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# NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

4 June 2024

## Cabinet

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<b>Title:</b>	<b>Strathclyde Partnership for Transport – Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy: Consultation on the Recommended Options for Improving our Future Bus Network</b>
<b>Purpose:</b>	To seek approval for the proposed North Ayrshire Council submission to Strathclyde Partnership for Transport consultation on the “Recommended Options for Improving our Future Bus Network”
<b>Recommendation:</b>	That Cabinet approves the submission of the proposed consultation response provided at Appendix Two.

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## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Regional Transport Partnership, Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT), has launched a public consultation on the Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy recommended options for improving our future bus network. The consultation sought views until 13 May 2024. An extension has been provided to the submission of the Council’s formal response. This report seeks approval for the proposed consultation response provided at Appendix Two.
- 1.2 The consultation consists of Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy (SRBS): A Consultation on the Recommended Options for Improving our Future Bus Network which follows the Options Development and Appraisal Process. Five options for the future delivery of the regional bus network were appraised. These were: Business As Usual; Voluntary Partnerships; Bus Service Improvement Partnerships; Local Services Franchising; and Municipal Bus Company. The consultation is seeking views on the options to be included for future delivery of the regional bus network.

## 2. Background

- 2.1 Bus services are a lifeline that many people heavily rely on, with around 70% of all public transport journeys in the Strathclyde region being taken by bus. They connect people to school, work, shops, services, family and friends alongside playing a significant role in tackling climate change, inequality and social isolation. Good quality, accessible bus services can contribute to improved places, healthier environments, town centre regeneration, inclusive economic growth, social inclusion and improved quality of life for communities.
- 2.2 Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) is the largest of the seven Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs) across Scotland. The SPT area comprises of the following council areas: East Dunbartonshire, East Ayrshire, East Renfrewshire, Glasgow City, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, South Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire, West Dunbartonshire and the Helensburgh and Lomond area of Argyll and Bute. SPT’s role involves planning and delivering transport solutions for all modes of transport across the region, in conjunction with the member Councils

and industry partners. SPT is central to the region's transport planning, funding and delivering socially necessary services, supporting capital investment and working in partnership to develop the transport system for now and the future.

- 2.3 SPT's work in developing the new Regional Transport Strategy reaffirmed significant concerns in terms of the efficiency, performance, affordability and overall sustainability of the bus network in Strathclyde. The development of the SRBS seeks to address these issues and aims to deliver a clear vision and strategy for the future of bus services in the region.
- 2.4 SPT's Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) was published in 2023 with a vision that "*The west of Scotland will be an attractive, resilient and well-connected place with active, liveable communities and accessible, vibrant centres facilitated by high quality, sustainable and low carbon transport shaped by the needs of all*". It noted that the RTS Vision will not be achieved without improving the quality and integration of the bus network. The Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 provides new powers to local transport authorities, including SPT, to improve local bus services, and these powers will be explored through development of the SRBS.
- 2.5 The need to develop a regional bus strategy was identified through the work undertaken to develop the RTS. The first stage of this was to prepare a case for change report that sets out why change in the bus network in Strathclyde is required. The case for change defined a set of objectives, and from these a set of core policies was developed to frame the strategy and inform the appraisal of options which will ultimately determine the strategy and its delivery.
- 2.6 Following the Case for Change report in December 2023 an Options Development and Appraisal process took place. Five options for future delivery of the regional bus network were appraised. These were: Business As Usual; Voluntary Partnerships; Bus Service Improvement Partnerships; Local Services Franchising; and Municipal Bus Company. The five options were appraised against a range of criteria including:
  - SRBS Policies of Level of Service, Affordability, and Service Quality;
  - Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) criteria: Environment; Climate Change; Health, Safety & Wellbeing; Economy; and Equality and Accessibility;
  - Implementation criteria of Feasibility, Affordability and Public Acceptability; and Risk and Uncertainty.
- 2.7 The five options and the outcome of their appraisal is summarised in Appendix One. Further details are also provided within SPT's A Consultation on the Recommended Options for Improving our Future Bus Network. Based on the findings of the appraisal process, the recommendations set out by SPT for the future delivery of the regional bus network are as follows:
  - Franchising – SPT should commence work on franchising, in line with the requirements of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019.
  - Bus Service Improvement Partnerships – SPT should progress with Bus Service Improvement Partnership (BSIP) arrangements 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.
  - 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.
  - Business As Usual and Voluntary Partnerships should be ruled out as means to

deliver a better bus network as more radical intervention as required.

