REGIONAL TRANSPORT PARTNERSHIPS

Develop to Deliver – 2023 Refresh

Maximising the Role of Regional Transport Partnerships in Furthering Improvements to Transport in Scotland

A report by the Chairs of the Regional Transport Partnerships of Scotland

November 2023

About this report

This report has been prepared by the Chairs of the Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs) of Scotland. It is a summary of work undertaken in seeking to 'refresh' the recommendations of the original 'Develop to Deliver' report* from 2015, and was approved by the Chairs at their meeting of 29 November 2023.

The report has not been approved by individual RTP Boards, and does not alter the policy content detailed in or status of each RTPs respective Regional Transport Strategy.

The report will be circulated to all relevant partners, and will be used to guide and progress future work by the RTP Chairs and their engagement with those partners, including the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland, COSLA, operators and others. Further information and background on the report is available from the RTP Lead Officers – contact mark.speed@tactran.gov.uk .

* https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/10266/sg-rtp-working-group-report-final-august-2015-pdf.pdf

Foreword – A New Future for Regional Transport Partnerships

Transport in Scotland is at a crossroads.

The challenges we face are significant: from addressing island connectivity and achieving a sustainable model for rural transport, through to widespread bus service withdrawals across our towns and cities.

Opportunities are there too. Our strategies, at national, regional and local levels are, for the first time, in almost complete alignment.

We know what we need to do. We just need to get on with doing it.

But there are many options and permutations of the path we need to take from that crossroads to get to the optimal results we all desire.

We believe that the Regional Transport Partnerships of Scotland hold the key to collectively guiding us down the right path.

There is no 'magic bullet', no 'one size fits all' solution to the transport issues we face. We all know that.

But the RTPs' unique and wide-ranging perspective - from the local to the strategic, cross-party, urban and rural – our partnership-focused approach, and crucially, capability to deliver, can give us a head-start in making a real positive difference for the people and communities we are here to serve.

The original "Develop to Deliver" report in 2015 set out a growth strategy for RTPs. When we had our first meetings as RTP Chairs after the May 2022 council elections, we realised we needed to take stock, revisit that report, refresh it, and set out an up-to-date vision of how RTPs could help in a much-changed world and address head-on the challenges our sector faces.

This 2023 Refresh sets out that vision.

We commend it to you, and hope that it triggers a transformation in strengthening RTPs to lead and support the right solutions for Scotland's transport challenges, working with our partners towards delivering the world-class sustainable transport system our communities want, need and deserve.

The Chairs of the Regional Transport Partnerships of Scotland

November 2023

Introduction and Context

Taking the conclusions of the original "Develop to Deliver" as its base, set out below are a series of recommendations and actions showing how the RTP Chairs believe the RTPs could further help improve transport in Scotland. Development of the report has been based on the range of significant work undertaken by RTPs and partners over recent years – from Regional Transport Strategies to development and delivery of projects on the ground. The recommendations are intended to stimulate discussion, accelerate progress and delivery, and to sit alongside and complement each RTP's Regional Transport Strategy.

The recommendations and actions of the 2023 Refresh are:

1. Co-ordinating action on reducing emissions

There is an opportunity for RTPs to play a stronger, co-ordinating role in reducing emissions, and accelerating climate adaptation and resilience, working with Transport Scotland, councils, operators, Electric Vehicle (EV) manufacturers and infrastructure providers, and others. RTPs can play an important role as a conduit between partners to deliver at a regional scale, bringing efficiencies and a complementary approach across boundaries. This approach will be especially important in infrastructure provision, in rural and island areas and areas of deprivation where, for example. enhanced support may be required.

Action: Through dialogue with Transport Scotland and others, the RTPs will seek a lead role in co-ordinating future actions on initiatives and infrastructure to reduce emissions to ensure maximum effects and an efficient approach.

Progress / Case Studies: SPT is working with partners through the Climate Ready Clyde Partnership and has established a transport resilience group to share best practice and work together to coordinate and align actions on adaptation. This has the potential to be replicated in other RTP areas to drive good practice and innovation. Similarly, Nestrans has signed the Aberdeen Climate and Nature Pledge. The pledge is a commitment by the organisations and people of the City of Aberdeen to act within their own organisations and lives to contribute towards the Net Zero Aberdeen Route map and Aberdeen Adapts Climate Adaptation Framework.

2. Delivering more effective and transparent, delivery-focused governance and roles and responsibilities

Building on the earlier findings of the NTS Roles and Responsibilities workstream, the recent report[1] by the Scottish Parliament's Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee, and work and consultation undertaken by RTPs in the recent preparation of their Regional Transport Strategies, the RTPs offer a potential route to lead and co-ordinate work to identify any required change in governance arrangements, roles and responsibilities in transport across Scotland, working with partners at national and local levels. This work would be focused on delivery of the Regional Transport Strategies, and will consider enhanced powers for the right partners where needed to ensure and accelerate that delivery.

