



Strategic Issues Update for the SPT area

Committee Strategy & Programmes

Date of meeting 27 August 2021

Date of report 17 August 2021

Report by Acting Chief Executive

1. Object of report

The object of this report is to provide an update on strategic-level issues affecting transport in the west of Scotland.

2. Background

Further to previous reports¹, members will be aware that measures to address the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and a range of other policy, planning and delivery initiatives are underway within transport and related sectors across Scotland at present, at national, regional and local levels. The impact of these on the people, communities and transport network of the west of Scotland could in some cases be significant, and it is therefore essential that SPT seeks to monitor progress and influence outcomes in order to maximise benefits for our area. This report summarises current progress on key workstreams and SPT activity in that regard.

3. Update

3.1 National

3.1.1 Covid-19 response

The impacts of the pandemic continue to be the primary focus of much of the work of transport stakeholders across the west of Scotland, although given recent moves to Level 0 and beyond, attention is now focusing on the longer-term recovery, specifically in relation to public transport. While patronage across all public transport modes currently remains below pre-Covid levels, there are encouraging signs of growth, particularly at weekends, but the longer-term picture is still unclear. Footfall² in Glasgow city centre remains low, and below that of comparator cities across the UK, although local 'high streets' would appear to be benefitting in some way from this as those working from home stay local to shop. Further, with working from home still advised, any potentially positive impacts on public transport patronage from a return to office are yet to be felt.

¹ http://www.spt.co.uk/documents/latest/sp210521_Agenda5.pdf

² Data from 14 July 2021, <https://www.centreforcities.org/data/high-streets-recovery-tracker/>

Despite this ongoing uncertainty, and further to the recent presentation to the Operations Committee, SPT and partners remain focused on ensuring that as far as possible any 'return to normal' has sustainable transport at its core, and aligns with targets such as those in relation to climate change and 'net zero'. Indeed, the level of project activity in transport in the west of Scotland could be said to be at its highest level for many years, with significant work underway on initiatives across the region, such as the Bus Partnership Fund (BPF), Spaces for People, as well as those through SPT's capital programme, for example.

Key to transport's success in our collective recovery from the pandemic will be to ensure that all such activity is undertaken in a co-ordinated and complementary way, and SPT and councils have a key role to play in that regard, through such forums as the 'Transport Transition' groups established during the pandemic, and the developing Regional Transport Strategy. Further, as we move forward, a collective and concerted effort to encourage people 'back on board' public transport is required at national, regional and local levels; a high-profile and direct counter to the "do not use public transport" messaging which formed a key part of lockdowns early in the pandemic. Crucially, and fundamental to encouraging people back on public transport, will be continued recovery support funding from the Scottish Government and SPT continues dialogue with Transport Scotland (TS) and other partners in that regard.

3.1.2 2020 United Nations (UN) Climate Change Conference – 26th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP26) – Glasgow

As is to be expected, planning for COP26 has intensified over recent months as the event draws near. This has consequently led to greater involvement for SPT in preparing for COP26, including submitting an Operations Plan at the end of July to event organisers for approval. The SPT COP26 Operations Plan covers all SPT activity affected by the event, from Human Resources and digital security through to the Subway and Buchanan Bus Station. The plan details additional services or resources required to enable SPT to deliver towards the wider event strategy. Heightened security presence, crowd management, emergency escalation procedures, support staff for the COP26 Transport Control Centre and communications support are some of the activities included in the plan for which SPT requires additional funding.

Should the plan and associated funding required by SPT be approved by event organisers, this will enable officers to progress matters timeously in advance of the event. It is worth highlighting that there are likely to be further iterations of the plan submitted over coming months as greater detail on the exact format of the event becomes apparent. Officers will continue to update the Committee on this and other related matters as the event draws near.

3.1.3 National Transport Strategy (NTS)

A meeting of the NTS Delivery Board, chaired by the new Minister for Transport, Graham Dey MSP, took place on 8 July 2021. Members will recall that the Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs) of Scotland are represented on the Board by Councillor Sandra Macdonald, Chair of Nestrans, and SPT at officer level. The agenda covered transport support for the Scottish Government's National Mission for Jobs, the review of Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG), the Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2) and the proposed way forward for the 'NTS Working with Partners' (WWP) report referred to in the report to the previous Committee.

