

SPT Communications Strategy 2020 – 2023

Committee Strategy and Programmes

Date of meeting 7 February 2020

Date of report 24 January 2020

Report by Assistant Chief Executive

1. Object of report

To provide the Strategy and Programmes Committee with a copy of the SPT Communications Strategy for 2020 – 2023 and, following consideration, request that the Committee recommend the strategy to the Partnership.

2. Background

Good communication requires to be at the heart of any open, transparent and responsive organisation. SPT will communicate effectively and engage openly both internally and externally.

The aim of this strategy is to ensure our future activity is focused and effective and sets out how we aim to communicate with our audience, everyone from the public and media, partners and transport operators to key stakeholders and our staff.

3. Current Position

In recent years, there has been a marked change in the communications approach utilised by organisations worldwide with the rapid development of the digital communications era. The Communications Strategy reflects this and responds to the changing way in which we now inform and engage with our audience.

While new digital communications leads much of our proactive communications, we do still actively engage with more traditional media but now in a much more targeted way to promote SPT and the key role it plays in the transport network. We also continue to respond to media enquiries in a timely manner to ensure SPT's reputation is maintained, protected and enhanced at all times.

Communications are important and how we do this is reflected in the work underway to update the Regional Transport Strategy, and the various operational activities undertaken to improve transport in the West of Scotland.

4. Recommendation

The Committee is asked to consider the attached Communications Strategy, and if appropriate recommend the adoption of the strategy to the Partnership.

5. Consequences

Policy consequences	<i>Supports implementation of SPT's policies.</i>
Legal consequences	<i>None directly.</i>
Financial consequences	<i>None directly.</i>
Personnel consequences	<i>None directly.</i>
Equalities consequences	<i>Supports SPT policies on diversity and equality.</i>
Risk consequences	<i>Aims to manage reputational risk.</i>

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Strathclyde Partnership for Transport
Communications Strategy
2020 - 2023



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Good communication is about getting the right message to the right person in the right medium at the right time.

Contents

INTRODUCTION	5.
WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO	6.
Media and Public Affairs.....	6.
Marketing	6.
OUR AUDIENCE.....	7.
GROWING THE AUDIENCE - SPT	8.
GROWING THE AUDIENCE - SUBWAY.....	9.
COMMUNICATIONS PRIORITIES 2020-2023	10
OVERALL	10.
Build SPT’s Corporate Reputation	10.
Subway Modernisation	11.
Grow Subway Patronage	11.
Customer Engagement	12.
CHANGING THE WAY WE WORK.....	13.
COMMUNICATION & ENGAGEMENT	14.
EVALAUTION.....	17.
APPENDIX 1: COMMUNICATIONS PRIORITIES 2020/2021	20.

Introduction

Good communication is at the heart of any open, transparent and responsive organisation. We are committed to insightful, creative and effective engagement with the public, with partners, with stakeholders and with our staff.

In an ever changing communications environment, it is vitally important that we demonstrate how we can adapt to the need and demands of all our audiences. Increasing knowledge of the audiences so we better understand their needs and interests is key but this must be supported by evidence, evaluation, and collaboration to ensure future development and success.

As an organisation, we must communicate effectively and engage openly both internally and externally. The aim of this strategy is to ensure our future work is focused and effective, while also meeting key corporate priorities and objectives.

This Communication Strategy aims to be an over-arching ambition for the organisation. Individual communication plans are devised as dictated by operational and organisational needs for specific issues as they arise or are planned for which may impact on the business and running of SPT.

The Strategy is designed to reflect changes in how people consume and access news, how people expect to get information from source and to be able to engage directly with us, and how we intend to respond to their expectations.

In addition to this corporate strategy, we also have a separate Crisis Communications plan which outlines the roles and responsibilities for key member staff during a crisis situation, and ensures SPT can effectively and quickly manage crisis communications.



Our Audience

Our audience is wide and varied and covers much more than just public or media and this is reflected in the development of a specific role to cover both media and public affairs for the organisation.