Action: RTPs will seek to co-ordinate any future work on changes to transport governance / roles and responsibilities in their areas.

Progress / Case Studies: The report by the Scottish Parliament's Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee noted that: "The Committee supports a stronger Regional Transport

[1] https://sp-bpr-en-prod-cdnep.azureedge.net/published/NZET/2023/1/23/2c9752ff-eb3f-4273-8f78-e726676a3b6e/NZET062023R1.pdf

Partnership model to help enable positive behavioural change. RTPs should be empowered and resourced to be lead decision-takers on achieving a more joined up and strategic approach to public transport and active travel at regional level: one reflective of actual travel or commuting patterns, which do not stop at Council boundaries, and to achieve better integration on transport policy between member Local Authorities. This in turn requires RTPs to be higher profile, more transparent and more responsive organisations, with clearer processes for public engagement."

3. Transforming active travel

RTPs are supportive of the partnership model proposed as a result of Transport Scotland's Active Travel Transformation Programme (ATTP). We believe this will form the framework for greater regional co-ordination of active travel project development and delivery. With our experience, RTPs are ideally placed to lead on these partnerships as required, building on the successful Regional Active Travel Grant process and regional active travel strategies currently being developed. Working with our councils and others, we believe this approach will ensure delivery of regional active travel projects of a significantly enhanced scale to ensure effective and efficient utilisation of the expected big increase in active travel funding by Transport Scotland over coming years.

Action: RTPs to continue work with TS and others to ensure a robust, regional approach to the new partnership model of funding, developing and delivering active travel improvements.

Progress / Case Studies: Hitrans "Hi-Bike" system offers e-bikes to residents and visitors in Inverness and Fort William. It's easy, fun and comfortable, and allows the Scottish highlands to join the active transportation revolution by offering a sustainable new transit option for people to get around the two towns. Hi-Bike is available 24/7 and is perfect for commuting, errands, or recreation. At present, there are 11 bike stations and around 90 bikes available.

4. Helping make public transport more affordable

Current ticketing and fare structures are too complex and confusing, As we await the outcome of the Fair Fares Review, RTPs are in a key position to work collectively with operators and Transport Scotland on more affordable fares and integrated, multi-modal smart ticketing, in line with our respective Regional Transport Strategies. Specifically, and potentially utilising the provisions of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, and reflecting the continuing significant public sector investment in supporting bus services and infrastructure – and support during the pandemic - there is a real opportunity to grow bus patronage back to pre-Covid levels and beyond through working with operators on fares. Similarly, we believe there is the opportunity for innovative pathfinder projects to examine new ways to promote more affordable fares.

Action: Building on the outcomes of the Fair Fares Review when published, RTPs will seek to co-ordinate any action to reduce fares or offer incentives to travel in their respective areas.

5. Seizing the opportunity to ensure the true alignment of strategic transport and land-use planning

Through our statutory RTSs, and our formal role as 'key agencies' in the development planning and management process, RTPs are already working hard to achieve the much-longed for goal of integrated transport and land-use planning. This ambition has never been more important given our collective targets to reduce car travel, grow the use of public transport and active travel, and achieve such initiatives as 20-minute neighbourhoods. RTPs present an opportunity to strengthen regional involvement in planning and development, both in terms of

transport and land-use, through a 'co-production' approach to the development of Regional Spatial Strategies, working with councils and other partners.

Action: RTPs to seek discussion with the Scottish Government, local authorities and regional planning teams to establish a more effective framework in which economic growth, land use and transport can co-exist and more effectively align, and secure a co-production approach to development of Regional Spatial Strategies.

6. Working in partnership to Improve transport access to health and social care

RTPs remain committed to working with partners across the Scottish Government, NHS, local authorities, Scottish Ambulance Service, transport operators including the Community and Voluntary Transport sectors and representatives of patient groups to deliver improved transport outcomes for people accessing healthcare, and in particular those who find access most challenging. RTPs have recently delivered successful pilot schemes in this regard. However, we believe much more could be done, and believe we need to bring relevant partners together to focus on stepping up improvements and efficiencies in transport access to healthcare facilities.

Action: RTPs to request the Scottish Government convene a Transport Access to Health and Social Care Ministerial Group to help co-ordinate national, regional and local leadership and action.

Progress / Case Studies: A report[2] by MACS in 2019 made 27 recommendations on improving transport access to health and social care. The recommendations included:

- One organisation needs to take accountability for the lead strategic planning role to ensure ambulance, hospital, community and public transport provision meets demand and is accessible, available and affordable to all
- All local authorities should have an accessible transport strategy and targets, which encourages and facilitates more disabled people and older people being able to use public transport to attend medical appointments.

7. Ensuring our islands are better connected

The ferry services which ensure our islands remain connected are a genuine lifeline service for the people and businesses which need them. But the challenges facing the sector are significant, and there is regular negative coverage in the media of issue on our ferry network. RTPs have done their best to help in this area, but want to do more in supporting Transport Scotland, local communities, and operators to secure a sustainable future for our ferries.

