

**REPORT TO: SPECIAL PLANNING & TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE  
15 DECEMBER 2003**

**REPORT ON: PROPOSALS FOR A NEW APPROACH TO TRANSPORT IN  
SCOTLAND**

**REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & TRANSPORTATION**

**REPORT NO: 827-2003**

## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To consider the proposals put forward in the Scottish Executive's publication "Consultation on Scotland's Transport – Proposals for a new approach to transport in Scotland".

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that Committee
- a note the observations made in the report; and
  - b agree the replies to the specific questions asked in the document as displayed in Appendix A.

## **3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 Without firm details of the role and responsibilities of any new "Scottish Transport Authority" the range of implications are from no change to complete removal of most of the Roads & Transportation revenue and capital budgets from council control or direct influence.

## **4 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 It is recognised that the future of transportation in Scotland will have a significant influence on local agenda 21 and cognisance of this has been given in the replies given to the Scottish Executive.

## **5 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 It is recognised that the future of transportation in Scotland will have a significant influence on equal opportunities and cognisance of this has been given in the replies given to the Scottish Executive.

## **6 BACKGROUND**

- 6.1 The Scottish Executive's Partnership Agreement included a commitment to bring forward proposals for a national transport body and regional transport partnerships.
- 6.2 This document proposals for a New Approach to Transport in Scotland was published (received by this Council on 19 September 2003) seeking responses by Wednesday 17 December 2003.

- 6.3 These tight deadlines have given the Director of Planning & Transportation severe problems given the multidisciplinary range of issues to be addressed and the required Committee cycle timescales set down to ensure full local consultation.
- 6.4 The question may be asked as to why such a truncated consultation is required and what exactly the Scottish Executive's intends doing with the many responses from Council's professional bodies and interested parties required on 17 December 2003.
- 6.5 From the general tenor of the document it is fairly clear that the Executive (through the Partnership Agreement) have accepted the need for a National Transport Body which "needs the accountability which comes from being closely linked to Ministers and Parliament."
- 6.6 Indeed on page 13 paragraph 35 of the document the "Ministers have concluded that Scotland needs the immediacy, flexibility, direct control and accountability that an agency could provide. This was clearly stated in the Partnership Agreement. "We do not plan to revisit the option of a Non-departmental Public Body."
- 6.7 Perhaps a crude summary of the consultation could be you (the Councils) are getting a Scottish Transport Authority – how best do you see its role and the extent of powers you wish to pass to it or new powers for it.
- 6.8 Professional bodies such as the Society of Chief Officers of Transportation Scotland (SCOTS) the Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers (ATCO), the Institute of Logistics and Transport will be making a formal professional response whilst COSLA have been actively in discussion with the Executive. At the time of writing this report, it has not been possible to share views with representative bodies.
- 6.9 It is therefore important that a "local" Dundee City Council perspective is put forward whilst accepting that professional and technical bodies may wish to challenge the need for and role of a Strategic Agency in the framework of existing transportation roles.
- 6.10 It is generally agreed that there is a need to address current shortcomings in transport delivery in Scotland. However, the document (Scotland's Transport) offers little evidence as to the problems at present other than in delivering rail based projects which it could be argued is a matter of process improvement rather than lack of expertise.
- 6.11 It is unfortunate that the consultation predicates the strategy body – Transport Scotland – as an agency of the Scottish Executive directly accountable to Ministers as this appears to miss the opportunity to facilitate constructive debate on delivery of an integrated transport system for Scotland.
- 6.12 While such an agency will focus on national transport strategy and international transport links is welcomed it could be interpreted that the range of responsibilities as wide as project delivery management of major assets and the provision of integrated travel services could run contrary to the ethos of Community Planning and Subsidiarity.
- 6.13 Whilst being supportive of the concept of national/regional/local transport delivery through participation in a form of flexible Regional Transport Partnerships it is

essential that links with structure planning economic development commuter restraint policies and traffic reduction targets are brought into the consultation debate.

It is the view that all management framework options for Regional Partnerships put forward in the consultation document could not take these issues on board.

6.14 Given the foregoing it is the opinion of the Director that the favoured option for Dundee City Council is that other forms of body corporate should be examined such as permitted under Section 19 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

6.15 Answers to the specific questions are displayed in full in Appendix A.

6.16 In conclusion the position is summarised as:

- The present delivery mechanism for Scotland is not sufficiently robust, however any new structure must be built on past successes, make best use of current resources and expertise and be designed on the premise that transport service delivery should be devolved rather than centralised. Local accountability should be the keystone of any future structure.
- There should be clear analysis of the way in which roles and responsibilities are to be split between the Scottish Executive, the re-modelled Regional Transport bodies and unitary authorities.

## **7 CONSULTATIONS**

7.1 The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Depute Chief Executive (Finance), and Assistant Chief Executive (Community Planning) have been consulted and are in agreement with the contents of this report.

## **8 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

8.1 None.

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Director of Planning & Transportation

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Iain Sherriff  
Head of Transportation

IFS/EES

12 December 2003

Dundee City Council  
Tayside House  
Dundee

## SCOTLAND'S TRANSPORT – PROPOSALS FOR A NEW APPROACH TO TRANSPORT IN SCOTLAND

**SECTION C****CONSULTATION – YOUR VIEWS****Q1** *We seek views on the overall aims for a new national transport body*

The STA should develop policies at a strategic level which address peripherality at UK and European level. The principal aim should be to articulate a National Transport Strategy which can be financed then delivered by Regional Transport Partnerships and local authorities. This will require long term policy aims accompanied with committed capital and revenue streams. Many and indeed most of these strategic policies will have a delivery target far in excess of the electoral timetable.

The National transport body should function as a conduit to and from the Minister and continuing the metaphor act as the reservoir of capital (section 70) and revenue streams for project delivery to the RTP's and or local authorities.

**Q2** *We would welcome comments on the best way of widening public involvement in the planning of transport services in Scotland*

Public involvement is achieved where people want to know or influence the how, when, where, at what cost and what value a transportation system works. Whilst this must fit within a strategic plan people engage generally at a local level. Their bus stop, their train journey, their commuter trip, their flight to/from the islands etc. There is much evidence as to what people want and expect from their transport system. Key will be the ability of community planning to feed into the LTS and Local Plan as material considerations for a Regional Transport Partnership interfacing with the overarching policy of the Parliament through the Scottish Transport Authority.

**Q3** *We have an open mind at present on any transfer of powers but would welcome views on whether changes should be made to the existing balance. In particular:*

- a Are there any transport powers currently with Scottish Ministers that might more effectively be exercised by local government, whether at regional partnership or local authority level?*
- b Will Transport Scotland need to attract powers that are currently with local government – especially in relation to concessionary fares and quality contracts now that these are to be co-ordinated nationally?*
- c Would it be helpful for Transport Scotland to have powers to promote new railways or tramways in Scotland at its own hand?*

**General**

Powers, duties and responsibilities all mean different things. For example, local authorities currently have powers to introduce road user charging. However, the political/ economic willingness to exercise such powers is a different matter.

An example of such a problem is City of Edinburgh Council's consultation on road user charging in Edinburgh. It is worthy of note that this consultation is only within the SESTRANS area. Many "essential" car journeys are made from outside the

SESTRANS area and as such should there not be a wider more strategic view taken/consulted on.

- a
  - All roads functions (including trunk) should revert to the responsibility of the local authority. The local authorities may at their discretion delegate or transfer the maintenance and or development control matters to an RTP.
- b
  - Framework for road users charging should be set at a national level with local government hypothecation.
  - Whilst there is a logic in moving concessionary fares to a national body, because of the direct relationship between concessionary travel and local bus service provision any such transfer would destroy the local bus network at a local level.
  - A national policy/strategy should be held with the service delivered at a local level.
- c
  - Yes.

Q4 *We welcome views on the management framework options for regional partnerships*

- a *existing local authorities working together through voluntary partnerships*
- b *new Passenger Transport Executives across Scotland, repeating the SPT model in the rest of Scotland; while leaving responsibility for local roads with existing Councils*
- c *the creation of new Joint Committees across Scotland, made up from existing local authorities, building on the benefits of the voluntary partnerships, with more formal structure and constitution, but without strong decision-making and budgetary powers*
- d *the creation of new Joint Boards, also made up from local authorities, properly maintaining the link with the constituent Councils, but with the powers and budget to plan and take difficult decisions on transport matters for their area*
- e *the active creation of further special purpose bodies to work with local authorities and the voluntary partnerships*

There is no single model suitable for all Regional bodies. Equally in order to ensure subsidiarity it is considered that only Section (19) of the Local Government Scotland Act offers a suitable "body corporate" with a flexibility to be moulded to the needs of each individual regional body. Given the importance of the relationship between economic development, land use planning and transportation, it is clear that representation is required from these areas.

Q5 *We welcome comments on the future of SPT and the challenge of delivering integrated transport in the west of Scotland, particularly if new regional partnerships are established across Scotland.*

Dundee City Council wish to make no comment on the future of SPT other than acknowledging their excellent history in delivering many major rail and bus projects. Given we have stated that no single model is appropriate a suitable model for the west coast may well be the SPT.

Q6 *We invite views on the appropriate number and geographical extent of regional partnerships.*

There are a number of considerations required when deciding upon the appropriate geographical area for a regional transport body.

The most logical starting point is that a regional body should cover the travel to work area around major cities. However, this may lead to local authorities being members of more than one regional transport body. Also given the answer to question 5 above, it is vitally important that any transport body area coincides with the land use planning areas, be it the structure plan area or the emerging city regions areas.

Q7 *We would welcome views on the options for resourcing effective regional partnerships, recognising that the preferred method by what model of regional partnership is chosen.*

- a *the majority of funding continuing to be provided to local authorities through GAE, with Council each deciding individually and separately how much to pass on to the partnership (voluntary partnership or Joint Committee)*
- b *funds still provided to local authorities through GAE and regional partnerships requisitioning their budget from their constituent Councils (Joint Board)*
- c *section 70 paid direct from the strategic transport authority to the regional partnerships replacing some or all of the transport GAE provided to constituent Councils.*

A further option to those given above may be appropriate.

Funding should continue to be provided to Local Authorities through GAE, with section 70 grants provided to Regional bodies for strategic transport schemes. This should not preclude local authorities from bidding for section 70 grant finance for large transport schemes wholly within their area.

Resourcing is not only a financial consideration. At a national level it is recognised there is an extreme shortage of qualified, experienced staff not only to assist in formulating transport policy, but also in its service delivery. Careful consideration and planning of physical resources will be required to ensure that each of the transport bodies – national, regional or local – are adequately resourced and none is left with a skills vacuum.