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20th February 2012

Dear Sir/Madam,

RAIL 2014 – PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Tactran welcomes the opportunity to respond to the above consultation. I am pleased to enclose a joint response by the Tayside and Central Scotland Partnership and on behalf of our partner Councils Angus Council, Dundee City Council, Perth & Kinross Council and Stirling Council.   We are aware that Stirling Council is also submitting a separate response to the consultation.

General Comments

The Tactran Partnership is strongly supportive of improving the railway system and particularly services operating within and through the Tayside and Central region. Our Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) includes strategic objectives to :-

▪ support sustainable delivery of economic prosperity by securing rail network improvements contained within the Strategic Transport Projects Review to enable increased provision and opportunities for the movement of passengers and freight by rail;

▪ promote environmental sustainability by maximising the use of public transport;

▪ improve access and encourage more sustainable options for tourism travel, including improvements in public transport integration, interchange and information;

▪ develop a public transport network that is accessible to all and enables people to access the region's main centres of employment, education, retail and leisure;

▪ improve the quality and integration of public transport services, including the development of improved/new multi-modal interchanges at key locations such as Dundee, Perth and Stirling; and

- develop Park & Ride/Choose networks through our Park & Ride Strategy, including enhancing opportunities at railway station car parks.

All of these strategic objectives are relevant to the issues and opportunities presented within the current consultation. Tactran urges the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland to seek to maximise the role and opportunity for positive development of the rail network and passenger services at local, regional and national levels through the next and future ScotRail franchises.

Tactran supports strongly existing Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR) proposals and commitments to enhance the rail network and infrastructure north of the Central Belt, through STPR Project 6: Further Electrification of the Strategic Rail Network to Aberdeen/Inverness; STPR Project 15: Edinburgh – Glasgow Rail Improvements (EGIP); STPR Project 17: Improving the Highland Main Line between Inverness and Perth; and STPR Project 23: Rail Service Enhancements between Aberdeen and the Central Belt. These are considered by Tactran to be high priority improvements to the strategic transport network.

Tactran welcomes the benefits that the current implementation of Project 15: EGIP will bring for Stirling, Bridge of Allan and Dunblane. However, both the STPR and the Tactran RTS have aspirations to provide more frequent services through the region to Edinburgh and Glasgow and from the north and northeast, and there is a need to protect capacity at and on approach to Edinburgh and Glasgow stations for more frequent services from north of Stirling and Fife.

It is believed that STPR Project 6: Further Electrification to Aberdeen/Inverness, should follow directly on from completion of EGIP, making use of an already assembled electrification project team, while recognising the "sparks effect" on boosting rail patronage and the more economical operation of services by electric units which also satisfy environmental aims to reduce carbon emissions, air pollution, noise, etc. Completion of the EGIP project also offers opportunities to implement early enhancements to local and regional services through the cascading and refurbishment of diesel rolling stock released by the electrification scheme. This rolling stock should be retained within Scotland and used to deliver proposals for regional and local service enhancements which have been developed by RTPs and others, including Tactran's TERS proposals (see below and references within detailed responses to questions).

In relation to STPR Project 23, it is essential that real improvements to rail journey times between Aberdeen – Edinburgh/Glasgow are achieved through enhancing rail infrastructure and capacity, and not simply at the expense of existing halts on the route, which the RTS identifies as having significant potential to be developed in support of RTS and NTS objectives and wider climate change objectives. The Partnership, in conjunction with Transport Scotland and the rail industry, has developed a coherent strategy for improving regional rail services in a way that complements and supports faster intercity services through its comprehensive Tay Estuary Rail Study (TERS). This sets out short, medium and longer term proposals for introducing additional stopping services between Arbroath and Glasgow, permitting faster ScotRail Express network services and an overall increased frequency between Aberdeen/Inverness and the Central Belt, as well as providing greater accessibility to the rail network for passengers at intermediate stations, thus supporting the aims of STPR. TERS identifies a positive business case for improving services between Arbroath – Dundee – Perth – Stirling – Glasgow, and intermediate stations, with projected passenger growth and revenue potential exceeding marginal

operating costs. The Partnership urges Scottish Government and Transport Scotland to positively consider the opportunity to embed the enhancements to regional rail services, as detailed within the comprehensive TERS report submitted to Transport Scotland in June 2009, and developed further in consultation with Transport Scotland, Network Rail and First ScotRail, within the 2014 refranchising process.