- Public – direct communications via digital / social media channels using Twitter, Facebook, Instagram
- Media – responding to direct media enquiries and engaging with them on specific announcements and news to ensure positive coverage. Ensuring the positive reputation of SPT is maintained and protected at all times.
- Local authorities – we work with 12 local authorities to deliver the Regional Transport Strategy, and to ensure socially necessary services are delivered across the West of Scotland. We effectively promote the arguments for improved transport links and how to achieve this.
- Other public sector bodies such as Transport Scotland, Regional Transport Partnerships, NHS and Universities and Colleges
- Community Planning Partnerships, where public bodies come together to improve outcomes in their local area, to promote investment in local bus services, park & ride, road safety investment, bus infrastructure improvements, new rail stations such as the recently opened Robroyston station, engagement on the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS), and MyBus services.
- Community Transport Groups
- Other transport operators across all modes of travel
- Active travel organisations
- Scottish Government / Transport Scotland
- Community Councils
- Third sector / voluntary sector
- Equality groups
- Specialist groups and professional / industry organisations eg Confederation of Passenger Transport, Urban Transport Group, Transport Focus, Bus Users Scotland.
- Last but by no means least! Internal – our staff



Growing the audience - SPT

SPT plays a key role in planning, coordinating and delivering transport in local communities across 12 Local Authority areas. It is responsible for the development and delivery of the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) and is at the heart of the region's transport planning, operations and infrastructure improvements. SPT responds to a range of consultations to influence and guide Scottish Government, and any future policy, on transport and related issues. SPT also responds to planning applications and helps to influence local and strategic development planning.

SPT also has a range of operational responsibilities including owning and operating the Subway, the management and operation of a number of key bus stations, as well as supporting socially necessary bus services and Community Transport (CT) services. It also co-ordinates school transport on behalf of 11 councils and delivers the MyBus demand responsive transport service.

SPT plays a role in encouraging a shift to more sustainable modes by investing in and promoting active travel, to encourage travel behaviour change, encourage car sharing, promote sustainable travel to work for employees, sharing best practice with our partners. We continue to look for opportunities to highlight and promote all these services, working with local press and community groups directly to ensure services are made available to those who need them, such as, working with groups who support older and disabled people to make them aware of the MyBus service.

By growing and developing direct links with stakeholder organisations, we are better able to develop specific messages for those groups and, importantly, extend our influence. These groups include but are not limited to local authorities, bus operators, equality groups, tourist boards, Glasgow Chamber of Commerce and others such as Glasgow City Marketing Bureau.

As an organisation, SPT continues to grow and develop links with various stakeholders, so it extends its influence and remains a key player in developing transport across the West of Scotland. Communications plays a key role in developing and supporting this work, including creating a better understanding of all the facets of SPT.

It is our intention to grow our Public Affairs engagement, attending conferences to demonstrate the value of a robust Regional Transport Strategy, SPT's role in making lives better through joined up, more integrated travel so everyone has the best possible access to work, education, health, leisure and other services. SPT will pursue high level stakeholder engagement with a wide variety of industry-based organisations, sharing and developing best practice.



Growing the audience – Subway

We actively look at ways to engage with third parties to create interest and awareness of SPT and our services. The Subway is a key transport service in Glasgow, unique to the city, it holds a particular interest and fascination for many people. It is a key transport link in the regions' network, carrying an estimated 40,000 passengers a day, not just from Glasgow but from across the Strathclyde area who arrive in the city by bus or train and then use the Subway for onward journey or to complete their journey.

As other organisations develop and adapt their communications approach, there are more opportunities to work together to highlight and share messages. For example, working with Glasgow City Marketing Bureau and People Make Glasgow, the Subway features in “Next Stop Glasgow” a picture perfect video tour through the city which we've also been able to use on our own social media, reaching out to new audiences.

We've previously worked with VisitScotland on a new international marketing campaign, again featuring the Subway as an integral part of Glasgow life.

We are also actively supporting local festivals and groups such as the Big Feed, GlasGlow and Byres Road Book Festival to push the key message that the Subway is easiest, quickest, most convenient way to travel to these events. These events are advertised on social media to a wide audience which we can also utilise for our own messages.

We played an active role in supporting Glasgow 2018 when the European Championships came to the city in August, working with Games organisers to promote the additional late running Sunday services that operated during the Games. This resulted in an extra 75,000 passengers using the Subway during the Games.

Our work with Pride Glasgow saw thousands of people celebrate the LGBTIQI community across the city and an additional 5000 passengers use the Subway over the 2018 Pride weekend. We worked closely with organisers to ensure the extended opening hours were widely publicised both on our own social media accounts and via our partnership with pride Glasgow.

