

PE2116/G: Accelerate the implementation of bus franchising powers

Office of the Traffic Commissioner written submission, 9 January 2025

Thank you for your email of 2 December 2024 requesting the Traffic Commissioner's views on the actions called for in the above-mentioned petition relating to the franchising of local bus services.

The petition calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to improve the process for implementing the bus franchising powers contained in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 by:

- introducing, without delay, the regulations and statutory guidance required to give bus franchising powers full effect
- amending the 2019 Act to remove the requirement for proposed franchising frameworks to be approved by a panel appointed by the traffic commissioner, instead empowering Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs) to have the final say on approving proposals
- providing additional funding to help support RTPs in preparing franchising frameworks and assisting them with initial set-up costs once frameworks are approved.

As you may be aware the post of Traffic Commissioner for Scotland is currently vacant, and the functions are being covered by the Senior Traffic Commissioner in his capacity as Deputy Traffic Commissioner for Scotland.

The Senior Traffic Commissioner thanks the Committee for the opportunity to comment. As traffic commissioners are independent of Government and act in a judicial capacity, they do not normally comment on existing policy decisions taken on a political matter. It is anticipated that the options were fully considered as part of the policy development when the legislation was originally put before the Scottish Parliament.

The Senior Traffic Commissioner and his officials will, of course, continue to work with Scottish Government officials to implement any approved scheme.