



## Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy – progress update

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**Date of meeting** 28 June 2024

**Date of report** 19 June 2024

**Report by Head of Policy & Planning**

### 1. Object of report

To update the Partnership on the development of the Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy (SRBS) including a summary of responses to the recent consultation on recommended options for improving the bus network.

### 2. Background to report

The report<sup>1</sup> to the previous Partnership meeting in March sought approval to consult on the recommended options arising from the Options Development and Appraisal stage of development of the SRBS. A summary of the recommended options is provided below for information:

- **Recommendation 1: Franchising**

SPT should commence work on franchising, in line with the requirements of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019.

- **Recommendation 2: Bus Service Improvement Partnerships**

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.

- **Recommendation 3: Municipal Bus Company**

As and when it may be required, SPT will consider developing business case(s) for small-scale municipal bus company(ies) aimed at providing socially necessary services in parts of the region where private operators are currently very limited.

- **Recommendation 4: Bus Partnership Fund**

SPT should continue working with local authorities, Transport Scotland and bus operators to continue delivery through the Bus Partnership Fund.

- **Recommendation 5: Business As Usual and Voluntary Partnerships**

Business As Usual and Voluntary Partnerships should be ruled out as means to deliver a better bus network as more radical intervention as required.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.spt.co.uk/media/5jcfkngz/p150324\\_agenda9.pdf](https://www.spt.co.uk/media/5jcfkngz/p150324_agenda9.pdf)

The purpose of the consultation was to understand the extent of support or opposition to the recommendations, and to allow SPT to consider if amendments to our approach should be made before the draft strategy is developed. Members are reminded that there will be a further public consultation on the final draft strategy later in the process.

While the outcomes of the Options Development and Appraisal stage is a key decision-point in the SRBS development process, there remain further Work Packages (WP) before the SRBS is complete:

- WP1 - Case for Change – complete
- WP2 - Options Development and Appraisal – current stage
- WP3 - Strategy Development & Consultation – next stage
- WP4 - Finalise Strategy & Delivery Plan – to be completed following WP3
- WP5 - Strategic Business Case – to be completed following WP4

This report provides a summary of responses to the consultation on the recommended options from the Options Development and Appraisal stage and an update on next steps in the development of the SRBS. A more detailed report on the results of the consultation and their impact on the SRBS will be presented to the Partnership in September.

### 3. Update

#### (i) Consultation timescales and stakeholder communication

The consultation on the recommended options to improve the future bus network was launched on Tuesday 2 April 2024 for a 6-week period. The consultation was promoted to partners and stakeholders through a variety of channels including:

- Press releases;
- SPT website;
- SPT social media;
- Stakeholder emails; and
- Briefing sessions with MPs/MSPs, Council leaders and Council Chief Executives.

#### (ii) Consultation response levels

SPT received 3,021 responses to the consultation questionnaire with 2,964, or 98%, of responses provided by individuals and 57, or 2%, of responses provided by organisations. Table 1 provides further details.

**Table 1: Level of response to consultation questionnaire**

Respondent type	Number of responses	%
Individual	2,964	98%
Organisation	57	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,021</b>	<b>100%</b>

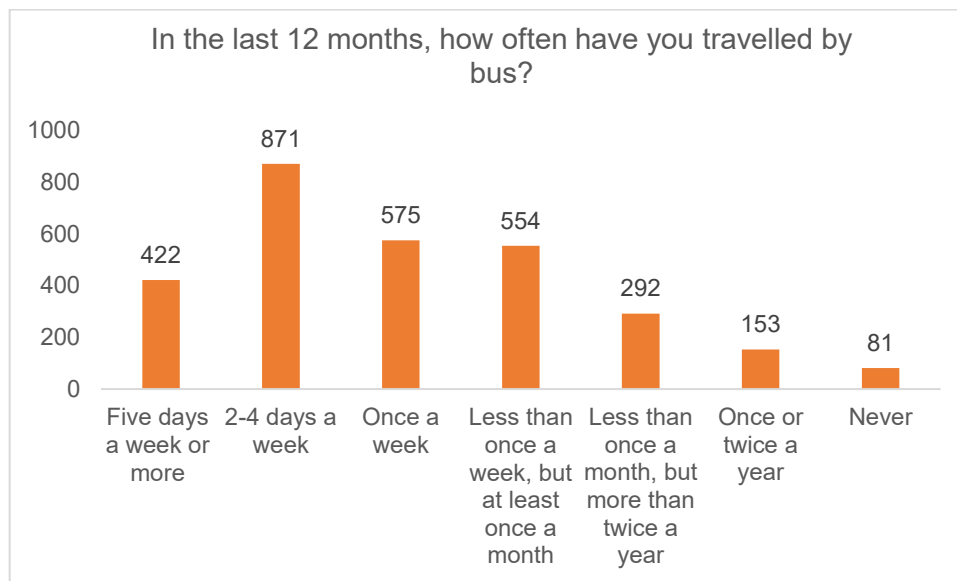
In addition, 14 interviews and 4 multi-stakeholder sessions were held where respondents could provide detailed views on the consultation. Seven organisations also provided a written response to the consultation that were in a different format to the consultation questionnaire.

(iii) Characteristics of survey respondents

Individual respondents to the consultation were asked to answer a few questions about themselves including frequency of travelling by bus, access to private transport and area of residence. This information helps SPT to understand if views differ by geographic or travel behaviour characteristics, and if the consultation has captured a range of views from people with different experiences or circumstances.

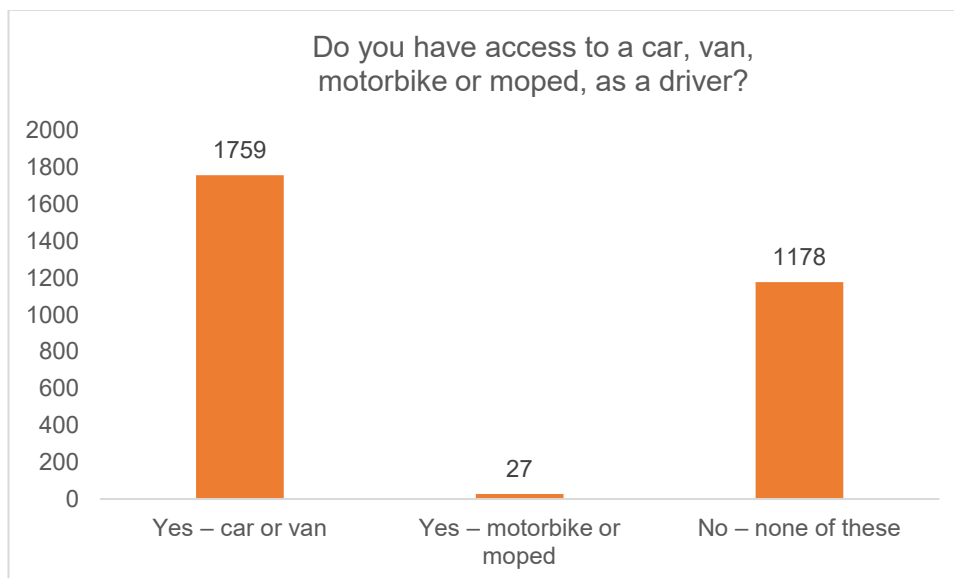
Nearly two-thirds, or 63%, of respondents travel by bus at least once a week and more than four out of five, or 82%, travel by bus at least once a month. Only 81, or 3%, of individual respondents stated that they never travel by bus. Figure 1 provides further details. The consultation respondents have a much higher frequency of bus use than the general population of the SPT area, where about one in every 3 residents (or 36%) use a bus about at least once a month.

**Figure 1: Number of respondents by frequency of bus use**



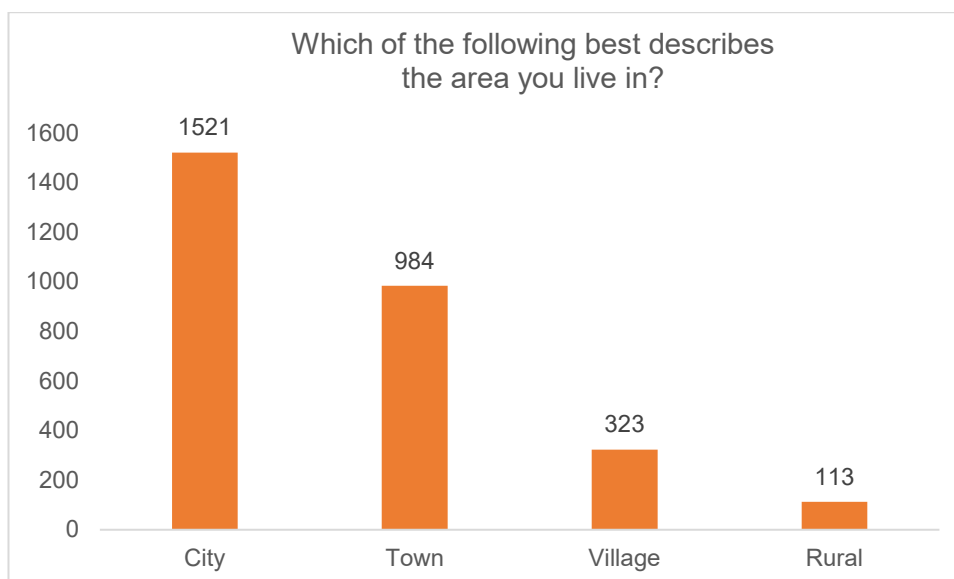
About three in every 5 respondents (60%) have access to a car, van, motorbike or moped as a driver, while 40% do not have access to private transport as a driver. Figure 2 provides further details. This is broadly in line with the population of the SPT area, where about two-thirds (65%) of the adult population drive at least a few times per month.

