

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:

The dual focus franchise focuses risks on the outcome of investment in “added value” services which do little to reduce inequality and open up access to the service but which could be used to increase fares on the economic routes. In addition, the system as described would allow little payback to the operators for investment to improve services and attractiveness of the routes which are designated as social routes. It is probable that this approach would therefore lead to a divergence in service quality between the economic and social franchises.

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:

There should be a mechanism in place to reward the franchisee for attracting more people to use the rail network, regardless of the route.

It is unlikely that a franchisee is going to attribute increased revenue to factors

other than those under their direct influence which will attract additional income.

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:

We suggest that the outcome to which this and all transport strategy should be working is a modal shift towards active transport (walking and cycling) and public transport. Achievement of this outcome would impact on health by reducing the use of private road transport – thus reducing levels of health damaging air pollutants; mitigating climate change (by reducing emissions of transport related greenhouse gases); increasing the opportunity for people to integrate active travel into their daily routine (e.g. walking or cycling to and from train stations) – this would improve population fitness levels; and increasing accessibility of the service would impact on social exclusion. It would also reduce levels of congestion on the roads – resulting in positive economic impacts.

Working to these outcomes would require:

- Encouraging people to use the rail system at all times of day – increasing capacity where required to encourage commuters to switch to this mode of transport.
- Improving the accessibility of the system – ensuring that all stations and trains are accessible for those with reduced mobility, including people who use wheelchairs; and are accessible for people with buggies and prams, and bicycle users. Increasing socio-economic accessibility would include simplifying and reducing fares.
- Improving network coverage
- If the views of users are going to be included in performance management – there should also be inclusion of work to widen the user base of the railway system. Provision of amenities and facilities on rail stations and rail routes for groups who are currently excluded should attract a premium.

The plans outlined in the consultation document are not orientated towards these activities or this outcome. Indeed, there seems to be a theme running through the documentation that prices will need to rise to reduce demand for services. We therefore wish to encourage the Scottish Government and

Transport Scotland to re-evaluate what it wants to achieve through this tender process and whether the current plans are likely to deliver this. Given the rationale described above, such investment would constitute preventative spend.

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:

Continuing to do both would be a reasonable approach. Given the outcome proposed above, good performance would be measured both in current terms and in terms of the level of additional customers attracted to rail services on an annual basis.

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:

Undertake an inequalities impact assessment as part of the assessment process for bids for the new franchise. Consider views of current passengers but also of those who are currently unable to, or do not access the rail system. Include information how rail journeys impact on the full journey of passengers (links to other services both rail, and road)

If fully signed up to an outcomes focussed approach – would need to focus on passengers (and potential passengers) and not trains.

As a separate issue – influence rolling stock design

- Disabled access
- Facilities for wheel chairs, prams, buggies
- Facilities to carry cycles by train

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

Q12 comments:

One of the selling points of rail travel over road transport is less congestion during peak hours, and thus a faster and more reliable service. Journey time is an important issue for new and existing customers.

If the proposal to move to a greater hub and spoke approach to journeys is progressed, then the importance of services meeting one another consistently and reliably becomes more important.

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:

Accessibility for people with mobility issues, amenities for wheel chair users, prams and buggies, and cyclists.

Use of station and trains by vulnerable groups, services to encourage equalities groups onto the system.

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:

Need for passengers to be comfortable. In contrast to the idea of increasing prices to reducing demand, the franchisee should be disincentivised from 'packing' trains at peak times (e.g. by discounting the cost of travel for those travelling on trains which are over capacity).

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:

In such a case, the importance of services meeting one another consistently and reliably becomes more important. Such an approach will only work if potential passengers are assured and are themselves sure they will not be left standing at a train station for long periods because the train on which they were travelling was late and failed to meet their onward connection. There would be a need for improved and integrated time-tabling to ensure that passengers can complete their total journey in a reasonable time frame which is competitive with other forms of public transport. Performance

measurement would then include missed connections.

The facilities at interchange stations should also be improved – to include accessible public toilets, attractive waiting areas, and other amenities.

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:

There should be broad agreement about minimum frequency and connectivity and then agreement between government and franchisee on particulars.

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:

By incentivising modal shift towards rail transport

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments:

Fares policy should work towards the proposed outcome of enabling a modal shift towards rail travel in Scotland. To this end, fares should be kept to a minimum and free travel should be used to improve accessibility of the service to key groups – for example, a recent study on free public transport for older age groups suggests an association between use of such services and lower levels of obesity in this age group.

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:

The argument for peak and off peak fares would appear to be that since commuters are the service's largest passenger group then this group should be discouraged from using the system at the time they need to use it, by effectively having an additional charge and not being provided with a seat.

If the outcome to which the rail operators and Scottish Ministers were working was a modal shift to rail transport, then there would be a greater focus in attracting more people away from a commute on private transport and onto the railways. This would mean reducing peak fares and improving the capacity of the system to meet the bulge in demand at these times.

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments:

In making any decision about station closure, a full assessment should be made of the accessibility of alternatives, approaches to improving station use, future demand, and a full health and inequalities impact assessment should be undertaken.

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:

We have concerns that having multiple organisations managing and maintaining stations would lead to increased complexity in the system – this would make more difficult to ensure quality and health and safety systems are consistently in place and are appropriately maintained and we therefore suggest there should be no increase in the number of organisations which currently manage and maintain stations.

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

Q27 comments:

Encouraging use of the system to enable a modal shift in transport use.

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:

The argument to require these services to stop at Edinburgh would appear to be economic (by increasing the revenues available to the Scottish franchisee) and not based on the preferences of the travelling public. Having to break a journey in Edinburgh, with the allied concerns of not meeting the connecting services, and the delays inherent in such a system can hardly be considered an added value to the people who use these services. It would make sense if the timetabling of services within Scotland made most use of such cross border services and that tickets could be used interchangeably with other services operating elsewhere in Scotland.

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:

From the point of view of passengers using the cross border service, there would be no benefits from having to change trains. If additional services were provided which improved the frequency, timing and cost of services north (or west) of Edinburgh for all passengers using this route, then there may be a wider benefit.

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:

All trains should have facilities to allow accessibility to people who use wheel chairs, prams and buggies.

All trains should have amenities to allow the carriage of bicycles and the number of bicycles which can be accommodated should be greater for those routes which go to tourist destinations.

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:

Improving the accessibility of the rail system should be prioritised above investment for the above.

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:

As a Health Improvement organisation which is concerned about the negative impact of alcohol consumption on the health of the population of Scotland, we would suggest that no alcohol is sold on trains in Scotland, and that there is a blanket ban on alcohol consumption on trains.

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:

We would argue that the sleeper service should be suitably subsidised and marketed as a viable alternative to early morning flights to London – as such a mode of travel is considerably more environmentally sustainable.

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:

Modal shift towards train travel (and contributing towards modal shifts towards active travel and all public transport modes).

Modal shift away from use of diesel rolling stock.