



Glasgow City Council

**Economy, Housing, Transport and
Regeneration City Policy Committee**

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

Contact: Kevin Argue

Item 3

22nd April 2025

BUS NETWORK WORKSTREAMS UPDATE

Purpose of Report:

To provide an update on the various bus related workstreams in Glasgow, including: the Bus Infrastructure Fund; Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy Consultation, Free Public Transport Pilot Scoping Study; and Bus Operators Co-ordination Group.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) Notes progress of bus network related activities in Glasgow; and
- (ii) Notes the current consultation on SPT's Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy.

Ward No(s):

Citywide: ✓

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

1 Background

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Committee with an update on the various workstreams related to bus network activity in Glasgow, including: the funding of infrastructure projects through the Bus Infrastructure Fund; the current Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy Consultation; the Free Public Transport Pilot Scoping Study; and the Bus Operators- Co-ordination Group.

2 The Bus Infrastructure Fund

- 2.1 The Scottish Government will launch a new Bus Infrastructure Fund (BIF) for 2025/26, focused on the delivery of bus priority and other bus infrastructure measures. The BIF aims to improve the attractiveness of bus services and replaces the Community Bus Fund and Bus Partnership Fund.
- 2.2 Transport Scotland are currently working through a process to assess budget allocations to Local Authorities for 25/26, which will be subject to final budget approvals through the Scottish Parliament and into the new financial year. Council Officers are continuing to engage with Transport Scotland regarding the design of the new Fund.
- 2.3 Initial options identified include continuing the work which was progressing through the previous Bus Partnership Fund and allocating funding directly to all councils through the General Capital Grant. It is anticipated that this new fund would be disseminated in a similar way to the Active Travel Infrastructure Fund Tier 1 funding, offering councils the flexibility to use the funding on a non-ring-fenced basis.
- 2.4 It should be noted that further details of the funding mechanism have still to be communicated by Transport Scotland.

3 Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy Consultation

- 3.1 Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) has commenced consultation on the draft Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy (SRBS). The aim of the strategy is to reverse the decline in bus use, increase bus attractiveness for use and ensure bus provides essential access for everyday journeys.
- 3.2 The draft bus strategy describes a future bus network that aims to deliver:
- Buses where they are needed, when they are needed
 - Reliable and quicker bus journeys
 - Affordable and attractive fares and ticketing
 - Accessible and safer bus journeys
 - A trusted and recognisable bus network

- A seamless and integrated bus network
 - A more environmentally sustainable, resilient and adaptable bus network fleet.
- 3.3 The draft bus strategy sets out a delivery plan, which includes a proposal to progress the development of bus franchising for the region, actions to deliver bus infrastructure and wider policies to support a 'bus friendly' environment.
- 3.4 Details of the draft strategy, supporting document and how to respond can be found at www.spt.co.uk/about-us/what-we-are-doing/regional-transport-strategy/bus-strategy/ The deadline for responding is **5pm Thursday 29 May 2025**. Once finalised, Officers response to this consultation will be shared with Elected Members and published to the transport pages of the Council website.
- 3.5 This consultation will inform the final version of the strategy, which is anticipated to be reported to SPT Partnership Board later in 2025. The Council, as a key stakeholder, will formally respond to this consultation.
- 3.6 SPT initially proposed a 'dual approach' to tackling the bus 'cycle of decline' which would have seen a Bus Service Improvement Partnership (BSIP) formed in the short-term to deliver key activities, particularly bus infrastructure and bus priority measures. It was anticipated that this would have been progressed whilst the long-term aim of developing bus franchising and implementation process was carried out.
- 3.7 However, the results of SPT's consultation with stakeholders and elected officials has demonstrated that there is limited support for this approach, particularly due to the resources required to carry out the formal statutory processes for a BSIP and the challenges for stakeholders to make legally binding commitments in a pre-franchising period.
- 3.8 In the development of the draft SRBS, an options appraisal was carried out which estimated the requirement of an investment of between £45m - £85m per annum additional revenue subsidy to deliver a regional franchise of a transformational nature would be required. This is currently unfunded. These costs exclude bus fleet and depot costs.
- 3.7 It should be noted, that SPT currently does not have the power to deliver these changes alone and will require the support of Transport Scotland and Local Authorities.
- 3.8 Glasgow City Council recognises the important, symbiotic relationship between SPTs major projects of the SRBS and Clyde Metro. It is imperative that these projects develop in tandem, since buses will be required to support any

emerging Clyde Metro network. Bus franchising will afford the opportunity to specify routes on key corridors without competing with Clyde Metro.

- 3.9 A franchised network, aligned and integrated with Clyde Metro will provide a significant boost in terms of accessibility, economic development potential and access to opportunities. Officers are therefore pursuing the imperative that any progress made towards bus franchising is properly aligned with the aspirations of Clyde Metro.

4 Glasgow City Regional Bus Partnership

- 4.1 For awareness, the Glasgow City Region Bus Partnership has recently reviewed its governance arrangements and appointed Dr George Hazel OBE as Independent Chair following the previous postholder, Joan Aitken OBE, stepping down.
- 4.2 Dr Hazel's extensive professional transport experience has seen him hold senior level roles in the public and private sectors, both domestically and internationally. He has previously served as an advisor to a range of organisations including Scottish Enterprise, the Scottish Council for Development and Industry, the Queensland State Government, the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Region, the City of San Diego, the World Roads Alliance and several UK Government agencies.
- 4.3 Glasgow City Council provides financial support to the Glasgow City Regional Bus Partnership and the Secretariat is provided by SPT. The Partnership is attended by all city region authorities and major bus operators. Glasgow City Council is represented on the Partnership Steering Group, which directs the activities of the Partnership through six newly-formed Task Working Groups, covering (i) Bus Projects, (ii) Network Management & Enforcement, (iii) Information & Data, (iv) Promotion & Events, (v) Anti-social Behaviour & Violence Against Women and Girls and (vi) Partnerships.

5 Free Public Transport Pilot Scoping Study

- 5.1 As reported to [Economy, Housing, Transport and Regeneration City Policy Committee 23rd April](#) 2024, the Council developed an option for a targeted, free public transport pilot in the city.
- 5.2 Officers commissioned a study to understand a potential scope for a free public transport pilot. Details of this can be accessed [here](#). At that time there was no budget available to undertake the pilot, however funding for this exercise was included in the 2025/26 Council budget.

- 5.3 Officers are currently working with key partners and stakeholders to explore options to deliver the pilot. Further information will be reported to members as the pilot develops.

6.0 Bus Operators Co-ordination Group

- 6.1 The Bus Operators Co-ordination Group was established in January 2024 with the objective of improving co-ordination of roadworks and other network activities to minimise the impact on bus services and to improve journey times and service reliability. The group consists of representatives from the major bus operators and is attended by key Council service areas (Roads, Sustainable Transport, Traffic Management, Parking Events, City Deal etc.) and SPT.
- 6.2 The Group meets regularly which has enabled key contacts to be established, assisting our ability to respond and react to network issues quickly and ensure delays are minimised. The main success of the group so far has been the ability to discuss programmes and priorities and how these would impact bus journeys. This pre-planning has allowed the council to reschedule and re-programme construction works following feedback from bus-operators as well as re-prioritise works taking bus priority into account, including the re-lining and signing of several major bus corridors in the last year.
- 6.3 In addition to above, Officers are undertaking separate discussions with SPT and the Scottish Roads Works Commissioner regarding the harnessing of available data and technology to supplement existing co-ordination processes. This would enable bus operators to be provided with more focussed and detailed information regarding the impact roadworks may have on bus operations.

7.0 SPT Funding

- 7.1 The Scottish Government budget process in December 2023 saw the withdrawal of capital funding to SPT for public transport improvements. The Council continues to liaise with SPT on this matter, and both parties recognize that this was a valuable funding source for bus infrastructure improvements in Glasgow annually.
- 7.2 SPT has advised that it is anticipated that funding will resume for 2025/26 and the Council awaits details of what funding will be provided. Subject to a successful funding award, a paper will be presented to Committee in due course to accept any funding that is received and provide details of the projects likely to be funded.

8 Policy and Resource Implications

Resource Implications:

<i>Financial:</i>	None.
<i>Legal:</i>	GCC Legal Services to conduct due diligence
<i>Personnel:</i>	No direct personnel issues
<i>Procurement:</i>	Any external resources will be procured through the Scotland Excel Framework

Council Strategic Plan: Deliver sustainable transport and travel aligned with the city region. **Mission 1, Grand Challenge 3.**

Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

<i>Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-25? Please specify.</i>	Generally supportive of the stated outcomes.
<i>What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?</i>	Positive impact
<i>Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage.</i>	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:

<i>Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify:</i>	Action 25 – Develop a Glasgow Bus Partnership Action 26 – Explore alternative options for bus delivery in Glasgow
<i>What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal?</i>	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 Not currently though commercial data shared by bus operators on bus service performance would be an issue in any future BSIP etc.

If Yes, please confirm that a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) has been carried out

9 Recommendations

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
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 - (ii) Notes the current consultation on SPT's Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy.