



Strategic Issues Update for the SPT area

Date of meeting 23 February 2024

Date of report 13 February 2024

Report by Head of Policy and Planning

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 wide 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 November 2023¹, efforts to grow public transport patronage continue. Subway patronage continues to perform well and has settled at around 100% of pre-pandemic levels, and SPT's supported bus services are now 4% up on pre-pandemic 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.

3.2 National

3.2.1 Transport (Scotland) Act 2019

Further to the update to the previous Committee, on 29 January 2024, Transport Scotland (TS) published an overview of powers available to Local Transport Authorities from the Act. Officers are in the process of reviewing this document in terms of any implications for SPT and the Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy (SRBS) workstream.

In late January, TS also wrote to SPT and councils in relation to a transfer order to allow SPT to formally take over the Local Transport Authority status of its previous incarnation, Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority (SPTA), thereby facilitating the potential use of the 2019 Act powers by SPT. TS has requested a response to the proposed transfer order by 4 March 2024 and SPT has contacted councils to clarify the implications of the transfer order and to ensure support.

¹ https://www.spt.co.uk/media/noynf555/sp241123_agenda7.pdf

3.2.2 Active Travel Funding

As part of the Scottish Government's budget in December 2023, funding for active travel (walking, wheeling and cycling) projects and initiatives in Scotland in 2024/2025 was increased by £31m to £220m. In support of this, TS launched the Active Travel Infrastructure Fund in late December for 'shovel-ready' projects to be delivered in 2024/2025. SPT is in the process of preparing a bid for that funding for active travel infrastructure improvements at Subway and bus stations.

TS also contacted SPT and the other Regional Transport Partnerships regarding potential funding for behaviour change and access to bikes initiatives and officers have been working with TS, council and third-sector organisations in relation to potential utilisation of such funding in 2024/2025. Confirmation of these arrangements is expected in March 2024 and officers will keep members updated as matters progress.

3.2.3 Rail update

Fare increases of 8.7% on all rail ticket types will be implemented from April 2024 although it should be noted that this increase will not be applied at this time to rail journeys made under the Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme.

TS's "off-peak fare all day" pilot has been extended from the end of March to the end of June 2024. Analysis of any emerging changed travel patterns or passenger numbers as a result of the pilot are yet to be published. Furthermore, Transport Scotland has advised that the publication of the Fair Fares Review has been delayed from the end of 2023 to later in 2024.

Officers continue to engage with ScotRail in relation to timetable changes, including those Ayrshire and Inverclyde services from June 2024, although the outcome of these consultations and any final decision on service levels has yet to be made public. SPT is also in the process of responding to a consultation by LNER trains as regards long distance through services and connectivity between Glasgow and Motherwell to/from the East Coast Mainline services at Edinburgh.

SPT continues to input into the electrification of the East Kilbride rail line project, following on from the completion of the electrification of the Barrhead Line. Officers also continue to engage with South Lanarkshire Council and rail industry partners in relation to the Hairmyres station relocation project.

3.3 Regional

3.3.1 SPT Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan

Further to the previous update, work has now completed on carbon footprinting analysis, and a new baseline (April 2022-March 2023) and carbon emissions from all scopes (Scope 1, Scope 2, and Scope 3 emissions) have been calculated. The new operational emission boundary has been expanded in line with industry-leading practice which incorporates additional Scope 3 emissions to consider the full impact of SPTs operations and services. A 'net-zero pathway' and net zero action plan for the Climate Change Strategy has been developed based on SPT's emission hotspots, which details the actions we need to take to reach our 2030 and 2045 carbon emission reduction targets. Preparation of a final Strategy document is underway, on schedule for submission to the Partnership for approval in March 2024.

3.3.2 Zonecard Update

SPT is continuing to work with the ZoneCard participating operators to progress modernisation of the ZoneCard ticketing arrangement. As part of this ZoneCard tickets will be available to customers in a smartcard format offering improved convenience and security. A wider and more flexible range of ticket choices will also be made available, and the existing Zone structure will be simplified to just seven Zones. The software and systems are currently undergoing extensive testing and smart ZoneCard tickets are planned to be in customer use by June 2024. A full report on the project will be brought to Partnership later this year.

3.3.3 Regional Transport Strategy Transport Governance Workstream

Further to the approval by the Partnership in December 2023, officers have begun the process to deliver this workstream. A members engagement session was held on 2 February and following that, a letter was sent from the SPT Chair to council leaders and chief executives seeking their initial views and outlining the proposed establishment of a SPT-Councils working group. Officers are analysing responses to the Chairs letter as they come in and will continue to keep members updated on progress of this workstream.

3.3.4 Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy (SRBS)

Members will recall the update to the Partnership in December 2023 on the SRBS and work continues as planned to complete the options development and appraisal stage, with the recommended option(s) on track to be presented to the Partnership in March 2024. Arrangements for the proposed public consultation on the approved recommended option(s) are in the process of development, with a view to this occurring over April to May 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 Regional Transport Strategy, 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	<i>All workstreams noted in this report are in line with the policies of the new Regional Transport Strategy.</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

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.

Name Bruce Kiloh

Title **Head of Policy & Planning**

Name Valerie Davidson

Title **Chief Executive**

For further information, please contact *Bruce Kiloh, Head of Policy & Planning* at bruce.kiloh@spt.co.uk.