



Development of the Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy & Delivery Plan

Committee Strategy & Programmes

Date of meeting 25 November 2022

Date of report 16 November 2022

Report by Chief Executive

1. Object of report

The object of this report is to inform the Committee of the proposed development process and structure of the future Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy (SRBS) and associated Delivery Plan, arising from and in line with the new Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) when approved, and the initial draft vision, outcomes, objectives and policies of the proposed SRBS.

2. Background

In Strathclyde, bus services are a lifeline that many people heavily rely on, with over 70% of all public transport journeys in the region being taken by bus. However, SPT's work in developing the new RTS has reaffirmed significant concerns in terms of the efficiency, performance, affordability and overall sustainability of the bus network in Strathclyde, both presently and in the future. Such concerns have only been further compounded by more recent events, namely the cumulative impacts of the Covid 19 Pandemic, Brexit, Ukraine war and the Cost of Living crisis. In short, it is clear and evident that change is required in order to ensure the bus network is fit for purpose for the future.

Feedback received by SPT during the RTS development process has shown a strong case and significant appetite for positive change to our bus networks in order that they better meet the needs of bus users and are of suitable quality to encourage modal shift to bus, arresting historical long-term patronage decline and supporting wider economic, societal and environmental objectives. Members attention is drawn to SPT's 2014 Bus Strategy¹ which highlighted a number of key aims, objectives and actions required to support the bus network in Strathclyde. It is important that this work is refreshed, updated and strengthened to align with the new RTS and to provide a route map for delivery of a 'world class' bus network across Strathclyde.

Members will recall that the Draft RTS was approved by the Partnership for public consultation in June 2022², which ran for 12 weeks and formally closed on 28 October 2022. Members will further recall that Appendix 2 of the Draft RTS report to the Partnership in June contained an initial list of RTS actions developed in partnership with stakeholders through the RTS development process, and based on responses to and dialogue conducted as part of the earlier RTS Case for Change consultation. These actions will be further developed and taken forward through the RTS Delivery Plan process³. One of the emerging actions is to develop a regional bus strategy, specifically:

¹ http://www.spt.co.uk/documents/rtp120914_agenda7.pdf

² https://www.spt.co.uk/media/qz3gbqy3/p240622_agenda10.pdf

³ https://www.spt.co.uk/media/wjwhiuso/p240622_agenda10b.pdf

“SPT will work with partners to develop and deliver a new regional bus strategy, setting out what is specifically required to achieve a world class bus system. The development of the bus strategy will include further investigation and appraisal of bus franchising and municipal bus operations, development of a regional network plan and bus decarbonisation”.

This action follows and is in line with the findings of the Bus Options Scoping Study carried out jointly by SPT and Glasgow City Council and reported to the Committee in February 2022⁴, and which fed into the content of the Draft RTS. Subsequent to that Study, SPT commissioned further work looking at how its conclusions could be taken forward and taking that into account, officers have developed a robust methodology for the development of a regional bus strategy, ensuring that this process can be designed to ensure alignment with the RTS as it is finalised and approved. Notwithstanding that, and in line with an action from the Partnership in September 2022, this current report is intended to outline the proposed approach to developing a regional bus strategy and associated delivery plan for the west of Scotland – the Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy.

At this stage, it is worth emphasising the importance of taking an evidence-based, objective-led, transparent approach involving engagement and consultation in undertaking such an exercise as the development of a regional bus strategy, in line with Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) and following the framework set by the new RTS when approved. Moreover, and crucially, a focus on outcomes and how the strategy will improve the bus network for the passenger and all those who rely on it must be at the heart of the development of any regional bus approach.

Further, where required to do so, the development of the SRBS must adhere to any legislative requirements and be in line with any advisory guidance and/or regulations, for example, in relation to the provisions of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019. Specifically, in relation to that Act, an Information Note has been published on the municipal bus operations provision, and officers are guided that further guidance and regulations on the other bus provisions will follow in 2023. In addition, any decisions at each stage in the development of the SRBS will be made by the SPT Partnership board and its committees, in line with due process.

The reasoning behind the importance of following the above approach is simple: notwithstanding other options which may be explored, the responsibility for initiating a significant change in the bus network or how it operates, for example, in terms of utilising the provisions of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, rests legislatively with the local transport authority; in the west of Scotland’s case, this being SPT and/or a council(s). It is therefore essential that, in making any policy, strategy or other decision about the future of bus, the authority(ies) in question must be sure that a robust, appropriate and legislatively sound process has been adopted in development of that policy or strategy.

This legislative responsibility of SPT and/or a council(s) is confirmed by the bus provisions of the 2019 Act, which lays the power to initiate a process in relation to those provisions with the local transport authority and emphasises that an authority must only pursue such a provision provided it “contribute(s) to the implementation of their general policies”⁵; in SPT and the west of Scotland’s case, this means the Regional Transport Strategy, and for councils, both the RTS and their own Local Transport Strategy.

