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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:

There is strong argument for long-term franchise – ie 20 years – which can allow proper decisions to be taken about type of rolling stock and service improvements.

The disadvantage is that contractual errors are often locked in; and there is lengthy archive of evidence that contracts brokered by government agencies are unfit for purpose – PPPs / Edinburgh Trams.

I have little confidence that Transport Scotland (with perceived vested interests) could draft a sound 20 year franchise agreement.

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:

Financial. Financial. Financial and financial.

With a bond deposited by franchisee or bank guarantor prior to taking up franchise.

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments:

Both are valid.

But, more importantly is the setting of valid, reasonable and challenging targets or benchmarks for evaluating performance.

Too often, the franchisee (with the collaboration of Transport Scotland as supervising authority) are able to manipulate performance statistics or to set inappropriate targets.

For example – lengthening timetabled journeys in order to improve punctuality statistics and running short-formation services.

And, my particular favourite – the outrageous practice of granting a 10 minute punctuality window against timetabled arrivals – especially devious on the Glasgow/Edinburgh (express/shuttle) which allows for a 20% delay margin.

In practice, Scotrail can run all Glasgow/Edinburgh services 10 minutes late and achieve 100% punctuality. That is clearly ridiculous and puts reported punctuality performance (at only 90%) into proper perspective.

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:

Aligned with actual routes or service.

Pointless to compare Inverness/Wick service against Glasgow Central/Cathcart.

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

Q11 comments:

Stop blatant manipulation of the system.

Implement a performance regime that actually measures performance against timetabled information and stated objectives rather than contriving a measurement system to show what Scotrail and Transport Scotland want it to show.

It may not be pretty, but passengers would prefer to know how many trains arrived on time (ie at timetabled arrival) rather than 10 minutes late.

I suspect that Glasgow/Edinburgh express/shuttle services run maybe 70% to timetable (ie arriving per timetable), reducing to less than 50% in peak hours. The punctuality figure of 90% quoted is inaccurate and misleading.

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

Q12 comments:

Why do they have to be exclusive?

A commuter service is run as a commuter service and can be judged as a commuter service.

An express service is run as an express service and should be judged as an express service.

The difficulty arises only when franchisee and supervising authority seek to dress up a commuter service as an express service or to reduce an express service to a stopping service.

I find it extraordinary that Glasgow/Edinburgh (via Falkirk High) trains are now running 7 or 8 minutes slower than they were 30 years ago (averaging maybe 50 mph).

That is dismal - however you benchmark performance.

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:

Equip trains for purpose.

Too many units carry unused catering areas or excessive toilet areas..

Scrap first class/toilets on trains of less than 60 minutes duration.

Increase number of services running 6 car units.

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:

Yes.

Provided that franchisee able (or willing) to operate connecting service to timetable.

Not much use alighting at interchange station to be informed that connecting service is late or cancelled.

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:

If Government is contributing 74% revenue support – of course they should direct aspects of service provision.

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:

Fares should be proportionate to the service provided.

For example - running 55 minute service between Edinburgh and Glasgow does not justify £21 return. Running a 35 minute service does.

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:

Believe that peak fares are nearer as high as they can be (particularly on Glasgow/Edinburgh) without significant risk of passengers deserting train

service.

Interested to see how electrification costs of Falkirk High route will affect fares.

If they rise to a 2012 equivalent of say £30, I suspect that passengers numbers will decrease rather than increase.

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:

No.

It may encourage passengers to take discretionary journeys or even to switch between modes of transport, but it will have only marginal effect on switching passengers from peak to non-peak services.

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments:

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:

Minimal services required on trains designed for journeys of less than 60 minutes.

The provision of one size fits all is ill-conceived.

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:

Not required.

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:

First class on services of less than 60 minutes is irrelevant.

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

Q35 comments:

There should be no alcohol sold on any train.

And consumption of alcohol brought onto train by passengers should be banned.

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

Q36 comments:

Accuracy and honesty.

To be told that your train has arrived 10 minutes late because of 'operational difficulties' is pointless.

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: