



Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy – Progress Update

Date of meeting 6 September 2024

Date of report 28 August 2024

Report by Head of Policy and Planning

1. Object of report

The object of this report is to:

- Update the Committee on progress in the development of the Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy (SRBS);
- Provide an update on the consultation on the Recommended Options for the SRBS;
- Recommend approval of proposed actions following the consultation; and
- Provide an update on the next steps for delivery of the final draft SRBS for public consultation.

2. Background to report

Members will recall previous reports to the Committee in November 2022¹ and June 2023² regarding development of the SRBS, the need for which was identified through work undertaken in development of the new Regional Transport Strategy (RTS), including the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 Scoping Option Assessment Study³.

Members will further recall that the first stage in developing the SRBS was to prepare a Case for Change, the initial findings of which were reported to the Partnership in September 2023⁴, with the full report being circulated to Partnership members and published on the SRBS page⁵ of the SPT website in late 2023⁶. The SRBS Case for Change consolidated and updated the evidence base for issues facing bus in the region, drawing upon work already carried out in the development of the RTS, as well as updated transport datasets and engagement with local authorities and bus operators carried out during August and September 2023.

Following a progress update to the Partnership in December 2023⁷, a report seeking approval to undertake a public consultation relating to the SRBS Options Development and Appraisal stage was approved by the Partnership in March 2024⁸. A report on the initial findings of that consultation was presented to the Partnership in June 2024⁹.

¹ https://www.spt.co.uk/media/zqsayayn/sp251122_agenda8.pdf

² https://www.spt.co.uk/media/gr3hd3gj/sp090623_agenda7.pdf

³ Section 3.3 and Appendix 2, https://www.spt.co.uk/media/vh5prl5y/sp180222_agenda11.pdf

⁴ https://www.spt.co.uk/media/4eapnkmz/p290923_agenda8.pdf

⁵ <https://www.spt.co.uk/about-us/what-we-are-doing/regional-transport-strategy/bus-strategy/>

⁶ <https://www.spt.co.uk/media/2wrkfd2o/srbs-case-for-change.pdf>

⁷ https://www.spt.co.uk/media/3wdb2fxa/p151223_agenda7.pdf

⁸ https://www.spt.co.uk/media/5jcfkngz/p150324_agenda9.pdf

⁹ https://spt.production.d8.studio/media/m5thqupj/p280624_agenda9.pdf

Members will recall that the consultation sought views on which of the Recommendations should be taken forward into the development of the final draft SRBS which will also be subject to public consultation. Having considered responses received from individuals and organisations, the following section sets out proposed actions following the consultation.

3. Outline of proposals

(i) Report on the consultation

A detailed report on the results of the consultation by SPT’s consultant SYSTRA is attached at Appendix 1. The report sets out the consultation methodology, responses, and feedback received on each of the Recommendations, and is an accurate summary of the consultation and responses received.

(ii) Response to consultation and next steps

The table below sets out SPT’s response to the consultation feedback and proposed actions following the consultation:

“Recommendation” as presented for the consultation	SPT response to consultation feedback	Proposed actions
<i>“Business As Usual and Voluntary Partnerships should be ruled out as means to deliver a better bus network as more radical intervention is required.”</i>	The consultation feedback was generally supportive of this recommendation. Having considered responses received from individuals and organisations, no points were identified that would require a change to the recommendation at this time.	The recommendation will be retained unchanged for development for the final draft SRBS for consultation. However, SPT will continue to support existing voluntary partnership arrangements in the immediate future.
<i>“SPT should commence work on franchising, in line with the requirements of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019.”</i>	The consultation feedback was generally supportive of this recommendation. Having considered responses received from individuals and organisations, no points were identified that would require a change to the recommendation at this time.	The recommendation on franchising will be retained unchanged for development for the final draft SRBS for public consultation. The franchise option will be further developed particularly the process route map to take forward the franchise assessment in line with emerging statutory guidance. This will include discussions with partners on funding for the franchise development process.
<i>“SPT will consider developing business case(s) for small-scale municipal bus company(ies) aimed at providing socially</i>	The consultation feedback was generally supportive of this recommendation. Having considered responses received from individuals and	The recommendation will be retained unchanged for development for the final draft SRBS for consultation.

