

Renfrewshire Council

To: Environment and Infrastructure Board

On: 29 February 2012

**Report
by
Director of Planning & Transport**

Rail 2014 - Public Consultation

1. Summary

In 2014 both the current contract for Rail Passenger Services (Scotrail) and the funding arrangements for Network Rail in Scotland are due to come to an end and new arrangements have to be put in place. Transport Scotland is therefore consulting on the rail network in Scotland and how both franchising and funding should be dealt with post 2014. The consultation document covers mostly management and operational aspects of the rail network. Few of these are directly relevant to Renfrewshire and SPT as a public transport body will be responding in detail on behalf of the metropolitan area and the constituent Councils. This Council's response has therefore focussed on issues related to our own strategic planning and economic regeneration aspirations. The deadline for responses is 20 February 2012 and a copy of this report has therefore been submitted to Transport Scotland with a caveat that it remains a draft until the 29 February 2012 subject to approval by this board.

2. Recommendations

2.1. It is recommended that the board:-

- i. Note the content of this paper in respect of the consultation into rail services in Scotland post 2014;
- ii. Approve this report as Renfrewshire Council's formal response to the consultation.

3. Background

3.1. In 2014 the current ScotRail Franchise for passenger rail services in Scotland will require to be renewed. At the same time the funding arrangements for Network Rail in Scotland will also require renewal. The "Rail 2014 – Public Consultation" provides significant information on the current management and operational aspects of railway services in Scotland and asks 40 questions as part of the consultation.

3.2. Key issues to consider in respect of future rail services are that:

- Annual rail subsidy is currently over £700m per year
- Around 78 million passenger journeys are made each year on the network of which the majority (63.87% of the total) are made within the Strathclyde area.
- Passenger numbers have grown by over 25% since the start of the current franchise in 2004
- Demand is expected to continue to grow, in the Glasgow conurbation the forecast for growth is between 24 and 38% by 2024/25.

- 3.3. The document recognises the considerable success of the rail industry in recent years and the considerable investment which has brought about reopened lines, new stations, upgraded tracks and new rolling stock. Indeed Renfrewshire has benefitted significantly from recently introduced new rolling stock, ongoing line upgrading works between Paisley Gilmour Street and Glasgow Central, re-roofing of Gilmour Street Station and signalling upgrades within the Renfrewshire area.
- 3.4. The consultation document focuses very strongly in both its evaluation of current performance and consultation questions on the operation and management of the network in the short to medium term. Perhaps surprisingly, there is consequently little opportunity to comment on the railway network as a component of a long term vision for the Greater Glasgow conurbation in the context of the Strategic Development Plan. Long term economic success and sustainable traffic growth is predicated on strong public transport links which provides real alternatives to private cars, especially for commuting.
- 3.5. A significant issue for Renfrewshire in this respect is the predicted expansion of housing in the Ayrshire local authorities, combined with the expectation that a significant proportion of the population will work in the conurbation. This will place future pressures on the Ayrshire to Glasgow railway lines and increase traffic through stations like Paisley Gilmour Street. This Council would therefore seek to play a part in further improvements that will take advantage of the increased track capacity between Paisley Gilmour Street and Glasgow Central which potentially could result in increased train frequencies through Paisley Gilmour Street to Ayrshire and Inverclyde.
- 3.6. SPT are in the best position to represent constituent Councils with respect to detailed questions on matters such as procurement, performance, revenue risk and fare levels. A response on the consultation by SPT was agreed at the Partnership meeting on 10 February. In respect of responses to the 40 specific questions, we consider that this response is very comprehensive, informed and helpful. SPT has agreed to include a statement, however, which raises a slight concern. In reference to the "McNulty, Rail Value for Money Study", the SPT report quotes a reference to a recommendation "that regional transport authorities should have responsibility for rail services in their areas so that there would be better decision making and more service innovation whilst enhancing local accountability and reducing costs".

The McNulty Study was concerned with achieving cost savings in the rail industry and was commissioned by the Department of Transport and the Office of Rail Regulation. The summary report dated May 2011 contains many recommendations designed to tackle issues in the rail industry such as fragmentation, short term franchising, weaknesses in human resource management etc. In the main body of the report (para 6.2.5) it states:

"greater localism, with more involvement in England of local authorities and/or PTEs with local decision making brought more closely together with budget responsibility and accountability".

The report does not specifically mention Scotland or the unique situation created by Scottish Government's role in the funding and franchising of Scottish Rail Services. In these circumstances, it is felt that the SPT recommendation:-

“SPT to have a greater role in supervision and development of regional rail services including the setting of service levels, fares and standards” would be more appropriate if it was substituted with:-

“SPT to be fully consulted on all rail matters including the setting of service levels, fares and standards”.

This latter statement we consider better reflects the proper role of a Transport Partnership with respect to the rail industry and recognises the role of Transport Scotland and Scottish Government in managing Scotland’s rail network.

- 3.7. Rail services in this area are very much conurbation wide issues and will benefit from a strategic approach. In this respect it should be noted that the Glasgow & Clyde Valley Strategic Development Planning Authority has agreed a response to the consultation and has raised issues in respect of strategic planning matters.
- 3.8. The key question for Renfrewshire is question 24 “How should we determine what rail stations are required and where, including whether a station should be closed”. The document identifies that there are 350 railway stations in Scotland. It is further stated that there is no intention to reduce the number of railway stations. Concern is raised however over a significant number of stations that currently serve less than 20 passengers per week. In addition there are 11 stations which are less than one mile from another railway station offering similar services.
- 3.9. The last point is significant because St James Station in Renfrewshire is one of the 11 stations in Scotland which is within a mile of an adjacent station. St James Station brings significant benefits however because it is close to the new St Mirren Football Stadium, indeed the locational choice for the St Mirren Football Stadium was enhanced by the close proximity of a good public transport interchange. This Council considers therefore that St James Station already plays an important role and that any future strategy should consider capitalising further on the locational advantages of St James Station.
- 3.10. There are no specific locations identified within the Council’s Local Transport Strategy where we consider a new station should be provided. The document does however seek further upgrade of Paisley Gilmour Street Station as a component in the regeneration of Paisley Town Centre and also enhanced parking facilities at Johnstone Station to alleviate parking pressure on the surrounding street.
- 3.11. This Council would therefore seek to maintain dialogue on these issues as discussion on franchising of rail services and funding of Network Rail continue.

Implications of this report

1. **Financial Implications** – none.
2. **HR and Organisational Development Implications** – none.

3. **Community Plan/Council Plan Implications**

Wealthier and Fairer – Enhanced stations and rail facilities will make a positive contribution to economic regeneration in Renfrewshire as well as potentially reducing traffic growth.

4. **Legal Implications** – none.

5. **Property Implications** – none.

6. **Information Technology Implications** – none.

7. **Equal Opportunity Implications** – none.

8. **Health and Safety Implications** – none.

9. **Procurement Implications** – none.

10. **Risk Implications** – none.

11. **COSLA Policy Position** – none.

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