Moreover, and specifically in relation to the bus aspects of the 2019 Act, a significant proportion of the legislative provisions currently have no statutory guidance or regulations available in support of them and are untested in practice. How workable the provisions

⁴ Section 3 and Appendix 2, https://www.spt.co.uk/media/vh5prl5y/sp180222_agenda11.pdf

⁵ Ch2, 13E(2)(a) of the Act, for example: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2019/17/part/3/crossheading/local-services-franchises/enacted>

therefore are remains to be seen and SPT will ensure strong engagement with Transport Scotland as the guidance and regulations are developed over the coming year. It is also important to note that, while acknowledging the framework set by the National Transport Strategy, there is no specific national bus strategy to act as a reference point for the development of a regional or local bus strategy. Officers will, however, continue to engage with colleagues in Transport Scotland on strategic bus matters and the new bus strategy as it develops.

It is also important to note that the SRBS development process will seek to align with other internal and external national, regional and local workstreams, including for example, projects arising from the Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2) e.g. Clyde Metro, the Bus Partnership Fund, and the RTS Delivery Plan. Further, working with councils and other partners, SPT will seek to identify any 'quick wins' arising from these workstreams or the SRBS development process.

The following must therefore be read and considered within the context set out in this section.

3. Proposed structure and process for the Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy

3.1 The SRBS will not repeat or duplicate the development process and content of the new RTS; it will align, complement, and flow from it. However, to ensure buy-in from all partners including, above all, the public, the SRBS development process by necessity has to be comprehensive. The process will, at all times, be focused on delivering real positive change for passengers and all those reliant on the bus network, and where possible, seek to identify any 'quick wins' which can deliver improvements effectively and efficiently. The following sections outline the proposed structure and process for development of the SRBS.

3.2 Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy – overview of structure and content

Figure 1 sets out the proposed structure and content of the SRBS. It is important to note that this is draft and further planning and engagement will be carried out internally and with partners before it is finalised.

Figure 1: Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy – proposed structure and content

Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy – proposed structure and content	
Strategic Framework	Vision, Objectives and Outcomes Policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of Service Framework • Service Quality Framework • Fare and Ticketing Policy and Index
Strategy Components	Network Plan Fares, Ticketing and Information Action Plan Accessibility Action Plan Safety & Security Action Plan Decarbonisation Plan Behaviour Change and Marketing Action Plan Operating and Funding Model(s) – Strategic Business Case
Delivery Plan	Capital investment plan & programme Operating & Funding Model(s) – Full Business Case Project plans and programmes to support delivery of the Action Plans

Monitoring and Evaluation Components	Passenger Satisfaction Monitoring Network and Operational Performance Monitoring Fares Monitoring Patronage and demand monitoring Strategy Component/Action Plan Progress Reports
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3.3 Strategic Framework

The Strategic Framework sets out what the SRBS should achieve and provides the framework for developing and appraising the Strategy Components. A draft Vision, Outcomes, Objectives and Policies have been developed, which are in line with the new RTS and are noted below, and which will be subject to further engagement with partners and consultation through the SRBS development process:

3.3.1 Vision

The draft proposed Vision for the SRBS is:

Strathclyde has a world-class bus network. It is a single, integrated network providing reliable, frequent and convenient services that actively encourage people to choose bus travel over less sustainable travel options. People feel that travelling by bus is a simple and desirable travel option that meets their needs, is reliable and offers good value for money. Bus contributes to a fairer and more equitable society through reducing inequalities of transport access. People can afford to travel by bus. People can travel by bus with ease and do not experience inaccessible, unsafe or hostile environments and systems. The regional bus network is low carbon and contributes to wider decarbonisation strategies by facilitating modal shift to bus from more energy-intensive transport modes. The bus network is highly integrated with active and other public transport options and the development of high quality, people-centred places.

3.3.2 Outcomes

A draft set of outcomes for the SRBS has been prepared, subject to future engagement and consultation. The outcomes are largely based upon the bus outcomes developed in the Bus Options Scoping Study. Key performance indicators will be developed later in the process to monitor benefit realisation in line with these outcomes.

Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy - draft outcomes:

- More people using buses
- Improved bus network coverage
- Cheaper and simpler fares
- More efficient, faster and reliable bus services
- Better integration of bus with other modes and with land-use development planning and management
- Lower adverse environmental impacts of bus
- Fully accessible bus network and services for all
- Safe and secure bus services for all
- Resilient, adaptive and innovative bus network and systems

3.3.3 Objectives

A draft set of objectives has been prepared, which are subject to further engagement with partners and consultation. The objectives will be refined to

become SMART (Specific, Measurable, Assignable, Realistic and Time-related) as the development process progresses, as this will facilitate a high quality, detailed appraisal of options to be taken forward by the SRBS.

