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Consultation Questions

The answer boxes will expand as you type.

Procuring rail passenger services

1. What are the merits of offering the ScotRail franchise as a dual focus franchise and what services should be covered by the economic rail element, and what by the social rail element?

Q1 comments:

2. What should be the length of the contract for future franchises, and what factors lead you to this view?

Q2 comments:

3. What risk support mechanism should be reflected within the franchise?

Q3 comments:

4. What, if any, profit share mechanism should apply within the franchise?

Q4 comments:

5. Under what terms should third parties be involved in the operation of passenger rail services?

Q5 comments:

6. What is the best way to structure and incentivise the achievement of outcome measures whilst ensuring value for money?

Q6 comments:

7. What level of performance bond and/or parent company guarantees are appropriate?

Q7 comments:

8. What sanctions should be used to ensure the franchisee fulfils its franchise commitments?

Q8 comments:

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

9. Under the franchise, should we incentivise good performance or only penalise poor performance?

Q9 comments:

10. Should the performance regime be aligned with actual routes or service groups, or should there be one system for the whole of Scotland?

Q10 comments:

11. How can we make the performance regime more aligned with passenger issues?

Q11 comments:

12. What should the balance be between journey times and performance?

Q12 comments:

13. Is a Service Quality Incentive Regime required? And if so should it cover all aspects of stations and service delivery, or just those being managed through the franchise?

Q13 comments:

14. What other mechanisms could be used for assessing train and station quality?

Q14 comments:

Scottish train services

15. Can better use be made of existing train capacity, such as increasing the permitted standing time beyond the limit of 10 minutes or increasing the capacity limit? What is an acceptable limit for standing times on rail services?

Q15 comments:

16. Should the number of services making use of interchange stations (both rail to rail and rail to other modes) be increased to reduce the number of direct services? What would be the opportunities and challenges of this?

Q16 comments:

17. Should Government direct aspects of service provision such as frequency and journey time, or would these be better determined by the franchisee based on customer demand?

Q17 comments:

18. What level of contract specification should we use the for the next ScotRail franchise?

Q18 comments:

19. How should the contract incentivise the franchisee to be innovative in the provision of services?

Q19 comments:

Scottish rail fares

20. What should be the rationale for, and purpose of, our fares policy?

Q20 comments:

21. What fares should be regulated by government and what should be set on a commercial basis? Do your recommendations change by geographic area (the Strathclyde area example), or by type of journey (for example suburban or intercity)?

Q21 comments:

22. How should we achieve a balance between the taxpayer subsidy and passenger revenue contributions in funding the Scottish rail network? At what rate should fares be increased, and how feasible would it be to apply higher increases to Sections of the network which have recently been enhanced?

Q22 comments:

23. What should the difference be between peak and off-peak fares? Will this help encourage people to switch to travelling in the off-peak?

Q23 comments:

Scottish stations

24. How should we determine what rail stations are required and where, including whether a station should be closed?

Q24 comments: Section 7.10 of the "Rail 2014 – Public Consultation" document and its associated factsheet highlighted eleven Glasgow stations in close proximity to one another and their operating costs. Whilst I appreciate that there are (as yet) no proposals to close these stations, such a specific reference has understandably provoked considerable public concern. I work at Glasgow Museums Resource Centre. Nitshill station is our main public transport link. It is regularly used by both staff and visitors. We have an enormously wide range of visitors, from local community groups to researchers from institutions both national and international. It would be a disgrace if such a major facility was to lose its link to the rest of the city. I am writing in support of retaining the threatened stations, and Nitshill in particular, for the following reasons:

You state that the lease costs associated with the eleven stations is £208,000, an average of just £18,909 each. You also state that an unstaffed station requires an (unspecified) "significant annual sum" to run. Against this you have to consider the potential loss of passengers who would use other modes of transport (or not visit the area at all). An annual season ticket between Glasgow Central and Nitshill costs £644. Losing just 30 of those would more than cancel out the savings on the lease.

You must also consider the costs of security and vandalism at disused stations. The pedestrian tunnel under Nitshill station is regularly used for under-age drinking and is always surrounded by broken glass. It's fair to assume that an abandoned station would immediately become an attractive destination for gangs of under-age drinkers. There are potentially serious issues of vandalism, objects being thrown at trains, objects being placed on the track and people on the track. The financial cost of these issues could easily outweigh any savings, not to mention the potential human cost.

As Network Rail would be required to secure and maintain any stations that were closed, it would simply be an exercise in transferring costs from ScotRail to Network Rail with no real savings for the public purse.

Nitshill station serves an area which (whilst improving) has relatively high levels of deprivation and unemployment and low levels of car ownership. The area is not overly blessed with amenities. Local residents might use the rail service less than more affluent areas, which have larger numbers of commuters, but the level of need is greater. The train is a lifeline for many disabled and older people.

Nitshill is 5.5 miles from city centre as the crow flies but it's 8.5 miles by road. The bus journey to the city centre is extremely lengthy and the service is patchy. The provision of buses has recently been reduced, as the 45 bus no longer extends to Nitshill. Also, public transport planners sometimes seem to think that all journeys are in and out of the city centre. Bear in mind that people also travel locally, e.g. between Nitshill and Kennishead.

If Nitshill and Kennishead were to close then Priesthill & Darnley would have to serve a massive catchment area, roughly bounded by Cowglen golf course to the north-east, Auldhouse Burn to the east, the greenbelt between Glasgow and Barrhead to the south and to the west and extending beyond Barrhead Road to the north-west. In comparison, there are more than a dozen stations in an area smaller than this around the Cathcart Circle (all of which are less than a mile from another station). That area is also much closer to the city centre and has better bus services.

The Office of Rail Regulation's usage statistics for Nitshill station are 61,116 entrances and exits for 2009/2010. This figure equates to 168 entrances and exits per day (i.e. 84 people making return journeys). As a regular user of the station, my impression is that this is a severe underestimate. The ORR does state that "these estimates should be treated with

caution". Even if you accept the figures, Nitshill is still in the top two-thirds of stations in Scotland by passenger numbers (227th busiest out of 345 stations in Scotland listed in the ORR statistics). If, for the sake of argument, the city boundary was moved a few hundred yards north then Nitshill would be categorised as a busy rural station rather than a quiet urban station. The figures also represent a 4% increase on the previous year. There has been a lot of redevelopment and new house building in the area in recent years and the number of potential users is growing.

Rather than considering closing Nitshill, thought should be given to improving it and increasing passenger numbers. Nitshill is close to the M77 and to Paisley (which has limited park-and-ride facilities) and would be an ideal park-and-ride location for commuters travelling into Glasgow. There is a piece of waste ground by the entrance which could be developed for this purpose. A small part of the waste ground is accessible to vehicles and is routinely full of cars already using it as an informal park-and-ride facility. I believe that this investment would pay for itself. Building an access ramp on the southbound side would further increase the number of potential users, as there is no disabled access on that side.

To sum up, Nitshill station if already providing a vital public service, with great potential for growth. Rather than entering a downward spiral of station closures and declining passenger numbers (in pursuit of spurious savings), it should be invested in and improved.

25. What are the merits or issues that arise from a third party (such as a local authority or local business) being able to propose, promote and fund a station or service?

Q25 comments:

26. Should only one organisation be responsible for the management and maintenance of stations? If this was the franchisee how should that responsibility be structured in terms of leasing, investment, and issues relating to residual capital value?

Q26 comments:

27. How can local communities be encouraged to support their local station?

Q27 comments:

28. What categories of station should be designated and what facilities should be available at each category of station?

Q28 comments:

Cross-border services

29. Should cross-border services continue to go north of Edinburgh? In operating alongside ScotRail services, how do cross-border services benefit passengers and taxpayers? And who should specify these services, the Department of Transport or the Scottish Ministers?

Q29 comments:

30. Or should the cross-border services terminate at Edinburgh Waverley, allowing opportunities for Scottish connections? And if so, what additional benefits would accrue from having an Edinburgh Hub?

Q30 comments:

Rolling stock

31. What alternative strategies or mechanisms could be used to reduce the cost of the provision of rolling stock?

Q31 comments:

32. What facilities should be present on a train and to what extent should these facilities vary according to the route served?

Q32 comments:

Passengers – information, security and services

33. How should we prioritise investment for mobile phone provision and / or Wi-Fi type high-bandwidth services?

Q33 comments:

34. How should we balance the need for additional seating capacity and retain the flexibility of a franchisee to offer first-class services if commercially viable?

Q34 comments:

35. What issues and evidence should be considered prior to determining whether or not to ban the consumption of alcohol on trains?

Q35 comments:

36. How can the provision of travel information for passengers be further improved?

Q36 comments:

Caledonian Sleeper

37. Should we continue to specify sleeper services, or should this be a purely commercial matter for a train operating company?

Q37 comments:

38. Should the Caledonian Sleeper services be contracted for separately from the main ScotRail franchise? Or should it be an option for within the main ScotRail franchise?

Q38 comments:

39. We would be interested in your views in the level and type of service that the Caledonian Sleeper Services should provide. Including:

- What is the appeal of the Caledonian Sleeper Service, and if there were more early and late trains would the appeal of the sleeper services change?

- What is the value of sleeper services to Fort William, Inverness and Aberdeen and are these the correct destinations, for example would Oban provide better connectivity?

- What facilities should the sleeper services provide and would you pay more for better facilities?

Q39 comments:

Environmental issues

40. What environmental key performance indicators should we consider for inclusion in the franchise agreement or the High Level Output Specification?

Q40 comments: