



Strategic Issues Update for the SPT area

Date of meeting 13 June 2025

Date of report 3 June 2025

Report by Head of Policy & 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

This report provides the regular update to the Committee on some of the key current workstreams either being led by or inputted to by SPT across transport and related sectors at national, regional and local level.

3. Outline of proposals

3.1 Scottish Government - Programme for Government (PfG)

The First Minister presented the Scottish Government's PfG to the Scottish Parliament on Tuesday 6 May. It focuses on four key priorities – eradicating child poverty, growing the economy, investing in public services and tackling the climate emergency.

Key transport measures outlined in the PfG:

- Abolishing peak rail fares permanently from 1 September 2025, to encourage more people to travel by train, reduce car journeys, and help existing peak time rail passengers with the cost of living. A significant marketing programme will support the revised fare structure.
- Continuing to deliver the major ferry vessels programme with MV Glen Rosa at the Ferguson Marine shipyard, MV Isle of Islay and three other vessels at the Cemre shipyard expected by summer 2026 and beginning work to deliver seven new electric ferries.
- Taking forward plans to directly award the next iteration of the Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Services contract to CalMac Ferries Ltd and make these services more resilient.
- Progressing business cases for infrastructure works at major ports including Ardrossan.
- Making it easier for people to walk, wheel, and cycle on everyday journeys by delivering projects through 2025-2026 sustainable travel programmes, and via public transport through the new Bus Infrastructure Fund.
- Completing electrification and enhancement of the East Kilbride rail line in 2025-2026, enabling the introduction of electric trains on the route from December 2025.

- Upgrading and reconfiguring rail power supplies to support existing and future electrification, with a new 'feeder station' planned to enter service at Newton in South Lanarkshire during 2025-2026.
- Continuing procurement of ScotRail's Intercity Fleet Replacement Programme and exploring options around replacement of ScotRail's suburban fleet.
- Making our roads safer and reducing the numbers killed or injured through delivery of 20 mph speed limits on appropriate roads by the end 2025-2026 and road safety funding for local authorities.
- Progressing delivery of the next phase of the medium-term improvements at the A83 Rest and Be Thankful and on the statutory authorisation process for the remaining elements of the medium-term improvements and the long-term solution.
- Introducing new rural and island EV infrastructure grants to help deliver approximately 24,000 additional public electric vehicle charge points by 2030.
- Introducing a new pilot grant scheme to help households without off-street parking to install cross-pavement EV charging solutions.
- Providing up to £4 million to increase the shift of freight from road to rail through the Freight Facilities Grant, and a first round of funding for the HGV sector to explore investments in decarbonised vehicles, charging and fuelling options.
- Expanding support for skills to help businesses and the workforce to adapt to zero emission vehicles, with £350,000 to develop capacity in colleges in EV and charge point maintenance and repair, and a further £400,000 for a new heavy-duty vehicle just transition initiative.

SPT continues to engage with the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland in relation to transport priorities for the west of Scotland.

3.2 Car use reduction

Further to the report to the previous Committee in February¹, the Scottish Government has subsequently advised its intention to review its 20% car use reduction target upon receipt of updated advice from the Climate Change Committee (CCC) on wider national targets for climate change and carbon reduction.

In late May, the CCC published their updated advice, stating that in order to achieve the Scottish Government's goal of being net zero by 2045, emissions would need to reduce by 57% by 2030 and 69% by 2035, based on 1990 levels. The Scottish Government is currently considering this updated advice and will announce their response in due course.

As regards the 20% car use reduction target, at the time of writing the Scottish Government is working with COSLA on a revised policy statement on car use reduction, and it is anticipated that any subsequent change to the 20% target will now take into account the updated position adopted by the Scottish Government in light of the recent CCC advice. Transport Scotland has noted that it will work with COSLA and Regional Transport Partnerships to develop delivery plans for car use reduction, reflective of different communities and places.

3.3 Just Transition

The Scottish Government has been taking forward work to promote a Just Transition² to address the social and economic challenges that arise during the transition to a low-carbon

¹ Section 3.1.3, https://spt.production.d8.studio/media/pxabtb1z/sp210225_agenda10.pdf

² https://www.spt.co.uk/media/noynf555/sp241123_agenda7.pdf

economy, seeking to ensure that the benefits of climate action are shared equitably. This includes consulting on its recently published draft Just Transition Plan for Transport³ which seeks to identify the key challenges and opportunities the transport sector currently faces in enabling a Just Transition.

SPT submitted its response to the consultation within the deadline of 19 May 2025; the key points of our response are as follows:

- Support for the outcomes set out in the Just Transition Plan which are in alignment with national, regional and local transport strategies.
- A call for more investment in sustainable transport and in particular bus services which are critical to the achievement of a Just Transition.
- Reference to the work being undertaken by SPT and Glasgow City Region partners to take forward Clyde Metro which will support the principles of a Just Transition.

Officers will continue to monitor work on Just Transition and provide further updates to the Committee on the outcomes of the Just Transition Plan for Transport.

3.4 Community Wealth Building

The Scottish Parliament's Economy & Fair Work Committee recently issued a Call for Views⁴ on the Community Wealth Building (CWB) Bill. Community Wealth Building is an approach to economic development that tries to use the power of 'anchor organisations' to grow and retain wealth within a local economy. The Bill seeks to ensure consistent implementation of the CWB model of economic development across Scotland and address economic and wealth inequality between individuals and communities by facilitating and supporting the generation, circulation and retention of more wealth in local and regional economies.

Under the Bill, Regional Transport Partnerships are included as 'relevant public bodies' and as such the legislation once in place will have requirements and implications for SPT. This includes a requirement to prepare and publish a report setting out how SPT will support Community Wealth Building in our area. Under the CWB approach, organisations might, for example, use their spending power to procure locally, pay the real living wage, or facilitate community ownership of land or assets among other actions.

Specifically, SPT will be required to publish and implement a Community Wealth Building action plan to be revised at least every five years. A local authority and relevant public bodies in its area will also form 'CWB partnerships' and can act jointly with other local authority areas to support the approach.

SPT's response to the Call for Views was submitted by the closing date of 23 May 2025. The response supports the principle of Community Wealth Building and notes that SPT's procurement of local bus services and other services provides significant benefit to local economies. The response, however, questions the need to legislate in this area and suggests the production of guidance would be a more appropriate mechanism. SPT's response also notes that under current procurement rules in Scotland, Scottish Public Bodies cannot restrict tenders geographically or by size of bidding company which would limit the potential impact of the new Bill. Officers will continue to keep members updated on the CWB Bill as it progresses.

³ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/transition-draft-transition-plan-transport-scotland/>

⁴ <https://yourviews.parliament.scot/efw/community-wealth-building-bill/>

3.5 People and Place Programme 2025/2026 Community Fund

A key development in the People and Place Programme for 2025/2026 is the transfer of responsibility for funding community-based projects to Regional Transport Partnerships. During the 2024/2025 transition year, this function was delivered by Paths for All under the Community Projects Transition Fund (CPTF).

The SPT People and Place Programme Community Fund has been established to support community organisations aiming to promote active and sustainable travel behaviour change throughout 2025/2026. This ensures that smaller organisations, who otherwise would not be capable of accessing or delivering larger programmes of work through the main People and Place programme are able to deliver these important community level initiatives.

The fund is targeted at community-led projects, offering grants ranging from £5,000 to £50,000. All funded projects are required to be within the wider programme scope and align with at least one of the programme's five core themes: Schools and Young People, Workplaces, Accessibility and Inclusion, Capacity and Capability, and Supporting Sustainable Transport.

An application window for the fund was open from 24 March to 14 April 2025. During this period, applications were received from a diverse range of community organisations across the SPT area.

A comprehensive assessment process - based on a structured scoring framework and guided by available capital and revenue budgets – has been undertaken and is currently being finalised for approval. An update on progress on the Community Fund will be provided to the next Committee meeting.

3.6 Buchanan Bus Station Masterplan

Members will recall from previous updates to this Committee^{5,6} and the Partnership⁷, SPT's proposal to develop a masterplan for Buchanan Bus Station (BBS) and the surrounding city block. Officers have been working closely with the AtkinsRéalis team and colleagues from Glasgow City Council to develop and evaluate development options for the site, while enhancing its core function as a bus station.

A preferred approach has emerged and will be taken forward for further evaluation and development into a Concept Masterplan. A report on progress of the BBS masterplan will be provided to a future Committee. In preparation, all Partnership members have been invited to an information session following this Committee at which more information will be shared on the work undertaken to date and next steps.

3.7 Rural Transport Study

Around 90% of SPT's geographic area is classified as rural, with approximately one in every five people in the SPT area living in small towns, rural or remote places. Remoteness from key facilities, coupled with more limited transport options, means there is often poorer access to opportunities and higher transport costs for people living in rural areas.

Furthermore, lower population densities and longer travel distances associated with rural areas reduces commercial viability of vital bus links which can result in inadequate service

⁵ https://spt.production.d8.studio/media/1ftdizwm/sp291124_agenda7.pdf

⁶ https://www.spt.co.uk/media/3mvp1fyc/sp090623_agenda5.pdf

⁷ https://www.spt.co.uk/media/4oppr1sq/p131224_agenda7.pdf

provision. SPT provides rural bus services on a supported basis which cannot be achieved without higher subsidies and a disproportionately higher cost compared to less sparsely populated areas.

In January 2024, SPT appointed consultants Stantec to support in the delivery of a Rural Transport Appraisal and Action Plan. This study is examining the transport needs of the SPT region's rural, remote and island communities, appraise a range of options to improve transport in these areas and develop an action plan to take forward recommended options. It will seek to develop practical, sustainable, and improved transport solutions for identified rural communities in region. The study is jointly funded by SPT and Transport Scotland through their Community Bus Fund (2023/2024).

Progress:

- Baseline & connectivity analysis has provided a detailed understanding of existing conditions and constraints in study area. This highlights that bus is the main mode of public transport for rural communities but that several communities do not have commercial/subsidised bus network access.
- The Case for Change (CfC) has helped define transport problems, opportunities, and objectives, and providing rationale for intervention. This included stakeholder engagement to establish the perspectives of local authority officers and over 165 community councils on the transport services provided in their communities, the challenges faced, and suggestions for enhancing transport provision. Findings included:
 - A lack of early morning and evening services prevents travel for certain purposes by public transport. In most cases, there may be an outbound option but no inbound option.
 - Frequency was a key issue with respondents indicating the inability to travel when they wanted.
 - Lack of integration between modes makes rural journeys more challenging/time consuming.

Next steps:

A rural options appraisal has commenced and will consider the study's emerging findings. This appraisal stage will examine opportunities for enhancing the existing bus network, consider opportunities for Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) and Community Transport, consider ways to improve integration and connectivity, explore potential new funding models as well as opportunities for complementary measures such as with active travel (walking, wheeling and cycling).

The options development workstream is expected to conclude Summer 2025 with a Rural Transport Action plan prepared by Autumn 2025, and presented to the Committee for approval.

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 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 at present.</i>
Climate Change, Adaptation & Carbon consequences	<i>The impact of the issues identified 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.</i>

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