

Bus Partnership Fund Call for Proposals



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1. Introduction to the Bus Partnership Fund

1.1 Having formally declared a global climate emergency, the Scottish Government committed to an ambitious target of net-zero emissions by 2045. This was encapsulated in law in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2019.

1.2 As part of an embryonic Scottish Green Deal to respond to this, the First Minister placed bus at the heart of the 2019 Programme for Government, announcing a landmark new investment. The commitment was to invest over £500 million in improved bus priority infrastructure, to tackle the negative impacts of congestion on bus services and raise bus usage.

1.3 The investment will take the form of a Bus Partnership Fund for local authorities and the roll-out of infrastructure for the trunk road network, to prioritise high-occupancy vehicles, such as buses. This document focuses on the Bus Partnership Fund (BPF or 'the Fund').

1.4 The BPF will target one of the major contributors to bus patronage decline: congestion. More than this, the purpose of the BPF is to leverage further improvements through partnership working. It is linked to the Bus Service Improvement Partnership (BSIP), which is the new statutory model in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 ('the Act'). We expect not only action on congestion, but further action and investment from both local transport authorities and bus operators, given that the economic viability of their operations will be enhanced by improved journey times and greater reliability. This whole-system approach will ensure that bus

services improve as part of a rounded, sustainable travel offer. Through partnership it is possible to deliver better, greener, more accessible bus services, which provide a viable alternative to car use.

1.5 According to a report by KPMG¹, Scottish cities are some of the most congested in the UK, with drivers spending up to 12% of the average journey in congested conditions, substantially increasing travel times. As one bus can take up to 75 private cars off our roads, there is a strong case for investment in bus priority, to reduce journey times and improve reliability. KPMG estimated that every £1 invested in local bus services generates up to £8 in wider social, economic and environmental benefits.

1.6 Eligible bidders to the BPF will be partnerships formed of a lead local authority with partners potentially including neighbouring local authorities, regional transport partnerships, Transport Scotland (where appropriate, as trunk road managers) and bus operators, with the involvement of other stakeholders, such as passenger representative groups. Eligible partnerships must be able to evidence that congestion is adversely impacting bus patronage and put forward ideas to address this. Bidders to the Fund should read the summary of how BSIPs will work and the role they will play in transforming bus services.

1.7 Projects funded by the BPF will be comprehensive and ambitious packages of bus priority measures; including for example bus lanes, bus gates, guided busways and traffic light priority. Partnerships are encouraged to propose other, innovative measures to contribute to the targeted outcomes.

1.8 To maximise the utility of bus services, partnerships are encouraged to develop proposals which integrate bus with active travel and other forms of transport, to provide an end-to-end solution, which will reduce private car use.

2. Intended Outcomes

2.1 The key intended outcomes of the Fund are to improve bus journey times and provide greater reliability, by prioritising bus over other types of traffic.

2.2 The BPF is a key part of this Government's delivery against the National Transport Strategy (NTS2²), which advocates a transport vision for the next 20 years. NTS2 highlights that two thirds of car trips are single-occupancy, which increases congestion and leads to longer bus journey times, which in turn discourage bus patronage. The four priorities of the NTS2 vision – to reduce inequality, take climate action, help deliver inclusive growth and improve health and well-being – are all supported by high-quality bus services.

2.3 The outcomes of the Fund are closely aligned to the National Outcomes, which are based on UN Sustainable Development Goals³. The Fund supports four National Outcomes in particular: Communities, Economy, Environment and Health.

2.4 Seven of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals are addressed by improving bus services, as viable alternatives to car use. These goals are: affordable and clean energy; sustainable cities and communities; decent work and

¹ Trends in Scottish Bus Patronage, KPMG, November 2017

² Scotland's National Transport Strategy, protecting our climate and improving lives: National Transport Strategy 2, Transport Scotland, February 2020

³ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

economic growth; industry, innovation and infrastructure; climate action; good health and well-being; and partnerships for the goals.

2.5 These outcomes will be supported by infrastructure developments to facilitate bus service improvements.

3. How the Fund will work

3.1 The Fund will operate via a competitive, light-touch process, designed as a proportionate ask of local authorities and their partners.

3.2 A first round of applications closed on 16th April 2021 but this call for proposals is a second opportunity for partnerships to come forward with outline proposals. We will assess the proposals against the criteria set out within this document and the evidence provided in the application form.