2.8 The consultation period closed on 13 May 2024. An extension has been provided to the submission of the Council's formal response. This report seeks approval for the proposed consultation response provided at Appendix Two. Key points from the consultation response include:

- Recognising that the existing bus services in North Ayrshire and across the wider region are not delivering for passengers or wider society.
- Outlining the challenges faced by rural Authorities and communities.
- Noting the limited influence of Councils on commercial bus service delivery by private operators.
- Highlighting that a voluntary partnership could offer several benefits including improved service coordination and enhanced service quality.
- Strongly supporting ruling out the further consideration of a business as usual approach in the strategy.
- Opposing the ruling out of further consideration of voluntary partnerships in the strategy.
- Strongly supporting further consideration in the bus strategy of local services franchising and Bus Service Improvement Partnerships (BSIPs).
- Supporting further investigation of the opportunities offered by the creation of a small-scale municipal bus operation in the strategy.
- Highlighting that any future proposals may have a financial impact on the Council and proposing that additional funding should be made available through Scottish Government/Transport Scotland to support delivery of the strategy.
- Noting that North Ayrshire is supportive of exploring alternative operating models to ensure that our communities are well connected and not disadvantaged due to a lack of sufficient public transport.

2.9 Following completion of this consultation period, SPT will work with their consultants to analyse the consultation feedback and consider if any changes should be made to the recommended approach. Thereafter, they will develop the full bus strategy, working closely with local authority partners to conclude the remaining work packages, namely:

- Strategy Development & Consultation
- Finalise Strategy & Delivery Plan
- Strategic Business Case
- Strategic Advisor – Bus Reform and Organisational Change

2.10 The SRBS is on programme and SPT currently anticipates that it will be completed by Summer 2025.

### **3. Proposals**

3.1 That Cabinet approves the formal submission of the consultation response provided at Appendix Two.

### **4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty**

#### **Financial**

4.1 There are no direct impacts from this report.

#### **Human Resources**

4.2 None at this stage.

### **Legal**

4.3 None at this stage.

### **Equality/Socio-economic**

4.4 The development of a Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy (SRBS) will potentially provide a mechanism for introducing a fit for purpose and inclusive transport network for the area thereby reducing socio-economic disadvantage and transport poverty.

### **Climate Change and Carbon**

4.5 The SRBS aligns with the Council's Sustainable North Ayrshire Strategy workstreams of Energy and Transport by potentially reducing emissions and encouraging low carbon behaviours in relation to energy use and supporting low carbon methods of travel. Furthermore, it aligns with the Council's commitment to reduce carbon emissions through our declaration of a Climate Emergency.

### **Key Priorities**

4.6 Strathclyde Partnership for Transport is seeking views on the recommended options for improving our future bus network. This will align with the Council's mission of working together to improve the lives of our people in North Ayrshire. It will contribute to several of the Council Plan priorities that focus on Wellbeing, Communities and Local Democracy, Climate Change, and a Sustainable Council.

### **Community Wealth Building**

4.7 The Inclusive Growth Diagnostic identified transport as a barrier to inclusive growth at a local level. The development of a SRBS is vital to local communities and delivering inclusive growth and Community Wealth Building.

## **5. Consultation**

5.1 SPT has committed to engaging with stakeholders and the public to actively shape the SRBS recommend options for improving our future bus network. The consultation has been promoted by North Ayrshire Council and the Trinity Active Travel Hub via social media channels. The proposed response was informed by an Elected Members' briefing session on 14 May 2024 and cross Service engagement.

RUSSELL McCUTCHEON  
Executive Director (Place)

For further information please contact **Claire Fitzsimmons, Interim Senior Manager – Regeneration** on **01294 315305**.

### **Background Papers**

Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) A Call to Action: The Regional Transport Strategy for the west of Scotland 2023-38 (RTS)

Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy – Case for Change

Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy – Options Appraisal Report

Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy – A Consultation on the Recommended Options for Improving our Future Bus Network.

## Appendix One

The following table summarises the five options for future delivery of the regional bus network:

Delivery Model	Description	Rationale for considering option
Business as Usual	Business as usual is the way the bus network is delivered now.	This option allows other options to be compared against the current situation to understand the difference in costs and benefits that may be delivered through organising the bus market differently.
Voluntary Partnership	Bus operators and public sector partners may 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. There is no legal basis or enforcement mechanism for voluntary partnerships and parties can leave the partnership at any time.	This option is available to Local Transport Authorities and bus operators, either working together or on an operator-only basis, and has not been discounted through any previous work by SPT.
Bus Service Improvement Partnership (BSIP)	A BSIP is a formal partnership between a Local Transport Authority* (or Authorities) and one or more bus operators. In the model, the Local Transport Authority* is responsible for making a Partnership Plan and Scheme (or Schemes), which are developed and agreed with bus operators and other relevant partners. The Plan sets out policies and objectives to be achieved through the BSIP and the Scheme (or Schemes) imposes service standards on operators and specifies the facilities to be provided or measures to be taken by the LTA to support the bus network. This model differs from a voluntary partnership in that there is a legal basis for the Plan and Scheme and, therefore, elements of the Scheme can be enforced.	This option is available to Local Transport Authorities under the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, and has not been discounted through any previous work by SPT.
Local Services Franchising	Local services franchising is a system that allows a Local Transport Authority* to award exclusive rights to an operator to run certain bus services for a set period. In Scotland, the Local Transport Authority* must first put in place a	This option is available to Local Transport Authorities under the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, and has not been

	franchise framework setting out what local services are to be provided, the standards to which the services are to be provided, and any additional facilities or services that are to be provided. Under this franchise framework, the Local Transport Authority* then enters into franchise agreements with bus operators, awarded through competitive processes, to deliver the specified services and standards.	discounted through any previous work by SPT.
Municipal bus company	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. Currently, there are no municipal bus companies in the SPT area.	This option is available to Local Transport Authorities under the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, and has not been discounted through any previous work by SPT.

*\*Note: The Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 defines a "Local Transport Authority\*" as either (a) a local authority; or (b) the Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority.*

The following tables provide a summary of the appraisal of the options undertaken by SPT's consultants:

# APPRAISAL CRITERIA

## OPTIONS

BUSINESS AS USUAL

VOLUNTARY PARTNERSHIP

BSIP

FRANCHISING

MUNICIPAL BUS OPERATIONS

APPRAISAL CRITERIA	BUSINESS AS USUAL	VOLUNTARY PARTNERSHIP	BSIP	FRANCHISING	MUNICIPAL BUS OPERATIONS
Improve service quality	"	"			10
Increase affordability of the busnetwork	"	"			10
Reliability and punctuality	"				"to
Network identity			10		10
Ticketing	""				""to
Interchanges and bus stops					10
Information					to
Customer support and feedback					10
Change to services					to
Vehicles and depots					to
Drivers					to
Safety and security		-			to

TPOs

APPRAISAL CRITERIA		OPTIONS				
		BUSINESS AS USUAL	VOLUNTARY PARTNERSHIP	BSIP	FRANCHISING	MUNICIPAL BUS OPERATIONS
STAG criteria	Customer charter					to
	Data and monitoring		10	10		10
	Environment					10
	Climate change					10
	Health, safety and wellbeing					to
	Economy					to
	Equality and accessibility		x			to
Feasibility		Minor consideration	Moderate consideration	Major consideration	Moderate consideration	
Affordability	Minor consideration	Moderate consideration	Major consideration	Major consideration	Moderate consideration	
Public acceptability	Moderate negative consideration	Moderate negative consideration	Moderate positive consideration	Major positive consideration	Minor positive consideration	
Indicative peakvehicle requirements			+200 vehicles	+260 vehicles		
Indicative additional annual bus kms			+8-10m	+20-25m		



APPRAISAL CRITERIA	OPTIONS				
	BUSINESS AS USUAL	VOLUNTARY PARTNERSHIP	BSIP	FRANCHISING	MUNICIPAL BUS OPERATIONS
<b>Total fare revenue benefits per annum</b>		£0-2m	-£6m to-£4m	£5-7m	-£6m to -£4m
Estimated MEC benefits per annum (2024 prices)		£0-2m	£5-7m	£8-10m	£5-7m
<b>Indicative additional annual operating costs<sup>19</sup></b>			+£20-40m	+£50-80m	-
<b>Indicative required subsidy</b>			+£40-60m	+£45-8Sm	-
<b>Estimated additional bus journeys per annum</b>		0-5m	20-25m	35-40m	20-25m
<b>Deliverability and acceptability risks</b>	Low	Low		Medium	Medium
<b>Complexity of operation</b>	Low	Low		High	High
<b>Timescales and program risks</b>	Short-term No program risk	Short to medium-term Some program risk, mitigated by low ambition	Short to medium-term Some program risk, mitigated by modest ambition	Medium to long-term High program risk due to uncertainty of process	Medium to long-term High program risk due to uncertainty of process



## 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.

### This survey

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 13<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto: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*

North Ayrshire Council
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**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
	Glasgow City
	Inverclyde
x	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:	David Hilditch
Job title:	Interim Active Travel and Transport Manager
Email:	dhilditch@north-ayrshire.gov.uk

## 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.

### 1.1.1.1 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		

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

### 1.1.1.3 *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*

	Strongly support
X	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.**

<p>Rule out business as usual</p>	<p>In Strathclyde, bus services are a lifeline that many people heavily rely on, with around 70% of all public transport journeys in the region being taken by bus. Fewer people overall however are using bus. With bus fares, nationally, increasing in real terms by 25% in the past 10 years whilst the cost of motoring fell by 5% in real terms. This makes conditions more difficult for people who are dependent upon bus travel and makes bus even less attractive for anyone who can use alternative transport. In the current system, operators are under increasing pressure to concentrate on more profitable routes (and less on more marginal but essential services).</p> <p>The Council recognises that the existing bus services in North Ayrshire and across the wider region are not delivering for passengers or wider society within Strathclyde. We are experiencing a substantial level of bus service and network contraction under the current operating model for the provision of bus services. As these services are run on a commercial basis by private operators, the Council has limited scope in influencing their delivery. The Council notes recent case for change report by SPT indicating some key issues including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Above inflation increases to bus fares</li> <li>• Sustained patronage decline</li> <li>• Shrinking network coverage</li> <li>• Congestion induced delays</li> </ul> <p>We would also highlight the challenges of delivering bus services for island and rural communities in North Ayrshire and across the wider SPT area, due to the lower population densities, longer distances between destinations and higher operational costs.</p> <p>We would agree that continuing with business as usual does not address the current decline and poor level of service. Therefore, we strongly support the proposal to rule this out.</p>
<p>Rule out voluntary partnerships</p>	<p>A voluntary partnership could offer several benefits between local authorities and bus operators:</p>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved Service Coordination: By collaborating, local authorities and bus operators can better coordinate routes and schedules, leading to more efficient and comprehensive service coverage.</li> <li>• Enhanced Service Quality: Cooperation can lead to improvements in service quality, including better-maintained vehicles, cleaner facilities, and more responsive customer service.</li> <li>• Increased Ridership: A well-coordinated partnership can make public transportation more attractive to passengers, leading to increased ridership and reduced congestion on roads.</li> <li>• Community Engagement: Involving both local authorities and bus operators in decision-making processes can help ensure that the needs and preferences of the community are considered and addressed.</li> <li>• Innovation and Adaptation: Collaboration can foster innovation in public transportation, such as the integration of new technologies for ticketing, scheduling, and route optimization.</li> </ul> <p>Overall, a voluntary partnership between local authorities and bus operators can lead to a more efficient, reliable, and sustainable public transportation system that benefits both the community and the environment.</p> <p>Entering a voluntary partnership would have limited financial impact on the Council. However as noted in the consultation there would be no legal requirements on either party which could be problematic.</p> <p>Whilst we would not necessarily envisage voluntary partnerships being a long-term solution, there is merit in its continuation whilst other proposals are phased in, hence we ‘somewhat oppose’ the proposal to rule this out.</p>
<p>Take forward local services franchising</p>	<p>The North Ayrshire Inclusive Growth Diagnostic identified transport as a barrier to inclusive growth and in particular as a limiting factor to and preventing people from accessing employment and training opportunities. Several contributing factors were identified including the: frequency of transport; connections between transport modes; cost; and shift patterns exacerbating transport constraints. Halting the decline in patronage and improving service provision is therefore vital to local communities, inclusive growth and supporting modal shift to sustainable travel.</p>

