

Detailed Appraisal		E14: Augment Far North Line Rail Services with Express Coach Facilities						
Estimated total Public Sector Funding Requirement:		<i>Capital Costs/grant</i> <i>Annual Revenue Support Present</i> <i>Value of Cost to Gvt</i> <i>BCR/PVB</i>				<£10m - <£10m <0.75 / <£10m		
Summary Impact on STAG Criteria	Environment Safety Economy Integration Accessibility and Social Inclusion	---	--	-	0	+	++	+++
(Judgement based on available information against a 7pt. scale.)								
Intervention Description:								
This intervention supports the objective of enhancing public transport accessibility and reducing journey time to and from Inverness.								
The intervention would consist of:								
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Coach stop facilities to augment railway stations on the Far North Line, with additional stops to serve the Black Isle and Dornoch; andTargeted infrastructure improvements to address constraints on the A9 (in conjunction with D3 (Targeted Programme of Measures to Reduce Accident Severity on the A9 north of Inverness)).								
Summary: Rationale for Not Recommending								
Currently the rail services north of Inverness carry the lowest levels of passengers on the Scottish rail network. Consequently a high level of subsidy is required. Provision of infrastructure to facilitate express coaches would adversely impact on the already low rail patronage levels and could affect the viability of this section of the rail network as an increase in the level of subsidy would be required. This intervention would not have any measurable modal shift from car to public transport. Therefore the costs of this scheme far outweigh any benefits that may be accrued.								

Table E14.1.1 STPR Objectives

STPR Objectives	
<p><u>STPR Objective 1:</u></p> <p>To enhance public transport accessibility and reduce public transport journey time to and from Inverness.</p> <p><u>STPR Objective 2:</u></p> <p>To reduce the fatal and severe accident rates to the national average or lower.</p>	<p>1: Positive - Augmenting the existing rail service with coach service facilities along the Far North rail line would result in improved access for communities currently not served by the rail network. Due to the circuitous route of the rail network on this corridor, improved bus facilities together with targeted road improvements would improve bus services and reduce journey times to and from Inverness.</p> <p>2: Neutral – Generally improvements to public transport on the route may result in a degree of modal shift, however, the overall impact of the measures on accident and severity rates would be negligible.</p>

Table E14.1.2 STAG Criteria

STAG Criteria		
Criteria:	Assessment Summary:	Supporting Information:
Environment:	Neutral/Minor Negative Impact	It is recognised that there could be a need for targeted infrastructure improvements along the road however, these are envisaged to be primarily online, with no substantial widening, and localised in nature. There is also likely to be potential to relocate any works to avoid the most sensitive environmental sites.
Safety:	Neutral	The accident rate for passengers of coach services is higher than that of rail services however, it would be expected that there would be a degree of modal shift towards public transport and therefore this would reduce the number of car trips. The overall impact of the measures on accident rates is anticipated to be neutral.
Economy:	Minor Benefit	<p>Transport Economic Efficiency (TEE): The proposed intervention, which augments the existing rail service, would help to reduce travel times for those people using public transport within the corridor. The land / sea public transport Interchange at Thurso would be enhanced as the existing rail terminus is approximately 3.5km east of the ferry terminal of Scrabster. However, these improvements are expected to be at the detriment of the Far North Line rail services, which could require further subsidy to continue operating.</p> <p>Wider Economic Benefits (WEBs): Improved productivity in the region would occur as a result of the improved public transport provision in the corridor. Business and recreational travel along the corridor may also become more attractive due to better services and the integrated link with the ferry services to Orkney. Augmentation of the existing rail service could provide more reliable journey times to the economic Regeneration Partnership area of Caithness and North Sutherland.</p> <p>Economic Activity and Location Impacts (EALIs): It is felt that economic activity in the region would benefit from this measure by making public transport more attractive to residents and visitors alike and making business locations more attractive to customers and the workforce.</p>
Integration:	Minor Benefit	Transport Integration: This intervention would have a slightly positive effect on transport integration as the proposed public transport links would terminate at the port of Scrabster linking with the Northern Isles ferry services. The existing rail service terminates to the south of Thurso town centre approximately 3.5km from the ferry port. Integration to Inverness Airport could also be improved through direct access by bus from the corridor. Time integration with rail services at Inverness is also expected to improve. New services would also improve integration with local services along the corridor through improved frequency and interchange points.

		<p>Transport and Land-Use Integration: This measure would not have a significant impact on land use planning along the corridor. However, it would have a small positive impact on the industrial and business locations at Wick, Golspie, Thurso, Inverness, Alass, Evanton, Invergordon and Dornoch.</p> <p>Policy Integration: This intervention would not affect disability, health services, rural affairs or social inclusion but would have a minor positive impact on the aspiration to reduce road traffic through modal shift to car from bus. The measure fits with the overarching HITRANS policy that seeks to develop a fit for purpose multi-modal transport network.</p>
Accessibility and Social Inclusion:	Minor benefit	<p>Community Accessibility: This intervention could have a small positive impact on community accessibility as it improves public transport network coverage and promotes non-motorised trips to access local services. This measure would improve accessibility to jobs, training, and shopping for all the communities which it serves by offering a faster, more frequent and reliable service along the corridor.</p> <p>Comparative Accessibility: This intervention could have a positive impact on accessibility in Dornoch and the Black Isle where there are no existing rail services. This intervention could have a positive impact on accessibility for all economic development areas as well as the Caithness and North Sutherland regeneration area following the decommissioning of Dounreay.</p>

Table E14.1.3 Key Strategic Outcomes

Key Strategic Outcomes (KSO's)		
Objective:	Assessment Summary:	Supporting Information:
Improve Journey Times and Connections:	Minor Benefit	End to end rail travel can be slow due to the limitations of the rail network within the corridor, while improved bus services and interchange could result in improved journey times for bus passengers. Connections to ferry services at Scrabster would be improved due to improved services along the corridor. Services may be able to provide a more flexible alternative, with potentially higher frequency closer to Inverness and the Black Isle. However, this may be at the detriment of current, rail users on the Far North Line.
Reduce Emissions:	Minor Benefit	Providing coach service facilities mirroring the Far North Rail Line could result in a modal shift from road to rail/bus, thereby reducing the number of cars on the road and so potentially contributing to a small decline in CO ₂ emissions and improvements to local air quality. However, modal shift as a result of this intervention is likely to be limited.
Improve Quality, Accessibility and Affordability:	Minor Benefit	This intervention would improve quality of travel and frequency of service along the corridor for bus passengers. People without a car would have improved accessibility, whilst car owners would have increased choice. The intervention would not significantly impact affordability.

Table E14.1.4 Scottish Government's Strategic Objectives

Scottish Government's Strategic Objectives		
Objective:	Assessment Summary:	Supporting Information:
Safer and Stronger:	Neutral	The provision of an augmented rail / bus service between Wick / Thurso and Inverness would make a contribution to safety by reducing the number of vehicle journeys on the corridor. However, the overall impact of the measures on accidents would be minimal. This intervention would improve the quality and accessibility of public transport but would not affect affordability.
Smarter:	Minor Benefit	This intervention would provide a minor benefit towards improving access to educational facilities in Inverness through reducing journey times to/from Inverness.
Wealthier and Fairer:	Minor Benefit	This intervention could increase productivity by reducing the time spent on the road by people in the corridor. This may help to make the region wealthier by improving the transport accessibility to the regeneration and development areas.
Greener:	Minor Benefit	This intervention promotes a minor modal shift to rail/coach with improvements to air quality and reduced carbon emissions. It also promotes the use of sustainable transport.
Healthier:	Minor Benefit	This intervention would improve accessibility to regional healthcare services in Inverness.

Table E14.1.5 Implementability Appraisal

Implementability Appraisal	
Technical:	It is expected that there would not be any technical issues which would arise from this intervention. This intervention is technically feasible with no untried technologies.
Operational:	Acceptable patronage levels would be required to successfully operate the intervention. Transport Scotland currently does not have the administrative powers to introduce a regulated coach service.
Public:	There has been no detailed consultation on this intervention however, it is expected that any measure which promotes modal shift to more sustainable transport would achieve public support.