



9 February 2022

BY EMAIL

Provost David Kinniburgh
Argyll and Bute Council
Kilmory
Lochgilphead
Argyll
PA31 8RT

Email: chair@spt.co.uk

Dear Provost Kinniburgh

Transport for Strathclyde: A New Public Transport Network

I am writing to you as Chair of SPT, your Regional Transport Partnership, as I promised my board members, to seek your Council's support for the vision and direction set out in Transport for Strathclyde: A New Public Transport Network.

The Transport for Strathclyde (TfS) document, published in March 2021 (attached), was shared with all Council Leaders, Councillors, MSPs and key stakeholders in our area at the time of publication. It has since been discussed and endorsed on a cross-party basis by all the local authority elected representatives on SPT, covering all 12 of SPT's local authorities, as well as by the board's appointed members. SPT's board have agreed that the aims, vision and aspiration of Transport for Strathclyde should be adopted and developed through the statutory Regional Transport Strategy, but I am keen that your Council as a whole has the opportunity to express its view on our next steps.

At the heart of the TfS document is a desire I am sure we all share as local councillors, for a better public transport system for our residents; one the document describes in its ten tests, is a public transport system which is *available, accessible, affordable, ecologically and economically sustainable, integrated, efficient, reliable, safe and enjoyable*. The second part sets out 5 visions: One Network, Smart Network, Green Network, Affordable Network and Network for the Future - which encompasses some of the challenging issues which we all know well from our constituent's concerns.[1] The third and final part sets out the most difficult challenge - what we need to deliver those changes. We know public transport needs to change and we also know that by improving public transport, we can transform the quality of life in our communities - whether in towns and cities, or across the island and rural parts of the region.

It must be said that good work is going on through various partnerships, projects and policy ideas, nationally, regionally and locally, at your and neighbouring authorities[2] - but even that work needs an empowered and resourced regional transport authority to support and deliver any ambitious change. The delivery of transformative change, championing the most vulnerable communities in and across the boundaries of our local authorities, presents particular challenges and I believe a stronger regional transport authority, accountable to your Council and appropriately empowered can meet the aspirations of our communities and tackle the big transport issues of net zero and covid recovery.

My ask of you therefore please, is that you present this letter to your Council, coming as it does with a breadth of political support and invite your Council to take a collective and united view on the aims, vision and aspiration of Transport for Strathclyde. I hope then that your Council might confirm that it would welcome the development and promotion by SPT of a Transport for Strathclyde Act, developed and consulted upon with your Council members (whomsoever may be elected in May) as well as the residents and transport stakeholders of the West of Scotland to make sure SPT can deliver on your behalf a region at the forefront of public transport.

Mindful we are going into an election period, since I am not standing in the forthcoming elections, I would be happy to meet and assist in any way you think helpful and look forward to hearing from you and your Council.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Dr Martin Bartos
Chair, SPT
(Independent)

cc. Leader of Councils, Cllrs in the SPT region, SPT Board members, all MSPs and MPs

Footnotes:

[1] Whether it's finally getting multimodal journeys and ticketing integrated, or having a network smart and responsive enough to guarantee travel options for the most rural or excluded; whether it's decarbonising the network or finding fair ways to pay for it; or whether it's preparing for the changes the future holds - I think the TfS document recognises those concerns. Most of all there are various problems which arise relating to competition law which prevent many of the integration issues which elected members and residents would want changed - this arises while operators compete between each other wholly at the bus-stop, whereas with an arrangement which adjusts that, then the scope for a transport authority to take action on various issues becomes more straightforward.

[2] Over the last couple of years there have been many exciting announcements on transport policy, from free bus travel for under 22s and the fair fares review; from commitments for reduction in car mileage to large scale infrastructure like the Clyde Metro to provide new options; from bus partnership development with operators, to local pieces of infrastructure funded jointly by SPT and member councils - there is a lot going on and still much to do to deliver on local as well as national aspirations. At the same time COP26 reminded us we must act quickly to transform the way we travel and the pandemic has shown things can rapidly change whether or not we like it.