

12 March 2024

Fiona Hyslop MSP  
Cabinet Secretary for Transport  
Scottish Government  
[scottish.ministers@gov.scot](mailto:scottish.ministers@gov.scot)

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

### **Bus Partnership Fund**

At the latest meeting of the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Joint Committee on 01 March 2024 [a report on the Bus Partnership Fund](#) (BPF) notified members of the funding pause for next financial year.

As you are aware, our collaborative approach utilising regional governance structures alongside our partnership working with individual local authorities and Bus operators has delivered robust Business Case work (approved by Transport Scotland) along with successful measures on the ground.

Our business case work confirmed a strong case for investment for the bus priority measures which cover all the major arterial corridors to strengthen bus links between Edinburgh with the region. It should also be noted that these works were coordinated with the local bids in West Lothian, Fife and Midlothian to complement the measures that are being delivered more locally in those areas. This collaborative and partnership approach is working very well and we continue to make good progress on the much needed various workstreams underway through BPF.

Edinburgh and South East Scotland is fastest-growing region in Scotland, and one of the fastest growing in the UK and Europe. The BPF was a key element of us supporting sustainable population growth and with transport being the largest generator of greenhouse emissions in Scotland, the work that regional partners were undertaking through this fund to stimulate the required mode shift from car to bus was a major part of our collective response to the climate emergency (including realising national targets to reduce the amount of kilometres travelled by car).

Our region also represents a huge proportion of Scotland's economic activity and is a centre of innovation and job creation. The BPF is incredibly important in being able to grow economic prosperity sustainably as well as connecting areas of deprivation to jobs and services. Therefore, it was very disappointing to hear the Scottish Budget on 19 December confirming that the £500m Bus Partnership Fund will be paused for Financial Year (FY) 2024/25 due to budgetary constraints.

Consequently, and recognising how important this fund is, I would be most grateful if you could provide assurance that the £500m fund will return in FY 2025/26.

Furthermore, in order to plan for the Fund's relaunch in FY 2025/26, I would be grateful if you confirm that a Transport Scotland BPF team resource will remain available during 2024/25 to advise and support the city region with their new BPF applications in due course, and commit Transport Scotland to process applications and provide award letters before the end of April 2025. This would help avoid a situation where the planned 12 month pause is not effectively elongated by award letters not being issued until several months after the start the new FY.

The £500m fund was intended to be an ambitious long-term investment commitment and is referenced within SPTR2 (a 20-year plan) as being one of key enablers of transport policy outcomes. I would be grateful if you could reconfirm this long-term approach and consequently ensure that future funding awards are multi-year

agreements, instead of the previous single year award approach, which caused significant challenges around: forward planning, resourcing, procurement, unnecessary elongation of delivery timescales, etc.

I want to provide comfort that despite the Scottish Government's announcement that it will not provide BPF funding during FY 2024/25, the regional partners remain committed to the workstreams already underway, and officers from across the region will continue to work with bus operators and partners to keep as much momentum behind the individual projects during this interim funding pause period.

On a personal note, I would like to end by congratulating you on your return to the Scottish Government Cabinet and wish you every success. Scotland faces huge challenges if it is to deliver on Climate Emergency commitments and boost economic growth, so I feel your new remit is incredibly important if we are to ensure the transport sector is ready to contribute to that agenda.

Yours sincerely,



Councillor Lawrence Fitzpatrick

Convener - Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal