

Our Ref: TM/BC
Date: 16 February, 2012

*Councillor Thomas Morgan, Convener
Audit and Governance Panel
Ward 7, Airdrie North*

Transport Scotland
Rail 2014 – Public Consultation
Buchanan House
58 Port Dundas Road
Glasgow
G4 0HF

Dear Sir

Rail 2014 – Public Consultation

In relation to the above consultation, while North Lanarkshire Council will be submitting a response to all parts of the consultation document, my own response relates, specifically, to/for the creation of a rail station in the village of Plains within my council ward.

Plains is located on the Glasgow to Edinburgh line, via Airdrie. This council, during the Bill stage of the Airdrie to Bathgate Project, campaigned for a station at Plains. Such a station would improve connectivity, particularly from Plains to West Lothian opening up employment opportunities which would address the high deprivation within the village. The social/demographic case made at that time is still relevant today.

The case is fully encapsulated in the attached (copy) letter I forwarded to Mr Stewart Stevenson, MSP; (see attached letter dated 10 December 2009).

Local councils, such as North Lanarkshire, do not have powers to deliver new stations.

Indeed, your own consultation document acknowledges this point; stating in paragraph 1.7, that “under the Railways Acts, we (The Scottish Ministers) are responsible for funding and specifying the rail networks in Scotland”.

It is my own (and council’s) belief that there is a strong case for providing a new station in Plains, based on the local demographic characteristics, social inclusion, unemployment levels and opportunities in the area. Indeed, the former Scottish Executive agreed with the council’s contention, that Plains required a station.

The funding for new stations (such as Plains) should remain with the Scottish Government/Network Rail. Local authorities are not funded to provide national transport infrastructure projects, such as stations. Transport Scotland (a few years ago) assumed responsibility for rail in Scotland; this includes the funding of services and infrastructure. Specifically in relation to Plains, this includes responsibility for a new train station.

TransportScotland.16.02.doc

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The above outlined responses should be taken in relation to the questions on "Scottish Stations"; (i.e. questions 24 and 25).

I give wholehearted agreement to my response being made available to the public, in the Scottish Government Library and on the Scottish Government website.

My name, address and contact details can all be made available for public information.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Thomas Morgan

Enc

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Windmillhill Street
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Our Ref: TM/BC
Date: 10 December, 2009

*Councillor Thomas Morgan, Convener
Audit and Governance Panel
Ward 7, Airdrie North*

Mr Stewart Stevenson MSP
Minister for Transport, Infrastructure & Climate Change
3E
95 Victoria Key
Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ

Dear Stewart

Airdrie-Bathgate Rail Link – Plains Station

The Airdrie Local Area Partnership supports the Airdrie-Bathgate Railway & Linked Improvements rail line re-opening project and is pleased with the progress on delivering the scheme. However, on their behalf, I would wish to re-affirm the Partnership's position on the need for a train station in Plains, particularly in view of the fact that a station is now to be provided in Blackridge.

You may recall that during the early consultation phase for the proposed project, one of the main issues for the Council concerned the recommendation that there would not be a station in Plains. The original Central Scotland Transport Corridor Study (CSTCS) study did not allow for any new intermediate stations between Airdrie (Drumgelloch) and Bathgate. However, following representations from officers and Members from both councils, as well as the local MSPs, the Scottish Executive subsequently included the examination of potential intermediate station locations within later studies.

However, the Scottish Executive only subsequently proposed one new intermediate station within North Lanarkshire, at Caldercruix, plus one within West Lothian. The Council was advised that the decision for those new stations was based upon engineering, patronage, environmental, economic and other associated factors, as well the ability of the new train stopping patterns to tie into the existing rail timetables for both the Glasgow and Edinburgh expansive and relatively congested networks. The reason given was that having more stops on a line increases the overall journey time and consequently reduces the attractiveness of the route. Consequently, within the Council's consultation response to the Bill, the Scottish Executive were asked to reconsider the Council's request to also have a station at Plains.

