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

MSP for Aberdeen South & North Kincardine

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

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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:

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: Any change to the balance between levels of direct services and services using interchange stations should be made with the objective of maximising the locations that passengers across the network can reasonably access. Potential reductions in longer distance direct services from suburban stations need to be matched by a corresponding increase in local services to interchanges so as to keep overall journey times as low as possible. Increases in local services as a result of this could also in some situations result in a greater modal shift to trains for commuting purposes.

However, if this approach is adopted, then the importance of maintaining and increasing services from interchange to interchange would substantially increase. This would have particular implications for Aberdeen and Dundee as the proposals to terminate East Coast cross-border rail services in Edinburgh contained in this consultation would reduce the level of service at these two stations and therefore have knock on effects to their viability as interchange stations.

It is also important to bear in mind that there is likely to be a relatively low limit on how far in the "wrong" direction passengers are willing to go to reach an interchange station. For example passengers living to the south of an interchange and wishing to travel further south would be likely only to accept a very short journey northwards to the interchange in order to change trains for their destination. This makes journey-time for such services particularly important.

Punctuality and reliability must also take on far greater importance if there is to be an increase in the use of connecting trains at interchanges rather than direct services in order to ensure that such connections are not missed.

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: Just as important as frequency and journey time in some cases is the time of journeys. If rail services are to achieve modal shift - for commuting in particular – then they need to run at times that are of use to passengers.

An example of where this is currently lacking is Portlethen station just outside Aberdeen, which is a town where the substantial majority of residents commute to work in Aberdeen. Currently, there are three trains in the morning that run from Portlethen to Aberdeen and arrive before 09:00, but returning trains after 17:00 are at 17:16 and 18:30. As annexe A to this response makes clear in detail, the first of these is too early for many potential commuters to use after leaving work at 17:00, while the following service involves such a lengthy wait that the journey from Aberdeen to Portlethen could be made several times by road, even during the congestion of rush hour.

This relatively simple timetable failure makes the train unusable as a means of commuting for most Portlethen residents which they would otherwise be keen to use in order to avoid the heaving rush hour congestion that builds up in the south of Aberdeen. Clearly this is a failure to meet the needs of passengers under the current franchise arrangements and while it is just one example, there are undoubtedly other similar cases across the country.

The timing of such peak-time journeys to and from commuter towns and the city they are near should form part of the targeted specification of services by the Scottish Government. The objective of encouraging modal shift to see greater use of trains for commuting and consequently a reduction in road congestion and greenhouse gas emissions should mean that there are trains at appropriate times between Portlethen and Aberdeen to enable their use by commuters. Similar specification should take place for other commuter services in a similar situation.

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

Q18 comments: Providing there is a willingness to use service specification to meet Government objectives such as modal shift outlined above, targeted specification strikes the right balance between Government direction and commercial freedom.

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: The case of Laurencekirk station where actual passenger numbers since its opening have substantially outstripped the predictions that were made before it was constructed clearly demonstrate that the current models used to predict potential passenger numbers need updated. Clearly this is important, as robust modelling has to be at the heart of identifying sites for new or re-opened stations.

Additionally, rapid large scale housing developments can dramatically alter the potential level of demand for a station in a relatively short space of time. The methodology used to model passenger numbers and determine the need for stations should recognise this fact and be flexible enough to adapt to such developments.

Given the extensive challenges involved in opening new stations or re-opening previously existing ones, any potential decision to close a station should be a process of absolute last resort rather than an exercise in cost-cutting. For reasons that the example of Portlethen station given in response to question 17 makes clear, any consideration of stations for closure should not just be on the basis of current annual footfall, but should also be based on a robust method of examining the potential for growth at a station. Porthlethen's annual footfall in 2009/10 was just 15,000, but as a commuter town that is inadequately served by commuter trains this is hardly surprising. With improvements to service times, that footfall figure would be likely to grow rapidly, and indeed was significantly higher in the three years previous to this. Similar growth potential should be considered when assessing other similar stations.

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: There is significant potential to reduce costs to Network Rail in third party organisations funding the construction of stations. However, it is important that any new station is matched by the services stopping at it to make it viable. As such, there would need to be some form of approval system that ensures the services will be available to match the demand for a new station.

An example of situations where this could be a useful way forward is the proposed Elsick development near Aberdeen where it has been suggested

that a new station to serve both the newly developed area and the community of Newtonhill could form part of the proposed plans for the area. However, for such a station to be a success it would need to offer appropriate train services, primarily to allow commuting into Aberdeen.

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: Giving one organisation responsibility for the management and maintenance of stations would presumably be more financially efficient, resulting in economies of scale. This approach may also help to ensure that there is little variance in the standard to which stations are maintained and the facilities available. If it could be shown that giving one organisation sole responsibility would benefit the public purse, then this is a sensible way forward.

However, if it could alternatively be shown that a better deal could be secured while protecting standards at stations through multiple organisations having this responsibility, then such an approach should not be ruled out.

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

Q27 comments: A basic standard for all stations across Scotland should be the provision of accurate and up to date information on services, primarily through electronic displays. Introducing these to stations currently lacking this facility should be an essential part of future agreements.

Stations where the majority of journeys made are short should also be targeted for the introduction of automated ticket machines. Busy trains travelling short distances can mean that there is no opportunity to buy a ticket on-board before reaching a passenger's destination. As well as impacting on the franchisee's revenue this can also cause inconvenience to passengers, particularly where automatic barriers are in use at their destination. Of the categories of proposed station types given in this consultation, commuter stations should therefore be prioritised for the introduction of ticket machines.

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: As stated in answer to question 16, the removal of East

Coast services terminating in Aberdeen would be of significant detriment to those using Aberdeen and Dundee stations due if their loss represents a reduction in the frequency of services from those cities to Edinburgh. If a greater focus on connecting journeys through interchange stations is adopted, then all interchange stations would need highly frequent services for rail to remain an attractive travelling option.

If there are fewer services operating from interchange stations then there will inevitably be delays for passengers as they must wait in a station for their connecting train. The longer this delay is, the less likely a passenger is to use the train for their journey. For the reasons already stated, this is a particular risk for Aberdeen and Dundee stations if changes to cross-border services result in a reduction in services on the East Coast mainline in Scotland.

In addition to this, cross-border services north of Edinburgh represent good value to passengers as they offer a reduced journey time to destinations in England compared to the alternative of travelling to Edinburgh and then waiting for a connecting train. The difference in pricing structure can also mean that they are a cheaper option for passengers, offering a much needed choice to customers.

As such, cross-border services should continue to operate 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: For the reasons discussed in answer to question 29, cross-border services should not terminate at Edinburgh Waverley.

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:

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:

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:

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:

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:

An analysis of responses to a consultation by Maureen Watt MSP of Portlethen residents on rail services

Copies of this consultation were sent to every household in Portlethen in July 2010.

Questions and Responses

How often do you use Portlethen Station?

1. Out of the 179 respondents that answered, only 30 (16.76%) of the stated that they utilise Portlethen Station regularly. 90 respondents (50.28%) explained that they had never or hardly ever used Portlethen Station. 38 respondents (21.23%) answered that they rarely or infrequently make use of Portlethen Station. The rarely or infrequently users include respondents who use the station a few times per year. 12 respondents (6.70%) stated that they occasionally use Portlethen Station (a few times a month). The remaining 9 respondents (5.03%) were categorised in the "not applicable" (N/A) group.
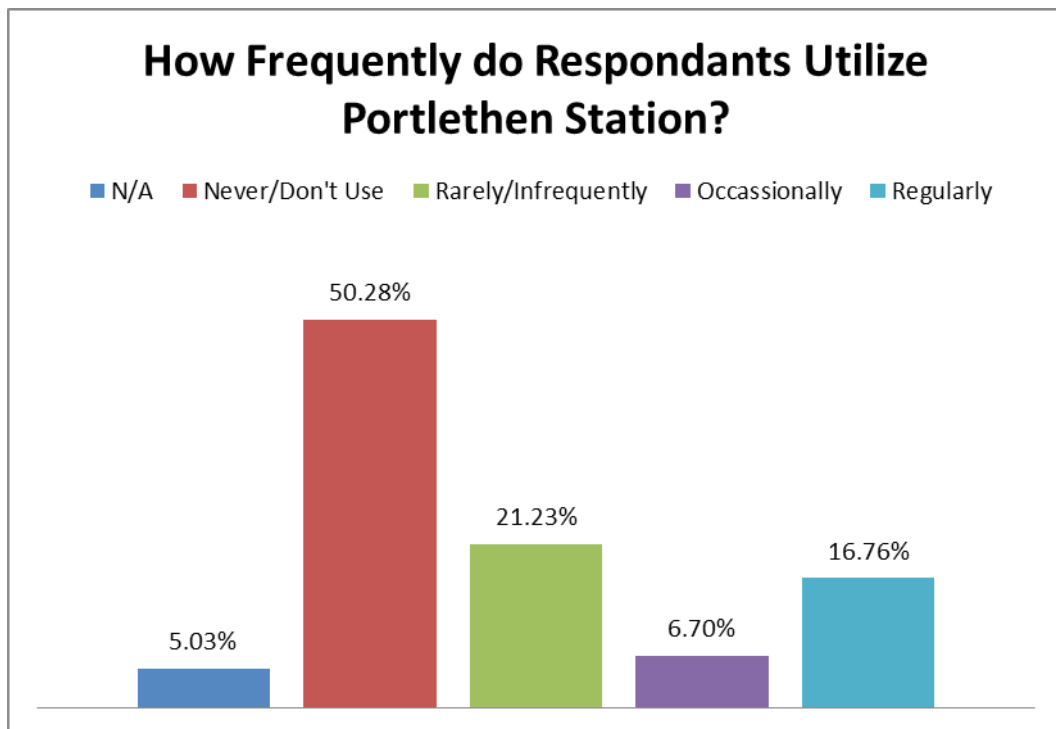

-Overwhelmingly the responses were negative. Those who do not use the station regularly often cited the lack of train services and the inconvenient and unpredictable times that the trains stop.