Specifically, in relation to the latter, Transport Scotland has proposed that the WWP report covers three main areas: governance, actions being taken by partners in support of the NTS, and case studies. Transport Scotland also sought support from board members in preparing the WWP report, and the RTPs offered their assistance in that regard, including leading or co-leading the preparation of sections of the report. Board members were also asked to provide any further comments on the proposed approach to the WWP report following the meeting and the RTPs subsequently submitted comments in that regard. The key points of the RTP response were: that the WWP report presented an opportunity to clarify the 'delivery pathway' for transport in Scotland; that any governance work should build on the earlier NTS Roles and Responsibilities workstream; funding should be covered in the WWP report; and the case studies should focus on future ways of working and international best practice rather than looking to the past. Officers will continue to update the Committee on progress on this and other NTS issues as matters move forward.

3.1.4 Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2)

The current stage of development of the STPR2 is options appraisal and an information session on TS's proposed approach to that took place on 28 July. In order to ensure good communication flow through forthcoming stages of STPR development, TS has established a Regional Reference Group (RRG), made up of two representatives from each STPR2 Regional Transport Working Group (RTWG) across Scotland. Officers from SPT and the Glasgow Metro development team represent the Glasgow City Region RTWG on the RRG, and similarly there will be officer representation from the Ayrshire and Argyll & Bute RTWGs.

Further meetings of RTWGs are planned for late August, at which TS's response to comments³ supplied previously by the RTWGs in relation to the STPR2 Phase 1 recommendations, Case for Change reports and option groupings will be among matters discussed. STPR2 remains on track to be published for a 12-week public consultation in winter 2021 and officers will continue to update the Committee as matters progress.

3.1.5 ScotRail

Further to the update to the previous Committee⁴, which highlighted Transport Scotland's aspiration that the RTPs of Scotland continue to have a strong and potentially, growing role in rail in the new Scottish Government-owned framework with ScotRail from April 2022, an approach has been made by the RTPs to ScotRail to begin dialogue in that regard. It is expected that a short-life working group of RTP and ScotRail officers will be established to explore opportunities in regard to a future working relationship, including any new responsibilities and funding therein. ScotRail has also started a consultation on its proposed timetable from May 2022 as reported at the recent Operations Committee and SPT is engaging in that process along with council colleagues. Officers will continue to keep the Committee updated on this and other rail matters as progress is made.

³³ Appendix 1, http://www.spt.co.uk/documents/latest/sp210521_Agenda5.pdf

⁴ Section 3.1.6, http://www.spt.co.uk/documents/latest/sp210521_Agenda5.pdf

3.1.6 Bus Partnership Fund

Members will recall⁵ previous updates in relation to Transport Scotland's Bus Partnership Fund and the work that was undertaken in the preparation of the two bids that were submitted ahead of the 16 April 2021 deadline; one on behalf of the Glasgow City Region, developed through the Glasgow Bus Partnership and the other covering the Ayrshire Region developed through Ayrshire Roads Alliance, North Ayrshire Council, local commercial bus operators and community transport services. SPT provided significant support in the development of both bids.

Lead applicants were notified of the outcome of the bid process in formal offer of grant letters in June 2021 with Glasgow City Region securing initial funding of £3.655 million and Ayrshire securing £0.305 million for delivering bus priority measures and the development of future schemes in their respective regions. The successful projects were as follows:

Glasgow City Region:

Workstream	Deliverable	Indicative Budget
Hope Street	Upgrade to Bus Avenue	£250,000
Howard Street	Improved Waiting Areas and Placemaking	£25,000
Paisley Town Centre	Junction Improvements	£2,000,000
Paisley Road West	STAG ⁶ Appraisal	£230,000
Maryhill Road	STAG Appraisal	£230,000
Dumbarton Road	STAG Appraisal	£230,000
Pollokshaws Road	STAG Appraisal	£230,000
Great Western Road	STAG Appraisal	£230,000
Wider Strategy	STAG Appraisal	£230,000
	TOTAL	£3,655,000

Ayrshire:

Workstream	Deliverable	Indicative Budget
UTC extensions	Two UTC extensions on Three Towns Corridor, to prioritise buses	£135,000
Feasibility Studies	Pennyburn Roundabout Bus Lane Extension	£100,000
Signals Upgrade	John Finnie Street prioritisation signals	£70,000
	TOTAL	£305,000

A number of project bids were deemed to be out of scope and whilst the total award values fell short of the submitted bids for both areas, it is estimated that through the development of the STAG appraisals this could unlock an additional £112 million and £1.9 million for the Glasgow City Region and Ayrshire respectively. Discussions are underway and further meetings have been arranged with Glasgow City and Ayrshire Regions to take forward the delivery

⁵ http://www.spt.co.uk/documents/latest/Ops300421_Agenda7.pdf,
http://www.spt.co.uk/documents/latest/p111220_Agenda7.pdf and section 3.2.2
http://www.spt.co.uk/documents/latest/sp190221_Agenda8.pdf

⁶ Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance

of these and to seek to unlock the potential future investment these funding awards could bring.

Members will also recall from previous reports that further applications can be submitted to the October 2021 round of the BPF. Work will continue with partners with a view to identifying options for submitting further bids to this round, including Argyll and Bute, in line with previous advice from Transport Scotland.

3.2 Regional

3.2.1 Regional Transport Strategy (RTS)

Further to the report to the previous Partnership⁷, work continues across a range of areas in RTS development. The consultation on the Case for Change closed in June and analysis of the responses is underway. A full report on the consultation will be presented to the Partnership in September but initial results indicate that the 'Key Issues' appear to resonate strongly with respondents and that there is a high level of support for the proposed vision, targets and objectives.

Work is also underway on option development, with key studies initiated on Mobility as a Service (MaaS) and the bus provisions of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019. Additional studies on roads transport decarbonisation and affordability of public transport are in development stages and anticipated to be underway soon. These studies will support the appraisal and development of the final strategy. Work is also underway on developing the spatial approach for the RTS, which will be on the basis of regional corridors, and engagement is ongoing with local, regional and national processes to ensure good spatial alignment. Officers will continue to update the Committee on RTS development as progress is made.

3.2.2 Glasgow Metro

Officers continue to engage with Transport Scotland and Glasgow City Council in relation to the various workstreams being taken forward in relation to the Glasgow Metro project. TS, through the STPR2, is currently progressing work in relation to analysing a range of local and regional factors such as accessibility, socio-economic and demographic data, and plans and strategies of other partners relevant to the Metro. TS is also looking at impacts on the rail network of the Metro with industry partners, and developing potential Metro network options in liaison with local and regional stakeholders.

Glasgow City Council on behalf of Glasgow City Region is progressing the development of a Glasgow Metro feasibility study, and a number of additional work packages are progressing to augment and complement TS's STPR2 work to deliver a composite set of outputs, aiming to complete in Autumn 2021. These include: vision and ambition guiding principles; transport governance and operator model options; a regional economic narrative, and an assessment of land value capture mechanisms. SPT officers will continue to engage with Metro partners as work progresses and update the Committee as matters move forward.

⁷ http://www.spt.co.uk/documents/latest/p180621_Agenda6.pdf

3.3 Local

Officers continue to liaise with councils, Community Planning Partnerships and other partners in relation to a range of plans, initiatives and projects, including the developing RTS, Local Transport Strategies, delivery of projects from SPT's capital programme and those mentioned elsewhere in this report, as well as undertaking liaison with relevant organisations in relation to the pandemic response.

4. Conclusions

The dominance of the Covid-19 pandemic on workloads and resources in transport and other sectors continues into 2021 however the parallel focus of the various organisations on taking forward the initiatives mentioned in section 3 is to be welcomed. SPT and partners will have a key role to play in positively shaping and influencing how the future unfolds and officers will keep Committee members updated on developments as matters progress.

5. Committee action

The Committee is recommended to note the contents of this report.

6. Consequences

Policy consequences	<i>The new RTS will need to take account and/or address matters raised in this report.</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>None at present.</i>
Risk consequences	<i>None at present.</i>

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