**Figure 2: Number of respondents by access to private transport**



A large majority of respondents (85%) live in a city or town, about one in ten (11%) live in a village and 4% live in a rural area. Figure 3 provides further details. These results are broadly in line with the population of the SPT area, where about 83% of residents live in an urban area and 17% of residents live in a small town, rural or remote area.

**Figure 3: Number of respondents by area of residence**



(iv) Responses to the 'closed' questions only (preliminary results)

The consultation questionnaire consisted of 'closed' (where respondents are required to give a definitive answer) and 'open' questions (where respondents can provide a more detailed response in the form of a written answer). The results of the 'closed' questions are shown in Table 2 (individual responses) and Table 3 (organisational responses). Please note that Tables 2 and 3 should be treated as preliminary results until the final consultation report is presented later in the year.

**Table 2: Level of support and opposition for each recommended option – individual responses to ‘closed’ questions (preliminary results)**

Recommended Option (summarised)	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Neither support nor oppose	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	Don't Know
Rule out Business as Usual	76%	4%	2%	2%	15%	1%
Rule out Voluntary Partnership	61%	9%	6%	5%	17%	2%
Take forward BSIP	28%	15%	5%	5%	46%	2%
Take forward Franchise	63%	13%	4%	4%	14%	1%
Take forward Municipal Bus	75%	11%	4%	2%	6%	1%

**Table 3: Level of support and opposition for each option recommendation – organisational responses to ‘closed’ questions (preliminary results)**

Recommended Option (summarised)	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Neither support nor oppose	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	Don't Know
Rule out Business as Usual	70%	4%	5%	5%	16%	0%
Rule out Voluntary Partnership	51%	11%	7%	9%	19%	4%
Take forward BSIP	30%	18%	11%	7%	30%	4%
Take forward franchise	61%	11%	7%	9%	11%	2%
Take forward Municipal Bus	58%	18%	5%	7%	12%	0%

(v) Analysis of ‘open’ questions

Analysis of written responses to the ‘open’ questions is currently being carried out and further on the results of that will be included in the final consultation report.

(vi) Petition

In addition to the consultation questionnaire, a petition<sup>2</sup> calling for the use of the Transport Act powers was submitted to SPT in February 2024, and re-submitted at the end of the consultation period. The petition will be taken into account in the consultation findings.

(vii) Conclusions and Next Steps

The scale of response to the consultation was very high, reflecting the importance of bus to many people, communities and organisations across the west of Scotland. Overall, at this early stage and on a preliminary basis until the results are analysed in detail, there was widespread support for the recommended options, with only the Bus Service Improvements Partnership (BSIP) recommended option causing differences of opinion.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.megaphone.org.uk/petitions/take-strathclyde-s-buses-back-into-public-control>

The consultation report will be presented to the Partnership in September, alongside a progress update on the SRBS as a whole. In the meantime, work on the strategy development will continue to progress over the summer. This includes refinement of the strategy policies, measures and network plans.

It is worth highlighting that the SRBS microsite on the SPT webpage remains available with all available documentation, to ensure clarity and transparency on the development process:

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

#### 4. Partnership action

The Partnership is recommended to note the content of this report.

#### 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 out as part of the SRBS development process.</i>
Risk consequences	<i>None at present.</i>
Climate Change, Adaptation & Carbon consequences	<i>The SRBS aims to support the RTS targets for modal shift and align to RTS policies for decarbonisation of road transport.</i>

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