Tactran is strongly opposed to any attempt to remove through daytime or Sleeper train services between Inverness/Aberdeen and England, either as part of the current refranchising process or post-High Speed Rail extending to Scotland. These services serve several of the region's stations and key national rail hubs, including Dundee, Perth and Stirling, and are considered by Tactran and our partner Councils to be critical to regional and national connectivity and supporting economic growth and tourism. We are aware that similar strong concerns regarding the need to maintain direct cross-border rail service connectivity north of Edinburgh and Glasgow have been raised in a separate response being submitted by Dundee & Angus Chamber of Commerce.

The Partnership wishes to see improvements made to stations in the region, in particular Stirling, Perth and Dundee. Dundee Station is tied into the Central Waterfront regeneration which will increase rail patronage, particularly in connection with the V & A Museum development. There is a need for the next franchise to address issues associated with currently constrained station car parking at locations such as Bridge of Allan, Dunblane, Arbroath and Carnoustie, as well as to promote multi-modal access to these and all other stations in the region.

Tactran wishes to stress that the focus in specifying services should be concentrated on improving service frequencies and performance rather than a preoccupation to shorten end to end journey times. The evidence cited in the consultation document on page 17 from Passenger Focus indicates that "frequency of services" and "reliability and punctuality of services" are priorities for passengers while faster journey times is not a priority. The current Transport Scotland presumption against proposals which may marginally increase end to end journey times, on the basis of theoretical journey time disbenefits, effectively constrains consideration and realisation of potential low-cost opportunities to expand the role and contribution of rail in promoting modal shift for local and longer distance travel.

On a matter of presentation, it is noted that different terminology is used for services in this consultation compared with other policy documentation, including Scotland RUS and the rail industry's Initial Industry Plan for Scotland. It would be of considerable assistance if consistent terminology could be used in all consultations.

If you require any further information, or clarification of any of the above comments, please contact Michael Cairns, Strategy Manager on 01738 475774 or michaelcairns@tactran.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Eric Guthrie
Director

Respondent Information Form and Questions

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

1. Name/Organisation

Organisation Name

Tactran

Title Mr ☒ **Ms** ☐ **Mrs** ☐ **Miss** ☐ **Dr** ☐   *Please tick as appropriate*

Surname

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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

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: In the absence of more detailed information it is difficult to comment on whether this proposal has merit. It is unclear whether "economic rail" services are services operated without financial support from the public sector or are those where the proportion of support needed to cover costs is least. The services operating within, through and beyond the Tactran region perform both an economic and social function and it is difficult to understand how these could be simply categorised. It is reasonable to expect cross-subsidisation within and between services either geographically, over sections of route, or by time of day. It is important that Scotland has a unified national rail system, not a two-tier network.

With a dual focus there could be a risk of increasing need for public sector financial support and/or deterioration in levels of service on those routes and regions where passenger demand is lower. The parallel local bus industry shows that daytime operations can be profitable while evening services on the same routes require financial support. Even within the daytime operations it is difficult to define what would be "economic" or "social" when inter-city trains provide both a long distance and short distance function, for example, all rail travel between Arbroath and Montrose is possible only on inter-city trains, which also cater for commuting, educational, leisure and other demands into centres including Aberdeen, Dundee, Perth and Stirling. Experience from the bus sector, where pressure on public support for socially necessary services has generally increased, and/or services have been reduced, in a number of areas suggests that any proposal to separate "economic" and "social" rail services could have serious unintended consequences and should be viewed with extreme caution.

It is important to consider the role of rural services feeding into or out of inter-city services and recognise that the rail system operates as a network. In terms of wider public transport integration there is also a need also to ensure that rural services are planned in conjunction with the local bus network to ensure good public transport connectivity in these areas.

The consultation document suggests that operators should be given more control over fares. However, this would allow the franchisee to, for example, increase the peak period fares premium with the aim of reducing the numbers travelling and therefore the cost differential between peak and off-peak. This would be at the expense of increasing road congestion which would be at odds with wider public sector transport objectives. There is a need for greater harmonisation of fares to remove anomalies.

Involvement of the community should not need a division of the franchise into two units though it is recognised that this involvement is more relevant to rural and commuter services.

