

Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy & Delivery Plan – progress update

Date of meeting 15 December 2023

Date of report 5 December 2023

Report by Chief Executive

1. Object of report

The object of this report is to:

- (i) provide an update on the progress of current stages of development of the Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy & Delivery Plan (SRBS);
- (ii) update on preparations for the recommended option(s) to be taken forward in SRBS future stages to be presented to the Partnership in March 2024, and next steps and considerations therein; and,
- (iii) update on SPT current activities to support and enhance improvements in the bus network across the region.

2. Background to report

Members will recall earlier reports¹ regarding the development of the SRBS, including most recently the key findings of SRBS Work Package 1 (WP1) Case for Change, which were presented to the Partnership in September 2023. Members will further recall that the SRBS development programme is broken down into six work packages, noted below:

- Work Package 1 Case for Change
- Work Package 2 (WP2) Options Development and Appraisal
- Work Package 3 (WP3) Strategy Development & Consultation
- Work Package 4 (WP4) Finalise Strategy & Delivery Plan
- Work Package 5 (WP5) Strategic Business Case
- Work Package 6 (WP6) Strategic Advisor - Bus Reform and Organisational Change

The following section provides an update on current progress.

3. Progress update

3.1 SRBS Work Package 1: Case for Change

WP1 is now complete. The full Case for Change report is now available on the SPT website² and provides further detail and underlying evidence for the Case for Change key findings presented to the Partnership in September 2023.

¹ https://www.spt.co.uk/media/gr3hd3gj/sp090623_agenda7.pdf and https://www.spt.co.uk/media/4eapnkmz/p290923_agenda8.pdf

² <https://www.spt.co.uk/about-us/what-we-are-doing/regional-transport-strategy/bus-strategy>

3.2 SRBS Work Package 2 (WP2): Options Development and Appraisal

WP2 remains on track to complete in time to enable the recommended option(s) to be presented to the Partnership in March 2024.

As set out in the Case for Change report, in order to facilitate the option development and appraisal process, a range of policies are being developed which establish the foundation for the bus network the region aspires to, based upon the Case for Change and a range of criteria including:

- Frequency levels by type of service, settlement type served, and time of day
- Reliability, punctuality and journey times
- Network stability
- Affordability, fares and ticketing
- Information standards
- Bus Stop and Interchange quality
- Vehicle quality and standards
- Driver training standards
- Customer service standards

The policies are being developed to a sufficient level of detail to meet the requirements of the appraisal process, providing a robust basis for the recommended option(s) which will emerge from that process. The options currently in development include relevant provisions from the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019.

Further engagement with councils and bus operators on the WP2 Options Development and Appraisal process will take place in December and January. A wider stakeholder communication email will also be sent out after the current Partnership meeting to give a progress update and directing stakeholders to SPT's SRBS webpage for further/future information. Information sessions, similar to those held for the Regional Transport Strategy in early 2023, will be arranged for SPT Partnership members in January and February 2024.

Members will recall from the previous update³ that a public consultation on the recommended option(s), subject to their approval by the Partnership in March 2024, is also planned. The consultation will include:

- A questionnaire for members of the public, partners and stakeholders to complete. A shortened version of the questionnaire will be available to ensure easy access to participation for members of the public, community councils and other groups or organisations with an interest in the SRBS process. This will predominantly be conducted online, but a paper version will be made available upon request to improve access to participation.
- Briefing and discussion sessions with partners and stakeholders, including but not exclusively:
 - Councils
 - MSPs and MPs
 - Transport Scotland
 - Bus Operators and Confederation of Public Transport (CPT) Scotland
 - Traffic Commissioner for Scotland
 - Transport Focus

³ Section 4.1, https://www.spt.co.uk/media/4eapnkmz/p290923_agenda8.pdf

- Chambers of Commerce
- Health boards
- Passenger representative/Interest Groups

The consultation will be promoted in several ways including email information campaign, social media, SPT website and posters placed in public places such as libraries. The results of the consultation will be reported to the Partnership later in 2024 and will feed into the next stages of development of the SRBS.

3.3 Next Steps and Future Considerations

The detailed scope of (and commissioning of further consultancy support from Systra⁴ for) SRBS WP3-6 is dependent on the approved WP2 recommended option(s) and the outcomes of the consultation and engagement planned to take place following their approval. The SRBS programme currently aims to deliver WP4 Strategy and Delivery Plan by March 2025, and WP5 Strategic Business Case by June 2025.

Some key components of future work will be gaining a detailed understanding and position on future revenue and capital funding to deliver the recommended option(s), achieving any required approvals from partners, inputting to the development of guidance and regulations of relevant provisions of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 (and subsequently adhering to the guidance and regulations), and continuing to ensure integration with other current workstreams e.g. Clyde Metro.

3.4 SPT current activities for bus

The SRBS seeks to address the long-term issues facing bus in the region. However, as members will be aware, SPT simultaneously remains focused on addressing both that and continuing the “day job” of ensuring the people and communities of the west of Scotland get the current bus network they need to thrive. For example, SPT’s revenue investment in socially necessary services has increased significantly over recent years, seeking to fill the gaps in the commercial network. SPT remains committed to doing this where budgets allow, and to continuing work with operators, councils and other stakeholders through forums such as the Glasgow Bus Partnership and related workstreams, including delivery of improvements funded through Transport Scotland’s Bus Partnership Fund. SPT has also recently secured funding from TS’s Community Bus Fund to advance work in relation to the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, including securing required data on services from operators, improving rural transport, and municipal operation.

4. Partnership action

The Partnership is recommended to:

- Note the update on the progress of current stages of development of the Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy & Delivery Plan (SRBS);
- Note the update on preparations for the recommended option(s) to be taken forward in SRBS future stages to be presented to the Partnership in March 2024, and next steps and considerations therein; and
- Note the update on SPT current activities to support and enhance improvements in the bus network across the region.

⁴ Systra were commissioned to support delivery of WP1 and 2, with SPT retaining an option to extend that contract for WP3-6, subject to the outcomes of WP1 and 2 and future Partnership approval. Contract award report: https://www.spt.co.uk/media/gr3hd3qj/sp090623_agenda7.pdf

5. Consequences

Policy consequences	<i>Supports delivery of a wide range of policies in the Regional Transport Strategy, including Policy 21 Bus Quality and Integration.</i>
Legal consequences	<i>None at present.</i>
Financial consequences	<i>None at present.</i>
Personnel consequences	<i>None at present.</i>
Equalities consequences	<i>An Equality Impact Assessment, Fairer Scotland Duty Impact Assessment, Island Community Impact Assessment, and Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment are being carried out as part of the SRBS development process.</i>
Risk consequences	<i>None at present.</i>
Climate Change, Adaptation & Carbon consequences	<i>Delivery of the SRBS will have a positive impact on climate change, adaptation and carbon reduction. A Strategic Environmental Assessment was undertaken as part of the development of the new RTS, from which the SRBS has developed.</i>

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