

The Vision for Fastlink

Committee Strategy and Programmes

Date of meeting 30 January 2009

Date of report 05 January 2009

Report by Assistant Chief Executive (Business Support)

1. Object of report

The object of this report is to seek the Committee's approval for SPT's 'Vision for Fastlink'.

2. Background

Members will be aware that work has been ongoing for some years on developing plans for Fastlink, a 'Bus Rapid Transit / pre-Light Rapid Transit' (BRT/pre-LRT) 'metro' system within Glasgow and the west of Scotland. The origins of Fastlink came from the conclusions of the Clyde Corridor Transport Study (CCTS), and the project was also included in the Regional Transport Strategy. Fastlink is also emerging as a key proposal in the current West of Scotland Conurbation Public Transport Study (WSCPTS).

SPT is currently project sponsor of Fastlink, with Glasgow City Council (GCC) being project manager, and Renfrewshire Council, West Dunbartonshire Council and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde being key stakeholders.

SPT has funded a significant proportion of the developmental work for Fastlink, most recently awarding £450,000 in 2008/09 to GCC from the Capital Programme. Given this, coupled with a desire to be a pro-active project sponsor, SPT has developed a long-term 'Vision for Fastlink' which is intended to provide guidance on the future development, management and operation of Fastlink, in addition to the work currently being undertaken by GCC on the project's initial phases.

3. Outline of proposals

SPT's 'Vision for Fastlink' is attached at Appendix 1. This has been developed internally by SPT, and has involved consultation with senior SPT officers, GCC and the project's key stakeholders. Members are asked to note that work undertaken in developing the Vision is firmly based on the WSCPTS, which itself has been developed in line with Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG).

Members should note that Transport Scotland's Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR), prepared on behalf of the Scottish Government, rejected Fastlink as a national project. Reasons given include:

- Fastlink would only bring 'local' or 'regional' benefits
- Reduction in emissions would be limited
- Does not contribute effectively to issues relating to cross-Glasgow trips

However, the STPR does contain a project, 'West of Scotland Strategic Rail Enhancements' which promotes a 'Metro/Light Rail' system for Glasgow and the west of Scotland, including the conversion of heavy rail lines, use of redundant rail infrastructure, new lines (e.g. Clyde Waterfront) and some on-road or next-to-road sections. This appears to be similar to what is proposed for Fastlink, and SPT officers are engaging with Scottish Government / Transport Scotland counterparts to seek clarity on the proposed scope of this intervention. The plans for Fastlink will be a key input to these discussions as it is a BRT/Pre-LRT 'metro' system.

4. Conclusions

Fastlink is a strategically important, regional project, and the 'Vision for Fastlink' ensures SPT continues to be a pro-active project sponsor. The Vision will be used to guide future development of the Fastlink network, based on the outcomes of the WSCPTS, and ongoing discussions with Transport Scotland / Scottish Government on the outcomes of the Strategic Transport Projects Review. It should be noted that if this initiative is to be implemented it could only be developed incrementally and would require a cocktail of funding from SPT, the constituent councils, the Scottish Government and the private sector if it is to be realised.

5. Committee action

The committee is recommended to:

- Approve the 'Vision for Fastlink' at Appendix 1.
- Note SPT officers continued engagement with Scottish Government / Transport Scotland counterparts in relation to clarification of the scope of the West of Scotland Strategic Rail Enhancements' project contained within the STPR.

6. Consequences

Policy consequences	<i>In line with the Regional Transport Strategy</i>
Legal consequences	<i>Legal issues to be resolved as outline in Appendix 1.</i>
Financial consequences	<i>No specific financial commitments beyond those already approved</i>
Personnel consequences	<i>None</i>
Social Inclusion consequences	<i>Fastlink will serve areas of deprivation, and will improve accessibility for equality groups.</i>

Name Valerie Davidson

Ron Culley

Title Assistant Chief Executive (Business Support)

Chief Executive

For further information, please contact Valerie Davidson, Assistant Chief Executive on 0141 333 3298.

Appendix 1

The Vision for Fastlink

Purpose

This paper provides a high-level, strategic 'Vision for Fastlink', reflecting Strathclyde Partnership for Transport's (SPT) continuing desire to see this regional 'Metro' system become a major regional project for the west of Scotland, bringing significant economic, social and environmental benefits. Initially a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system, Fastlink will be future-proofed for conversion to Light Rapid Transit (LRT) – trams - at a later date.

What is Fastlink?

The 'Fastlink' project is a qualitative step-change for public transport in the west of Scotland. It will provide a mass-transit 'metro' system centred on Glasgow but which will go far beyond the city boundaries. Fastlink would be an attractive, high-quality, affordable public transport system which would soon be seen as a credible alternative to continued use of the car for daily travel.

'BRT / pre-LRT' systems operate in a number of countries. In the last decade they have proved to be 'fit for purpose' in delivering a mass transit solution for major cities and have encouraged significant modal shift from cars to public transport. The Zuidtangent in Amsterdam, and further afield, the Transmilenio in Bogota, Columbia, are two best practice examples of BRT / pre-LRT systems.

Brief History and Current Status of Fastlink.

In 2006 planning permission was granted and a detailed business case was completed for Fastlink Phase 1 Glasgow Central Station to the SECC, with Phase 2 extending beyond this to Glasgow Harbour. High level feasibility work was carried out into the potential for a wider Regional Scheme serving Renfrew and Clydebank. Total cost of Phases 1 and 2 was estimated as £42m but there have not been any government decisions to proceed with any element of the project.

In this financial year SPT (Project Sponsor for Fastlink) provided £450,000 of grant aid to Glasgow City Council (Project Manager for Fastlink) to carry out further detailed feasibility work. The project is being developed in partnership with West Dunbartonshire Council, Renfrewshire Council, and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. GCC's Land and Environment Services are carrying out engineering design and planning, and the consultants, Halcrow, are undertaking further high level studies including a STAG appraisal, an Outline Business Case, and patronage and traffic analysis (using SPT's SITM4¹). This work is expected to be completed by spring 2009.

Feasibility Work was also undertaken on a wider Regional Scheme which included 2 additional route options:

- To Renfrew, via the Southern General Hospital on the south side of the Clyde, and ...
- To Clydebank via Glasgow Harbour on the north.

A third option to examine the potential for a route to the east end, serving the Commonwealth Games site is now being given some consideration.

A further bid by GCC for £500,000 from SPT's 2009/10 Capital Programme to develop these studies further has been received.

¹ Strathclyde Integrated Transport Model, part of SPT's west of Scotland transport modelling suite.

Where could Fastlink operate?

The Clyde Corridor Transport Study (CCTS) and the emerging West of Scotland Conurbation Public Transport Study (WSCPTS) are the key STAG-based documents which provide technical analysis on which to base consideration of possible routes for Fastlink, and from a land-use/economic development perspective, the Clyde 'Corridor of Growth'. The CCTS provided the genesis for Fastlink, and work is ongoing on the WSCPTS which is due to report in early 2009. The WSCPTS is the key document which will dictate the future plans for Fastlink.

