



Strategic Issues Update for the SPT area

Date of meeting 24 November 2023

Date of report 8 November 2023

Report by 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 to report

Members will be aware that a range of policy, planning and delivery initiatives are currently underway within transport and related sectors across Scotland at national, regional and local levels. The effects of these on the people, communities and transport network of the west of Scotland could be significant and it is therefore important that SPT continues to monitor developments and seek to influence outcomes in order to maximise benefits for our area. This report summarises current key workstreams and SPT activity in that regard.

3. Outline of proposals

3.1 General

Further to the update to the previous Committee in September, public transport patronage continues its recovery from the impacts of the Covid pandemic. Subway patronage continues to perform well and has settled at around 100% of pre-Covid levels, and the most recent figures for SPT's supported bus services showing they are close to achieving similar levels. For the commercial bus network, passenger numbers remain around 90% of pre-pandemic levels, and patronage on ScotRail services is improving but is still at circa 80% of pre-pandemic levels. On SPT's MyBus demand responsive transport service, numbers remain significantly below pre-pandemic levels at around 30%, although it is worth noting reduced service provision is still in place at the current time.

3.2 National

3.2.1 Transport Scotland Act Guidance & Regulations

In September, regulations were laid before the Scottish Parliament commencing sections of the Act around Bus Services Improvement Partnerships (BSIPs) and Bus Franchising¹ on 4 December 2023. Officers continue to have discussions with Transport Scotland officials regarding their application by SPT.

¹ <https://www.transport.gov.scot/news/more-bus-powers-for-local-authorities/>

Further regulations are required for both partnerships and franchising in order to give these powers full effect and the intention is to introduce these throughout 2024 alongside the development of guidance to support the use of the powers.

SPT officers also continue to input to the development of the Act's regulations and guidance through the Transport Scotland/ATCO²/SPT Working Group whose remit is to discuss and reflect on proposed regulations and guidance and reflect these in the finalised versions. Officers will keep the Committee updated as further details become public.

3.2.2 Active Travel Transformation Fund (ATTF)

Following an application to the fund in January 2023, SPT was informed in October that its bid for Design Support funding of £135,000 had been successful. With £15,000 match funding from SPT, this will facilitate the development of initial/concept and detailed designs for delivering high quality enhancements to active travel infrastructure and connections around Subway and bus stations with a view towards establishing a pipeline of active travel projects ready for funding and delivery through the ATTF and SPT Capital Programme in future years, in line with the developing Regional Active Travel Strategy. Members are reminded that Active Travel projects include walking routes, wayfinding as well as cycling and wheeling.

3.2.3 Scottish Government Just Transition Plans (JTPs)

As previously reported, the Scottish Government established a Just Transition Commission to advise Scottish Ministers and to make recommendations on future action in relation to achieving climate change targets in a fair and equitable way. The Scottish Government subsequently committed to deliver Just Transition Plans, focussed on: Built Environment and Construction; Land Use and Agriculture; and Transport and has published discussion papers³ around these to consider key challenges and opportunities that the transition to net zero will bring.

To support this process, SPT, along with a range of other stakeholders from across the public sector, provided input at a recent workshop hosted by the Improvement Service. The findings from the workshop have now been published online⁴ Key findings from the workshop from a transport perspective include:

- Behavioural change and improved public transport are key to delivering on net zero – the switch to electric vehicles will not be sufficient in achieving change required.
- There is a need to emphasise the importance of reducing longer journeys made by car, and improving public transport is key to this.
- Significant investment in public transport and bus services in particular is essential to achieving net zero.

The output from the engagement events will feed into the development of draft Just Transition Plans for each sector. These plans are due to be published in late 2023/early 2024 and will include targeted action plans and route maps outlining the key steps for each sector. Officers will update the Committee as further detail emerges.

² Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers

³ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/transition-built-environment-construction-sector-discussion-paper/>

· <https://www.gov.scot/publications/transition-land-use-agriculture-discussion-paper/>

· <https://www.gov.scot/publications/transition-transport-sector-discussion-paper/>

⁴ <https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/products-and-services/consultancy-and-support/climate-change/just-transition-public-sector-engagement>

3.3 Regional

3.3.1 SPT Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan

As per the previous report⁵, SPT continues to progress work to develop its Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan. Current focus is completing the baseline assessment of carbon footprint for SPT's property portfolio and operational boundary. An Action Plan is being developed which will support achievement of the net zero emission pathway and will contain mitigation and adaptation measures to ensure SPT and the services we provide are resilient to the impacts of climate change. A further update on the Strategy will be provided to the next meeting of this Committee and the finalised Strategy and Action Plan will be presented to the Partnership in March 2024.

3.3.2 Sustainable Procurement

Staff from across SPT departments recently attended a Sustainable Procurement Training Workshop delivered by Sustainable Procurement Limited in partnership with Climate X Change, Scotland's centre of expertise connecting climate change research and policy. The course focused on driving emission reduction through the public sector supply chain using Scottish Government procurement tools and guidance. Through focused discussions and real-world case studies, participants gained a deeper understanding of the methodology for integrating economic, social and environmental considerations into contracts and frameworks at all stages of the procurement process. The training will help ensure that staff are now better prepared to make informed, socially responsible decisions that reflect SPT's commitment to sustainability, as well as the objectives of our developing Climate Change Strategy.

3.3.3 Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy (SRBS)

Work is progressing well on the options development and appraisal stage of the SRBS, and a further update on this will be presented to the Partnership in December, with the recommended option(s) (including operating and funding model) to be taken forward for the SRBS being presented to the Partnership in March 2024.

3.4 Local

Officers continue to liaise with councils, Community Planning Partnerships and other partners in relation to a range of other plans, initiatives and projects, including the newly approved RTS, Local Transport Strategies, delivery of projects from SPT's capital programme as well as undertaking liaison with partners in relation to other issues.

4. Committee action

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

5. Consequences

Policy consequences

All workstreams noted in this report are in line with the policies of the new Regional Transport Strategy.

Legal consequences

None at present.

⁵ https://www.spt.co.uk/media/m24dapuk/p230623_agenda8.pdf

Financial consequences	<i>None at present.</i>
Personnel consequences	<i>None at present.</i>
Equalities consequences	<i>The impact of the issues identified in this report could be significant for equalities groups. Due process in terms of statutory impact assessments will need to be undertaken by responsible parties to ensure appropriate mitigation of any matters identified.</i>
Risk consequences	<i>None.</i>
Climate Change, Adaptation & Carbon consequences	<i>The impact of the issues identified in this report could be significant and due process in terms of statutory impacts assessments will need to be undertaken by responsible parties to ensure appropriate mitigation of any matters identified.</i>

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