Glasgow City Council

City Administration Committee

Report by George Gillespie, Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, Regeneration and Sustainability

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STRATHCLYDE PARTNERSHIP FOR TRANSPORT – STRATHCLYDE REGIONAL BUS STRATEGY CONSULTATION

Purpose of Report:

The purpose of this report is to advise Committee of the current consultation being undertaken by Strathclyde Partnership for Transport on the Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy and seek approval for the Council's response.

Recommendations:

Members are asked to:
  (i)   Note SPT's Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy
  (ii)   Approve the proposed response to the consultation on SPT's Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy business case in Appendix A

Ward No(s):   Citywide: ✓

Local member(s) advised: Yes ☐ No ☐   consulted: Yes ☐ No ☐

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1   Background

1.1   Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) is currently consulting on their Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy: A consultation on the recommended options for improving the bus network in the region. This provides their recommended options for bus reform including local services franchising, Bus Service Improvement Partnerships and a municipal bus company.

1.2   Details of the consultation and supporting documentation can be found [here](#) and is open to everyone with feedback being accepted until Monday 13 May 2024.

2   Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy

2.1   Glasgow City Council (GCC) adopted our [bus governance routemap](#) in November 2022 at the City Administration Committee. This confirmed GCC aspirations to explore alternative forms of bus governance in the city, including a Bus Service Improvement Partnership (BSIP), municipal bus operations, and franchising.

2.2   The Council has participated in SPT's work to develop a Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy (SRBS), which is looking at options to improve the bus network within Strathclyde Region.

2.3   The SRBS Options Development and Appraisal process explored 5 options for future delivery of the regional bus network:
1. Business As Usual;
2. Voluntary Partnerships;
3. Bus Service Improvement Partnerships;
4. Local Services Franchising; and
5. Municipal Bus Company.

2.4   SPT are proposing that change is required and the Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy should be developed within a bus reform framework, rather than within the existing deregulated model. Given the significance of the proposed change to the current system, they are currently consulting on this approach and want to understand the extent to which the Council agree or disagree with their recommended approach.

2.5   Recommendations for future delivery of the regional bus network was published at the [SPT Partnership Committee on the 15th March](#):
- 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)

arrangement 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 should be ruled out.

2.6   The Council as a key stakeholder has an opportunity to feed into this process along with the wider public. A draft consultation response is appended in Appendix A for discussion and approval.

2.7   SPT are then proposing to develop the full bus strategy, working closely with local authority partners, with the aim of producing the final strategy in 2025.

3   Policy and Resource Implications
   Resource Implications:

Financial:	No financial implications at present as this work is being taken forward by SPT
Legal:	None
Personnel:	None
Procurement:	None
Council Strategic Plan:	Deliver sustainable transport and travel aligned with the city region. **Mission 1, Grand Challenge 3.**
Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:	
Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-25? Please specify.	Generally supportive of the stated outcomes.

What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?	Positive impact
Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage.	Improving opportunities for additional, quicker, more frequent and reliable bus services can help address barriers many people in Glasgow face in accessing employment, education and services

Climate Impacts:

Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify:	Action 26 – Explore alternative options for bus delivery in Glasgow
What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal?	Bus related work looks to improve bus services in terms of reliability and shorter journey times to make it more attractive for the passenger. A greater shift from private car to bus would tackle congestion, reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality.
Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target?	Yes

Privacy and Data Protection Impacts:

Are there any potential data protection impacts as a result of this report Y/N	No
If Yes, please confirm that a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) has been carried out	

4   Recommendations

4.1   Members are asked to:
   (i)   Note SPT's Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy
   (ii)   Approve the proposed response to the consultation on SPT's Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy business case in Appendix A

Appendix A: Proposed GCC response to SPT SRBS publication April 2024

The Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy (SRBS) is SPT's process to determine a preferred strategy to improving the bus network and set the direction of bus policy in the region. SPT has developed a set of recommendations to guide the development and implementation of its bus strategy.

SPT is now seeking GCC's feedback, as a key stakeholder, on their approach the extent of support for its recommendations and whether they should consider amending their approach before moving into the next stage of the bus strategy process
The survey is also open for individual comments which anyone can respond to and details on the consultation can be found at https://www.spt.co.uk/about-us/what-we-are-doing/regional-transport-strategy/bus-strategy/

SPT has been considering how a future bus network could be delivered. Details on these options can be found within the Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy Consultation document. SPT has appraised each option to understand how well each one could help with the delivery of a better bus network, based on their anticipated benefits, costs and any implementation issues.

GCC's proposed response to their recommendations and their appraisal is detailed within their supplied questionnaire as follows:

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this research

In 2023, Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) commenced work on the Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy (SRBS). The SRBS is SPT's process to determine a preferred strategy to improving the bus network and set the direction of bus policy in the region. SPT has now developed a set of recommendations to guide the development and implementation of its bus strategy.

SPT has commissioned SYSTRA, an independent transport consultancy, to consult with stakeholders and the general public to understand the extent of support on these recommendations.

SPT is keen to get your feedback on whether you feel these are the right recommendations, and why. Your feedback is important so that SPT can understand the extent of support for its recommendations and whether they should consider amending their approach before moving into the next stage of the bus strategy process.

We would be very grateful if you would take the time to complete the survey, which will take approximately 10 minutes. The feedback that you can provide will help SPT to further develop the bus strategy for the region and consider if any changes should be made to the recommendations. You are able to provide a response to the survey from now until **Monday 13th May 2024.**

If you would prefer to fill in a paper version of the questionnaire, you can request a paper version be posted to your household by emailing the team at RTS@spt.co.uk.

Your data

All survey responses are confidential and results will be analysed and reported anonymously by SYSTRA. The research complies with the Market Research Society Professional Code of Conduct and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). You can withdraw from the research at any time.

The survey will ask you for some basic contact information for the purposes of ensuring the authenticity of responses, as well as asking about your level of support or opposition on the different options. Those responding on behalf of an organisations will also be asked to provide some basic details about their organisation. Those responding as an individual will be asked about the area they live in and their current travel behaviour.

You have rights in relation to how your personal data is handled and you can find full details by clicking here.

0. Are you happy to proceed with the survey?
Please select one

X	Yes
	No

ABOUT YOU

These first few questions are to understand a little bit more about you / your organisation.

1. Are you completing this questionnaire as an individual or on behalf of an organisation?
Please select one

	I am responding as an individual
X	I am responding on behalf of an organisation

2. What is the name of the organisation that you are responding on behalf of?
Please enter your organisation's name below

Glasgow City Council

3. Which of the following best describes your organisation?
Please select one

	Bus operator
X	Local authority
	Other organisation

4. In which local authority area does your organisation primarily operate?
Please select all that apply

	Argyll and Bute
	East Ayrshire
	East Dunbartonshire
	East Renfrewshire
X	Glasgow City
	Inverclyde
	North Ayrshire
	North Lanarkshire
	Renfrewshire
	South Ayrshire
	South Lanarkshire
	West Dunbartonshire

5. Please provide your name, job title, and email address below.
Note, this information is being requested for the purposes of ensuring the authenticity of responses. A list of all organisations that respond to the consultation will also be included in reporting, but will not be linked to responses. Your details will not be used for any other purpose.
Please enter your name and email address below.

Name:
Job title:
Email:

FEEDBACK ON RECOMMENDATIONS

Over the last nine months, SPT has been considering a number of ways, or options, that the future bus network could be delivered. More detail on these options can be found within the [Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy Consultation document.](#) SPT has appraised each option to understand how well each one could help with the delivery of a better bus network, based on their anticipated benefits, costs and any implementation issues.

After reviewing the evidence and appraisal findings, SPT has developed a set of recommendations to guide the development and implementation of the bus strategy. These next few questions are to understand whether you think these are the right recommendations and why.

Business as Usual and Voluntary Partnerships

SPT is proposing to rule out **business as usual** and **voluntary partnerships** for further consideration in its bus strategy. These options, and the reasons for ruling them out, are described in brief below.

Business as usual describes the existing bus network. Operators are free to run any service, set their own fares and choose their own vehicles, subject to meeting safety and operating standards and applicable government policies such as Low Emission Zones. Evidence suggests that with this option, it is highly unlikely that the cycle of decline will be broken. SPT also anticipate that continuing with business as usual is unacceptable to most stakeholders and communities.

Voluntary partnerships are when bus operators and public sector partners come together to improve the bus network through agreeing, on a voluntary basis, to provide or deliver improvements to services and infrastructure or other local policies to support bus services. The option appraisal process found no evidence in the region to suggest that voluntary partnerships are likely to break the cycle of bus decline.

6. **To what extent do you support or oppose SPT's recommendation to rule out 'business as usual' and 'voluntary partnerships' for further consideration in the bus strategy?**
   Please select one for each option

	Rule out business as usual	Rule out voluntary partnerships
Strongly support	**X**	
Somewhat support		
Neither support nor oppose		
Somewhat oppose		**X**
Strongly oppose		
Don't know		

Local services franchising and Bus Service Improvement Partnerships

SPT is recommending that they begin work on local services franchising, in line with the requirements of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019. SPT is also recommending that they work with partners to develop Bus Service Improvement Partnerships while franchising is developed.