<p><i>necessary services in parts of the region where private operators are currently very limited.”</i></p>	<p>organisations, no points were identified that would require a change to the recommendation at this time.</p>	
<p><i>“SPT should progress with Bus Service Improvement Partnership (BSIP) arrangements to provide a firm basis for private and public sector commitments to arrest further passenger decline and improve the bus network over the medium term.”</i></p>	<p>The consultation feedback on this recommendation was mixed in terms of support for and opposition to it. Acknowledging this, and that it may be challenging to deliver BSIP as an interim measure within a wider framework that aims to develop franchising, SPT believes the recommendation should be amended.</p>	<p>The recommendation will be amended to read: <i>“SPT, and our partners, should progress with the necessary transition arrangements appropriate (e.g. time-limited, voluntary partnerships or other agreements aimed at improving the bus network) to provide a structured basis for private and public sector collaboration in attempting to arrest further passenger decline and stabilise the bus network in the pre-franchising period.”</i></p> <p>SPT will develop the detail of the “necessary transition arrangements appropriate” as the final draft SRBS for public consultation is developed and finalised. SPT has engagement planned with stakeholders over coming months.</p>

It is important to emphasise that all responses to the consultation have been considered and informed the proposed actions noted in the table above. Responses identified not just whether there was stakeholder support to the options considered but also included positive suggestions for consideration as the strategy is further developed. Further, the responses will also serve to add to, update and inform the evidence base, analysis and development work to be undertaken in preparing the final draft SRBS for public consultation. It is also worth highlighting, as referenced in section 7.4 of the report at Appendix 1, that some respondents commented on the consultation process, and officers will take these points into account in preparing for the public consultation on the final draft SRBS.

This is particularly important given the Judicial Review of the consultation process which Partnership members were recently made aware of, the Judicial Review being a matter of public record. It is important for members to note that litigation, and that consideration has been and will be given to the consultation responses, including the objections of the organisation pursuing the litigation. Members have received a separate briefing on the petition and should have cognisance of this when making decisions.

It is also worth emphasising that Partnership members have as much background and information available to them to make informed decisions about the SRBS and, to that end, a full, appropriately redacted, list of all consultation responses was circulated to

members in advance of this meeting and will be made publicly available on the SRBS page of the SPT website following this meeting.

Within the above context therefore, SPT's position and proposed actions following the consultation are as noted in the table above and, subject to approval by this Committee, the final draft SRBS for public consultation will be developed based on those proposed actions.

It is worth stressing the importance of SPT continuing to press Transport Scotland to re-commence the Bus Partnership Fund, which was 'paused' during 2024-2025. Successful delivery of any future delivery model will also require on-street bus priority measures to support bus as a viable and attractive mode.

(iii) Next steps

SPT has sought to take an inclusive and transparent approach through the early stages of SRBS development, acknowledging the wide range of stakeholders affected by the outcomes from it: councils, operators, business organisations, other sectors and, above all, the people and communities of the west of Scotland. For example, our approach led to the recent consultation on the Recommendations being added to the SRBS programme during the option development stage to accommodate the very large number of stakeholders whom it had become apparent wished to participate in and have their views heard in the SRBS development process and indeed, this was borne out in the resultant scale of response to the consultation. Further, and continuing to align with the inclusive and transparent approach adopted, the public consultation on the final draft SRBS will run for twelve weeks during early 2025.

It is important to emphasise that the public consultation will cover the whole of the SRBS, ensuring respondents have the opportunity to offer their views or suggest alternative approaches on all elements of the final draft SRBS, given its significance and potential impact.

In light of the above, the final SRBS will be presented to the Partnership following the twelve-week public consultation noted above, and any adjustments made to the strategy arising from the consultation. Further details on the dates for the public consultation will be presented to the Committee in November.

4. Committee action

The Committee is recommended to:

- (i) Note the content of this report;
- (ii) Note the report on the consultation on the Recommendations for the SRBS attached at Appendix 1;
- (iii) Approve the proposed actions contained in section 3(ii); and
- (iv) Note the next steps in section 3(iii).

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 for the SRBS.</i>
Risk consequences	<i>None at present.</i>
Climate Change, Adaptation & Carbon consequences	<i>A Strategic Environmental Assessment is being carried out for the SRBS.</i>

Name	Bruce Kiloh	Name	Valerie Davidson
Title	Head of Policy & Planning	Title	Chief Executive

For further information, please contact *Bruce Kiloh, Head of Policy and Planning on 0141 333 3740 or Gordon Dickson, Head of Bus Strategy and Delivery on 0141 333 3407.*