

## Regional Transport Strategy – progress update

**Committee** Strategy & Programmes

**Date of meeting** 20 November 2020

**Date of report** 20 October 2020

### Report by Chief Executive

#### 1. Object of report

The object of this report is to update the Committee on the revised methodology and programme for development of the new Regional Transport Strategy (RTS).

#### 2. Background

As members are aware, preparation of the RTS is a statutory responsibility of SPT as specified in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005. Further to earlier reports to the Committee<sup>1</sup> and the presentation to the Partnership in September, members will recall that the onset of the COVID19 pandemic necessitated the RTS development process to, in effect, pause in order to consider and understand how best to take into account COVID19-related implications for transport and travel behaviours, and to re-align with national transport processes which were similarly affected by the pandemic.

#### 3. Update

##### 3.1 Completion of Stage 1: Key Issues and Objectives

A range of options were explored to determine the most appropriate way forward in light of the Stage 1: Key Issues and Objectives public consultation not being undertaken earlier this year as a result of the pandemic. The approach adopted is that the Stage 1 consultation will be consolidated with the Stage 2: Options public consultation, and the original Key Issues and Objectives report will be amended to a 'Case for Change' report – standard terminology applicable when using the STAG process - which will include updated Key Issues, vision, objectives, outcomes and initial options for interventions. This ensures that all key elements of the first stages of the RTS development process will be consulted upon. More detail on this is provided in section 3.3.

##### 3.2 Methodology Review

A review of the RTS development methodology was carried out over the summer. This considered the implications of the COVID19 pandemic on transport trends and behaviours, the RTS development programme and the appropriateness of traditional

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<sup>1</sup> Section 3.2.1, [http://www.spt.co.uk/documents/latest/SP280820\\_Agenda8.pdf](http://www.spt.co.uk/documents/latest/SP280820_Agenda8.pdf)

appraisal techniques and tools. The options which emerged from that process are outlined below, along with commentary on their suitability:

- **Option 1 – Continue with planned methodology as agreed pre-COVID19**

The methodology as originally planned was based upon accepted professional practice, which lends itself to a robust appraisal under typical circumstances. That methodology was developed based upon a fixed understanding of the parameters of conventional travel demand, but questions of appropriateness could now be raised of these methods given current uncertainties caused by COVID19, both in terms of future travel patterns and the ability of conventional modelling and appraisal techniques to represent an ever-changing scenario.

- **Option 2 – Review and refine the current methodology, taking further cognisance of uncertainties**

This option uses the planned methodology as the starting point, but builds in method revisions to specifically identify and address key uncertainties that may arise or intensify due to impacts of COVID19, while taking account of updated approaches and programmes for national transport processes.

- **Option 3 – Pause development of the RTS for a period of time until more normal travel and demand patterns resume**

This option would halt all strategy development until such time as there is a return to some form of normal, or a 'new normal' is understood. This option would mean that the RTS would be out of step with national and local policy and strategy development processes, and it would be challenging to specify when the strategy development could restart.

- **Option 4 – Reposition the RTS as a high-level framework, working to strategic-level outcomes**

Pursuing this option would remove from the strategy development process the ability to create specific targets, policies and schemes. This means the RTS would not provide further development of policies set out within the new National Transport Strategy (NTS), nor link closely or be complementary to the interventions identified within the Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2).

Option 2 was selected as the most rational approach as it allows the RTS to continue to be developed with alignment to national processes, whilst taking cognisance of the challenges presented by COVID19 to traditional transport planning processes, thereby seeking to ensure the final strategy will be effective and robust.

### 3.3 Revised and updated workplan and programme

Further to the previous section, the following provides an outline of the remaining processes requiring to be undertaken to deliver the new RTS.

#### 3.3.1 Update Key Issues

The Key Issues are being updated with new/additional evidence where available including an updated RTS policy review, to be included in the new 'Case for Change' report noted above, the main content of which will now comprise:

- Updated Context chapter including COVID-related impacts and potential implications;

- Transport problems and opportunities arranged thematically under 5 main Key Issues – Emissions, Access for All, Regional Connectivity, Active Living and Public Transport Quality and Integration;
- Updated section on Technology and Innovation;
- Updated section on Roles and Responsibilities;
- New section on funding for transport; and
- Draft RTS framework incorporating vision, targets, objectives and initial options.