3.3 In their proposals, we expect partnerships to give an indication of the level of funding they would need to deliver their long-term ambitions.

3.4 We expect to decide in December 2021 which proposals will receive funding to move forward to development, through the proportionate application of the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG), and ultimately move into project delivery.

3.5 Whilst we are seeking ambitious, long-term proposals, we recognise that some partnerships may have already carried out appraisals and have sufficient evidence to support investment in quick wins. These may be funded in 2022/23, where the criteria are met and the capital budget allows. Quick wins projects which already have allocated funding will not be eligible for BPF funding. Quick wins must be future-proofed, to align with the longer-term proposals.

3.6 The exact amounts available each year will depend upon the annual budget process, which will also take into account demand for the Fund. We will undertake gateway assurance reviews of funded proposals, to determine which will be taken forward to implementation. Partnerships will be informed in advance of the process and timing of these reviews.

3.7 Grant offer letters will include full terms and conditions, including requirements for grant recipients to provide project plans and report against these on a monthly basis.

4. Design Principles

4.1 The design principles for funded bus priority infrastructure projects will relate to all phases of the development so should be borne in mind for the initial proposal, although it is recognised that ideas will not be fully-formed at this stage.

4.2 The core design principles are:

- Proposals must be holistic; demonstrating how mobility will work in the area, the active and sustainable travel aspects, and how bus fits into that model
- Proposals must target a reduction in congestion
- Proposals will outline bus priority measures, to improve bus journey times and make services more reliable

- There must be consideration of active travel, integration with other public transport and place-making
- There should be alignment with local and regional transport plans
- Proposals should be deliverable and have local political support
- There should be a genuine partnership approach, based on the BSIP model
- The proposals should represent value for money.

4.3 Funding from the BPF may only be used by local authorities, to carry out infrastructure projects designed to encourage bus use. However, the design of those projects should be agreed and supported by the bidding partnership.

4.4 Given that this is 100% funding, partnerships are expected to demonstrate their commitment to providing match in kind investment to improve the bus offer. This could include making services:

- More frequent, with turn-up-and-go services on major routes and feeder or demand-responsive services to lower-density places.
- More comprehensive, with overprovision on a few corridors reduced to boost provision elsewhere and better services in the evenings and weekends; not necessarily with conventional buses.
- Easier to understand, with simpler routes, common numbering, co-ordinated timetable change dates, good publicity, and comprehensive information online.
- Easier to use, with common tickets, passes and daily capping across operators, simpler (and cheaper) fares, including more flat fares in towns and cities, and contactless payment options.
- Better integrated with other modes and each other, including more bus-rail interchange and integration and inter-bus transfers.
- Greener, with more investment in zero-emission buses.

5. Evaluation of Proposals

5.1 Proposals will be evaluated against the quality of ideas presented and the strength of evidence to support the ideas. For example, proposals targeting higher reductions in congestion will receive higher scores.

5.2 To support the objectives of the Fund, the minimum data we would expect to see includes:

- Information on bus patronage levels
- Information on the trend in bus speeds and general traffic speeds
- Information on the number of bus services and distance travelled by bus services
- Detailed information on the current travel patterns and composition (e.g. age, employment status etc.) of the population who travel within the intervention area, including consideration of the potential for mode shift towards bus.

5.3 Where a local authority has already secured investment in active travel infrastructure or has a live application with Sustrans for active travel developments, this should be highlighted on the application form. This will enable us to put the bus priority proposals in context and will demonstrate a holistic approach.

5.4 Partnerships should also cross-reference to any relevant evidence/proposals emerging from the Strategic Transport Project Review (STPR2) process.

5.5 We expect partnerships to have formed or be working towards a BSIP, so the strength of the partnership element will be a key factor in the evaluation. Essentially, the proposal should be to fund the development of business cases to implement one or more bus service improvement partnership schemes, as defined by section 35 of the Act.

5.6 Proposals will be evaluated by an expert panel, who will make recommendations to Transport Scotland's relevant decision-makers, who will make the decisions on all awards from the BPF.