The marketing team runs several campaigns each year specifically targeting new passengers e.g. Summer of Adventure designed for families during the school holidays; the student campaign in September specifically targeting new students to the city; the Summer of Music Campaign using social media showcases local acts in stations, as well as running a Busker opportunity to win a chance to appear at one of the breakout stages at TRNSMT. By working with TRNSMT Festival and other major event organisers in the city, it has been another opportunity to highlight the convenience of Subway travel to various venues.



Communications priorities 2020 - 2023

Overall

- Lead the operational development and delivery of effective communications and public affairs activities across all SPT including media; public affairs; stakeholders; digital audiences through website and social media channels.
- Continue to respond to all media enquiries in a timely manner, ensuring SPT's position is clearly stated and reputation is maintained and protected at all times.
- Build and maintain relationships with external stakeholders and key influencers to develop a strong and positive press and PR profile for SPT and promote sustainable travel.
- Continue to identify positive media opportunities to highlight the role of the sustainable in Glasgow and the wider region including: highlighting key achievements in the Subway modernisation roll out and the key role it plays in the Strathclyde area's transport network, investment in supported bus services and infrastructure, park & ride, active travel, integrated ticketing, MyBus etc.
- Lead and deliver the Annual Report for SPT. Using this report, the developing Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) RTS, and the annual Transport Outcome Reports (TORs) produced by the planning and policy team to highlight the positive contribution SPT makes to public transport delivery and active travel options across the region.
- Support the development of the new Regional Transport Strategy, a key objective of the Communications Strategy is to inform our customers, partners and other stakeholders of our RTS Vision and outcomes including the forward RTS Delivery Plan. Primarily using our social media channels to promote and deliver key information about the RTS. This has already proved successful, our RTS public survey which took place at the start of last year received 4000 responses mostly through the promotion on social media.

Build SPT's Corporate Reputation

- Continue to work to build reputation and knowledge of SPT as a corporate body, highlighting its input and impact to travel developments across the SPT region, and emphasising our commitment to the Regional Transport Strategy outcomes so we see improved connectivity; access for all; reduced emissions; and develop attractive, seamless, reliable travel.
 - *Continue to engage with a variety of stakeholders to actively promote work on the new Regional Transport Strategy, supporting work of policy and planning colleagues to deliver this major piece of work for the organisation*
 - *Highlight investment from the Capital Programme into specific projects to improve connectivity in local authority areas*
 - *Work with Board members in specific areas to highlight investment and improvement in their local area, to improve connectivity and develop attractive, seamless, reliable travel*
 - *Closer working with council press offices, and other stakeholder press offices to highlight other partnership work and support SPT offers to improve local transport infrastructure, ensuring access for all. Actively demonstrating the power and benefits of collaboration*

- Create more awareness of SPT subsidised services working for the good of local communities.
 - *identifying media opportunities to highlight work SPT does behind scenes with funding from our partner Councils to ensure bus services are improved, invested as well as retained in specific areas where threat of withdrawal, improving connectivity for those living in some of our most deprived areas, and or rural communities*
 - *highlighting joined up working and our commitment to improve access to key services for all such as healthcare and education*
- Continue to develop closer working relationships with local authority colleagues and other stakeholders to identify more media opportunities. Utilise board members to represent SPT at events, media calls to explain role in taking forward local projects.
 - *Identifying key areas of investment from the Capital Budget for media opportunities*
 - *Closer working with third parties and other stakeholders to support local projects and initiatives particularly around community transport planning*
- Further develop and progress our internal communications to include a more corporate viewpoint.
 - *Working closer with departments to identify new stories, internal and external*
 - *Develop a central resource for key dates, conferences to be added for organisation*
 - *Look at and discuss opportunities to develop the staff intranet*
 - *Promote SPT's work on equalities and our commitment to improving access to the transport network so people can get to the people and services they need*

Subway Modernisation

- Continue close working with the Subway Modernisation Project team and Performance Review Group as modernisation programme rolls out.
 - *Identifying key media opportunities to update media and public about the modernisation key milestones*
 - *Station modernisation roll out*
 - *Ticketing opportunities and development, SPT as innovator in this field*

Grow Subway Patronage

- Work with the patronage strategy group to ensure patronage growth is key to everything we do within communications and marketing.
 - *Work closely with marketing to develop campaigns utilising social media such as My Glasgow, My Subway*

- *Work with third parties and stakeholders to highlight convenience of Subway to events*
- *Highlight on-going work to improve customer experience, make ticket options easier, more convenient*

Customer Engagement

- Lead the development of a working social media strategy and approach to increase our direct engagement with passengers and stakeholders.
 - *Gain more knowledge and understanding of our audience and their expectations*
 - *Work with third parties and other stakeholders to highlight the convenience of sustainable transport to events*
 - *Highlight on-going work to improve customer experience when using public transport to make more convenient and make ticket options easier*
 - *Promote Improved Passenger Assistance in cooperation with rail and bus operators*

Changing the way we work

As an organisation, we are striving to be more open, more transparent, and more accessible to our passengers and stakeholders.

Through better digital engagement we will be able to improve the online experience for our audiences – ensuring the information they need is easy to find, especially for those who require extra assistance when travelling.

All of our engagement should work together to reach as much of our audience as possible, demonstrating a co-ordinated approach across all channels. How we get the message across has become as important as what the message is.

Traditional media communications has transformed in recent times, seeing rapid changes take place with the introduction of social media and direct communication with our audience. Now newspapers and journalists are as likely to pick up a news story from a tweet as from a press release.



With this change, comes pros and cons, you reach an interested audience who have chosen to follow you, accept updates from you and can present the facts as you wish them to be presented rather than risking the media ‘filter’. We can also maximise opportunities to view information across all our channels.

Traditional media still plays a role but needs to be presented with information via a much more targeted approach. They also face pressure to produce information in a demanding 24/7 news cycle with news stories added online almost instantly.

We are currently working on a refresh of the SPT website so it is more user-friendly as well as more adaptable for various devices, whether viewed on a phone, tablet, or laptop. We want to be confident that the website is accessible and offers visitors the information they are looking for easily and quickly.

Communication and engagement

An overview of how the networks are currently used to communicate with our audience.

Social network	Customers/users	Communication strategy	Frequency
Twitter @glasgowsubway	18 - 20 = 13.6% 21-24 = 23.3% 25-32 = 36.6% 35-44 = 18% 45 - 55 = 5.8% 55-64 = 1.6% 65+ = 1.1% 40% female 60% male	Create awareness of the Subway brand through engaging campaign content; owned and paid content. Engaging with users, sharing relevant events and cross promoting events around the Subway network.	2-4 posts/day Dependant on campaigns running in a period.
Twitter @GLASubwayTravel	18-20 = 12.6% 21-24 = 28.6% 25-34 = 34.8% 35-44 = 18.2% 45-55 = 4% 55-64 = 0.6% 65+ = 1.2% 43% female 57% male	Provide valuable information: Strathclyde wide transport travel updates, tweeting service disruptions and sharing relevant information ie. Public holiday updates.	Posts before and on event days. Sharing important weather, traffic and events information as and when required.
Facebook	13-17 = 0.9% 18-24% = 16% 35- 24 = 34% 35-44 = 15% 55-64 = 6% 65+ = 2% 54% women 45% men	Create awareness of the Subway brand through engaging campaign content; owned and paid content. Engaging with users, sharing relevant events and cross promoting events around the Subway network.	2-4 posts/day Dependant on campaigns running in a period.
Instagram	13-17 = 3% 18-24 = 14% 25-34 = 39% 35-44 = 31% 45-54 = 12% 55-64 = 3% 65+ = 1% 53% female 47% male	Increasing awareness of our Subway brand through image led content; stations, modernisation and (campaign) events. Collecting and sharing UGC, engaging with our community by sharing their Subway experiences.	1 post per weekday Stories to support when relevant
YouTube	13 - 17 = 2% 18 - 24 = 20.7% 25-34 = 47.7% 35-44 = 18.7% 45-54 = 7.9% 55-64 = 2.8% 65+ = 0	Increasing awareness of our ongoing modernisation and campaigns. Reaching new markets.	Uploading new content for specific campaigns.

Engagement

Through our social media and strong emphasis on using digital channels we are better placed to monitor and evaluate the impact of messages.

In 2018/19 – Our social media activity achieved:



Followers

Our Twitter accounts have a collective following of more than 35,500.

@GlasgowSubway < 24,400 followers

@GLASubwayTravel 9929 followers

@SPTcorporate 1174 followers



Organic Impressions

1.9m on @GLASubwayTravel

2m on @GlasgowSubway

331.1K on @SPTCorporate

Tweets sent

616 from @GLASubwayTravel

838 from @GlasgowSubway

165 tweets from @SPTCorporate

Likes

1,257 likes on @GLASubwayTravel

1,883 likes on @GlasgowSubway

338 likes on @SPTCorporate

Total for Twitter accounts: 4.23m impressions 1,792 messages sent 3,496 likes



Engagements

14.4K engagements



Impressions

1.8m organic impressions

1.7m paid impressions (through paid ads)

Clicks

10.8K clicks

Posts

649 posts

Top post received a reach of 37.6K, 1.5K reactions (likes, shares, comments)



Engagements

2.7K engagements

LinkedIn

Impressions

35.3K impressions

Clicks & Likes

2.2K clicks

477 likes

Posts

27 posts



Followers

Increase in followers by 132.4% (an increase of 1,430)

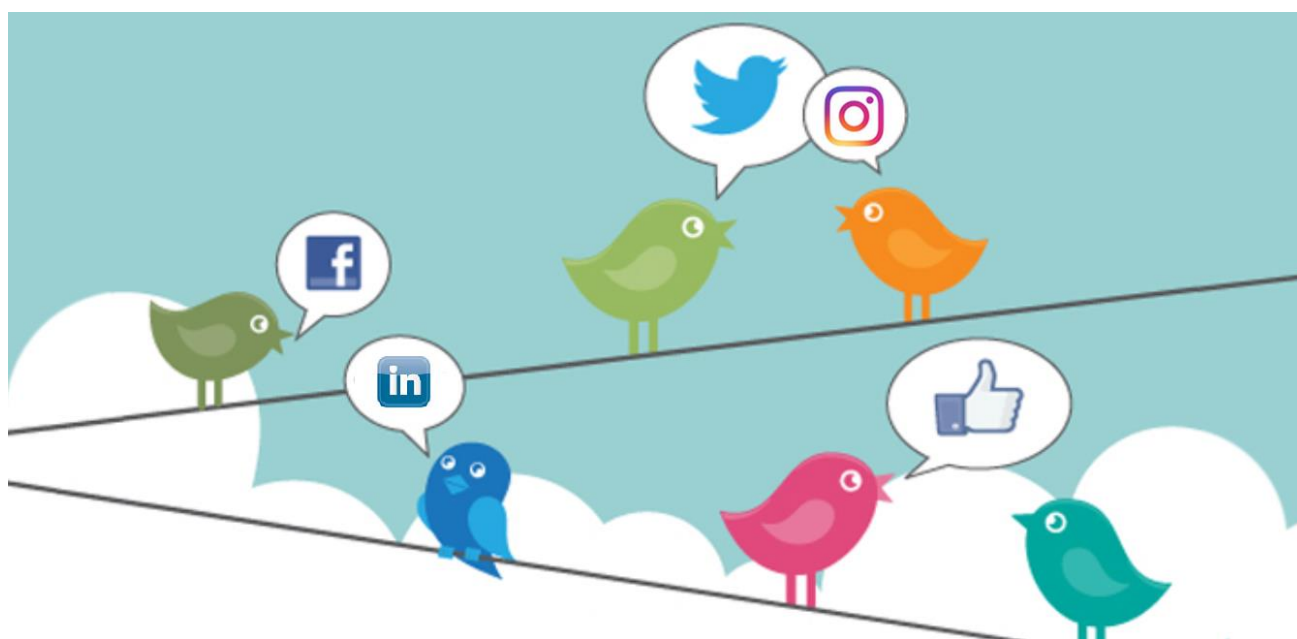
Instagram

Media Posted

Total media sent – 200

Likes

12,632 likes received



Evaluation

Measuring progress via evaluation is the cornerstone of continuous improvement and development. Understanding what works and where we can have the most impact will allow us to deliver more efficient and effective communications.

This Communications Strategy will assist our evaluation process by clearly outlining the priorities of our work for the period ahead. Evaluations will focus on the outcomes and impact of activity, with progress monitored throughout the year to inform and shape future communication.

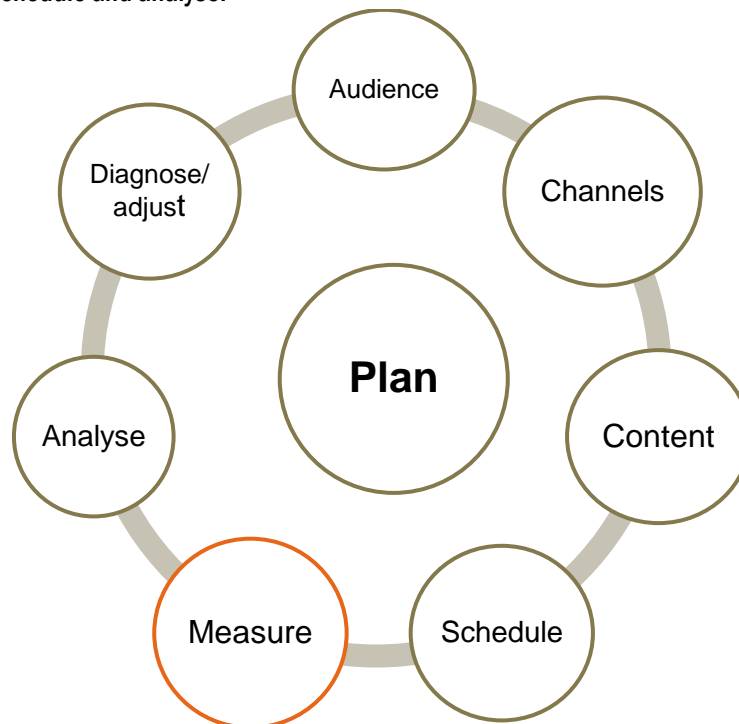
More evidence-based and outcome-focused work will concentrate on those areas where we know communications can deliver results. We will use research techniques to truly understand our audiences and their lives, what motivates them and what creates challenges for them so that we can reach them and engage with them in the most effective way. This also includes continuing to build on feedback through specific focus groups considering our services and performance, such as Secret Shopper experiences.

By rooting our communications strategies in audience insight they will have a much greater chance of success. Setting clear Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timely (SMART) objectives and using meaningful evaluation methods will allow us to deliver and demonstrate impact and value.

Using digital communications, we are also better able to monitor and evaluate the impact of campaigns and messages directly on our passengers using Sprout Social to analyse our social media engagement across all our social media platforms.

Measuring Performance

Social marketing is of an on-going cyclical nature where activity is constantly evolving at every stage of the process, and is measured between schedule and analyse.



The ultimate goal of posting on social media is that your audience will see it, engage with it and spread the word. Each channel is unique and each has different qualities that need to be understood. In order to measure this we will look at the Quality Scale of Social Media Interaction.



The most commonly used metric we will measure our efforts against is engagement. There are numerous engagement indicators that are used throughout the industry which we will utilise and benchmark campaign success against. Such indicators are:

- ✓ Reach
- ✓ Clicks
- ✓ Click through rate
- ✓ Organic and paid likes
- ✓ Hashtag performance
- ✓ Sentiment
- ✓ Competition entries
- ✓ Event conversion rate
- ✓ Time spent on page
- ✓ Engagement rate

How we measure the success of our objectives

Increase social following	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Followers gained ✓ Engagement rate ✓ Sentiment
Increase usage of paid social ads to increase brand awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reach ✓ Engagement rate ✓ Event conversion rate ✓ Followers gained ✓ Click Through Rate (CTR)
Increase engagement across social campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Engagement rate ✓ Sentiment ✓ Organic and paid likes
Increase understanding of our audiences through advanced data analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reach ✓ Sentiment ✓ Engagement rate ✓ CTR
Increase conversion rate across social campaigns, organic & paid.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ CTR ✓ Engagement rate ✓ Web traffic ✓ Event conversion rate

Appendix 1

Communications priorities 2020 / 21.

Input into and actively influence Government policy, particularly with regard to the new Transport Act 2019, development of the National Transport Strategy, and the Programme for Government.

Communicate and publicise the development of the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) including public consultations and raise the profile of SPT as the main drivers of the Strategy.

Work with bus operators and other stakeholders to continue to raise issues and concerns about the declining bus market through bus user groups.

Highlight the refurbishment and improvement of Buchanan Bus Station, other regional stations and interchange stations.

Continue to work with the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Region City Deal to highlight the important and role of transport across the region.

Engage with other stakeholders to support and develop transport projects across the region eg development of Motherwell Station.

Continue to highlight and manage communication around Subway Modernisation, working closely with the Joint Venture of Stadler and Hitachi while we test and commission the new trains and complete the refurbishment programme of Subway stations.

Publicise the role of SPT and investment from Grant Funding to support projects provided by Community Transport across Strathclyde

Continue to work with the SPT Subway patronage group to encourage a positive trend in passenger numbers on the Subway and achieve 13million journeys in 2019/20.