### 3.3.2 Revise and update RTS vision, objectives, outcomes, targets and option appraisal framework

After review, the draft RTS vision and outcomes developed in 2019 have been retained as they were considered sufficiently strategic, high-level and long-term, and provide consistency between pre- and post-COVID19 scenarios.

The previously developed objectives were, in line with guidance (STAG<sup>2</sup>), refined and “SMARTened” prior to commencing with the Stage 2: Options process.

Two strategic targets are also being developed for the strategy. The first target aims to align the RTS to the national statutory climate change targets, with the aim of providing a regional pathway for net zero particularly in relation to roads transport emissions. The second target will provide a broad quantification for modal shift to more sustainable modes, required to support the collective achievement of the strategy objectives. The specific targets continue to be developed and will be consulted upon in future.

A set of appraisal metrics have been developed for each objective. The appraisal metrics have been developed based upon the sub-issues associated with the Key Issues of Emissions, Access for All, Regional Connectivity, Active Living and Public Transport Quality & Integration. Each option will be assessed using the appraisal metrics for its contribution towards delivering the strategy objectives, using a mix of analytical tools, narrative and case studies. This will be combined with appraisal against the five STAG criteria to enable a robust assessment of each option (or package of options) to be undertaken in line with the requirements of STAG.

### 3.3.3 Option generation, development and sifting

A structured option generation and development process will be carried out from November 2020. A full range of options will be developed under each thematic Key Issue. The option generation process will be informed by a range of sources including regional or local options sifted from the STPR2 process, policy review, project team workshop and discussion with partners. There have been significant option generation processes carried out in the region over the past 18 months within work undertaken by partners, so SPT intends to focus engagement activities on developing specific options. This approach will best integrate with STPR2 Phase 1 (see section 3.5 of this report), which is also focusing on option development over the next few months.

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<sup>2</sup> Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance - <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/41507/j9760.pdf>

It is also worth highlighting that Transport Scotland has advised that regulations and guidance in relation to the provisions of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 will be developed over late 2020 / early 2021 (in tandem with the Bus Partnership Fund bid process), and the outcomes of this will be taken into account in development of the RTS.

#### 3.3.4 Option Appraisal

The objectives and appraisal metrics, as set out above, will provide the framework for the option appraisal against the transport planning objectives and STAG criteria, although the need for additional analytical tools which may be required in this regard is currently being scoped.

The appraisal will be developed in the context of a number of external scenarios which aim to incorporate societal trends, technological change and possible structural impacts of COVID19 among other key factors. The main purpose of this is to undertake sensitivity testing to identify and understand risks in relation to options based on different external scenarios to avoid pursuing a course of action which will be undermined or made redundant by wider changes in society and the economy.

SPT has commissioned work being carried out by the appointed consultants for the RTS (Stantec) to understand the implications of COVID19 on the use of traditional appraisal tools, including the Strathclyde Regional Transport Model. This commission includes engagement with experts in appraisal and transport modelling in Scotland and is due to conclude shortly before this committee meets. The outputs from this will inform the detailed appraisal methodology. At the same time, the consultants are investigating the development of other unique analytical tools for the RTS that could provide a proportionate approach for the strategy.

#### 3.3.5 Statutory Assessments

The RTS process initially proposed an integrated assessment to incorporate Equality Impact Assessment, Fairer Scotland Duty, Island Rights Assessment and Childs Rights Assessment. SPT has taken advice on this approach, including incorporating experience and practice from the National Transport Strategy development process, and now will be carrying out individual assessments for the final strategy. However, as originally planned, an integrated interim Equalities Report is being prepared and will be available for consultation at the end of the Options stage. This report will provide commentary on key equality matters in the strategy development outputs to date, and, importantly, advise on the need for amendments or mitigations before the appraisal stage commences.

### 3.4 Consultation

As noted earlier in this report, the planned public consultation at the end of the Key Issues and Objectives stage will now be incorporated into one consultation incorporating this and the outputs from the Options stage. As planned, in addition, there will be a further public consultation on the final draft strategy. It is anticipated that both consultations may need to be fully virtual, and ways to improve accessibility are being explored including drawing upon experiences of other consultations that are underway this year.