As part of that response, as well as in the evidence given at a number of the Airdrie-Bathgate Bill stakeholder consultation events, the Council argued that not providing a station at Plains Station was contrary to Government transport policy key aims of social inclusion and of improving access to remote areas and areas of deprivation. It was also highlighted that there are presently no alternative bus services in the evening and a limited provision at weekends. There is a dial-a-bus service for disabled and a ring-and-ride service, both of which do not operate after 1800hrs. These services are only suitable for occasional use and cannot provide the regular service required to access health, education or employment.

Further, the average walking distance to the nearest station, at the re-located Drumgelloch Station, is some 1.8km, which is above the recommended walking distance of 800m. In addition, the location of the proposed new station in Caldercruix has since been moved further eastwards. The Council accommodated that move, in the interests of delivering the project. However, that consequently moved it further from the village which, because the new cycle path follows a more circuitous route than the former rail bed, means that the distance to it is significantly increased for anyone from Plains who had to choose that option.

In 2007, the Council wrote to Transport Scotland in regard to the provision of a station in Plains. Transport Scotland had commissioned a feasibility study to examine the technical issues that would be associated with the provision of a station at Plains and/ or Blackridge, in response to an earlier instruction by the previous Transport Minister, Tavish Scott, during the passage of the Airdrie-Bathgate Rail Bill through the Scottish Parliament. The Council had understood that that study was primarily requested to examine the technical feasibility issues; however, we subsequently learnt that the findings of the report would now be considered alongside any potential impacts on overall rail patronage levels. The Council had understood that we had made a case for the station based on social inclusion need that outweighed the patronage issue. The Council had withdrawn their objection to the Bill based on the previous decision from the Minister of Transport that agreed that the Council had made a case for provision of a station at Plains. This allowed the Bill to be considered by the Scottish Parliament at an early stage.

It is worth reiterating that the earlier Initial Technical Feasibility Study and the later Design Development Appraisal study, both commissioned by Network Rail, identified that there were no technical reasons preventing the provision of a station at Plains.

During the Consideration Stage of the Bill, the Bill Committee acknowledged that there was some merit in providing these stations on the basis of social need, reflecting the strength of the arguments presented to the Bill Committee in oral and written evidence submissions. However, the views of the Bill Committee do not appear to have been taken into account by Transport Scotland when concluding their subsequent study, even though the earlier Economic Appraisal and Locational Impacts (EALI) study, commissioned jointly by both Councils, demonstrated that significant economic and social inclusion benefits that would emanate from the provision of these stations.

The area of Plains is ranked as one of Scotland's most deprived areas in the 2009 Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. Two of the three zones that cover Pains lie within the 15% most deprived data zones in the whole of Scotland, while the third zone is ranked within the 20% band.

Plains also has a higher than average percentage of unemployed job seekers, as the number of individuals claiming Job Seekers Allowance stands at 6.8% of the working age population in Plains, compared to a Scottish average of 4.0% (*National Statistics data for Plains and Caldercruix, September 2009). Expanding this to include the other key out of work benefits (incapacity benefit, lone parents and others on income related benefits) shows that 24.2% of the working age population in Plains claim such benefits, which is significantly higher than the Scottish average of 15.1% (*National Statistics data for Plains and Caldercruix, February 2009).

To put that in perspective, North Lanarkshire has the sixth highest rate of Job Seeker Allowance claimants in Scotland at 5.4% {*ONS claimant count with rates and proportions [September 2009]}. That position is mirrored by those claiming key out of work benefits (consists of the groups: job seekers, incapacity benefits, lone parents and others on income related benefits) {*ONS benefit claimants - working age client group [February 2009]}.

The figures from 2007 identified that the percentage of 16 to 24 year olds studying but not working was 10%, compared with a Scottish average of 15%. 44% of households do not have access to a car, compared to 36% in North Lanarkshire and 34% in Scotland. Access to a station would allow residents to better take advantage of available employment and education opportunities within and out-with North Lanarkshire, which is a key component of the North Lanarkshire Regeneration Outcome Agreement. In particular, it would enable access to employment opportunities within West Lothian, which is presently not an option for many as there are no direct bus services from Plains. The need for such a service was identified during the Parliamentary Bill stage; however, there still seems to be no likelihood of any such service being provided.

The lack of car ownership, the employment deprivation and the income deprivation of the village are very important considerations in this matter. These social issues, combined with the number of people in receipt of key benefits, all serve to reiterate that Plains is a population that needs good access to transport links in order to engage with the job market.