In summing up, more detailed information should be provided on this topic and be the subject of further consultation. This could include an option for more route or corridor based consideration of services within the franchise, for example, Edinburgh - Glasgow, Edinburgh/Glasgow - Inverness/Aberdeen, West Highland, etc.

2. What should be the length of the contract for future franchises, and what factors lead you to this view?

Q2 comments: This issue has been considered elsewhere, including the House of Commons Transport Committee in 2006. There would seem to be little merit in considering short franchises as these are costly for bidders; we have had a figure of £4million per bidder quoted to us. This money would be better invested in rail service improvements. In addition, franchise management time at the time of contract renewals is inevitably directed away from operational management to developing bids and Transport Scotland will also have proportionately more staff time taken up in the franchising process rather than delivering improvements to the railway system. In general, shorter franchise terms and more frequent franchising processes will increase the potential for abortive investment of staff time and scarce financial resources. Short franchises are likely to focus management entirely on day-to-day operations if major investment, such as EGIP, is taking place with its consequent impact on service reliability, with consequently less strategic focus on opportunities and developments.

Tactran supports the Committee's conclusions in 2006 that there should be a "move towards medium-length franchises of up to fifteen years with one or two in-built break-points where contracts may be terminated if performance is unacceptable". We believe longer franchises will encourage greater stability, increase the willingness by TOCs to invest, and reduce the cost of refranchising. The considerable improvements and investment being made as part of the 20 year Chiltern Railways franchise are testament to the stability and encouragement provided by a longer franchise. The Government already deploys break clauses, and we think they are the key to having longer franchises without losing the ability to set incentives and targets for TOC performance". There would be some logic in tying in the franchise with Network Rail's Control Periods, offering for example a 10 year franchise with an extension following acceptable operations to 15 years.

3. What risk support mechanism should be reflected within the franchise?

Q3 comments: This is a matter for Transport Scotland to determine, though Tactran believes that the decision taken should be informed by the DfT's experience particularly gained from the East Coast Trains franchise.

4. What, if any, profit share mechanism should apply within the franchise?

Q4 comments: It is unclear what profits are envisaged in view of paragraph 3.30 that "the ScotRail franchise is a heavily subsidised franchise". If, in the future, profits emerge or are generated then a mechanism should be applied to cap these, adopting similar principles to the Scottish Futures Trust. A mechanism should be applied to prevent excess profits being achieved through fares. As a general matter of principle any excessive profit generated through the operation of the franchise should be re-invested in improving rail services and infrastructure and to restrain fare increases.

5. Under what terms should third parties be involved in the operation of passenger rail services?

Q5 comments: As the franchise is "heavily subsidised" it is difficult to envisage any third party involvement. However, the option of third parties to promote enhanced rail services and facilities as suggested in paragraph 3.20, with the caveats outlined, would be supported. There may also be scope to allow the franchise operator to consider sub-franchising if a third party could operate, for example, rural services at lower cost. However, any third party involvement should not result in additional complexity for rail users, particularly with regard to ticketing, timetables, connectivity and travel information.

6. What is the best way to structure and incentivise the achievement of outcome measures whilst ensuring value for money?

Q6 comments: This is a matter for Transport Scotland to determine, though Tactran believes that experience of franchising in Scotland, along with franchises in England and Wales should inform such consideration.

7. What level of performance bond and/or parent company guarantees are appropriate?

Q7 comments: This is a matter for Transport Scotland to determine, though Tactran believes that experience from the East Coast Trains franchise should be used to inform such decisions.

8. What sanctions should be used to ensure the franchisee fulfils its franchise commitments?

Q8 comments: Tactran concurs with the House of Commons Transport Committee recommendations that break-points should be inserted where contracts may be terminated if performance is unacceptable. Financial penalties should also be used to deter serious breaches of contract, safety and service quality standards. This is comparable to other passenger service contracts managed by local authorities. The service measures listed in paragraph 3.26 seem reasonable. Any sanctions or penalties should be measures that contribute either to continual improvement of the rail network and/or improvements for the rail user.

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments: Tactran supports the penalisation of poor performance. Penalties should be proportionate to the nature and level of failure and also incrementally increase in the case of recurrent failure. There may be circumstances where incentivised payments are justified. However, this should not result in excessive profits being generated at public expense. Improved reliability will generally benefit the franchise operator through increased revenue.

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: It is believed that the performance regime should be aligned with actual routes. One system for the whole of Scotland would allow poor performance in one area to the obvious detriment of those passengers to be offset against good performance elsewhere.

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

Q11 comments: Tactran believes that any such regime should not focus solely on existing passengers, who may be satisfied with the service offered but should also take into account people who could make a journey by train but use the car instead. The key performance related issues of most concern for existing and potential passengers are likely to be service reliability, quality and capacity.

Consideration needs to be given to total journey times. In paragraph 4.7 it is commented that "relative journey times matter and therefore shorter journey times will increase patronage". The journey time that should be considered is door-to-door therefore including waiting time at stations. If a train service is to substitute for a car journey, a more frequent service with consequently shorter waiting times will do more to reduce total journey times than having shorter on-train journey times.

This has been successfully demonstrated over the past few years between Dundee and Edinburgh, where fast intercity services are supplemented by local stopping services. As a result rail journey times have been maintained on the fast services, but more importantly the frequency of service has significantly reduced the overall journey time making it more attractive to the passenger. In addition, the stopping service has provided good access to the rail network for passengers at intermediate stations.

With the advent of Wifi and other computer and technology advances, the idea that in-vehicle time is "lost time" is becoming obsolete, with passengers making more use of their in-vehicle time. Unless there is a "step change" in journey times, rather than a few minutes shaved off a journey, this again points to frequency and reliability being more important than speed of journey.

With regard to the definition of lateness this should be for the whole journey rather than arrival at the ultimate destination, especially as "recovery" times are frequently added in to timetables. An example of the latter can be seen between Stirling and Alloa where times from Alloa to Stirling, as an intermediate station, are consistently 9

minutes on Mondays to Saturdays but on journeys terminating in Alloa from Stirling 12-14 minutes are allowed. Significant flows of passengers are not covered by the current calculation, for example, Dundee passengers travelling on Edinburgh to Aberdeen/Inverurie trains and Perth passengers on Glasgow/Edinburgh to Inverness services. This issue could be addressed by noting times at key stations en route. Any new method of measuring lateness should not result in detriment to service; stopping patterns for example should not be sacrificed to improve reliability.

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

Q12 comments: Both are of significance, however, performance should be weighted more heavily as this will ensure trains operate to time, consequently reducing average waiting times and contributing to improved overall journey times. Marginal improvements in journey time are likely to be much less important to passengers than reliability.

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: The Service Quality Incentive Regime is required to ensure the franchise operator does not concentrate on trimming costs. It is believed that the SQuIRe regime has generally encouraged maintenance and improvements in service standards during the current franchise. To ensure consistent standards across Scotland all stations should be included in the regime, together with all aspects of station condition and facilities. It is believed that it should be extended to enable issues identified through the National Passenger Survey to become priorities.

14. What other mechanisms could be used for assessing train and station quality?

Q14 comments: This is a matter for Transport Scotland to determine.

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: Tactran has no information on which to respond. However, we would not wish to see peak period users penalised more than currently and would not support any increase in the current 10 minute standing time as a means of increasing theoretical capacity on already crowded trains. Existing off-peak travel promotions should be developed further to fill spare capacity at these periods and promote peak spreading where possible. As a general rule the franchise and TOC should seek to minimise overcrowding and standing to allow passengers to make most productive use of their travel time.

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: Tactran would not support an increase in the use of interchange stations at the expense of direct services. Unless connections were guaranteed this would likely increase public concerns and uncertainty about the reliability of rail travel. Paragraph 5.16 fails to consider the "penalty" for interchange in terms of cost, longer journey times due to having to change trains and the inconvenience for all passengers. A major attraction of train travel for business people is the ability to work on board the train and, this ability would be negated by having to change trains frequently. Leisure and tourism passengers with accompanying luggage and those with disabilities and other mobility encumbered travellers would be similarly inconvenienced.

Greater incentivisation to provide improved integration of interchange with other modes is supported. However, current lead-in times for even minor rail timetable changes are lengthy and excessive. Where connections are made with bus, coach or ferry services, some mechanism is needed to allow consequent train service changes. Service changes should also be the subject of consultation with other public transport operators, RTPs and local authorities. Greater recognition is required within both the rail and bus industries of opportunities for rail-bus interchange, through-ticketing, etc.