5.7 Proposals will be scored on a scale of 0 to 4, defined as follows:

0	No evidence the criterion has been addressed
1	Some evidence but significant issues with the proposals
2	Some good ideas but limited supporting evidence and some issues
3	Good ideas, with good evidence, but some work still to be done to develop these
4	Well-developed proposals, with strong evidence and no major issues

5.8 Proposals will be scored against the following criteria:

- Evidence of congestion and ideas to reduce congestion, through improved bus services (40%)
- How the proposal fits with the partnership area's overall strategy for integrated transport, to encourage a modal shift from cars to more sustainable transport and reduce emissions (25%)
- Partnership strength and demonstrated commitment, which will include match in kind (20%)
- Deliverability: the ability of the lead local authority and its partners to deliver the proposed developments, including local political buy-in (15%)

6. Application Process

6.1 Applications to the BPF should be submitted on the Bus Partnership Fund Application Form, which includes guidance notes. Bids should be submitted electronically, to buspartnershipfund@transport.gov.scot.

6.2 For further guidance, please refer to the associated Q&A document, BSIP guidance and best practice examples. Any other questions on the BPF or application process should be directed to buspartnershipfund@transport.gov.scot.

6.3 Applications must be submitted by the closing date, which is 12 noon on 15 October 2021, and signed by the relevant local authority personnel and partners, as detailed on the application form.

7. Consultation

7.1 Transport Scotland has consulted with a range of stakeholders in the bus sector and other interested parties in developing these initial processes to administer the BPF. This engagement will continue and expand throughout the life of the Fund.

7.2 As well as going through formal consultation with CoSLA, we have engaged with the Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers (ATCO), the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT), the Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS), the Regional Transport Partnerships, the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS) and a number of bus partnerships.

7.3 Partnerships benefiting from the Fund will be expected to carry out appropriate public consultation as their business cases progress. Transport Scotland will monitor levels of consultation as part of its monitoring and evaluation of the Fund.

8. Data Protection

8.1 Any personal data provided through the application to the BPF will be processed in line with data protection legislation. Transport Scotland is the Data Controller. The Data Protection Officer can be contacted at dpa@transport.gov.scot.

8.2 The Data Protection Act 2018 sets out when we are lawfully allowed to process your data. The lawful basis that applies to this processing is 6(1)(e) of the GDPR: the processing of personal data is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority.

8.3 We are processing your data as part of the application process for the Bus Partnership Fund. We may share the information with external assessors as we assess the applications. Your personal data will only be shared with the assessor for that purpose and will only be retained by them for the duration of the assessment process. Your personal data will be held for the duration of the Fund, including monitoring and evaluation. It will be held on a secure Scottish Government system.

8.4 Some of the data we are collecting is your personal data, and you have rights as to how that is processed. These rights are detailed in Transport Scotland's privacy policy, which you are asked to read before submitting your application. The privacy policy can be found at <https://identity.trafficscotland.org/privacy>.

BPF – Questions and Answers for Bidders

Scope and Design of the Fund

Q: What can the funding be used for?

A: The Bus Partnership Fund is a capital fund, to develop and implement bus priority infrastructure. Initial awards are likely to be for capacity; supporting partnerships by funding the expert resources required to conduct appraisals and business cases. They may also be used to implement quick wins, where the partnership has already appraised bus priority ideas and requires funding to deliver them.

Q: How much will be allocated for appraisal and business case development?

A: Transport Scotland wishes to actively support the development of robust business cases, to justify infrastructure funding. Part 1 and Part 2 Appraisals developed under the STAG guidance form a significant part of the Outline Business Case (OBC) for bus priority infrastructure developments. There is no fixed amount of capacity funding, as this will vary, according to the nature and stage of the development. Partnerships are asked to provide realistic costings, based on their previous experience of appraisals and by consulting with experts on their procurement frameworks.

Q: How much match funding will partnerships be required to offer?

A: There is no match funding requirement. However, partnerships will need to demonstrate that they already have or have requested funding for sufficient capacity to develop and deliver proposals and they are expected to commit to complementary measures ('match in kind') as part of the wider partnership offer.

Q: Given this is a capital fund, can staff costs be included in the bid?

A: Staff costs can be capitalised, where they are directly related to the proposed infrastructure developments. This includes, for example, staffing to develop STAG appraisals and business cases, project management and monitoring and evaluation.

Q: Can the BPF be used to fund the development of park and ride facilities?

