



## Strategic Issues Update for the SPT area

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**Date of meeting** 9 June 2023

**Date of report** 30 May 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 February 2023<sup>1</sup>, the west of Scotland public transport network continues its recovery from the significant impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, cost of living crisis, and other factors.

Public transport patronage remains below pre-pandemic levels but positive progress is being made. On the commercial bus network, passenger numbers are around 90% of pre-pandemic levels, with SPT's supported bus services at around 90-95%, reflecting the importance of these often 'lifeline' services to communities across the region. Patronage on ScotRail services remains low at circa 65-75% of pre-pandemic levels. The picture is more positive for SPT's Subway, with patronage consistently reaching 90% or higher of pre-pandemic levels in recent months and attaining 99% in the first period of 2023/2024. However, for the MyBus demand responsive transport service, numbers remain significantly below pre-pandemic levels at around 30%.

While the positive progress noted above is welcome, it is worth highlighting that more than one year after lockdown restrictions began to be withdrawn, the widespread change in societal behaviours as result of the pandemic has led to a seemingly settled position of public transport patronage not recovering to a level comparable with pre-pandemic numbers. Thanks to hybrid working arrangements, for example, commuting to and from work five days a week, for so long the bedrock on which public transport built its financial sustainability, appears now for many to be a thing of the past. This inevitably leads to an

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.spt.co.uk/media/ybkfbyn5/sp090922\\_agenda9.pdf](https://www.spt.co.uk/media/ybkfbyn5/sp090922_agenda9.pdf)

overriding concern that public transport patronage, without significant future help, may struggle ever to return to pre-pandemic patronage levels. The implications of this are manifold across society, the economy and the environment. Sustaining service provision will prove challenging for operators and will see less investment in the network, which moreover will lead to many people and communities seeing reduced or withdrawn services, in effect cutting them off from jobs, family and friends, and other life opportunities. Climate change targets, the achievement of which are reliant on reducing transport emissions as they are the biggest source, will prove even harder to reach with a reduced public transport network.

However, SPT and partners across the region and Scotland remain focused on addressing these challenges. SPT is in regular communication with the Transport Minister, Transport Scotland (TS) and others about funding and wider solutions, in line with the new Regional Transport Strategy (RTS). The range of activity covered in the rest of this report demonstrates further action aimed at encouraging more use of and investment in sustainable transport measures, and officers will continue to update the Committee on current events, future issues and actions therein as progress is made.

## 3.2 National

### 3.2.1 Transport (Scotland) Act 2019

SPT is guided that the majority of regulations and guidance on the provisions of the Act will likely now be issued in 2024 following a consultation period, although there are likely to be some regulations, guidance or orders issued throughout the rest of 2023. Officers will continue to engage with Transport Scotland and other partners in relation to these. A separate report to this Committee provides an update on the Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy (SRBS).

### 3.2.2 National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4): Scottish Government Guidance on Local Development Plans

As noted in the last update to Committee, Scottish Ministers adopted and published Scotland's Fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4) on 13 February 2023. NPF4 comprises the National Spatial Strategy for 2045, including National Developments, Regional Spatial Priorities, and National Planning Policy focused around the themes of Sustainable Places, Liveable Places and Productive Places. NPF4 supersedes NPF3 and Scottish Planning Policy and replaces Strategic Development Plans, and now forms part of the statutory 'Development Plan' for an area, alongside new Local Development Plans (LDPs).

The Scottish Government has indicated an expectation that these new style LDP's will be in place within 5 years of the new Development Plan Regulations coming into force. The Town and Country Planning (Development Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2023, which includes procedures for the preparation of local development plans (LDPs), came into force on 19 May 2023. The associated Local Development Planning Guidance, setting out the Scottish Ministers' expectations for implementing the system of local development plans to deliver new-style, place-based, people-centred and delivery-focussed plans was published by the Scottish Government on 24 May 2023<sup>2</sup>.

SPT, as a statutory Key Agency in the development planning process is reviewing these documents and is engaging with the planning departments in councils and other stakeholders including the Scottish Government Key Agency Group and Transport Scotland with regards to future further engagement in and support for the

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/local-development-planning-guidance/>

Local Development Planning process. Officers will keep members updated as matters progress.

### 3.2.3 Fair Fares Review (FFR)/The Future of Public Transport

Further to the previous update to the Committee, the Transport Minister has advised stakeholders including SPT that the Review will now report later in 2023, in order to monitor and consider the impact of the initial outcomes of the Pathfinder Pilot project to remove peak fares on ScotRail services for six months from October 2023. Further, the Minister confirmed that there will be a consultation on the scope of the Fair Fares Review over summer, and at the same time, there will also be a consultation on the Scottish Government's Vision for the Future of Public Transport. SPT officers remain in liaison with Transport Scotland about the review and officers will continue to update the Committee as and when matters progress.

### 3.2.4 Active Travel Transformation Programme (ATTP)

Members will recall that the Scottish Government is increasing its investment in active travel to 10% of Transport Scotland's annual budget from 2024/2025, circa £320m, and had established the ATTP to ensure the right mechanisms were in place to ensure efficient and effective delivery of projects arising from that funding. The conclusions of the ATTP are awaited, and SPT is in regular dialogue with COSLA and Transport Scotland in this regard and will keep members updated on progress.

### 3.2.5 Regional Transport Strategy

Following a series of member information sessions held between January and March, the final draft RTS was approved by the Partnership in March, and it was subsequently submitted to Scottish Ministers for approval. Transport Scotland officials have since advised that the RTS has been circulated to relevant departments in TS for comment, and at the time of writing, these remain awaited. In the meantime, officers continue with relevant workstreams including development of the RTS Delivery Plan and initial scoping in relation to the RTS Governance workstream.

### 3.2.6 Bus Partnership Fund Network Study

Further to previous updates, SPT continues to work with Glasgow City Council and partners to develop a bus network plan for the city and a strategic bus network plan for the wider region as part of the process to secure future funding from Transport Scotland's Bus Partnership Fund. Members of the Glasgow Bus Partnership are engaged in the process. The outputs of this work will be integrated with the Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy process as appropriate – the SRBS is the subject of a separate report to this Committee.

### 3.2.7 Regional Transport Climate Resilience Group (RTCRCG) Workshop

As members are aware, SPT and Network Rail are the lead partners for the Regional Transport Climate Resilience Group (RTCRCG), bringing together transport partners including Transport Scotland, ScotRail, Confederation of Passenger Transport, CalMac and Sustrans to promote climate adaptation and resilience in the Strathclyde transport sector.

To support this work, SPT and Network Rail jointly chaired a workshop in early May 2023 considering best practice, information sharing and opportunities for joint working. Partners found the workshop helpful in disseminating resources, identifying areas for further work and sharing experience of practice to date. In particular, opportunities for common approaches to climate risk screening and capability will be further explored. The RTCRCG will consider the findings of the

workshop in more detail at its next meeting and officers will keep the Committee updated on progress.

### 3.3 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 developing RTS, Local Transport Strategies, delivery of projects from SPT's capital programme as well as undertaking liaison with relevant organisations in relation to other issues.

## 4. Committee action

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

## 5. Consequences

Policy consequences	<i>All workstreams noted in this report should be in line with the policies of the new Regional Transport Strategy and help achieve its targets.</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>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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