



### Changes to the Bus Service Registration Process in Scotland

**Committee**            Operations

**Date of meeting**    22 January 2016

**Date of report**    12 January 2016

#### Report by Assistant Chief Executive (Operations)

##### 1. Object of report

The object of this report is to inform the Committee of forthcoming changes to the bus service registration process in Scotland and to recommend approval of the next steps for SPT arising from the changes.

##### 2. Background

2.1 Members will recall that through SPT's bus policy – known as the 'Ten Point Plan' – SPT has long been an advocate of changes to the bus registrations process in order to deliver a better service to the travelling public, and a better deal for the public purse. The registration process is pivotal to SPT's network planning activities, with on-going service variations, withdrawals and new registrations collectively informing procurement activity and decisions relating to SPT's supported services network. For information, it is worth noting that, currently, around 30% of bus services in Strathclyde are supported either in whole or in part by SPT.

2.2 After discussion at the national Bus Stakeholders Group, Transport Scotland (TS) undertook a consultation on proposed changes to the bus service registration process, which SPT responded to and were very supportive of, as they were very much in line with our views outlined in the 'Ten Point Plan'.

##### 3. Outline of proposals

3.1 It is therefore gratifying to report that, on 18 December 2015, SPT were informed by TS that the changes to the bus service registration process, championed by SPT, would come into effect from 31 January 2016. This change is a significant achievement for SPT and partners and, it could be said, is the most significant change to the regulatory framework for the bus market since the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001.

3.2 In summary, TS outlined the changes as follows:

- *"The pre-registration period will increase from 14 to 28 days to allow bus service operators and the relevant transport authorities time for meaningful discussion on the implications of any proposed changes and to plan accordingly to*

# Agenda 14

*minimise any disruption or seek alternative options in the run up to service changes;*

- *The registration period will correspondingly decrease from 56 to 42 days, preserving the overall timetable from notification to service change at 70 days; and,*
- *The Scottish Government expects bus operators and the relevant authorities to use the extended pre-registration period constructively to discuss proposed service changes and address any problems that may arise.”*

- 3.3 In addition, and in support of the above, TS have committed to issuing Best Practice Guidance to accompany the changes. At the time of writing, this guidance had not yet been issued.
- 3.4 In clarification of the status of the guidance, TS noted that *“it has been designed to give an indication of how the additional time allocated to the pre-registration period might be used by bus operators and the relevant authorities to work in partnership in considering applications for bus service registration.”*
- 3.5 Officers are in the process of assessing the impact of the changes on work processes and procedures, specifically in relation to network planning. Officers await the publication of the best practice guidance to fully gauge impacts (e.g. in relation to consultation with bus operators on a service registration), but it is anticipated a paper will be presented to the next Committee proposing how the changes will be adhered to in the SPT area, based on best practice within the guidance. Officers will engage in dialogue with operators, councils, the Confederation for Passenger Transport (CPT) and the Traffic Commissioner for Scotland (TC) in this regard prior to the proposal being presented to the Committee. Until then, on an interim basis, officers will utilise the guidance when published as a means of how best to implement the changes.

## 4. Conclusions

- 4.1 SPT welcomes the new bus service registration changes being implemented in January 2016 as they are very much in line with SPT’s bus policy. Officers will continue to assess the impacts of the changes, engage with relevant stakeholders, adjust work processes and procedures, and will present a proposal for a recommended way forward to a future Committee, based on the Best Practice Guidance due to be published soon.
- 4.2 It is worth highlighting at this stage that officers are hopeful that these changes to the bus registration process will mark a step-change in terms of SPT’s relationship with bus operators. It is hoped that positive working relationships will be forged through the new changes, and could indeed lead to some type of formalised ‘agreements’ being created between SPT and operators – collectively and/or individually – all with a view to achieving more for the travelling public and the public purse.
- 4.3 Members are also reminded that, that while these changes are indeed very welcome, they form the initial phase of progressive measures which SPT would like to see in bus policy. For example, and in line with the ‘Ten Point Plan’, officers will continue to seek improvements to the procurement process, which are pivotal to a step-change in bus service delivery, and Statutory Quality Partnerships. Members will also recall the forthcoming consultation exercise SPT is planning to undertake in relation to bus, as the views of the public and communities across the west of Scotland will be central to and critical in shaping the future direction of our bus policy.

## 5. Committee action

The Committee is recommended to:

- Note the contents of this report; and
- Note that officers will engage with bus operators, councils, CPT and the TC prior to developing a proposal for the recommended way forward to the next Committee.

## 6. Consequences

Policy consequences	<i>In line with the RTS.</i>
Legal consequences	<i>As the Public Transport Authority for the west of Scotland, SPT is required to comply with the new regulations which come into effect on 31 January 2016.</i>
Financial consequences	<i>None identified at present.</i>
Personnel consequences	<i>None identified at present.</i>
Equalities consequences	<i>None identified at present.</i>
Risk consequences	<i>None identified at present.</i>

**Name**    **Eric Stewart**  
**Title**    **Assistant Chief Executive**  
              **(Operations)**

**Name**    **Gordon Maclennan**  
**Title**    **Chief Executive**

For further information, please contact *Ronnie Park, Director Bus Operations* on 0141 333 3691.