

Financial assistance for Glasgow Subway and Edinburgh Trams secured until the end of the year

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The Scottish Government is to provide a further £4 million of emergency funding for Glasgow Subway and Edinburgh Trams in response to the on-going financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This latest emergency measure is in addition to the £9 million announced in July and will be in place until the end of 2020 to support services throughout this period.

It follows detailed discussions with Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) and Edinburgh Trams regarding available resources due to the unprecedented impact that COVID-19 has had on travel demand. These discussions have been undertaken in light of our published COVID-19: Framework for Decision Making and the Transport Transition Plan.

Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity Michael Matheson said: “The Glasgow Subway and Edinburgh Trams continue to provide key connections within our two biggest cities. The services provide essential capacity and link with bus, rail and park and ride facilities.

“Over the six month period from July we will now have provided up to £13 million of financial support to operators to enable services to continue. Any restrictions on these services could have placed unsustainable demands on other modes, especially bus and so this funding will assist capacity across all public transport.

“I would again like to thank all the people working across the light rail sector who have, and continue to, provide these important connections. These services have allowed our key workers and others who needed to travel for essential journeys to do so during very challenging circumstances. The subway and tram will help our wider society and economy recover as we go through the next phases of this pandemic.

“We will continue to monitor the demand, capacity and costs of support across all transport modes.”

Martin Dean, Chair of Edinburgh Trams said: “The additional funding being offered from Transport Scotland is welcomed news, especially as we navigate the challenges of fresh restrictions in the area.

“The ongoing financial support allows us to continue to operate our services for anyone who relies on the city’s tramway to make essential journeys.

“We are grateful to Transport for Edinburgh for leading on these negotiations on behalf of our organisation.”

SPT chair, Councillor Dr Martin Bartos said: “The extension of emergency Subway support until the end of 2020 hopefully means we will be able to cover the current losses from Subway operations from July to the end of December. The funding package is disappointing when contrasted with the speed of the hundreds of millions of pounds of money and commitments provided to private rail and bus transport companies since March.

“Even if the Subway successfully receives its fraction of the headline total figure announced for Subway and Trams, SPT will still face a multimillion pound deficit by the end of the financial year. Unless there is a fresh approach taken by government and a commitment for the rest of the financial year the deficit still means cuts to our capacity to support public transport.”

SPT plays an essential role in ensuring many local and rural communities stay connected and keep moving, travelling for work, education and leisure. Without SPT subsidised support, many of these communities would find themselves completely isolated.

SPT has sought to keep these subsidised services running throughout the period of the pandemic, however SPT has received no funding for any aspect of its role in public transport for the first three months of the pandemic when the impact was most felt and patronage numbers were lowest on both Subway and bus.

Dr Bartos added: “SPT has gone to great lengths to explain the very real challenges it faces in the coming months and in the longer term as it looks to its budget for the next year. I have written to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport on these issues and am still waiting for a response. The Scottish Government must urgently reconsider its position on funding for the first three months of the pandemic. This decision could impact the SPT budget for years to come, and its ability to deliver much needed public transport services

to the people of the West of Scotland.”

Photo credit: Transport Scotland

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