travel information to the public**
SPT’s Mobile Travel Centre visits remote and rural areas on a regular basis to ensure that information can be disseminated as widely as possible – particularly in areas where public transport is a community necessity.

SPT also provides and maintains bus stop pole mounted information cases. Cases are owned by SPT and inspected and cleaned on an appropriate basis.

**Supporting Community Transport**
SPT provides advice and development support to existing and new Community Transport organisations throughout the west of Scotland. SPT has established a Community Transport Network to promote improved vehicle quality, support training and encourage best practice across the Community Transport sector in the west of Scotland.

**Addressing transport affordability**
As administrators of the Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme (SCTS), SPT works with its local authority partners to sustain the affordability of transport for elderly and disabled residents in the west of Scotland. The SCTS takes specific account of rural and remote area requirements and enables users to travel beyond the 10 mile limit within designated rural areas for a fixed cost by rail and ferry. SPT also administers the National Entitlement Card on behalf of the Scottish Government which allows eligible persons to travel free on bus services.
Planning the regional transport network
Through the statutory Regional Transport Strategy, SPT has a key role to review the existing transport network and to develop plans, as appropriate, to ensure continued effectiveness and efficiency of the network including responding to local, regional, national and where appropriate European Union consultations which could impact on the transport network and service delivery in the west of Scotland.

SPT is also a key agency in the Local Development Plans process and offers detailed advice regarding transport and land use forecasting. This information and other SPT responses inform relevant planning documentation, including consideration of developments in rural areas – e.g. Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park. SPT also engages with councils through the development management process, providing responses on planning applications which could impact on the transport network.

Administering integrated ticketing initiatives - ZoneCard / Day Tripper
SPT promotes and administers a range of integrated tickets covering the west of Scotland, including Zonecard, the biggest multi-modal ticketing scheme outside London as well as Day Tripper for recreational and family use.

Improving safety on regional roads
SPT has worked closely with local authorities to target investment on regional roads to improve safety and reduce accidents, this includes rural non-trunked roads.

Consider the level of legal flexibility, and autonomy from central government, which local government enjoys.

In many respects, the opportunity of RTPs as statutory, democratically-accountable legal entities that are partnerships of local authorities has not been fully explored and exploited since their establishment in 2006.

SPT would advocate the case for additional powers over transport that Passenger Transport Executives (PTEs) or equivalent PTEs have in England. Recent changes to legislation covering England & Wales has resulted in changes to the powers of PTE’s.

SPT has put forward proposals to the Scottish Government’s Bus Stakeholder Group seeking support for its ‘Ten Point Plan’ for bus which seeks variations to existing regulatory provisions to improve the co-ordination and delivery of bus services. This would broadly bring Scotland into line with the current situation in England and provide RTPs with increased powers to make local bus networks work better for passengers. The proposals include allowing Public Transport Authorities (PTAs) like SPT to secure or provide bus services where there is clearly a need even if it may conflict with the
perceived commercial view; giving PTAs powers to require compulsory participation in ticketing schemes; and giving PTAs greater powers in relation to Statutory Quality Partnerships. SPT believes these relatively minor changes could lead to significant improvements to the availability, quality and integration of the bus network.