



Update on SPT's Position on Pandemic and Restart & Recovery Plans

Committee Chairs Committee

Date of meeting 15 May 2020

Date of report 6 May 2020

Report by Assistant Chief Executive

1. Object of report

To appraise SPT members of the current position on SPT's response to the current public health pandemic and outline the matters being assessed in terms of restart and recovery.

2. Background

All Partnership members were previously advised of SPT's initial response in a report dated 24 April 2020. This was noted by the Chairs Committee on 1 May 2020.

3. Current Position

Since the last report, in terms of staffing and Subway operations, matters remain stable and closely monitored. Subway maintenance activities are also continuing, having due regard to all Government and public health guidance.

Bus services, both commercial and SPT supported, remain subject to change. Although SPT has temporarily suspended some SPT supported services, consideration has also been given to where MyBus services could temporarily fill service gaps, thus ensuring essential travel for those who need it.

Members' attention is also made to the role SPT has been playing in other COVID-19 response matters, including:

- Plans to utilise a MyBus service and assisting with the scheduling of key workers' travel needs to the NHS PPE distribution centre in Lanark;
- Facilitating discussions to ensure public transport is available to the temporary hospital at the SECC; and
- Facilitating between local authorities and the volunteer bank relating to transport.

All other services remain operational and were discussed at the Chairs Committee on 1 May 2020.

4. Financial Consequences

Members were made aware of the potential impact of the current public health pandemic on SPT's financial health and stability, including that discussions with Transport Scotland had taken place and the submissions of impact being made, with a request for financial assistance

similar to that given to commercial operators, both rail and bus. At the time of writing, although further information had been sought, no formal response has been received, and SPT continue to use cash reserves to maintain the operations of the whole organisation.

Members are advised that without financial support, SPT will be forecasting a deficit position as previously outlined.

5. Restart and Recovery

SPT has clearly given significant thought to the restart and recovery of its services. Current information would suggest that it is likely that public transport will see a significant reduction over a prolonged period, with some commentators suggesting patronage levels being as low as 20-25%.

SPT has approached the restart and recovery from the following perspectives:

- Services and Customers
- Suppliers
- Staffing
- Strategy

Services and Customers

Individual detailed plans have been prepared for all services to ensure that SPT continue to follow Government guidance and safeguard customers. Issues being considered include:

- Subway – social distancing on trains and throughout stations, including passenger flows. Ensuring maintenance and operation of trains continues safely, thus ensuring the requirements of operational safety at all times.
- Bus Stations – work has commenced to mark out bus stations to reflect the current social distancing requirements, and consideration has been given to actual bus flows to assist with these matters. The utilisation of the bus station is closely matched by the change in bus services – regulation of customers queuing for bus services may require additional staffing.
- MyBus and SPT Supported Services – the restart of these services will inevitably relate to the number of people undertaking travel, and discussions with bus operators to collaboratively assess the network needs will be essential. It is unlikely the regional bus network will reflect the pre-COVID position. Social distancing measures will affect the reliability of services and it is likely that greater demand on public funding will continue. In determining the best use of available resources, SPT is monitoring demand.

There are many unseen impacts of changes in services, including information provision – SPT maintains more than 13,000 information displays at bus stops and shelters and it is simply not possible in the current environment to keep this up to date. However, SPT has assessed all changes, and this information is fed into Traveline Scotland, the national travel information system, to which customers are diverted to.

Suppliers

SPT suppliers cover everything from bus operators to contractors of construction services and suppliers of goods. Two main supply chains have been identified as high priority:

- School transport operators

- Construction services in support of Subway Modernisation

School Transport Operators

SPT acts as the agent on behalf of 11 local authorities and has been facilitating continued payment and support. More information is required from Government to fully flesh out the Restart Plan.

Construction services in support of Subway Modernisation

An assessment has been undertaken of what essential work is required to maintain the Subway system and its operation, and that can be conducted within the Government's guidelines. As a result, some works are planned to restart week commencing 25 May 2020.

Staffing

SPT is clear that it will continue to carry out all those functions that it can from a home working basis – this will assist with the maintenance of social distancing in the workplace.

However, consideration has been given to what groups of staff need to return to their normal workplace and how this can be facilitated. Consideration has also been given to many options including staggered work patterns, how staff would travel to the workplace, what groups of staff interact most productively when physically close by, how SPT can utilise its available work space and importantly, whether a return to the workplace will assist with staff wellbeing.

Strategy

SPT is also considering the wider implications of the impact of the crisis on the transport network, and as matters progress, how transport can assist in our collective recovery from the crisis in economic, social, and environmental terms. At this stage, dialogue is ongoing with Councils, operators, Transport Scotland and others in that regard, and regular updates will be provided to the Committee in future to keep the Partnership apprised of developments. Further, the Regional Transport Strategy will naturally seek to take account of not only the impacts of the crisis, but also set a framework for the longer term.

6. Conclusion

At the time of writing, SPT's Restart and Recovery Plans have been prepared, and will be implemented once government advice is received. These include discussions with Transport Scotland on the role that SPT plays in the national recovery position.

All plans will be reassessed as and when more Government information becomes available.

7. Consequences

Policy consequences	<i>All Policy matters to be considered as part of the restart arrangements.</i>
Legal consequences	<i>All Legal matters to be considered as part of the restart arrangements.</i>
Financial consequences	<i>Currently in discussion with TS regarding funding support to SPT.</i>
Personnel consequences	<i>SPT are seeking to maintain the safety and wellbeing of all staff.</i>
Equalities consequences	<i>None directly.</i>

Risk consequences

Restart Plans are seeking to de-risk disruption to service whilst ensuring that services are available to those who need them most.

Name Valerie Davidson
Title Assistant Chief Executive

Name Gordon MacLennan
Title Chief Executive

For further information, please contact *Valerie Davidson, Assistant Chief Executive on extension 3298.*