



Public Social Partnership: SPT Community Transport



Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) is the Regional Transport Partnership (and Public Transport Authority) for the west of Scotland, established by the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005, covering 11 full council areas and part of one other. Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs) were established by the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 with the purpose of delivering and co-ordinating transport solutions which were cross-boundary, multi-modal, and partnership focused.

Background

SPT sees community transport (CT) providers as an essential part of future public transport provision, especially in times of financial constraint, which will see the demand for socially necessary and community transport provision continuing to grow against the backdrop of an ageing population.

They have clearly recognised the importance of a strong Community Transport sector and, as well as providing significantly financial support to the sector, sought to strengthen the sector by launching the West of Scotland Community Transport Network in March 2013. The Network is a partnership between SPT and the CT sector in the West of Scotland and has been established to assist in bringing coordination, enhanced quality and better uses of resources within CT. The two main roles of the network are to (i) Develop existing provision within the sector and encourage new initiatives; and (ii) Provide a membership organisation through which advice, support and training can be delivered.

In delivering these aims, the network seeks to:

- Work in partnership with CT providers at a local and regional level;

- Enable improved outcomes for service users and increasing social value for the local community;
- Developing sustainable transport services;
- Build the capacity of community transport in the SPT area;
- Provide training and information to providers;
- Develop and implement best practice and quality standards in the delivery of community transport; and
- Support network members by providing links to other members for the purpose of sharing resources and information

To ensure that the Network is an effective partnership between SPT and the professional community transport sector in the West of Scotland, a Steering Group has been established that oversees its development. The group is chaired by SPT and comprises of representatives from Community Transport Operators that SPT currently fund and The Community Transport Association in Scotland.

During conversations between SPT and the Network members, it was agreed that the overall aims of the network can be achieved and strengthened, as well as developing and improving socially necessary demand responsive transport

(DRT) services, through the development of a Public Social Partnership.

Scope & Focus

Several proposed projects were identified by SPT for potential inclusion in the Public Social Partnership. As SPT, and the network members, were new to the PSP model, it was agreed that the initial scope should be limited to those projects that were essential to the development and future success of the CT sector. Remaining focused in this way would allow all partners to learn and develop throughout the process, with the potential to use the PSP model to a greater extent in future.

As a result, two workstreams were identified and agreed as the focus of this initial PSP:

- **Delivery of SPT's MyBus Services** - SPT's Demand Responsive Transport service which provides door-to-door transport and low-floor, wheelchair-friendly buses meaning that it can be used by all members of the community including areas not served by regular public transport services. It is available to the public but due to mobility issues of the users who travel it is a bookable bus service taking people directly from their home to their destination, and can be used for a number of activities including shopping, visiting friends, attending local clubs, doctor appointments and hospital visits. This workstream focuses on the design and development of innovative DRT solutions that can be tested and piloted before being tendered. This will ensure that the service is 'future-proofed' to deal with the expected increase in demand as a result of self directed support and demographic change.
- **CT Capability & Capacity Growth** - focusing on mitigating an impending gap in skills provision through driver training, volunteering and employment, building the IT infrastructure to enable more efficient scheduling of community transport and mapping the capacity and capability of the CT sector in the West of

Scotland. This workstream will seek to ensure that volunteering provides opportunities to those who are long-term unemployed, looking at a change of career, those returning to the workplace and younger people looking to develop new skills.

Implementation

Following an initial meeting in April 2013, a considered and structured approach was adopted by the SPT lead to ensure the foundations for the PSP were clearly articulated. In the intervening period, twelve partners have committed to participating in and contributing to the PSP. In addition to SPT, they include:

- Community Transport Association Scotland
- Rural Development Trust (South Lanarkshire)
- RSVP (East Renfrewshire)
- Community Transport Glasgow (Glasgow)
- Getting Better Together (North Lanarkshire)
- Coalfields Community Transport (East Ayrshire)
- RVS Clydesdale
- RVS Renfrewshire
- British Red Cross (Ayrshire & Arran)
- Ailsa Horizons (South Ayrshire)
- Kyle Community Transport (South Ayrshire)

The key activities which have been undertaken by SPT and the provider partners to date can be summarised as follows:

- **Obtaining Stakeholder Buy-in:** A significant level of focus was placed on ensuring that all key stakeholders were aware of the PSP model, the opportunities it presented, and how it could be adopted. This process resulted in buy-in both internally, at executive level within SPT, and externally, with the Community Transport Network.
- **Understanding and Defining Scope:** Following the initial engagement and agreement of stakeholders, an options paper was developed to identify and compare a number of potential projects which could form the PSP, including volunteer car schemes and non-emergency

ambulance transport. Following this assessment, it was agreed that potential projects would be phased, with immediate focus given to the development of the MyBus service and capability building within the sector.