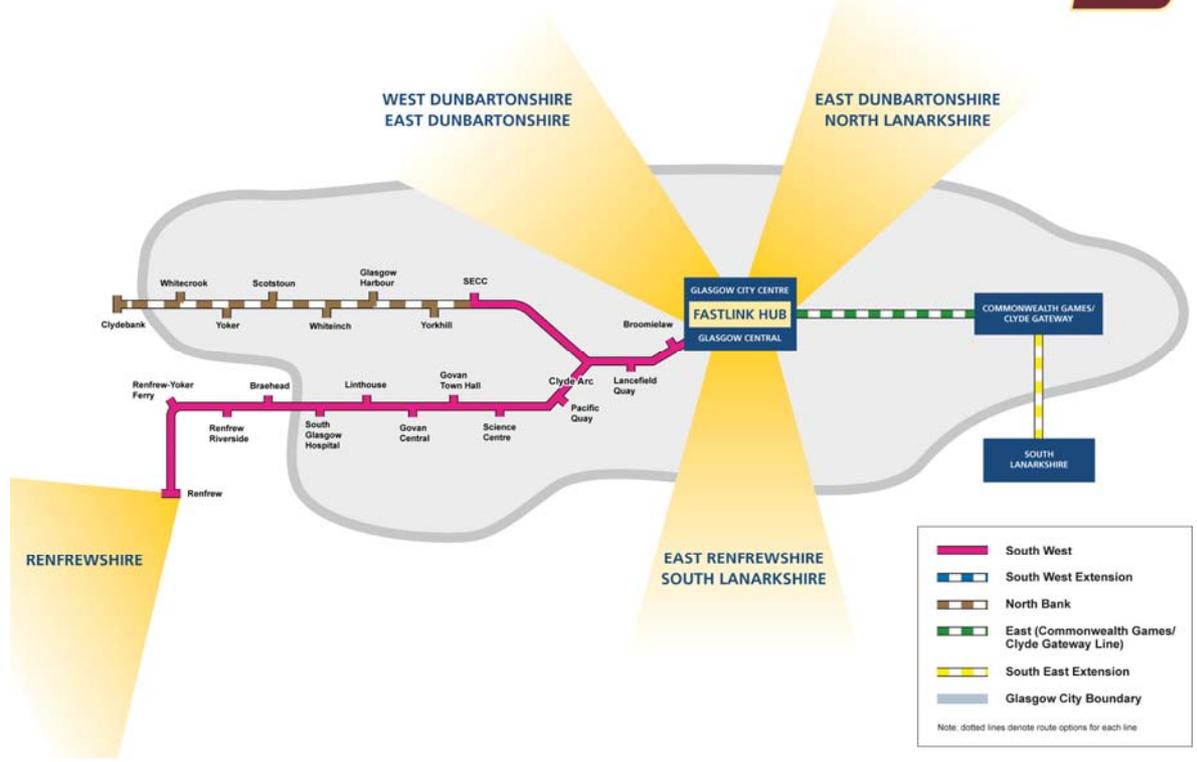
Furthermore, the recently released Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR) provides a national context. Work Package 24 within the STPR, 'West of Scotland Strategic Rail Enhancements' makes reference to the possibility of a 'metro/Light Rail' system for Glasgow and the west of Scotland. SPT and Glasgow City Council are engaging in discussions with Transport Scotland and the Scottish Government early in 2009 to discuss the detail of this proposal. The plans for Fastlink will be a key input to these discussions as it is a BRT/Pre-LRT 'metro' system.

A 'Potential Fastlink Network' diagram (Diagram 1 on the following page), has been developed providing a high-level summary of potential routes. It should be noted that this is presented for discussion, and is intended to provide an indication of the potential opportunities for the development of a regional Fastlink network in the future. In other words the diagram is a draft of possible routes, not a blueprint.

A City Centre Hub

Best practice from other European cities proves that high quality, high frequency public transport is vital to the efficiency, economy and vibrancy of city centres. Fastlink is being developed to re-connect the commercial and retail heart of Glasgow through a BRT/pre-LRT system to match the best in Europe. A core city centre hub will therefore be key to the success of Fastlink. In consequence, options are being considered within the area around Glasgow Central rail station, or further east near Argyle Street for Fastlink's city centre hub.

DIAGRAM 1: POTENTIAL FASTLINK NETWORK



Wider than this, the future success of Fastlink will be on further penetration of the city centre. This would provide opportunity for further interchange with other transport modes, and would also mean greater accessibility to the network for people within the city centre. Passenger demand and operational requirements will be key considerations in this context.

In addition to the CCTS and WSCPTS mentioned above, SPT is currently undertaking an additional study to examine the scope for bus services and infrastructure within the city centre in the future, and how the development of Fastlink may be part of that.

Delivering the Vision

Effective and mutually beneficial partnership working between the public and private sector will be crucial to the success of Fastlink. The current roles and responsibilities of key partners are shown below:

SPT

SPT is the Project Sponsor of Fastlink, and will have key role to play in the future as this is a regional project, and is likely to require public subsidy ('kick-start' funding or revenue support).

Councils

GCC are currently Project Managers for Fastlink, with Renfrewshire and West Dunbartonshire Councils being key stakeholders. Councils will have a key role to play in terms of land, legal issues, planning gain / developer contributions, and route infrastructure including roads, lanes, signals and junctions.

NHS

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde is a key stakeholder in the Fastlink project, as the south-west route will serve the Southern General, and the Golden Jubilee Hospital will be served via a route on the north bank. A route has been reserved through the Southern General site for Fastlink, and a hub will be created within the hospital grounds.

Operators

The success of Fastlink will be heavily reliant on the support of operators, and they will have a crucial role to play in future, in terms of planning, operation, 'feeder' services, and integration with the existing transport network.

Other agencies

SPT are keen that all organisations willing to contribute to the development of Fastlink have the opportunity to do so, and therefore, on an ad-hoc basis, other partners will become involved in the project. For example, Clyde Gateway URC, Renfrew Riverside, Games 2014 Ltd, Clydebank Re:Built, the Enterprise Network, and the wider private sector.

Key Issues and Challenges

SPT are keen that all agencies involved work positively towards the successful delivery of this project. However, there are a number of key issues and challenges which will be resolved as the project progresses. These are:

Funding

Indicative capital costs for the south-west line to Renfrew are estimated at £40m-£100m. It is therefore likely that a variety of national, regional and local public and private sector agencies, including the Scottish Government, will need to contribute to the funding of the project. Due consideration will also need to be given to revenue funding for Fastlink with special reference given to the possible need for a public subsidy for running costs.

Management

Effective and efficient management of Fastlink – including service specifications, contracts, information, stop and hub infrastructure, ticketing, branding, etc – will be key to its success. SPT will take the lead in clarifying roles and responsibilities in this respect, with support from member councils and operators.

Operation

The private sector – public transport operators – will operate Fastlink services. Staffing, service levels, revenue risk and vehicle purchase / ownership are issues to be resolved.

Land

As with any sizeable transport infrastructure project, there is the potential for significant implications on land across the proposed network. At present, work is focusing on the route via the Southern General, due to significant land issues which need to be resolved. Regarding the route on the north bank to Clydebank, good progress has been made on resolving land issues for this route although land issues near the Golden Jubilee hospital need to be addressed. Furthermore, issues regarding Fastlink and concessionary fares are similarly to be resolved.

Legal issues

The development and implementation of Fastlink will be heavily dependent on resolving legal issues in relation to current bus contracts, competition laws, concessionary fares, and project delivery vehicle. SPT will take the lead in ensuring there is adequate consultation to ensure clarification of these issues and their agreed resolution.

Timescales

While SPT is keen that the initial phases of Fastlink are delivered as soon as possible, there are 2 key time constraints: the completion of the Southern General in 2013, and the Commonwealth Games in 2014.

What are the anticipated benefits of Fastlink?

Below are the anticipated benefits of Fastlink, grouped under the relevant RTS Objective:

Modal Shift

- *New public transport journeys / less car journeys* – Fastlink will be a positive addition to the public transport network of the west of Scotland, providing opportunities for direct journeys to communities, to new developments / regeneration areas, to national hospitals, and to major events such as the Commonwealth Games.

Excellent Transport System

- *Attractiveness to travelling public* – Fastlink will overcome the traditional problems faced by bus services – lack of reliability due to congestion, for example – by prioritising BRT /pre-LRT through segregation, dedicated lanes and junction signal priority. While acknowledging that these options are available for traditional bus services, they are generally not widely available. Ease of use for the traveller - through smartcard technology for ticketing, and real-time passenger information, for example – are key benefits too.
- *Operational flexibility* – Fastlink is able to use normal roads or bus lanes, and is therefore easily integrated with existing transport infrastructure. Furthermore, for this reason it is also easy to extend the network in future.
- *Reliability* – Fastlink will offer greater operational reliability than a traditional bus service through segregation and signal priority.

Effectiveness and Efficiency

- *Reduced journey times* – due to the segregated nature of Fastlink, dedicated lanes, signal priority, and the limited number of stops on the network, journey times will be greatly reduced, therefore offering a viable alternative to the private car.
- *Low cost* – infrastructure costs for Fastlink are relatively low due to ease of construction, and limited engineering work, in comparison with traditional rail schemes.
- *Timescales for implementation* – Fastlink can be implemented in a relatively short timescale in comparison with, for example, a light rail project.
- *Parliamentary orders* – Fastlink can be implemented without need for parliamentary orders.
- *Limited or no statutory utility diversion works* – Fastlink requires no or limited utility diversion works during construction.
- *Contractual flexibility* - in comparison with Rail projects, the BRT / pre-LRT public/private sector contractual framework is relatively simple.
- *Route maintenance* – BRT/pre-LRT routes will require only slightly more maintenance than a normal road.

Access for All

- *Social Inclusion* – Fastlink will serve some of the most deprived areas in Scotland, particularly areas of the east end of Glasgow. Furthermore, Fastlink will potentially serve settlements which currently do not have a fixed transport link e.g. Renfrew. With regard to accessibility, Fastlink will be fully DDA compliant, offering ‘access for all’, this being particularly important given that it is intended that Fastlink will serve the Southern General and the Golden Jubilee Hospital.

Environment and Health

- *Environmental impacts* – Some BRT /pre-LRT systems are diesel powered and can contribute to pollution levels. However, SPT are keen that the best available technology is used for Fastlink vehicles. While no decision has yet been taken, this may include diesel-electric hybrid vehicles which, although initially more expensive, will significantly reduce environmental impacts, and ongoing running cost at around 35% fuel saving.
- *Pollution in the urban core* - The centre of Glasgow has some of the most polluted streets in the UK, with light goods and public transport vehicles being key contributors. Fastlink, through its use of diesel-electric hybrid technology, will significantly reduce contributions to pollution from public transport. City centre penetration of the Fastlink network is therefore vital in achieving this. Fastlink will also attract current private car users, thereby further reducing the number of cars on the region’s roads, congestion and resultant pollution. Beyond the city centre, Fastlink will also have benefits on key corridors which currently experience pollution, for example, the Dumbarton Road corridor, particularly at Scotstoun and Yoker.

Economy, Transport and Land-use Planning

- *Interchange with other modes* – Fastlink offers significant opportunities for interchange with other modes including bus, air, subway, rail (national and local services), ferry and active travel modes like walking and cycling.
- *Economy / Regeneration* - The potential Fastlink network will maximise connections to areas of current and future economic activity. Key areas served include the International Financial Services District (IFSD), regeneration areas such as Clyde Gateway, Renfrew Riverside and Clydebank ReBuilt (e.g. Queen’s Quays).

Policy Context

The key policy document for Fastlink is the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS). Fastlink matches its key vision of creating :

‘a world class, sustainable transport system that acts as a catalyst for an improved quality of life for all’.

Fastlink also fits with the RTS Objectives:

1. **Safety and Security:** *To improve safety and personal security on the transport system.*
2. **Modal Shift:** *To increase the proportion of trips undertaken by walking, cycling and public transport*
3. **Excellent Transport System:** *To enhance the attractiveness, reliability and integration of the transport network*
4. **Effectiveness and Efficiency:** *To ensure the provision of effective and efficient transport infrastructure and services to improve connectivity for people and freight*
5. **Access for All:** *To promote and facilitate access that recognises the transport requirements of all*
6. **Environment and Health:** *To improve health and protect the environment by minimising emissions and consumption of resources and energy by the transport system*
7. **Economy, Transport and Land-use Planning:** *To support land-use planning strategies, regeneration and development by integrating transport provision*

In line with the Vision and Objectives of the Regional Transport Strategy, SPT is keen to work in partnership to deliver modern, innovative solutions to the transport issues facing the west of Scotland. Fastlink is one of our key priorities for achieving this, and SPT is focused on building the momentum behind this project, and on its delivery, providing real benefits for the travelling public and business in the west of Scotland.

Appendix 1

Fastlink – Technical specification / requirements and BRT / pre-LRT Best Practice

Vehicles:

BRT / pre-LRT systems can use any available bus types (articulated, standard, 'deluxe' or custom built). However, a modern vehicle image is important and 'tram-type' vehicles have been adopted where both capacity and tram-like image is important to the system.

Route Requirements:

Fastlink can run on segregated (separate track) or non-segregated (on-road using normal carriageway or bus-lanes).

Non-guided segregated routes e.g. on the Broomielaw, avoid the need for certain legislation but the carriageway requires some form of regulation to avoid general use of the Fastlink segregated route by non-compliant vehicles.

Fastlink to Glasgow Harbour was conceived as a non-guided bus system i.e. no guide wheels are to be fitted to buses using the segregated track system.

Regeneration areas e.g. Glasgow Harbour, Renfrew Riverside and Clyde Gateway, allow better opportunities to pre-plan dedicated roadways for public transport compared with existing streetscapes.

Stops / Hubs:

Normal bus-stop spacing distances do not apply to Fastlink. Fastlink would have limited stops to achieve 'tram-like' journey times.

Stops are planned at key hubs e.g. Govan Interchange / South Glasgow Hospital and Glasgow Central station. Stops feature 'tram-like' features like off-vehicle ticketing to improve boarding dwell times and detailed service information to a higher standard than Streamline can provide.

Stops are high-quality, low-level and fully accessible (which would be greatly valued at the South Glasgow Hospital).

Technical Details:

Fastlink uses vehicles with level boarding at stops. The vehicles would use the best available technology, potentially including hybrid-power (diesel / electric) vehicles.

The routes (both on-street and segregated sections) are constructed as smoothly as possible to maximise comfort and give a 'rail-like' level of performance.

Fastlink routes are being designed to future-proof the route alignments to upgrade to either trolleybus or light-rail without major reconstruction or revision being necessary. An example of this is in Edinburgh where a section of guided-bus route will be converted to tram operation on completion of the Princes Street to Edinburgh Airport section of Edinburgh Tram.

BRT/ pre-LRT Best Practice:

The UK has a number of new schemes in operation, including Kent, Essex and Edinburgh. Swansea has a core network which employs dedicated operation within a constrained highway network.

Best Practice internationally includes Bogota in Columbia and the Zuidtangent in Amsterdam, Netherlands.

Appendix 2

Policy and Planning Context for Fastlink

Key reference documents for the planning and policy context for Fastlink are:

National

- Scottish Government's Strategic Purpose:
- Scottish Government's Strategic Objectives
- National Outcomes
- The Government Economic Strategy
- National Transport Strategy
- Strategic Transport Projects Review
- 'Moving into the future' – An Action Plan for buses in Scotland
- The National Planning Framework 2 (due to be published in early 2009)
- People and Place, the Scottish Executive Regeneration Policy Statement
- Relevant Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) statements.
- Smart, Successful Scotland
- Closing the Opportunity Gap
- The Scottish Climate Change Programme
- Delivering for Health

Regional

- SPT's Regional Transport Strategy
- Glasgow and Clyde Valley Joint Structure Plan (and emerging Strategic Development Plan)
- Clyde Gateway plan
- The West of Scotland Conurbation Public Transport Study (and the previous Clyde Corridor Transportation Study)
- Plans of other relevant agencies, including NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and Scottish Enterprise.

Local

- The Local Transport Strategies of SPT member councils
- The Local Plans of SPT Member Councils, including Glasgow City Council's emerging City Plan 2.
- A Step Change for Glasgow, the Glasgow Economic Strategy, and other Local Economic Forum Plans.