During the consultation stage of the Bill, the community of Plains, wholly independent of the Council, had carried out a survey to establish support for, and likely usage of, a station in Plains. The respondents demonstrated overwhelming support for a station, which suggests that the potential patronage figures for Plains were underestimated. That support for a station from the community in Plains remains just as strong as it was during the Bill's consultation stages.

Following the passage of the Parliamentary Bill, now the Airdrie-Bathgate Railway and Linked Improvements Act, the Council and West Lothian Council formally asked you to re-consider the request to provide more intermediate stations on the re-opened section of the line. The subsequent decision was that you did not support the provision of a station in Plains, but would consider the provision of a station in Blackridge, subject to funding contributions from a large housing development proposed within the area and from the Council.

We have since been advised that a station will be provided in Blackridge, with a substantial element of the funding made available by West Lothian Council. In view of that decision, it would seem that the precedent has been set that social issues now outweigh any concerns over the potential impact on overall rail patronage levels.

The social factors relating to Plains certainly justify the case for the provision of a station. In addition, the relative population figures comparing Plains with Blackridge, and even with Caldercruix, only serve to reinforce the argument for the provision of a stop within Plains. The following information was downloaded from Scottish Census Results Online, with the figures produced from the 2001 Census, based on locality population returns:

| | |
|----------------------------|-------|
| Population of Plains: | 2,291 |
| Population of Caldercruix: | 2,031 |
| Population of Armadale: | 9,063 |
| Population of Blackridge: | 1,554 |

The Economic Appraisal and Locational Impacts (EALI) study, previously commissioned jointly by North Lanarkshire and West Lothian Councils, demonstrated that significant economic and social inclusion benefits that would emanate from the provision of intermediate stations, including Plains. A wide range of issues were presented by the Council as part of our formal written evidence to the Bill Committee, including a number of key social inclusion and patronage elements.

I believe that the case for providing a station in Plains has actually been reinforced by the Transport Scotland/Network Rail Edinburgh-Glasgow Improvements Programme (EGIP), announced last year. EGIP comprises around 20 related rail projects that will significantly improve rail links between Edinburgh and Glasgow, increasing service levels to 13 trains an hour in each direction. A major electrification programme will electrify 350km of diesel routes between and around the two cities, allowing journey times to be reduced to a headline 35 minutes, on the Glasgow to Edinburgh via Falkirk line, following the electrification programme.

Therefore, quite apart from the Airdrie-Bathgate link, Glasgow city to Edinburgh city commuters will soon have the option to choose an increased frequency and faster 35-minute service on the Falkirk line, or use the currently electrified main inter-city link between Edinburgh and Glasgow via Carstairs, or use the new semi-fast hourly service that is due to be overlaid on the Glasgow to Edinburgh via Shotts line.

City to city commuters will therefore soon be able to enjoy a number of options for travelling between the two cities, which reinforces the importance of the need for the Airdrie-Bathgate line to service the many communities along the route who do not enjoy the luxury of choice afforded to those cities.

The majority of patronage on the Airdrie-Bathgate reopening is generated from the Central Scotland conurbation, connecting North Lanarkshire and West Lothian with each other and with Edinburgh and Glasgow. Commuters travelling directly between Glasgow and Edinburgh already have these other rail options, therefore if any patronage were to be lost from the line, it would not be lost from the rail network.

There are also opportunities to revise timetables to negate the increase in stopping time required at Plains. This could for example be achieved with alternative stopping patterns, taking cognisance of the fact that patrons of stations nearer Glasgow and Edinburgh have far greater travel choices than the residents of Plains. In addition the overall patronage estimates on previous rail projects have historically proved to be pessimistic and therefore financial returns can be expected to be greater than estimated.

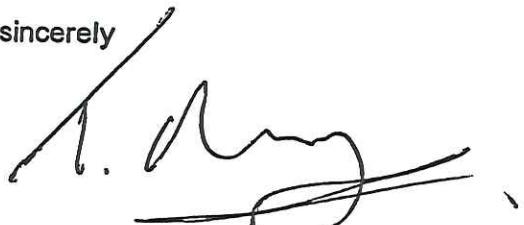
The Council therefore believes that the provision of a rail station in Plains will provide the most reliable opportunity to access employment, training and health for the surrounding communities, tackling social inclusion and equality concerns.

Previous reports indicate the provision is technically possible. A precedent has already been set for supporting additional stations, following the decision to provide one in Blackridge. Constructing the station now as opposed to after opening of the line will save an estimated £500k in rail possession and contract disruption costs. There is therefore a window of opportunity that can be taken now to optimise costs by constructing the station before the line is re-opened.

You will be aware that the Council has been committed to a very significant financial contribution towards the Airdrie-Bathgate scheme, including: the loss of Capital receipts for the various parcels of land transferred at nil-cost, in particular the substantial area of land required for the re-located Drumgelloch Station; the cost of bringing forward the replacement of Crowwood bridge deck; substantial future maintenance liabilities to be incurred for structures that were previously the responsibility of British Railways Board (Residuary) Ltd; maintenance liabilities for sections of the NCN 75 cycle track previously maintained by Sustrans; and the future maintenance liabilities for various road and footbridges, culverts and sections of carriageway and cycle paths that are to be vested in the Council.

In view of the various factors detailed above, I would respectfully ask you to re-consider your previous decision and give a commitment to providing a station in Plains at the earliest possible opportunity.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Morgan". The signature is fluid and somewhat abstract, with a large, stylized 'T' on the left and a more rounded 'Morgan' on the right.

Councillor Thomas Morgan

Chief Executive's Office

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Councillor Thomas Morgan
North Lanarkshire Council
Civic Centre
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ML1 1AB

Our ref:
1250/09/CER

5 January 2010

Dear Councillor Morgan

Provision of a station at Plains

~~Thank you for your letter to the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change dated 10 December regarding the provision of a station at Plains. As this is a matter delegated to Transport Scotland, your letter has been passed to me for a reply.~~

The Airdrie Bathgate Rail link will promote economic activity and jobs in North Lanarkshire. In addition to the benefits of the construction phase where there are currently around 1000 people employed, studies show that up to 400 jobs could be generated in North Lanarkshire by the new railway connecting Glasgow and Edinburgh.

The feasibility study undertaken into the provision of a station at Plains in 2007 is still valid today. This showed that the overall number of passengers using the new route would reduce if a station was provided at Plains. This would impact projected revenues by approximately £650k per annum.

The study also reported that, although it is technically feasible to build a station at Plains, it would cost £6.5m since the provision of a car park and supporting road network is challenging. This amount is considerably in excess for the provision of similar new stations along the route.

To secure an efficient cost for this new railway, Transport Scotland has successfully negotiated a fixed price contract with Network Rail. Any provision of a station at Plains would be incremental to this and is not in our funding plans.

With the current pressures on transport spending, it is not possible to see circumstances changing in the near future to reconsider this position. However, as the Minister noted on 22 October 2007, he has not closed the door to considering the case in the future should the circumstances warrant a re-evaluation.

I hope this is helpful.

I am copying this letter to the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change.

Yours sincerely

David Middleton

DAVID MIDDLETON

Respondent Information Form and Questions

Please Note this form **must** be returned with your response to ensure that we handle your response appropriately

1. Name/Organisation

Organisation Name

North Lanarkshire Council

Title Mr Ms Mrs Miss Dr Councillor **Please tick as appropriate**

Surname

Morgan

Forename

Thomas

2. Postal Address

North Lanarkshire Council

Civic Centre

Windmillhill Street

Motherwell

Postcode ML1 1AB

Phone 01698 302314

Email morgant@northlan.gov.uk

3. Permissions - I am responding as...

Individual

/ Group/Organisation



Please tick as appropriate



(a) Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (in Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government web site)?

Please tick as appropriate Yes No

(b) Where confidentiality is not requested, we will make your responses available to the public on the following basis
Please tick ONE of the following boxes

Yes, make my response, name and address all available

or

Yes, make my response available, but not my name and address

or

Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address

(c) The name and address of your organisation **will be** made available to the public (in the Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government web site).

Are you content for your **response** to be made available?

Please tick as appropriate Yes No

(d) We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Please tick as appropriate

Yes

No

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 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 See attached letter

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 See attached letter

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: