Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) is the Regional Transport Partnership (RTP) for the west of Scotland. Our area covers 11 full council areas and part of one other – East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Glasgow, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, South Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire, West Dunbartonshire, and the Helensburgh and Lomond area of Argyll and Bute. SPT has a range of planning and operational responsibilities including the Regional Transport Strategy, operating the Subway, bus stations, supporting socially necessary bus services, providing school transport, ticketing, and more. Further information on who we are and what we do is available at www.spt.co.uk.

SPT welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Committee on the Planning (Scotland) Bill.

Recognising the intrinsic relationship between transport and land use planning, and the importance of transport and accessibility to the creation of successful places, SPT has sought to be fully involved in the Scottish Government’s Independent Review of Planning, and the development of the Planning Bill, including providing responses at various stages in both processes, including:

- The Independent Review of the Scottish Planning System – Call for Evidence¹;
- “Places, People and Planning – A Consultation on the Future of the Scottish Planning System”²; and
- “Places, People and Planning” - Position Statement³.

SPT officers have also given evidence in person to the Independent Review of Planning Panel⁴ and participated in Scottish Government workshops on planning and infrastructure.

A key part of the proposed Bill is encouraging ‘cross-working’ between local authorities in ‘regional partnerships’. SPT would highlight that, for transport, there is

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² SPT response - [http://www.spt.co.uk/documents/rtp310317agenda8.pdf](http://www.spt.co.uk/documents/rtp310317agenda8.pdf)
already an effective and proven governance structure at regional level that is delivering very successfully - Regional Transport Partnerships like SPT.

SPT welcomes the Scottish Government’s commitment to a plan-led, ‘front-loaded’, more streamlined planning system, with greater community involvement, more emphasis on certainty for developers, encouraging ‘development ready’ land, and a stronger focus on delivery. However, the Bill as proposed presents something of a missed opportunity, as its provisions raise various causes for concern and have the potential to create a range of negative consequences.

**Question 1:** Do you think the Bill, taken as a whole, will produce a planning system for Scotland that balances the need to secure the appropriate development with the views of communities and protection of the built and natural environment?

SPT welcomes greater integration of Community Planning and greater community engagement in the planning system, with the introduction of Local Place Plans and the inter-relationship with Local Outcome Improvement Plans as part of the Local Development Plan.

However, the Bill appears to undermine local accountability and could create a more centralised planning system. Despite significant work being undertaken by local authorities and other partners at the local and regional level, the Bill proposes that the Scottish Government will have the ultimate final decision over nearly all aspects of development planning: from the National Planning Framework, to Simplified Planning Zones, through to Local Development Plans.

We are also concerned that there will be a widened gap between ‘local’ and ‘national’ planning levels through the provisions of the new Bill. While the Local Place Plans will have a welcome focus on community involvement and accountability, the National Planning Framework will become a far more prescriptive and detailed statement of Scottish Ministers’ policies and proposals for the development and use of land across all council areas in Scotland. It is worth remembering that the NPF will also form part of the statutory Development Plan for an area, alongside the Local Development Plan. There also appears to be a lack of public scrutiny of the NPF which is another concern, particularly when one of the objectives of reform is greater community involvement, and when the NPF will have an enhanced status as a *de facto* replacement for Strategic Development Plans.

**Question 3:** Do the proposals in the Bill create a sufficiently robust structure to maintain planning at a regional level following the ending of Strategic Development Plans and, if not, what needs to be done to improve regional planning?
Removing statutory Strategic Development Plans from the planning process is a retrograde step which goes against best practice and does not reflect the unique qualities of each of Scotland’s regions, and indeed, has the potential to place the future sustainable economic growth of the west of Scotland in jeopardy.

It is worth highlighting that in their flowchart explaining the Bill, the Scottish Government give significant weight to the importance of “Regional Partnerships” in the future structure of development planning in Scotland. Yet what is not made clear is that these ‘Regional Partnerships’ are not referred to directly anywhere in the proposed Bill, that they would be voluntary, and that they would have no statutory footing. If taken forward as proposed, these voluntary and non-statutory “Regional Partnerships” would create a sub-optimal framework for regional delivery in Scotland that would be wholly unworkable.

**Question 8:** Is the proposed Infrastructure Levy the best way to secure investment in new infrastructure from developers, how might it impact on levels of development? Are there any other ways (to the proposed Levy) that could raise funds for infrastructure provision in order to provide services and amenities to support land development? Are there lessons that can be learned from the Infrastructure Levy as it operates in England?

SPT welcomes an ‘infrastructure first’ approach and the principles behind the proposed infrastructure levy, but would highlight the need for a greater appreciation of ongoing service / revenue requirements (such as for bus services) arising from any new infrastructure, and the potential key role RTPs could play in that. Furthermore, the Bill suggests that money collected from the infrastructure levy could be collected by an authority, paid to SG then redistributed. However it is not clear how this would work in practice, and may indeed cause confusion and possible conflict if any monies are not seen to be being redistributed equitably.

There is also no provision for infrastructure levy funding to go to regional bodies such as SPT, despite the levy being intended for strategic/regional infrastructure, and that route often being the most appropriate and deliverable way of utilising such funding. These issues should be reflected and clarified through secondary legislation.

**Question 11:** Will the changes in the Bill to enable flexibility in the fees charged by councils and the Scottish Government (such as charging for or waiving fees for some services) provide enough funding for local authority planning departments to deliver...
the high –performing planning system the Scottish Government wants? If not, what needs to change?

The proposals do not reflect the whole costs of a planning service - costs of development planning to planning authorities and key agencies, and development management to council departments, beyond planning departments, and services of other key stakeholders such as RTP's.

Relationship between the Planning Bill and the forthcoming Transport Bill

Transport acts as a catalyst for development, and there is a mutually dependant relationship between transport and land use planning, including the relationship between the new Planning Bill and the forthcoming Transport Bill and emerging National Transport Strategy.

There is very little reference to transport within the Bill, as was to be expected, as the new National Transport Strategy and forthcoming Transport Bills will cover that. However, the timing of the NTS and these Bills has unfortunately created a situation where any legislative change required to improve the integration of transport and land-use planning will require the transport sector to ‘play catch-up’ with planning; for example, how will the lack of a statutory regional focus within the Planning Bill affect the outcomes of the NTS and the forthcoming Transport Bills? It is therefore essential that the Planning Bill makes provision for future policy such as the NTS and Transport Bill, in order that they can be taken into account in legislation.

In addition there are number of areas that the Bill fails to address including: recognition of the role of statutory ‘key agencies’ (including RTPs) in the development plan process; strengthening of the role of key stakeholders, including RTP’s in the development management process (for example, transport assessments at present are not as effective as they could be and RTPs could play a key role in that area in future); limited flexibility for city-regions to reflect area specific circumstances; and last but not least, recognition of the role of transport as a catalyst for development, and the mutually dependant relationship between transport and land use planning, including the relationship between the new Planning Bill, the forthcoming Transport Bill and emerging National Transport Strategy.