Draft Objectives of the SRBS:

- Increase bus service frequencies
- Increase availability and coverage of the bus network
- Simplify and smarten bus ticketing and deliver fare capping across the region
- Increase affordability of travelling by bus
- Increase bus priority on strategic bus corridors
- Increase and improve provision of real time bus travel information
- Increase accessibility, safety and security of the whole bus journey, including journeys to and from stops and stations e.g. lighting on walking routes
- Complete transition of the regional bus fleet to zero emission vehicles and maximise the wider public benefits of government investment in decarbonisation
- Improve the perception of bus and ensure a consistently high-quality passenger experience across the regional network
- Increase integration of the bus network and integration of bus with other public and active modes and the Mobility as a Service (MaaS) ecosystem
- Identify and implement the bus operating and funding model(s) best suited to the successful delivery of the SRBS

The SRBS objectives have been aligned to the RTS objectives and targets to ensure the bus strategy will contribute to the targets of the RTS in relation to modal shift, transport emission reductions and car kilometre reductions.

3.3.4 Policies

It is proposed that three key Policies are developed for the SRBS. These policies will express, in detail, the regional level of ambition for bus network coverage, quality, fares and ticketing, and set the framework for the action plans to be developed as part of the Strategy Components. The proposed principles of each draft policy are set out below. Again, these are subject to further engagement and consultation as part of the strategy development process.

Policy 1: Level of Service Framework (LoSF)

The Level of Service Framework will set out the minimum and desired levels of bus service by route type and area type. The LoSF will include capacity, service frequency, bus stop/hub coverage and timetable coverage. Other relevant attributes may be identified and included through the bus strategy development process. The LoSF will also consider the role of the bus network in relation to heavy rail, Subway and Clyde Metro and active travel networks, and the principle of reallocating road space to public transport.

Policy 2: Service Quality Framework (SQF)

The Service Quality Framework will set out the bus service quality attributes and parameters/values critical to passenger satisfaction and

growth. The attributes will include service reliability and journey times, and other relevant attributes will be identified through the strategy development process.

Policy 3: Ticketing and Fares Policy (TFP) and Index

The Ticketing and Fares Policy will set out desired bus fare structures and prices. The policy will set out the basis for a consistent approach to fare structures across the region, while the Index will set out a methodology for determining desired fares over time. This process will aim to align with the national Fair Fares Review process as appropriate and practicable.

3.4 Strategy Components

It is proposed that the main body of the SRBS is comprised of six key components as detailed below, plus the development of a proposed Operating and Funding Model through a business case development approach which will be undertaken as part of the Strategy Component and Delivery Plan stages. Again, these will be subject to further engagement with partners.

3.4.1 Bus Network Plan(s)

The Bus Network Plan will set out detailed spatial plans, in line with the Level of Service Framework. The Bus Network Plan will include the specification of the route and service types and key operational attributes including route and service capacities, operating hours, vehicle requirements, depots and the operating costs to deliver the network plan. It will also determine the infrastructure and capital investment requirements to deliver the Network Plan (e.g. bus priority, hubs), and integration with other workstreams including projects arising from the Bus Partnership Fund, and the Clyde Metro.

3.4.2 Fares, Ticketing and Information Action Plan

The Fares, Ticketing and Information Action Plan will set out the actions and interventions required to achieve the bus fares policy (Policy 3 noted above in section 3.3.4), smart and fully integrated bus ticketing including fare capping, and consistently high-quality travel information across the region. This Plan will also include the actions to integrate bus more effectively with wider developments in Mobility as a Service, and the Clyde Metro.

3.4.3 Accessibility Action Plan

The Accessibility Action Plan will set out the actions and interventions required to achieve a fully accessible bus network and system for all passengers.

3.4.4 Safety and Security Action Plan

The Safety and Security Action Plan will set out the actions and interventions required to achieve a safe and secure bus network and system for all passengers.

3.4.5 Bus Decarbonisation Plan

The Bus Decarbonisation Plan will build on work undertaken as part of the RTS development process, and will set out the actions and interventions required to transition the regional bus fleet from conventionally fuelled vehicles to electric buses or other alternative fuels, including supporting infrastructure requirements.

3.4.6 Behaviour Change and Marketing Action Plan

The Behaviour Change and Marketing Action Plan will set out the actions and interventions required to support behaviour change to choosing bus over less sustainable travel options including promoting bus and changing perceptions. A regional bus brand will also be considered in the development of this Action Plan.

3.4.7 Operating and Funding Model(s) – Strategic Business Case

A Strategic Business Case for the Operating and Funding Model(s) required to deliver the SRBS will be developed during the Strategy Components phase, with a Full Business Case to follow in the Delivery Plan stage.

3.5 SRBS Delivery Plan

The Delivery Plan will set out the programme to deliver the SRBS, taking the actions from the strategy components in section 3.4 above and identifying when they should be taken forward, how long they will take, and the cost. The specific nature of this will be determined by the content of the SRBS but will include, at minimum, a capital investment programme, which will be in relation to such actions as delivering future phases of the Bus Partnership Fund. Further to section 3.4.7 above, a Full Business Case for the required Operating and Funding Model(s) will also be developed. The Delivery Plan will be reflective of current and future conditions and will include actions, projects and 'quick win' improvements that can be delivered in the short term.

3.6 SRBS Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework will set out how the SRBS performance and progress will be monitored, evaluated and reported. This will be linked to the RTS monitoring framework to understand impacts of the SRBS on the RTS targets. The specific nature of the monitoring and evaluation requirements will be determined through the strategy development process but, at this point, it is proposed that there will be monitoring across the following:

- Passenger Satisfaction
- Network and Operational Performance
- Fares and affordability
- Patronage and demand
- Strategy Component/Action Plan Progress reports

3.7 SRBS development process - timeline and cost

Officers are in the process of developing the project plan for development of the SRBS in line with the structure noted above, including resource requirements, governance arrangements, procurement, approval stages, public consultation and stakeholder engagement, and statutory impact assessments. Worth emphasising is the fact that key to the success of the SRBS, will be the involvement and buy-in of partners in its development, and the SRBS development will include a comprehensive engagement and consultation process.

It is anticipated the SRBS development process could be complete in within 12 months (subject to the outcome of further project scoping). Costs for undertaking the SRBS development process are in the process of being identified, although it is worth highlighting at this early stage that these will be of a scale reflecting the importance, scope of work and potential outcomes of such a workstream as the SRBS. Internal and external opportunities for funding will be explored, including the Scottish Government's Community Bus Fund (albeit recognising that the application process for this has temporarily been paused). Further to this, members will recall and notwithstanding any

outcomes of the SRBS, the SPT Chair wrote to the Transport Minister recently highlighting that while the powers of the 2019 Act were welcome, they came without any associated funding to pursue them.

It is worth highlighting that the SRBS and Delivery Plan will be developed with a strong focus on significantly improving access for people and communities across the west of Scotland, but it is essential that SPT and partners remain cognisant of the immediate challenges facing the market, such as the potential impacts of Network Support Grant stopping. To that end, SPT continues to provide funding for Community Transport services, deliver the supported bus network, provide capital funding to local authorities to improve passenger infrastructure, work through the Glasgow Bus Partnership and with our stakeholders in Ayrshire to deliver the Bus Partnership Fund, deliver improved RTPI across the region, deliver integrated ticketing through ZoneCard, and to review the MyBus service.

4. Conclusions

Bus is at the heart of the new RTS, acknowledging its role as the main public transport mode in the region, the views of respondents to the various stages of RTS consultation and engagement, and its importance in delivering a future network which achieves the RTS vision and targets. Officers are in the process of reviewing the considerable number of responses to the RTS public consultation, which over 5,000 people and organisations engaged with, and will present a report to the Partnership in December advising of the key views from the consultation and recommending how the previously approved Draft RTS should be updated.

The Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy & Delivery Plan will, under the auspices of and in alignment with the new RTS once approved, set out an objective-led, evidence-based regional approach to bus which all stakeholders can buy into. Officers will provide an update on progress to the next Committee.

5. Committee action

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

6. Consequences

Policy consequences	<i>The SRBS will be a key mechanism to deliver Regional Transport Strategy policies and objectives, will determine the ways that national bus policy will be delivered in the region and will establish regional bus policy.</i>
Legal consequences	<i>The SRBS may have legal consequences related to the delivery of bus policy and strategy in the region.</i>
Financial consequences	<i>The SRBS may have financial consequences in delivering bus policy and strategy in the region.</i>
Personnel consequences	<i>None at present, currently being considered.</i>
Equalities consequences	<i>Bus is used by all types of people and communities and has a significant role in delivering local and national government social, health, environmental and economic policies. The SRBS will be aligned with the RTS strategic framework including the RTS priorities for improved quality of life and inclusive economic growth to ensure the bus strategy is developed to support this wider policy agenda. A suite of impact assessments will</i>

be carried out throughout the SRBS development process.

Risk consequences

None at present.

Climate Change, Adaptation & Carbon consequences

Decarbonisation of the bus fleet will be central to the delivery of the SRBS.

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