

**MEMBERSHIP OF TRANSPORTATION PARTNERSHIPS**

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**1. Summary**

The purpose of this paper is to allow the Group to consider the arguments for the Council to be formally tied to one or other, or indeed both of the Regional Transport Partnerships, with which we are currently associated voluntarily.

**2. Recommendations**

That the Group ask the Strategic Policy Committee to consider the following options for involvement in transportation partnerships, with the Group's recommendation that the Council should proceed on the basis of option 2.1.

- 2.1 The Council area in its entirety is associated with the HITRANS partnership.
- 2.2 The Council's Area is part of the HITRANS partnership with the exception of the Helensburgh and Lomond Area, which would seek to participate as part of the WESTRANS partnership.
- 2.3 The Council's membership is divided between HITRANS and WESTRANS, with OLT and MAKI linking with HITRANS and B & C and H & L linking with Westrans.

**3. Background**

- 3.1. The Scottish Executive recently issued a White Paper on the subject of Scotland's Transport, which clearly states that the Executive intend to press forward with the creation of statutory Transport Partnerships as being the preferred way of delivering Transport improvements across the country. As these areas will have statutory duties an area cannot be represented in more than one partnership.
- 3.2 The White Paper makes it clear that there will be a period of consultation with local authorities and partnerships, probably commencing during August, where views will be sought as to where the boundaries of these partnerships should be drawn, and the duties and powers which the partnerships should assume.
- 3.3 The paper is brought to the Committee for it to debate the issues involved and the choices available, and to come to a view on the best way forward for the Council in advance of this formal consultation.
- 3.4 At their meeting on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> July, the Policy Development Group considered the issue, and their recommendation to the Committee would be to pursue the first option, membership of HITRANS for the entire Council area.

#### **4. Options**

- 4.1 If the Council opts to take membership of only one partnership, then it's influence in that unit is strengthened, on the basis of the voting rights described in the white paper, and its clear commitment to the body. The corollary to this is that membership of two partnerships must dilute the Council's influence in each.
- 4.2 Transportation and Planning issues are closely linked through land use policies. Membership of a single partnership means that the local plan boundary would be coterminous with the Transportation Boundary.
- 4.3 Given the comparatively large proportion of the Argyll and Bute population resident on islands or peninsulas, with their dependence on lifeline ferry services, the area has more commonality in terms of the transportation issues it faces, with the island populations in the HITRANS area. Than the principally urban problems of WESTRANS. It is possible that the former may wish in time to take a more direct role in the strategic decision making as regards ferry services, and so this Council, with its large number of routes, should seek to maximise it's influence in this area and to encourage HITRANS to pursue the acquisition of greater powers at a strategic level.
- 4.4 Argyll and Bute Council has been influential in the HITRANS partnership over the last 3 years, having acted as lead partner in two major projects, and having benefited by around £1.3m expenditure on public transport infrastructure from its membership. The Council's influence in WESTRANS/SPT is more modest, given the imbalance in population terms, and so the ability to attract funding to deal with the rural Argyll and Bute issues when compared with the issues faced by the majority of the more urban Authorities of Glasgow, the Renfrewshires and North Lanarkshire, could be limited. Conversely the level of funding available to Westrans is likely to be greater than that to Hitrans due to the scales of the issues faced and the cost of solutions.
- 4.5 The primary routes serving the Helensburgh and Lomond Area are also vitally important to the HITRANS area, in their role as strategic routes to the Highlands and Islands, and therefore attract a high degree of priority and support – probably at a higher level than their rather more peripheral nature would accord in the WESTRANS context, although this partnership has consistently identified the A82 schemes and improvements to Clyde ferry services as necessary
- 4.6 The boundary between WESTRANS and HITRANS has to be somewhere. Provided that the issues of boundaries can be resolved by the Economic Development agencies, the more logical place would be coterminous with the Council boundary. The existing HITRANS area is defined by the area covered by Highlands and Islands Enterprise which gives the partnership a clear economic focus on highlands and island issues. Inclusion of part of the Scottish Enterprise Dunbartonshire area in the partnership could, to a degree, disenfranchise this part of the area when economic regeneration issues are a major factor in an element of work.
- 4.7 It is likely that cross boundary routes between partnerships will however be recognised as inter-regional connectors, both in terms of road and public transport, and will attract a reasonable degree of priority. In these terms, Helensburgh and Lomond, and Bute and Cowal, should be well placed on the southern edge of the HITRANS boundary to benefit from this position.

- 4.8 In purely practical terms, the authority will require to support the partnership/s it joins. In terms of member and officer time, it would represent a lesser commitment to participate in one rather than two bodies.
- 4.9 It is clear that both Bute and Cowal and Helensburgh and Lomond areas have significant transport connections with the conurbation, by rail, sea or road, or by a combination of these modes. The question to be addressed is whether the area will be able to bring greater influence to the maintenance and development of each of those modes by being physically within the partnership area where the transport is provided, or not. The rail services and roads used by the Bute and Cowal communities are intrinsic to the Westrans Partnership Area, also serving the Inverclyde and Ayrshire areas. Arguably, Bute and Cowal could exert just as much influence from its stance as a significant partner within a neighbouring partnership as it could as a comparatively small player in a larger partnership. The ferries issue has already been raised in point 3 above and the significant issue is that if all the CalMac ferry services serve communities within a single partnership, then the potential for such a partnership to participate in the strategic future planning of these ferry services is improved to the benefit of all the communities served.
- 4.10 It is recognized that Helensburgh and Lomond benefit from good rail commuting links with the city centre through inclusion of part of the Area within the SPT extended boundary. There might reasonably be local concern that the vital Helensburgh commuting rail links may be more at risk should the area it serves be outwith the partnership responsible for its management. While the detail of the proposals is not yet available, it appears the intention within the White Paper that strategic rail issues are dealt with by the new national Transport Agency, and if realised, this should mitigate any issues regarding strategic changes to the current level of services to Helensburgh within the national rail service framework. Given the clear intention of the Executive to promote modal shift away from private to public transport and the high level of usage of the service, it would be difficult to see a case for reducing the rail service to Helensburgh which would inevitably encourage counter modal shift.

## 5.0 Implications

Policy:	The Scottish Executive's Transport White Paper indicates its intention to introduce Regional Transport Partnerships to cover the whole of Scotland.
Financial:	It is the Executive's proposal that the cost of running Regional Partnerships will be met by Councils.
Personnel:	None
Equal Opportunity:	None

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 20 July 2004