A: The Fund may be used for park and ride facilities, but only where these are clearly linked to bus priority measures and evidence suggests that the facilities will contribute to the reduction in congestion, by encouraging modal shift. We want proposals, including those for park and ride, to be ambitious, and proposals will be considered in light of the evidence provided and how far the developments will achieve the outcomes of the Fund.

Q: Can projects funded through the Bus Priority Rapid Deployment Fund (BPRDF) be made permanent, using BPF funds?

A: In principle, yes. The evaluation from BPRDF will be important in determining whether or not the temporary measures should become permanent; with consultation, where appropriate.

Costing the Application

Q: Given that the STAG appraisal process is objective-led and the preferred solutions take some time to emerge, how are bidders to the fund expected to estimate construction costs?

A: We understand the process needs to be objective-led so are looking for a broad range of costs, based on the potential solutions. For example, if a corridor requires some priority measures, the eventual solution could be traffic light prioritisation or a bus lane; both very different in terms of cost. However, some estimation should be possible, based on the size and complexity of the intervention area and the finite choice of bus priority infrastructure options.

What we need you to be specific on is the amount required to achieve the first major milestone, which is likely to be an appraisal or business case stage, as any initial offer will only be for that first stage. Subsequent offers will be made after assurance of progress and obviously final business case will specify the costs of construction.

Q: How many appraisals and business cases will be required?

A: The process to access infrastructure funding will be based on Transport Scotland's STAG Guidance. The STAG Report – comprised of the Pre-appraisal, Part 1 and Part 2 Appraisals and Post-appraisal – forms the basis of much of the OBC. This may be followed by a Full Business Case (FBC).

As per the principle of proportionality, the number of appraisals and business cases required will depend on the nature of the proposals and stage of development. At each stage, the BPF team will advise bidding partnerships of the business case requirements.

Q: Given the time it may take to procure professional support and to develop a business case, does the spend all have to be within this financial year?

A: We realise that partnerships will go at different paces so the final offer letters will reflect that and we do not expect all of the spend to be in any given financial year. What we would like in the bid is the estimate of costs to develop the OBC and an outline timeline. The offer letter will include the OBC as a key deliverable, with that estimated date, to help us with financial planning. One of the reasons for the monthly reporting will be to highlight if that date varies either way, so we can be flexible with the capital budget.

Future Tranches of Funding

Q: Does the production of an appraisal or OBC guarantee access to infrastructure funding?

A: Not necessarily. Each case will be evaluated by a panel of experts, which will make recommendations to the relevant decision-maker in Transport Scotland, who will decide on whether further tranches of funding will be allocated; either for further appraisal work or for infrastructure delivery.

Q: Will allocation of the infrastructure funding take into account anything other than the appraisal or business case?

A: No. In line with other challenge funds and to comply with competition rules, the STAG appraisal and/or OBC will be the sole evidence base which Transport Scotland will use to decide future funding allocations.

Q: *What happens if the BPF is over-subscribed?*

A: Because of the specific intent of the fund and amount of new money allocated, we do not anticipate that this will happen. However, we do ask applicants to consider how proposals can be flexed up and down in terms of scale and/or cost. Where competition is high or low, Transport Scotland then has option to award within the available budget.

Q: *If the business case is approved, is the funding guaranteed in future years?*

A: Once Transport Scotland has approved the final business case and awarded funding for infrastructure development, those funds are considered 'contractually committed', so local authorities can enter into development contracts spanning more than one financial year, within the terms of the grant award letter.

Developing and Submitting the Application

Q: *Are Equality Impact Assessments required?*

A: There is a duty on public bodies to assess the impact of new policies or practices against the needs of the general equality duty, via Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA). It is likely that new bus infrastructure developments and consequent service changes will require impact assessments. Partnerships are advised to involve local equality interest groups at an early stage, either in consultation or as part of the governance of the partnership, to help ensure that projects funded by the BPF have due regard to the equality duty.

Q: *Can a Regional Transport Authority (RTP) be the lead for the BPF?*

A: For the purposes of the Fund and to comply with Scottish Government financial governance, a local authority has to be nominated as the lead and Accountable Officer for the funding. However, this does not stop an RTP or other partner from leading the BSIP. We also welcome the RTP being a signatory to the application, to evidence a region-wide strategic approach.

Q: *Can publicly-owned bus operators be part of partnerships bidding to the fund?*

A: The Bus Partnership Fund requires bidders to be working towards a Bus Service Improvement Partnership, as defined in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019. There is no restriction on the ownership model of the operators involved in the partnership.

Q: *Does the application form have to be physically signed by senior colleagues, given the current physical restrictions?*

A: No, you can type the names in and please add their email addresses. We will send offer letters to the lead contact but copy in the authorising officers so it being returned to the same copy list will be sufficient evidence of authorisation.

Q: *Does the application have to be signed by the CEO and Leader of the Council?*

A: The CEO should sign, as the size of any bid and therefore officer spend will fall to her/him under the scheme of delegations. We are looking for senior political buy-in, which will usually be the Council Leader but may also be another relevant senior elected member - e.g. a convenor of a transport committee - depending on your structure.

Q: If a full STAG pre-appraisal up to Part 2 is done, could the Strategic Business Case be skipped and partnerships progress straight to the Outline Business Case (OBC)?

A: We are looking for this to be proportionate so it will depend to some extent on what the scale of the ambition is. However, assuming it will be ambitious, the application will form a large part of the pre-appraisal stage, together with the STPR2 report, as part of the evidence base. Although separated in the guidance, the appraisal stages are meant to run as one iterative process and the time taken will depend upon the range of options available. The STAG Report emerging from the full appraisal in itself should constitute both the strategic case for the OBC and a large part of the financial and economic cases.

Q: How should we account for quick wins in the application?

A: Through our evaluation processes of the applications, we will be looking at what major deliverables are required and basing any offer on that, so the option still remains for quick wins, which do not have to go through full appraisal processes, as long as they are part of the wider ambition and have evidence to support them. If you have any such options (e.g. traffic light prioritisation), you should highlight these in the first section of the application form, with projected timescales. In the cost section, you can then put three numbers: the broad estimate of the overall scheme, the cost to get to OBC and the cost of quick wins; the latter two numbers being reasonably accurate.

Q: Will the STAG be expected to be multi-modal as per a standard objective-led STAG appraisal or is it taken that as this is a bus-specific fund for tackling problems experienced by bus services and bus users, the scope could be limited to bus, without consideration of alternative modes?

A: One of the key criteria for the fund is that bus priority measures integrate with other sustainable travel modes. So your appraisal should highlight how that integration happens but does not extend to appraising e.g. potential active travel options. For example, you should refer to any active travel infrastructure - either existing or in development - which complements the bus services. Or you could demonstrate that a bus priority corridor enables a link-up with rail services.

Q: How should large files in support of the application be transferred securely to Transport Scotland?

A: To avoid problems with email limits of document sizes, Transport Scotland will set up a folder in Objective Connect, which we use for secure file transfer. Please contact buspartnershipfund@transport.gov.scot with the email addresses of people you wish to have access to the folder and they will receive invitations to set up passwords and gain access. No software download is required to access Objective Connect.

SETTLEMENT AND DISTRIBUTION GROUP (SDG)

BUS PARTNERSHIP FUND

Purpose

1. A commitment was made in the Programme for Government 2019 to invest over £500 million in improved bus priority infrastructure, to tackle the negative impacts of congestion on bus services and make bus a more attractive travel option. The investment will take the form of a Bus Partnership Fund (BPF, 'the Fund') for local authorities and the roll-out of infrastructure for the trunk road network, to prioritise high-occupancy vehicles, such as buses.
2. Transport Scotland resources were diverted, owing to the pressures arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, as were those of local authorities. Given that, Transport Scotland paused the work on the BPF and on Managed Motorways, which together made up the over £500 million investment announced in Programme for Government 2019.
3. Transport Scotland is now preparing to launch the BPF, allowing local authorities time to develop applications for the next financial year.
4. This paper proposes the process to administer the Fund and the principles underlying the process.

Recommendation

5. **The SDG is asked to agree the recommendations in respect of the principles and process for administering the Fund.**

Policy Intention

6. Having formally declared a global climate emergency, the Scottish Government committed to an ambitious target of net-zero emissions by 2045. This was encapsulated in law in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2019.
7. As part of an embryonic Scottish Green Deal to respond to this, the First Minister placed bus at the heart of the 2019 Programme for Government, announcing a landmark new investment.
8. The BPF will target one of the major contributors to bus patronage decline: congestion. More than this, the purpose of the BPF is to leverage further improvements through partnership working. It is linked to the Bus Service Improvement Partnership (BSIP), which is the new statutory model in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019. We expect not only action on bus priority, but further action and investment from both local transport authorities and bus operators, given that the economic viability of their operations will be enhanced by improved journey times and greater reliability. This whole-system approach will ensure that bus services improve as part of a rounded, sustainable travel offer.

9. The Bus Priority Rapid Deployment Fund (BPRDF), which was announced on 16 July 2020, was funded from the 2020/21 budget allocation for BPF and Managed Motorways.

10. The BPRDF is currently supporting local authorities – working closely with bus operators - to respond to congestion with interventions such as temporary bus lanes or gates. The Fund is for short-term measures but it presents an opportunity for local authorities to test interventions as they develop plans for the BPF.

11. The BPF programme will continue to work closely with the STPR2 and Managed Motorways programmes, to ensure that the investment in bus priority will form part of a wider strategic approach to transport.

Principles underlying the design of the BPF

12. The Government's General Grants Guidance¹ states that "Government grants should be competed by default...". There are exceptions but the BPF does not meet any of the criteria for a direct award. It will therefore be administered under a competitive process.

13. There will be two phases to the Fund: the first acting as a light-touch expression of interest process to release capacity funding to local authorities (LAs) to develop evidence and ideas for longer-term transformational proposals (and fund any future-proofed quick wins); and the second to fund the delivery of those longer-term interventions.

14. Awards will be made to partnerships which are functional and working towards formal BSIP status.

15. A lead local authority should be nominated as Accountable Officer for the funding, in line with the Scottish Public Finance Manual, and to comply with State Aid rules. However, that does not preclude another partner – such as a Regional Transport Authority (RTP) - from leading the BSIP.

16. The fund is to address evidenced congestion which is negatively affecting bus services. Given this, it is likely that it will be spent proportionally more in urban areas. Whilst there are expected to be benefits for the general health of bus operations and for rural populations travelling into urban centres, it is clear that BPF itself will not provide the solution to rural transport issues.

17. The desired outcomes of the fund are improved bus journey times and greater reliability of bus services.

18. The fund is also intended to secure further action and investment from LAs and bus operators, to continue to improve bus services. Both LAs and operators will need to set these commitments in stone in a partnership agreement in Phase 2.

19. There is no guidance on how much money will be awarded to each successful partnership following Phase 1 – we are asking partnerships to tell us how much they

¹ Government Functional Standard for General Grants Guidance Standard 5 - Competition for Funding, Cabinet Office 2018

require initially to develop the business case in Phase 2 and an estimate of the full investment.

20. As part of Phase 1, we will also invite bids for quick wins, to be funded in 2021-22/2022-23 where adequate evidence exists to support these. Quick wins must be future-proof.

21. Examples of eligible infrastructure developments include bus lanes, bus gates, priority signalling and guided busways. The fund can also support related infrastructure on bus priority routes e.g. bus waiting environment and paths.

22. Proposals should be holistic and fully aligned with local transport strategies: in particular active travel initiatives.

23. There may be further rounds of funding but we are setting a closing date for Phase 1, to focus partnerships on getting properly established and starting developments as soon as possible.

24. Principles around how Phase 2 will operate will be developed in close consultation with stakeholders, including COSLA.

Stakeholder engagement

25. We have begun to test the above principles and the process with stakeholders and this process is ongoing.

26. Those engaged to date include: ATCO, SCOTS, COSLA officials, CPT, RTP Chairs and Lead Officers, LEZ Leadership Group, Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS), established and emerging partnerships such as the North East Bus Alliance, East Lothian Bus Alliance and Glasgow Bus Partnership, and regional groupings that relate to STPR2.

Next steps

27. In addition to the BPF call for proposals and application form, Transport Scotland is preparing a set of questions and answers, based on feedback from stakeholders. There will also be information on best practice developments elsewhere and on BSIPs, as well as access to the BPF programme team to advise local authorities and their partners on the process.

28. Transport Scotland is developing a package of support for partnerships for Phase 2, to address resource pressures. Further information will be made to bidding partnerships when the detail of this support is finalised.

29. Subject to approvals, the intention is to launch the Fund in November, with a closing date of mid-April 2021.

RECOMMENDATION

30. The Scottish Government recommends that the SDG approve the process for sign-off by the COSLA Leaders' Group and, ultimately, Transport Scotland's Investment Decision Making Board.