Action: RTP Lead Officers to scope out an enhanced role for RTPs in this important area. This consideration should take place alongside the work to implement improved Governance of ferry services that has been committed to by Ministers through the Project Neptune process.

Progress / Case Studies: An example of the work RTPs are doing in this area is the collaboration between HITRANS, ZetTrans, Shetland Islands Council and Orkney Islands Council between 2013 and 2015 and the follow=on studies in Orkney and Shetland. The Shetland Inter Island Transport Study (SIITS), published in December 2016, was developed by Shetland Islands Council and ZetTrans. The study reviewed connectivity across the Shetland Islands and developed a Strategic Business Case for future of inter-island transport services and infrastructure covering 30 years. The study provided the basis for successfully

[2] https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/47020/subgroup-transport-to-health-report.pdf

securing additional funding for the costs of ferry services of £5.0 million in 2018/19 and a further £5.2 million for 2019/20 with the current funding sitting at £23 million in 2023/24.

To secure longer term funding for the running of services and the building of new infrastructure, Shetland Council and ZetTrans are undertaking an update of their 2016 study in the form of an Inter-Island Transport Connectivity Business Case to include detailed work on fixed links which will also contribute to considering solutions in addition to ferries in other areas of the Highlands and Islands.

8. Delivering for the freight sector

RTPs want to support the major freight operators and Transport Scotland to encourage the reduction of diesel mileage by 20% in line with Scottish Government aspirations, including the electrification of rail freight services and development of electric Heavy Goods Vehicles. The impact of Freeports on the 20% diesel mileage reduction aspirations and the costs associated with decarbonisation of the railway will be key factors to be considered as we progress these matters.

Action: RTPs will work with the freight sector, Transport Scotland and other partners to build on existing and promote more sustainable freight approaches including Consolidation Centres, Cyclelogistics, drone testing, and decarbonisation of fleets.

9. Promoting and delivering Demand Responsive Transport and Mobility as a Service

Mobility as a Service (MaaS) and Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) are and will play a crucial role over coming years to improve travel options for people including some of our most vulnerable passengers. It will be important that RTPs work with a range of transport and wider partners to identify, promote and implement best practice across Scotland while recognising different solutions will be required for different geographies and demographics. Strong leadership at a national and regional level will be critical to this process to drive progress and provide a clear pathway forward.

Action: RTPs are committed to playing their role in the promotion and delivery of MaaS and DRT and we are keen to improve engagement across the sectors and with Transport Scotland to establish an appropriate Framework on which to build progress.

Progress / Case Studies: There are examples of DRT across Scotland including Aberdeenshire's A2B Dial-a-Bus, SPT's MyBus and Fife Dial-a Ride. Combining DRT and MaaS has also been taken forward by HITRANS and Tactrans as part of a joint project. The RTPs received around £1 million of funding from the Transport Scotland MaaS Investment fund to implement MaaS trials which include key elements of modern DRT. To further develop these projects and turn the Maas concept into reality will require further investment but there is no doubt that MaaS and Digital DRT present a huge opportunity to reduce private car use and promote more sustainable travel in rural areas.

10. Sustaining air services

Protecting Scotland's air services including essential links to wider markets in England, UK and beyond is essential to the wellbeing of our communities. Internal flights are a lifeline service and must be protected and enhanced to ensure our rural and island economies can share in opportunities and prosperity. RTPs are a crucial voice in calling for more investment in air services and have the potential to be at the forefront of exploring innovative new technology to decarbonise the sector, stating with internal flights.

Action: RTPs would welcome a new partnership along with Transport Scotland, local authorities, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the aviation sector to support the growth of new decarbonised technologies to support the sector, grow Scotland's connectivity and meet the needs of its residents for access to services.

Progress / Case studies: Air links from and between Scotland's Islands make up the vast majority of Scotland's internal scheduled air services and provide islanders access to healthcare, employment, education and access to friends and family. Air services also deliver vital freight supplies essential to the viability of island communities. We often see air travel as being additional to our normal daily lives or link it in our minds with leisure travel but island air services including intra island services are integral to the daily life of islanders particularly those living on some of our most remote island communities. Looking further afield, access to slots at Heathrow Airport are essential to communities and economies including those for Inverness, Aberdeen, Dundee and the Western Isles, Shetland and Orkney to enable onward travel for people and goods to the wider world. It is recognised that air services must play their full part in efforts to decarbonise the transport sector, in-turn reducing the significant emissions currently experienced. The greatest opportunity to affect change in the medium term is to explore and develop low carbon and electric aircraft to serve internal flights. Progress is already being made in testing low carbon aviation solutions and the Highlands and Islands air networks offer real potential for a switch to low carbon solutions in the early stages of this journey.