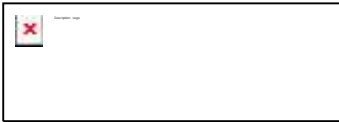

From: Hutton, Patrick (SELEX GALILEO, UK) []
Sent: 20 February 2012 12:55
To: Rail 2014
Cc: LAWRENCE MARSHALL (); PatrickHutton
Subject: R000631

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CRAG response to the Rail2014 questionnaire

Capital Rail Action Group is a well-established public transport group based in, and focussed on, the Edinburgh area.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the Transport Scotland Rail2014 consultation.

We feel that the majority of the rail services in the Edinburgh area fall in the 'Economic Railway' category, and we intend to make most of our comments in this regard.

CRAG note that rail services in Scotland (and in the UK) are a balance between the private sector provider, the users' service requirement, and the government's subsidy/planning. All these drivers need to be built into the franchise in such a way that we can have a viable, responsive and effective passenger rail service in Scotland.

Although the majority of Scotland's social rail services (eg West Highland, Stranraer, Far North) lie outwith CRAG's remit, we do feel that more could be done to promote these services. Better marketing for tourism; better timetabling for access; better rolling-stock for sightseeing and luggage and bicycle carriage; better connections with other trains and other transport modes - all these could make Scotland's rural branches more effective and attractive.

Best Regards,

Patrick Hutton

Secretary, Capital Rail Action Group

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CRAG have responses only to a limited number of the Consultation Questions: (forgive us for abridging the questions!)

Q5 – Under what terms should third parties be involved?

CRAG support the involvement of third parties (under open access) to enhance services on social railways, particularly if this enhances service provision for locals as well as tourists. There may also be an opportunity for local community involvement on these lines.

CRAG support the involvement of third parties in innovative schemes such as tram-trains on the Edinburgh South Suburban. This is unlikely to be a factor in the immediate 2014 franchise negotiation, but the door should be left open - and with a “Welcome” sign attached - for such schemes to be included on an opportunist basis during the lifetime of the franchise.

Q9 – Should we incentivise good performance?

CRAG believe that a major aim of Scotland’s rail franchise should be to effect modal share transfer to rail. A performance incentive regime based on modal share could be proposed.

Q10 – Should performance regime be aligned locally or nationally?

CRAG believe that performance should be assessed on actual routes.

Q11 – How can the performance regime be aligned with passenger issues?

CRAG comment: more involvement with consumer and campaign groups such as Passenger Focus, RAGES and CRAG, etc. Whilst it is right that the performance regime prioritises punctuality, this is often achieved at the expense of revenue protection on short journeys in urban areas. A further criterion of revenue collection should be added to the performance regime to encourage the franchise holder to also invest in this area of the service and reduce passenger frustration at large-scale fare evasion on certain journeys.

Q12 – what should be the balance between journey times and performance?

CRAG believe that Transport Scotland should scrutinise performance (including punctuality) at key points in the network. The practice of padding timetabling to allow ‘on-time’ arrival at the final destination despite being severely late at intermediate stations must be discouraged.

Q15 – Can better use be made of existing train capacity?

CRAG think that most of the time overcrowding is bearable, but there should be better planning to cope with large public events (eg concerts/events at Murrayfield can result in significant overcrowding on otherwise off-peak services at Haymarket).

Q16 – Interchanges vs direct services?

CRAG would prefer to retain direct services wherever possible, as the inconvenience and time penalty associated with changing trains is unattractive. However, where there is the opportunity to significantly increase modal share (Q9) then interchanges can be considered acceptable (eg Edinburgh Gateway).

Q17 – Who should direct aspects of service provision?

CRAG believe that this should be determined by Transport Scotland in conjunction with Regional Transport Partnerships (eg Sustrans).

Q19 – How should the contract incentivise the franchisee to be innovative?

As per Q9; CRAG believe that modal share increase should be a major driver, and mechanisms should be in place within the franchise to reward innovative schemes (marketing, timetabling, ticket discounting, etc) that increase modal share.

Q23 – Peak vs off-peak

CRAG would welcome the re-introduction of cheap returns, such as weekend returns. The cost penalty with two singles can be a disincentive.

CRAG would like to see a more equal fare structure across Scotland. SPT have successfully promoted rail travel within the Glasgow area through a subsidised fare system.

Q24 – Station closures?

CRAG support the aspiration that, as a minimum, there shall be no reduction in the number of stations on the network. There are locations where additional stations are desirable (eg Winchburgh, Abbeyhill and Portobello), and the opening of these may allow the closure of some lesser-used stations (eg Breich). However, due process for station closures must be followed, and it is noted that some lesser-used stations do have potential, such as Broughty Ferry and even Golf Street (Carnoustie).

Q25 – Merits of third-party funding of stations or services

CRAG are supportive of third-party funding provided that the funding is reasonable and adequate. The developer-led proposal for Winchburgh is a good example. CRAG would also support a greater role for Regional Transport Partnerships and local authorities in promoting and part-funding new stations where these will enhance access to the rail network. There are, for instance, many thousands of people in urban areas with no local station to enable them to use rail regularly – whilst other areas with few local inhabitants do have a station nearby. RTPs, in particular, should have available to them a ring-fenced sum of money each financial year with which to fund such initiatives – which will provide a necessary counter-balance to the more nationally focussed work of Transport Scotland. These funds should be in addition to a proposed innovation fund for other worthwhile initiatives .

Q26 – Only one organisation to run stations?

CRAG do not consider this necessary. Network Rail run some major stations, and there is scope for community organisations to take over aspects of local stations (subject to the appropriate safety provisions).

Q27 – How can local communities be encouraged to support their local station?

CRAG commend the Adopt-a-Station scheme. We also believe that for rural lines there should be greater opportunity for the re-use of station buildings for local/tourist purposes. The cafe at Crianlarich, the bunkhouses at Bridge of Orchy and Corrour, and the museum at Glenfinnan are good examples from the WHL.

Q28 – Facilities at stations?

CRAG welcome the recent improvements at Waverley and the proposed works at Haymarket to ease access to these stations. The proposed removal of taxis from Waverley, in particular, is, however, a seriously retrograde step and one which CRAG cannot support.

CRAG would also comment that the current works at Waverley should not be seen as the end of station improvements there. Consideration should be given to removing railway management offices from the main station building – though retaining the main booking hall and toilet facilities. This fine building could then be marketed as a retail destination – with railway management and staff facilities concentrated in a new building or buildings at the

east end of the station. Many other major stations have achieved a significant improvement to their “offer” and attractiveness by such means throughout Europe and beyond.

Q29 – Cross-border services North of Edinburgh?

CRAG’s position is absolutely yes! These provide significant connectivity across the whole of the UK. Also, consideration could be made for enabling West Coast services to call at Glasgow Central and then continue on to Stirling and points North.

Q30 – Should cross-border services terminate at Waverley?

CRAG position is No. See response to Q29.

Q31 – Alternative strategies or mechanisms to reduce the cost of rolling stock?

CRAG strongly encourage alternative mechanisms. The ROSCO system is not always conducive to an efficient and responsive railway. The rolling stock used on Scotland’s railways should be transferred from the ROSCO to either the franchisee or a not-for-profit body run by Transport Scotland. This would make for a railway better able to react to short-term demands (see Q15) and would reduce the cost to the taxpayer. New rolling stock, financed by Transport Scotland, should remain the property of TS.

Q32 – What facilities should be present on trains and should these vary by route?

CRAG expect that all trains should have adequate luggage and bicycle space, also toilet provision. Catering trolleys should be provided on all inter-city services, and also on rural routes (perhaps operated by community organisations). On scenic routes (eg WHL) rolling stock should have good seat/window alignment, as the view is a good part of the experience. (Clean/uns scratched windows would help...)

Q33 – Mobile phone and/or wi-fi?

CRAG’s view is that this is increasingly expected. It is a differentiator for train travel and should be available free of charge. Sockets for phone/PC charging are also required.

Q34 – Balance of seating vs first-class

CRAG consider that this could be left to the franchisee. First class could be removed on some services.

Q35 – Alcohol ban?

CRAG consider that the present arrangement of bans on specific routes at specific times/events is adequate. A blanket ban would not be reasonable on long-distance services.

Q37 – Sleeper service specification?

CRAG believe that the sleeper service specification should continue to be defined by Transport Scotland.

Q38 – Sleeper service contracted separately or as an option?

CRAG’s view is that this should be an option.

Q39 – Views on Caledonian Sleeper Service

CRAG think that in general the sleeper service is good. The appeal is a mix of old-style civilised and relaxed travel, utility, and potential value for money. The destinations are probably correct. The connections are not brilliant – for instance the Inverness sleeper arrives 0838 which is a good connection for the 0900 to Kyle, but the next Thurso/Wick train is not until 1038. An Oban connection would be useful; perhaps a 156 could be diagrammed to

overnight at Crianlarich to connect to the sleeper (due 0744). The connection at Fort William for Mallaig is fine. A bit of joined-up thinking would help make the sleeper an even more useful service.

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