- **Agreeing Governance:** It was agreed by all parties that the Community Transport network steering group would be best placed to act as the governance group for the PSP. This ensured that those responsible for setting the strategic governance were identified at an early stage, with representation shared between SPT and third sector partners in the spirit of equal partnership.
- **Set up of working group:** Following the creation of the PSP governance structure, a working group was formed with volunteer representatives from a range of partner organisations. This group worked together to develop an initial project plan and draft Memorandum of Understanding which will underpin the principles of the partnership, set clear objectives, and assign roles and responsibilities to respective partners.
- **Appointing a Project Coordinator:** The appointment of a project coordinator was successfully made in March 2014. This injected further resource into the PSP, allowing the team to accelerate progress against the initial project plans and timescales.
- **Tender and Launch of a Community Transport Mapping exercise:** A detailed exercise to map the capability, capacity and skills base of the community transport sector in the west of Scotland was launched in March 2014. This exercise will provide the evidence base which will underpin the capability enhancement workstream within the PSP, and will identify the training and development opportunities which need to be implemented to support the growth of the sector.

Key Challenges

The Public Social Partnership process can be complex, and it is not a quick fix to issues facing public services. It should be expected that partners will face a number of challenges throughout the process. In the case of the Community Transport PSP, the challenges addressed have included:

- **Identifying dedicated Resource:** It is essential that a PSP has a focused Project Manager who is able to commit to driving forward the project on a full-time basis. This will ensure that there is a firm grip on progress against activities, and that risk and issues are identified quickly and managed effectively. It will also ensure that pace is maintained throughout. SPT were clear that this challenge could not be overcome by allocating a portion of an individual's time to the PSP, and so focused on recruiting a PSP coordinator on a full-time basis to lead the development of the PSP.
- **Stakeholder Buy-in:** Obtaining stakeholder buy-in at the earliest possible stage was essential to building the foundations for a successful PSP. This included engaging with legal and procurement representatives to raise awareness of the PSP model and the planned activity but also to understand the different legal and procurement considerations which Regional Transport Providers must take into account. The PSP approach could then be shaped to reflect this.
- **Balancing ambition with realism:** Lead organisations within this, and many PSPs, are understandably eager to address a wide range of issues through their PSP. It is important that this ambition is tempered with a realistic assessment of what is achievable and when. SPT – as noted above - overcame the temptation to broaden scope at the earliest stage by phasing potential projects over a number of years.

Outcomes

Whilst this PSP is still in the early stages of development, it is clear that a number of benefits will be derived throughout the process. Such benefits include:

- **In-depth understanding of the market:** The current exercise focused on documenting and defining the capability and capacity of the Community Transport sector will deliver significant benefits over the coming years. Training will be designed in response to the outputs of this work, allowing it to be focused and tailored towards addressing key issues rather than generic. It will also help focus partners' minds as to where provision needs to be stimulated in response to increasing demands.
- **Increased Capability & Capacity:** The capacity building workstream will be integral to both the success of the PSP and the future sustainability of the community transport sector in the West of Scotland. By identifying and addressing the training requirements of providers, staff and volunteers, the capacity and capability of the provider group will be enhanced. This will lead to increased provision and quality of services and will also mitigate an impending gap in driver provision as a result of enhanced training programmes.
- **Responding to Changing Demand:** Both demographic change and the implementation of Self-Directed Support (SDS) are expected to have a significant impact upon demand for MyBus and community transport services. The PSP has recognised this, and through careful planning and service re-design, will implement more effective and efficient services which respond to this demand and help individuals achieve their outcomes.

Critical Success Factors

A number of activities have been undertaken by SPT and the partnership to date which have been

essential in facilitating the progress made so far, and will be critical to the future success of the PSP:

- **Deep understanding of the issues:** The partners involved within the PSP, which includes the Community Transport Association Scotland and a range of CT providers, means that there is a wealth of knowledge and understanding of the key issues facing community transport and the actions needed to help resolve them. This greatly increases the probability of success in designing better services.
- **Equal representation:** The PSP has been highly inclusive, with a broad number and range of providers involved. This enables those with a clear contribution a role to play, and allows differing levels of involvement for smaller providers with lower levels of resource.
- **Clear scope:** As noted earlier in this case study, the scope of the PSP was clearly defined and agreed at an early stage, and this has helped the partnership to remain focused on the future vision and goals they are seeking to achieve, without becoming 'bogged down' trying to achieve too much, too soon.

Future Ambitions

The PSP is now expected to pick up pace following the appointment of a coordinator. This will allow full focus on future activity, with significant levels of activity planned. The next steps outlined for the partnership to address are:

- **Signed Memorandum of Understanding:** It is clear that partners within the PSP are highly committed to this process. This commitment has been documented with the draft MoU which has been created, and will be underlined once all partners have signed the document.
- **Understanding Outcomes:** The partnership will commence work on identifying the outcomes they are aiming to achieve through this process

for service users, the community transport sector, and the partnership itself. This will be done through a mixture of logic modelling and engagement with providers and those who use current services.

- **Agree baseline and agree opportunities:** Once the mapping exercise has been completed and

signed off, there will be a documented and detailed baseline of how community transport is currently delivered. This will be used to identify priority opportunities for change and improvement and will support the detailed design of future services.

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