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Edward Mountain MSP
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Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee
The Scottish Parliament
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17 March 2026

Dear Convener,

Final Publication of the Bus Franchising Guidance

On 17 December, I wrote to update the Committee on progress on the development of the statutory guidance on bus franchising, and, in line with my commitment to the NZET Committee, provided a draft copy of the document.

Officials subsequently shared the draft document with a wide range of affected parties, including local authorities, regional transport partnerships, COSLA, the Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers (ATCO), lobby groups, and operator representatives for their consideration and comment. Stakeholders were asked to respond by 6 February 2026. However, one stakeholder was granted an extension until 23 February 2026. All responses have been considered in full, and the guidance document has been refined where appropriate in light of the feedback received.

I am pleased to advise that the finalised guidance for Local Services Franchises has now been formally published. A copy is attached for the Committee's awareness, and the document is also available on Transport Scotland's website at [Transport \(Scotland\) Act 2019: Local Services Franchises: Guidance on Franchising Frameworks and As...](#)

Alongside this, my officials are continuing to work closely with Office of the Traffic Commissioner (OTC) and the UK Government on the development of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This MoU will set out the funding arrangements for the establishment and operation of the bus franchising approval panels. Discussions remain constructive, and we expect the MoU to be concluded later this year. I will ensure that the Committee receives the final document once agreement is reached by all parties.

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Work is also continuing to progress on the Bus Services Improvement Partnership guidance. Officials will shortly share a draft with key stakeholders, including the CMA and the OTC for formal comment.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours sincerely,



JIM FAIRLIE

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