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: As the Scottish Government "heavily subsidises" the franchise then Transport Scotland should ensure that the franchise operator satisfies Government objectives by directly determining aspects such as minimum frequency and journey times. However, sufficient flexibility should be included to allow the trial introduction of new services or service changes that exhibit an economic case, such as Tactran's TERS improvements. Allowing the franchisee to operate services to a purely financial remit could preclude consideration of services that would provide wider community benefits. The Scottish Government should ensure that the railway is customer focussed rather than purely industry focussed. In addition to guaranteeing current levels of service the Scottish Government should ensure there is a strategy to deliver not only EGIP aspirations but also to progress other essential enhancements to the rail network and services, as identified in STPR, TERS and other RTP initiatives, during the next franchise and beyond.

18. What level of contract specification should we use the for the next ScotRail franchise?

Q18 comments: As indicated in the answer to Q17 the specification should be focussed on ensuring that Government transport, and wider economic and environmental, objectives are realised. The Scottish Government must ensure that the railway is customer focussed rather than industry focussed. The "targeted specification" in paragraph 5.21 would be supported though direction should be more than a "minimum" to ensure that services meet broader social, economic and environmental aims rather than narrow financial targets.

19. How should the contract incentivise the franchisee to be innovative in the provision of services?

Q19 comments: The franchisee should be incentivised to maximise revenue through innovation. Where this is achieved consideration should be given to ensuring that additional revenue generates benefits for the Government, potentially by sharing profit with the Scottish Government, and also for the travelling public, through reinvestment in the rail network and services. The franchisee should be required to work with other bodies to innovate, for example, in implementing Tactran's TERS proposals.

Consideration should be given to the provision of separate funding to enable the introduction of new, altered or innovative services without significant financial risk to the franchisee, in a similar way to BRDG.

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments: Fares should be regulated to achieve wider social, economic and environmental objectives. Rail should play a full in role in alleviating urban road congestion and reducing carbon emissions by offering a competitively priced alternative to the car and other modes, particularly for commuting. It needs to be recognised that trains provide a commuter function for strategic nodes such as Stirling, Perth and Dundee and therefore any intention to allow a franchisee complete commercial freedom to set inter-city fares should only apply to long-distance journeys outwith journey to work areas. The existing rail fares system is overly complex and contains significant anomalies and geographical inconsistencies in pricing policy, with some areas enjoying much lower travel to work fares than others. Passenger Focus research identifies fares as the top priority and concern for passengers. Tactran would support rationalisation of fares but this must not be achieved at the cost of significant fare increases, which will penalise passengers and discourage use of rail as a mode of choice.

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: As noted above in a heavily subsidised railway most fares should be regulated to achieve wider social, economic and environmental objectives. A primary consideration should be ensuring that fares make rail travel an attractive option relative to car travel for shorter distance suburban travel. It is recognised that some inter-city business travel is funded by employers rather than individual passengers however similar considerations apply to inter-city as well as to suburban and rural travel. Priority in regulating fares should be given to key commuter routes where there is a recognised congestion or road space problem at peak times. There is also a case for regulating fares on services which fulfil a social inclusion role.

Paragraph 6.15 asserts that "car travel is the most convenient and comfortable alternative to rail for inter-city travel". It must be recognised that the car is the most convenient and comfortable alternative to rail for commuting, leisure and other journey purposes.

An anomaly regarding concessionary travel should be addressed. Transport Scotland should organise the provision of free rail travel for National Entitlement Card holders who are blind to be included in the franchise rather than the franchisee negotiating reimbursement rates with 32 Councils on an annual basis.

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: The balance between taxpayer subsidy and passenger revenue contributions is going to be determined largely by Government budgets and should ensure that social, economic and environmental objectives are satisfied. Any increase in fares should be considered in relation to meeting these wider objectives and reflecting changes in the generalised costs of motoring. Higher fares for routes where enhancements have been made would not be justified or supported unless the balance of generalised costs change relative to motoring costs.

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: Off-peak fares can be set at a lower level to encourage optional travel by passengers to be taken outwith peak periods. Current initiatives such as the 16-25 year rail card and First ScotRail's Club 55 limit travel on AM peak trains so the scope for switching will be limited. It needs to be recognised that most travel in the peaks is by commuters who do not have options to travel at different times but may have an option to drive. Consideration of a peak period premium should be considered relative to the generalised costs of motoring at these times and to satisfy social, economic and environmental objectives. Imaginative schemes should be explored to assist passengers who must travel at peak times, for example, season ticket purchase through the employer or carnet tickets.