	<p>The proposal to take forward local services franchising is welcomed. This will enable those who are closest to communities and best placed to understand their needs are provided with the tools to address them through the provision of required services. To ensure best value and value for money, it is important that services can be packaged to balance surplus and subsidy across the bus network within the area. To provide a sustainable and planned approach to the shift in provision to meet the needs of communities will require additional funding to establish services to support new and increased patronage.</p> <p>Although there may be a financial impact on the Transport Authority (which could be either SPT or the Council) we would strongly support taking forward local services franchising. We would however propose that additional funding should be made available through Scottish Government/Transport Scotland to support this.</p>
<p>Take forward BSIPs</p>	<p>Similar to a voluntary partnership, Bus Service Improvement Partnerships (BSIPs) could deliver multiple benefits to a) leading to a more efficient, reliable, and sustainable public transportation system that benefits both the community and the environment. BSIPs offer potential to deliver greater information provision, a more consistent standard of service across the region and improved ticketing. However as indicated in the report, an ambitious BSIP, though, is heavily dependent on funding availability and is likely to require substantial new investment for operating and infrastructure improvements. A key long-term challenge with BSIPs is that they do not provide any certainty that service improvements will continue after the BSIP agreements expire, even if the public sector infrastructure investment has been delivered.</p> <p>Some initial discussions have taken place between the three Ayrshire authorities and SPT to discuss options for establishing a Bus Services Improvement Partnership. We are keen for these discussions to progress and for alternative operating models to be explored as appropriate.</p> <p>Although there may be a financial impact on the Council, we would strongly support taking forward BSIPs. We would however propose that additional funding should be made available through Scottish Government/Transport Scotland to support this.</p>

<p>Further investigate municipal bus operations</p>	<p>Previous North Ayrshire Council administrations have strongly advocated for improved bus service provision for example through municipalised bus services. Following the enactment of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, and SPT proposing the development of the SRBS, it was considered prudent for this to be investigated through the SRBS rather than locally within North Ayrshire.</p> <p>Although there would be a financial impact on the Transport Authority (either SPT or Council) we would strongly support investigating municipal bus operations further. We would however propose that additional funding should be made available through Scottish Government/Transport Scotland to support this.</p> <p>We would strongly note that there are significant operational, logistical and financial considerations that would require to be taken into account by the Local Transport Authority considering a municipal bus operation. This could include operator licencing, garage premises, specific arrangements for registration of vehicles/services, driver hours regulations, TUPE staffing arrangements, staffing requirements, financial aspects (wages, insurance, PLI), GDPR, union arrangements etc. We would therefore welcome detailed discussion on which organisation the most appropriate operating transport authority would be and consideration of the most appropriate scale of operations.</p>

**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.**

We note that the option appraisal process has been informed by the following impact assessments:

- Equality Impact Assessment
- Fairer Scotland Duty Impact Assessment
- Island Communities Impact Assessment
- Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment

We welcome the assessments carried out to inform this process and are satisfied that the needs of our island communities will be taken into account during this process.

## FINAL COMMENTS

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

Regarding the new provisions included within the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, the existing arrangements for the provision of bus services is not working in many areas, particularly in North Ayrshire. Currently these services are run on a commercial basis by private operators and, as such, the Council has limited scope in influencing their delivery. The Regional Transport Partnership, Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT), supports socially necessary bus services where there is no provision, by commercial bus operators. Funds however are limited and therefore we appreciate the need to carefully consider the number of passengers who are likely to use a service, the cost per passenger carried and whether there are other public transport options available before deciding whether they can subsidise a service.

The North Ayrshire Inclusive Growth Diagnostic identified transport as a barrier to inclusive growth at a local level. The provision of high-quality opportunities for public transport for everyday journeys is vital to local communities and delivering inclusive growth and Community Wealth Building. North Ayrshire is therefore keen to explore other operating models to ensure that our communities are well connected and not disadvantaged due to a lack of sufficient public transport.

North Ayrshire Council launched Scotland's first Community Wealth Building strategy in 2020. One of the 5 pillars within the strategy is plural ownership of the economy which advocates for more diverse range of business models with greater local/community ownership invested in the local economy. Business models advocated include cooperative, social enterprise, employee owned and municipalisation. These models have proved to be more resilient to economic shocks and consideration of further support to encourage these models would be welcomed. We have also declared a Climate Emergency and do not wish to see a rise in private car ownership and vehicle kilometres due to the public transport network not meeting the needs of our communities.

Rural and island communities face different challenges to those within urban areas due to the constraints of delivering bus services in these areas due to the lower population densities, longer distances between destinations and higher operational costs. These challenges are evidenced by the contraction of commercial bus services in our rural areas, particularly the Garnock Valley and the full service on the Isle of Arran being subsidised by SPT. Limited transport options in these areas can result in dependence on cars, poor access

to services, facilities and employment opportunities and social isolation. The Strategy should therefore consider the full range of operating models to address these challenges.

We are therefore fully supportive of the work being undertaken to progress a SRBS and will continue to engage in its development.

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](mailto:RTS@spt.co.uk)*