Local services franchising is a system that allows a Local Transport Authority to plan the bus network and to award exclusive rights to an operator to run certain bus services for a set period of time. Under this franchise framework, the Local Transport Authority then enters into franchise agreements with bus operators, generally awarded through competitive processes, to deliver the specified services and standards. SPT believes franchising offers the greatest certainty in delivering an improved bus network for the region in the long term.

Bus Service Improvement Partnerships (BSIPs) are a statutory partnership between a Local Transport Authority (or authorities) and one or more bus operators. This model differs from a voluntary partnership in that there is a legal basis for the Plan and Scheme(s) and, therefore, elements of the Plan and Scheme(s) can be enforced. SPT believes BSIPs play an important role in delivering key improvements for the bus network, including bus priority measures to improve reliability, ahead of implementing local services franchising.

7. **To what extent do you support or oppose SPT's recommendation to take forward local services franchising and BSIPs?**
Please select one for each option

	Take forward Local services franchising	Take forward BSIPs
Strongly support	X	
Somewhat support		
Neither support nor oppose		X
Somewhat oppose		
Strongly oppose		
Don't know		

Municipal bus company

SPT is proposing to further investigate the opportunity offered by the creation of a small-scale municipal bus operation to target provision in areas where there is a lack of commercial services or as an operator of last resort.

A **municipal bus company** is an operator of bus services owned by a Local Transport Authority. A municipal bus company can be formed from the purchase of an existing bus or coach company or the creation of a new company. Municipal bus companies compete for the market in the same way as privately owned bus companies.

8. **To what extent do you support or oppose SPT's recommendation to further investigate the opportunities offered by the creation of a small-scale municipal bus operation?**
   Please select one

X	Strongly support
	Somewhat support
	Neither support nor oppose
	Somewhat oppose
	Strongly oppose
	Don't know

9. If you wish, please use the box below to explain why you support or oppose any of SPT's recommendations.

Rule out business as usual	The Council's Glasgow Transport Strategy work and associated Case for Change highlights improvements required to bus in Glasgow, and sets out ambitious policy aspirations for a world-class public transport system in Glasgow. The Council has also published a bus governance routemap to explore alternative forms of bus governance. We also recognise however that there are many influencing factors in the decline of bus patronage including travel demand changes (many of which were already in motion before Covid-19) - changes in how / when / why people travel (particularly around retail and commuting). As per the Systra research for GCC and SPT in 2022, the Council acknowledges 'business as usual' is unlikely to deliver the GTS policy aspirations around a world-class public transport system. We would however question what "business as usual" means in the SPT SRBS work – arguably business as usual within Glasgow currently is the Glasgow City Region Bus Partnership, which is a Voluntary Partnership, and therefore overlaps with the option below on Voluntary Partnerships. We have therefore interpreted this "business as usual" option to mean a scenario where there is no Voluntary Partnership in place. GCC **Strongly Supports** SPT 's recommendation to rule out business as usual (on the assumption it does not include Voluntary Partnerships)
Rule out voluntary partnerships	GCC are concerned at the SRBS recommendation to rule out a Voluntary Partnership completely, and would request clarification in the wording that this should still be a short term option. This would support the continuation of the Glasgow City Region Bus Partnership, which has achieved improvements for bus passengers in recent years including growth of the integrated bus ticket Glasgow Tripper, capped fares and tap on tap off technology on some bus services, delivery of bus priority through signal enhancements on Paisley Road West via the BPF, and the current "Don't be a bus blocker" public

	awareness campaign. A new operations sub-group has also been set up to enhance communications between GCC and bus operations, and ensure events and roadworks better take into account the impacts on bus services – this group is chaired by GCC and is meeting monthly.
	It will take time for any other bus governance intervention to be implemented, particularly when there is currently no certainty over funding availability for these bus governance changes. GCC would argue it is in the best interests of bus passengers to continue the Glasgow City Region Bus Partnership and positive dialogue and partnership working within that, whilst other options are being explored by SPT. It should also be noted that a franchising system also relies on private sector provision.
	GCC **Somewhat Opposes** SPT 's recommendation to rule out Voluntary Partnerships completely, and would request amended wording to support voluntary partnership working in the short term until another option is in place, such as other aspirations in GCC's adopted Bus Governance Routemap like franchising.
Take forward local services franchising	The Council's Glasgow Transport Strategy work and associated Case for Change highlights improvements required to bus in Glasgow, and sets out ambitious policy aspirations for a world-class public transport system in Glasgow. The Council has also published a bus governance routemap to explore alternative forms of bus governance, including franchising.
	GCC **Strongly Supports** SPT's recommendation to commence work on bus franchising. As per the SPT and GCC co-commissioned work on bus governance options in 2022, franchising may be most effectively delivered at a regional level so we request clarification of use of the word "local" in this context. GCC also supports the potential use of revenue raising powers to be used by local authorities to assist in delivering long-term Transport Strategy aspirations like franchising.

