Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill: Submission by the Chairs of Scotland’s 7 Regional Transport Partnerships

This submission is by the Chairs of Scotland’s 7 statutory Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs). The RTPs have a statutory duty to engage in community planning. All RTPs currently seek to proactively support community planning in Scotland’s 32 community planning areas generally through the implementation of their statutory Regional Transport Strategies (RTSs), and specifically by contributing to the achievement of national and local SOA outcomes relating to sustainable economic growth, improving personal and community health and wellbeing, and improved environmental sustainability, including carbon reduction. As indicated in the Policy Memorandum accompanying the Bill, transport is a key cross-cutting community planning issue, which helps ensure that communities have efficient, effective and accessible services; that local economies are vibrant and well connected to markets; and that local communities are better and healthier places to live, work, visit and enjoy.

The RTPs are working proactively on a wide range of initiatives, including improving local and regional strategic connectivity; reducing peripherality and combatting social exclusion through a range of transport connectivity measures, including issues related to transport and health; and reducing the environmental impacts of transport, which are aimed at supporting achievement of local and national outcomes in partnership with our constituent Councils, Health Boards, Police, Fire & Rescue, Universities and Colleges, the Voluntary sector and other statutory community planning agencies.

The RTPs support proposals which will improve efficient and effective partnership working and will strengthen the role of community planning. Part 2 and Schedules 1, 2 and 3 of the Bill propose designation of various public sector bodies in relation to community planning. The RTPs welcome the inclusion of RTPs as:

- Public Service Authorities, as introduced by section 4 (1) of the Bill;
- Relevant Bodies, as introduced under section 16 (1) of the Bill; and
- Relevant Authorities, as introduced under section 51 (1) of the Bill

The reinforcement of the current statutory role of RTPs within community planning implied by these designations is strongly supported.

However, the RTPs have concerns relating to Part 2 of the Bill which, in Section 8, defines those partners having a statutory Governance role in community planning as Councils, Health Boards, Scottish Enterprise/HIE, Police Scotland and Fire and Rescue Scotland only, omitting RTPs and other defined bodies in Schedules 1, 2 and 3. In addition Part 2, Section 9 on community planning partners’ duties states that they:

- must cooperate with other community planning partners in carrying out community planning;
- must, in relation to a community planning partnership, contribute such funds, staff and other resources as the community planning partnership considers appropriate to ... improving, contributing to achievement of local outcomes ... and for the purpose of securing participation of community bodies in community planning;
- must provide such information to the community planning partnership about local outcomes as the partnership may request; and
- must, in carrying out its functions, take account of community planning local outcome improvement plans.
Whilst the generality of the above duties to cooperate in the achievement of community planning outcomes is also supported, it is of serious concern that RTPs are not included within the list of specified Governance bodies for community planning in Part 2, Section 8 (2) of the Bill and, therefore, have the potential to be excluded from core governance and resource decision-making in relation to determining and agreeing community planning resource requirements in accordance with Part 2, Section 9 of the Bill. This appears to be a potentially serious and hopefully unintentional governance dis-connect within the Bill, as currently drafted.

Part 2, Section 8 (3) of the Bill indicates that Scottish Ministers may, by regulations, add to the community planning partners listed under Part 2, Section 8 (2). However, in order to ensure that RTPs can continue to play a fully supportive role in community planning, the RTP Chairs formally request that the Bill is amended to specifically include Regional Transport Partnerships, along with the other statutory community planning Governance bodies, listed within Part 2, Section 8 (2).

If you require any further information or clarification of the content of this submission please contact Eric Guthrie, Partnership Director, Tactran at.