J Stephen Sinclair

Consultation Questions

The answer boxes will expand as you type. **I answered Questions 29, 30, 32, 33, 35, 36, 37, 39, and 40.**

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:

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: I'm commenting as an American interested in maintaining the ease of tourism travel to the north of Edinburgh. If direct service is eliminated, the convenience of train travel by visitors is severely diminished , leaving two unhappy consequences: forego travel to the Highlands altogether, harming the Scottish tourism economy, or travel by private automobile, which is undesired for the Scottish environment. Increased automobile traffic to the north of Edinburgh will place greater stress on the necessity for road repair and new road construction as well as add to traffic congestion in smaller towns and villages. Governing authorities need to consider the unintended travel consequences of eliminating direct train travel north of Edinburgh.

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: Again, this is an American's perspective: the difficulties in making train connections in Edinburgh to continue a journey to the north will make private automobile travel beginning either in Edinburgh or beginning

from some point south of the border, much more attractive. I urge that the analysis of the question of whether to terminate cross-border services at Edinburgh not consider just two choices – continue the direct train service to the Highlands or not – but consider two other choices for consumers as well, which includes the option to use an automobile, bus or air flight or to skip the travel to the north. Also, please consider that making train connections for elderly travellers and for families traveling with small children, whether tourists or residents, can be extremely challenging. Thus, there may not be a consumer switch of the projected magnitude from a direct train terminating at Edinburgh to Scottish connections, with a resulting failure to achieve anything like the projected train revenues, as well as a greater potential demand for road and motorway repair and construction and enhancements to automobile and bus parking.

From the way that the proposition is worded – yea or nay to continue direct train travel to the north of Edinburgh – it appears that the analysis of the problem is too restricted and should consider the effect of a change to direct rail north of Edinburgh on all transportation options to include the public's choices of automobile, bus, and air as competitors to rail.

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: First, meet basic needs on short hauls (toilet, safety considerations, adequate luggage space, sufficient space for comfortable seating, barrier-free travel for disabled persons, bicycle storage); along with provision of adequate real-time, on-board information on station arrival times and information on status of connecting trains, plus mobile phone and Wi-Fi services. Second, for routes taking more than an hour, add food and beverage service and appropriate seating options for families traveling with children.

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: Mobile phone and Wi-Fi are nearly universal needs for

business and tourist travellers and the usage of electronic devices only will grow in the future. Having state-of-the-art communication capabilities on trains adds to their competitiveness as a choice of means of travel.

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: In part, this is a risk-management issue: How many claims for damages and injuries have resulted from consumption of alcohol on trains? It is a business revenue issue: Does the train operator or vendor make money on sale of alcoholic beverages and does the sale of alcohol offset any of the government's subsidies on trains? It also is an aesthetic and law enforcement issue: Are there an unacceptable number of incidents of public annoyance, violence, etc., due to excessive drinking on the trains that upset passengers and cause arrests? Consider whether a ban on the consumption of alcohol actually is enforceable, especially without undue interference to the travel enjoyment of sober passengers (such as passenger searches and "pat-downs")? Finally, is there another way to manage this issue without an outright ban (e.g., no personal alcohol allowed to be brought on board; sell alcoholic drinks on-board at high price as a beverage option)?

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

Q36 comments: Train cars could have on-board flat-screen monitors displaying real-time information on train arrivals and departures, much like that of airline terminals.

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: This depends upon whether or not tourist cross-border travel to Edinburgh and to the Highlands needs to be promoted and supported. Do you want this decision left to the train operating company, which pursues its own interests, or is this a larger issue to the entire community, especially to the hospitality industry in the north of Scotland?

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: Again, as an American traveller in Scotland: 1) The appeal of the Caledonian Sleeper is efficiency in cross-border traveling to and from Edinburgh (and to continue directly to the Highlands). Additional direct trains from London earlier in the evening to arrive earlier in the day in Fort William ought to be appealing to tourist travellers.
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> 2) Fort William, Inverness and Aberdeen are desired end-points for many American tourists, such as myself, and I could see Oban having the same appeal.
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> 3) Improved food and beverage service, including an option for an evening meal as well as a more extensive breakfast service on the Caledonian Sleeper is something that I would pay for as it increases the utility of the time spent on board by travellers. Also, consider the passenger entertainment features on airplanes, such as movies, news, electronic games, that could play on small screens in the passenger compartment. Or at least, provide the WiFi Broad-Band service that would allow the use of iPad, iPhone and other personal electronic devices. This would align the passenger experience on the 12-hour long haul London-Edinburgh-Fort William with expectations on air travel, especially for younger adult passengers.

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: Include an analysis of environmental and economic impact of changes in train service on alternative means of travel to include automobile, bus and air.