Take forward BSIPs	The Council's Glasgow Transport Strategy work and associated Case for Change highlights improvements required to bus in Glasgow, and sets out ambitious policy aspirations for a world-class public transport system in Glasgow. The Council has also published a bus governance routemap to explore alternative forms of bus governance, including BSIP in the short-term.

It should be noted however that the funding context has changed significantly since the SPT SRBS work began and since GCC's bus governance routemap was published. The Scottish Government Budget end 2023 saw the Bus Partnership Fund paused for 2024/25, as well as capital funding for SPT removed. A key expectation for any BSIP is local authority investment in measures to support enhanced bus services from operators as part of any BSIP Scheme, and GCC currently has little funding to deliver improvements in 2024/25. GCC anticipates the Strategic Bus Network Plan work funded by BPF in 2022/23 and co-commissioned by SPT and GCC, to be of value in the development of any future BSIPlan.

GCC would also seek clarity from SPT on expectations over roles and responsibilities in taking forward BSIP in Glasgow (SPT or local authorities), as well as the appropriate spatial level.

GCC acknowledges that BSIPs are not likely to be a long-term strategy towards delivering a bus network which meets the requirements of the public and Glasgow's Transport Strategy, and believes that it should be clear that any potential BSIP should be short-term and time-limited.

Indeed, GCC believes that any potential BSIP should be considered as a time-limited mechanism to secure improvements to the city's bus network through partnership working, while work to progress franchising is taken forward concurrently. For the avoidance of doubt, it should be made clear that progressing franchising is the primary aspiration of the SRBS over the medium-term; that there should be no delay to the franchising process due to the initiation of a time-limited concurrent BSIP; and that should funding or resources require to be prioritised, then work to progress franchising should take precedence. |

	GCC also believes that any decision to progress a BSIP should be kept under close and regular review and that any BSIP should be subject to ongoing monitoring.
	GCC notes that any decision to take forward any BSIP would also be subject to funding being reinstated for local authority bus improvement investment and would require greater clarity over roles and responsibilities on taking forward BSIP in Glasgow. As such, **GCC neither supports nor opposes** SPT's recommendation to progress with BSIP arrangements. Further work is required to understand timelines of any BSIP work and associated outputs, to ensure it does not prejudice or distract from longer term aspirations to move towards franchising if that is the preferred option from SPT's SRBS. Wording in the SRBS should also be clear around time-limited BSIPs to allow monitoring of progress.
Further investigate municipal bus operations	The Council's Glasgow Transport Strategy work and associated Case for Change highlights improvements required to bus in Glasgow, and sets out ambitious policy aspirations for a world-class public transport system in Glasgow. The Council has also published a bus governance routemap to explore alternative forms of bus governance, including municipal bus operations.
	At this stage the full cost of running a Municipal Bus Company is unknown, and the SRBS report highlights "significant commercial risks to stakeholders and no certainty of success". As also noted in the report, any such company would be operating within the prevailing delivery model.
	GCC does not currently have the funding available to take this any further forward and will be interested in the outcomes of SPT's ongoing work on this topic, funded by the Community Bus Fund. GCC would also seek clarity from SPT on expectations over roles and responsibilities in taking forward municipal bus operations in the region – SPT and/or local authorities.
	GCC **Strongly Supports** the SPT recommendation to consider developing business cases for small-scale municipal bus companies, subject to clarity

	over roles and responsibilities in delivering these (SPT and/or local authorities).

10. Have you read any of the impact assessments that accompany the bus strategy consultation document?

X	Yes
	No
	Don't know

11. If you would like to make any comments on the impact assessments, please leave these below.

GCC broadly supports the impact assessment findings though would query the adverse effect findings on Voluntary Partnerships – see comments above on achievements already seen to date via the Glasgow City Region Bus Partnership which have benefitted bus passengers.

FINAL COMMENTS

12. Finally, if you have any further comments related to the consultation on the bus strategy recommendations, please enter them here.

Glasgow City Council welcomes the SPT work on a Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy. The Council would request a more active and collaborative role in the next stages of the work (beyond as a consultee) to ensure the interests of the Council are represented. The work should also better link with Clyde Metro as an overarching and integrated public transport concept in the city and region.

That's all of our questions. Thank you so much for your time.

Please submit this response through the online questionnaire or email to RTS@spt.co.uk