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: Stations should be provided to meet travel needs in line with social, economic and environmental objectives. A sensible balance should be drawn between end-to-end train journey times and additional time taken stopping at stations. An illustration of this is the additional stops being made at Broughty Ferry in the December 2011 timetable that have been achieved with no or only minimal increase in journey times. However, this has created significant opportunities to achieve mode shift from the car to public transport particularly at times of congestion in the Dundee urban area with consequent benefits in relief of congestion, improved air quality, etc. Tactran does not believe that an increase in end-to-end journey time should be a sufficient reason to prevent consideration of either introducing additional/improved services at existing stations or introducing new stations.

New stations should be considered where there is a strong economic case and not restricted to the closure of a station elsewhere.

Station closures should only considered when a full assessment of the benefits of

retaining the station have been set against station costs, based on discussions with the relevant RTP and local authority regarding future proposals for services and potential developments in the station catchment area, and full local community consultation. Where existing levels of usage are low this may well be due to lack of an attractive service rather than lack of demand.

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: The benefit of enabling a third party to propose, promote or fund a new station or service is that those organisations are likely to have a better appreciation of local circumstances than the franchisee and may be able to provide an alternative funding source to Transport Scotland. Local authorities, RTPs and other organisations should be involved in any such discussions and fully consulted on the criteria for success.

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: In terms of achieving economies of scale and limiting the already complex relationships within the rail industry, placing responsibility for all aspects of station maintenance and operation with the franchisee would be preferable. This should not prevent sub-contracting where this may be economical, particularly for remoter rural stations or where a station could form part of a wider development. In such circumstances any sub-contractor must, as a minimum, be required to satisfy the same standards as set for the franchisee.

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

Q27 comments: First ScotRail's Adopt a Station scheme is an example of good practice in this regard. There should be a requirement on the franchisee to work with communities to support their local stations. Mixed use of station properties along with good bus interchange facilities should be encouraged. Also, development of Community Rail Partnerships, as in England and Wales, should be supported.

28. What categories of station should be designated and what facilities should be available at each category of station?

Q28 comments: The concept of categorisation of stations is supported though it requires careful consideration and needs to reflect the multiple roles of many stations as well as consideration of the number of travellers attracted. Tactran has available information on station usage and has issued this to First ScotRail and Transport Scotland. The facilities listed exclude consideration of ticket machines, information systems and help points, and CCTV, which are particularly important at unmanned or partially manned stations. The franchisee should also be required to develop Station Travel Plans, working with RTPs and local authorities to ensure that travel to and from stations by various modes, including walking and cycling, are considered with appropriate modal split targets.

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?

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?

Q29 & Q30 comments: Yes. Tactran strongly believes that cross-border services, both now and post-HS2 reaching Scotland, should be retained to guarantee connectivity between the Tactran region and key destinations in England. The specification of services should be undertaken jointly by the Department for Transport (for Berwick upon Tweed and south) and by Scottish Ministers (for north of Berwick upon Tweed). Recent changes to the early morning Cross-Country timetable has lengthened journey times from Dundee to Newcastle and destinations to the south by half an hour due to the lack of consideration of travel opportunities in Scotland by the Department for Transport.

Retention of cross boundary services would support Scottish Government Planning Policy. NPF2 refers generally to strengthening Scotland's links to the rest of the world and specifically through the East Coast Corridor between Aberdeen and Newcastle where it is proposed to develop knowledge economy links.

Poorer cross-border services could give rise to an increase in short haul air travel.

The Edinburgh Hub is not supported as an alternative to direct East Coast and Cross Country services, not least as the removal of through services would be likely to increase the number of train movements at an already congested station and increase the inconvenience of passenger interchange for long distance travellers.

Rolling stock

31. What alternative strategies or mechanisms could be used to reduce the cost of the provision of rolling stock?

Q31 comments: This is a matter for Transport Scotland to determine. However, we are concerned about proposals in the Initial Industry Plan consultation to scrap "a significant number" of diesel powered units that will be freed up following EGIP electrification. The availability of surplus rolling stock would allow the full implementation of Tactran's TERS proposals and other initiatives aimed at improving local rail services across Scotland. Scrapping of rolling stock should only be considered where its continued operation is economically unviable or after electrification extends north of the Central Belt, with consideration instead being given to refurbishment of stock to support implementation of TERS and similar proposals in other parts of Scotland.

32. What facilities should be present on a train and to what extent should these facilities vary according to the route served?

Q32 comments: Tactran agrees that the priorities for passenger comfort should be those listed in paragraphs 9.17 **and** 9.19. The provision of spaces for bikes is of particular importance for trains serving tourist areas such as the West Highland and Highland Main Lines. Also of importance is the need for free Wi-Fi access to enable business people to work effectively while travelling by train, thereby making train travel more attractive than driving. This should be provided on all inter-city services, along with onboard catering. Where possible free Wi-Fi should be available on rural routes though it is accepted there may be difficulties providing this in remoter areas owing to current limitations of communications. Similar consideration should be given to longer commuter journeys of say, 20 minutes or longer.

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: Free Wi-Fi is standard in many public places, cafes/restaurants, etc., and should also be on trains. This would also eliminate any administrative costs incurred in charging for Wi-Fi. As indicated above Wi-Fi should be available on all inter-city services as a first priority and where feasible on rural services and for longer distance commuting. Data connectivity via on-train Wi-Fi should be prioritised.

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: There is a strong case for the provision of first class seating on inter-city services particularly for business travellers in providing a quiet environment for working and generating additional revenue. There should be a requirement on the franchisee to monitor and report on this provision regularly to ensure that the capacity matches demand and prevent over-provision so that standard class capacity is optimised.

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

Q35 comments: Issues that should be considered are passenger safety and security, and passenger perception of the importance of access to alcohol and disturbance caused by intoxicated passengers. British Transport Police should advise on whether strengthening existing controls are justified in terms of reducing actual crime or annoyance.

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

Q36 comments: Provision of on-train information appears to be variable. Instructions should be issued to staff to ensure that full and accurate information is made available on late running.

Information prior to travel is of paramount importance particularly when services are likely to be disrupted. Current information supplied via radio stations is frequently

incorrect and does not seem to be updated. This is an issue that possibly needs to be taken up with broadcasters.

Websites are a major and increasingly important source of information. These must have sufficient capacity to cope with demands when services are disrupted. For example in December 2011, when strong winds adversely affected train services, the First ScotRail website crashed meaning no on-line information on whether services were operating or not was available.

Greater emphasis should be placed on multi-modal journey planning with better use made of mobile phone technologies, such as QR tags and NFC, for both live data and scheduled timetables.

Tactran operates the www.tactranconnect.com website which includes links to rail travel information and would be pleased to develop this service further together with the rail industry.

Caledonian Sleeper

37. Should we continue to specify sleeper services, or should this be a purely commercial matter for a train operating company?

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?

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?

Q37, Q38 & Q39 comments: Sleeper services to Fort William, Inverness and Aberdeen, serving Stirling, Perth, Dundee, Arbroath, and other communities in our region must be retained. It is our understanding that a decision has been taken to retain the sleeper services and to invest in refurbished rolling stock. Tactran considers that these services provide a vital economic link for many businesses in the region, providing a convenient early arrival for business meetings in London, and are also vital to the tourism industry and destinations in Central and Tayside, including Gleneagles, Dunkeld & Birnam, Pitlochry, Blair Atholl and communities along the West Highland line, including Crianlarich, Tyndrum and Rannoch. The operation of additional early or late trains to/from Edinburgh would not address the overall long journey times from stations in the region to London, therefore retention of through sleeper services to Fort William, Inverness and Aberdeen, is essential.

The issue of who operates the service is probably of less significance than ensuring that it forms an integral part of the rail offering to passengers, including inter-available fares with daytime trains. Currently First ScotRail provides limited information on sleeper services in their printed timetables. This is an area of operation where a separate franchise could be considered though the whole rail industry should be required to promote Sleeper services. If a separate franchise is considered Transport Scotland must ensure that the Fort William sleeper services continue to carry local passengers between Westerton and Fort William.

Facilities on sleeper trains need to be significantly upgraded. As a minimum these should be on a par with the national budget accommodation chains with en-suite facilities and not having to share with a stranger.

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: Tactran agrees that indicators should be included for aspects including carbon consumption, waste and biodiversity. However, the primary indicators should relate to passenger usage and modal split between rail and road. The franchise agreement should include indicators and targets to achieve modal shift from car to train.