### 3.5 RTS Programme Update

Core to the development of the RTS has been ensuring that other key plans and strategies, particularly STPR2, are taken into account. Transport Scotland has advised that the STPR2 process has, in light of COVID19, now been amended to be delivered over two phases. Phase 1 will now report at the end of 2020 and will set out options to be delivered over next 2-3 years with a focus on locking in beneficial travel behaviour changes due to COVID19 and supporting economic recovery. Phase 2 will report towards end of 2021 and will incorporate the longer term strategic investment packages as per original scope.

At the same time, the National Transport Strategy Delivery Plan is being developed by Transport Scotland in partnership with stakeholders, including RTPs. Transport Scotland has advised that a specific document outlining how the NTS will be delivered through 'working with partners' will be published early in 2021.

It is important to highlight that aligning with the new timelines for STPR2 and the NTS Delivery Plan, and taking account of the impacts of COVID19, means that the new RTS programme will now complete in early 2022. However, opportunities to refine timelines for public consultation will be considered which balance the essential need for community involvement in RTS development with delivery of the new RTS in a timely manner.

SPT believes that this extension to the programme is essential so that the RTS continues to align with the plans of key partners, account for the impacts of COVID19 as far as practicable, and has involvement and buy-in from the people and communities of the west of Scotland.

*Diagram 1: Updated RTS Timeline*



### 3.6 Extension of current RTS Delivery Plan

Members will recall that at its meeting of 22 June 2018, the Partnership approved the RTS Delivery Plan 2018/19-2020/21<sup>3</sup>. Given the events of 2020 and the plans and proposals being developed by partners over the next year, it is proposed that the current RTS Delivery Plan is extended to cover 2021-2022. Officers will review and update the plan to take account of this extension and this will be brought to the Strategy and Programmes committee in early 2021 for approval.

### 3.7 Strategy Development – Groups and Governance

This section provides an update on those bodies or groups involved in the development of the RTS:

- SPT Partnership and RTS Board – there will be a report to the Partnership in March 2021 setting out the content and plans for the public consultation on the “Case for Change” (Key Issues, vision, objectives, outcomes and options). The RTS Board will be reconvened over the coming months to discuss the developing options and alignment with partner’s strategies.

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.spt.co.uk/documents/latest/rtp220618\\_agenda9.pdf](http://www.spt.co.uk/documents/latest/rtp220618_agenda9.pdf)

- Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) – SPT officers have been meeting with the Chair of the SAG, Professor Iain Docherty, who has prepared a report on COVID impacts on transport and the content of this is being incorporated into the updated Key Issues; the SAG will be reconvened for an options development workshop during the Options stage.
- SPT/Councils working group – the group met in September and will continue to meet thereon as per usual 6-weekly schedule.

#### 4. Conclusions

The impacts on society of the COVID19 pandemic continue to have significant repercussions for the people and communities of the west of Scotland, and their full extent in the long-term naturally remains uncertain at this stage. As with other partners, it is appropriate that SPT seeks to take account as best as possible, and acknowledging their evolving nature, of the impacts of COVID19 in key workstreams. SPT believes it is essential for the credibility of the new RTS, which will guide transport in the region for the next 15-20 years, that the process for its development reflects and responds to the crisis in a way which gives it the credence it deserves, while also ensuring that public involvement continues to be at its heart. Further, focus must be retained on the strategic issues which still hold true despite the pandemic. The updated methodology and programme for the new RTS seeks to reflect this and officers will continue to keep the Committee updated as work progresses.

#### 5. Committee action

The Committee is recommended to note the contents of this report, including the revised methodology and preferred “Option 2” in section 3.2, and revised programme for development of the new RTS.

#### 6. Consequences

Policy consequences	<i>The new RTS will be the key statutory transport strategy for the west of Scotland for the next 15-20 years.</i>
Legal consequences	<i>Preparation of the RTS is a statutory responsibility of SPT as specified in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005.</i>
Financial consequences	<i>Within existing budgets.</i>
Personnel consequences	<i>None at present.</i>
Equalities consequences	<i>None at present.</i>
Risk consequences	<i>None at present.</i>

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