-One respondent states, "I have always had to take a taxi into Aberdeen to board the train from there and faced with the return journey *vice versa* often queuing for long periods of time to get home."

-Many respondents noted that they do not use Portlethen Station, but do use the services at Stonehaven Station, "because of train times."

Would you like to see more trains stopping at Portlethen, and if so at what times?

2. The vast majority of respondents – 165 out of 179 (92.18%) reported that they would like to see more trains stopping at Portlethen Station. Only one respondent (0.56%) stated that they would not like to see more trains stopping at Portlethen Station. The remaining 13 respondents (7.26%) were categorised as "not applicable" (N/A).
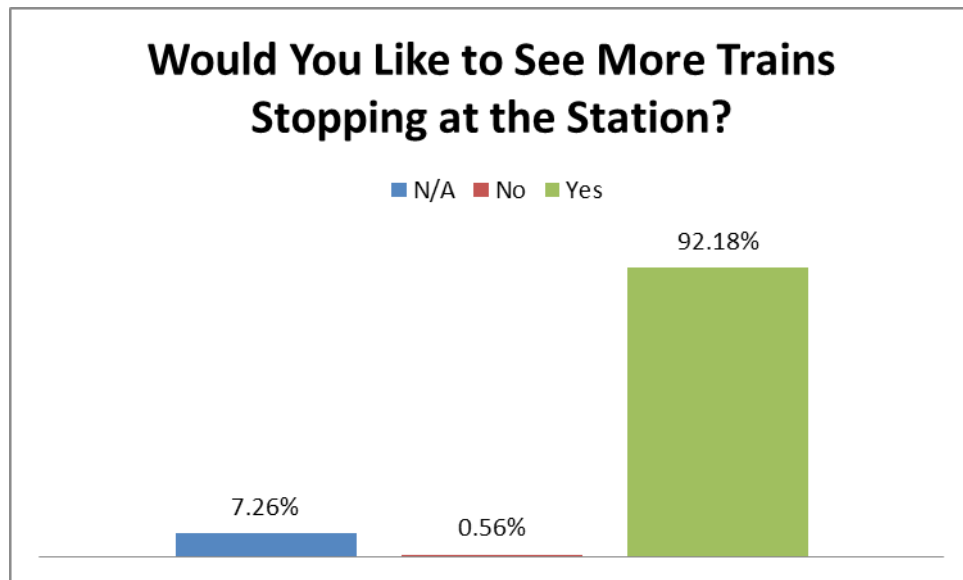

-Many respondents highlighted rush hour commute times during the weekdays, and shopping times during weekends. A number also suggested more frequent and regular stops at Portlethen station, and more trains that head to and from Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Montrose and Glasgow. Many of the respondents, especially those that commented that they utilise other train stations, explained that they would like the quantity and quality of train services to run in a similar fashion as Stonehaven Station.

-A common answer from respondents was that they would like trains "to stop more often, and if possible, every hour" at Portlethen Station.

-Another suggestion made by many respondents was that they would like to have more trains to and from Aberdeen, especially during commuting times and rush hours.

Are there any improvements to the station that you would like to see made?

3. Out of the 179 respondents, 90 of them (50.28%) explained that they would like to see improvements made to the station. 50 respondents (27.93%) did not know of anything that needed to be improved at the station, and therefore are categorised as "not applicable" (N/A). The remaining 39 (21.79%) respondents explained that they did not want the station to undergo improvements at this time, but would prefer that station improvements occur after more train services are added.
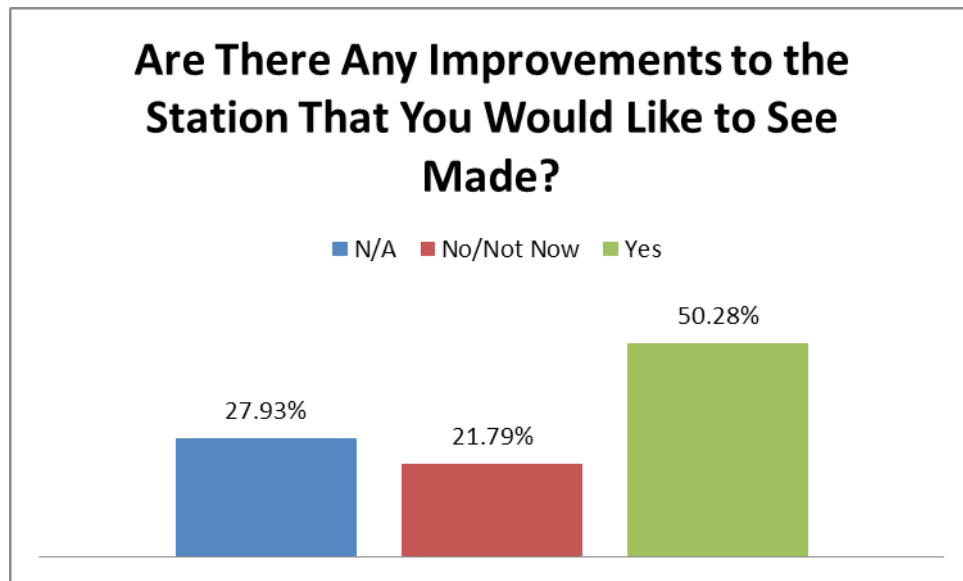

-The most common suggestions were:

-Many respondents cited the need for an electronic ticket machine and an electronic departure and arrival display. Similar to question 2, a large number of respondents cited the need for more trains at the station. Another popular suggestion was more shelters with seating, and the addition of toilets. Security was also cited as a large concern, with many respondents citing the need for more CCTV cameras, lighting, and potentially the addition of security personnel.

-Other suggestions included a commuter bus/direct onward bus link, bike racks, a park and ride service, and safe parking for bikes and cars. One respondent noted that they would like the vandalism at the station to be cleaned up. Another respondent also noted that the train platform should be elongated in order to allow more trains to stop at the station.

Would service improvements make you more likely to travel by train?

4.   An overwhelming majority – 157 out of 179 respondents (87.71%) said that they would be more likely to travel by train given that improvements in the train service at the station are made. 18 respondents (10.06%) are categorised as "not applicable" (N/A). The remaining 4 respondents (2.23%) reported that service improvements would not make them likelier to travel by train.
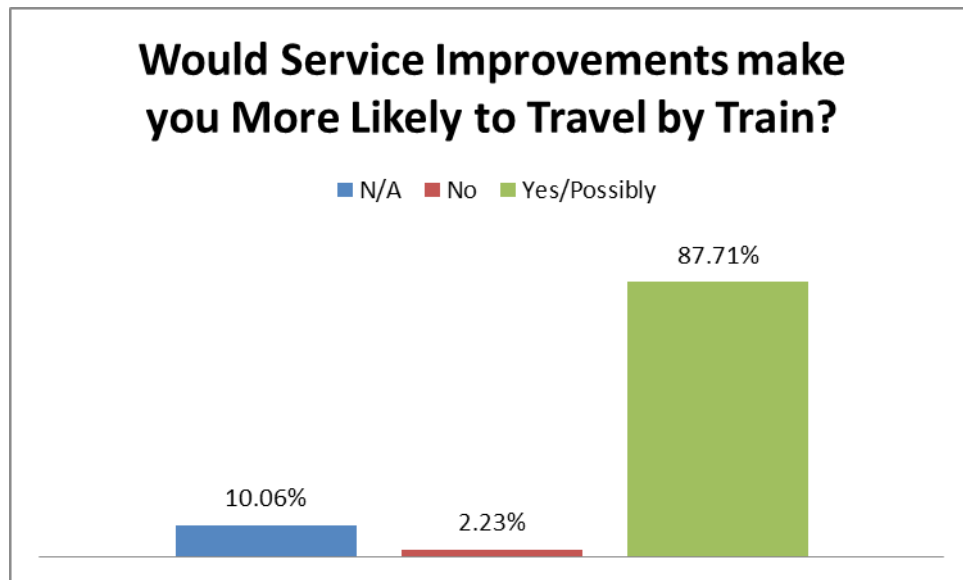
-One respondent noted that if there was a suburban "commuter service" to and from Aberdeen, then they would utilise the services at Portlethen Station more often.

-Many of the respondents mentioned that they would be more inclined to use the services at Portlethen Station if more long distance trains stopped.

Do you think that ticket costs are competitive with other modes of transport?

5. Unlike the previous questions, the respondents were divided regarding ticket costs. 58 out of the 179 respondents (32.40%) were unable to answer this particular question, as many of them had not taken the train in quite some time and were unfamiliar with the pricing scheme. Other respondents who were unable to answer received the older person's concessionary travel bus pass, which therefore makes paying for public transport rather unappealing. 47 respondents (26.26%) stated that the ticket costs are not competitive with other modes of transport. 63 respondents (34.20%) felt that ticket costs are competitive with other modes of transport. The remaining 11 respondents (6.15%) explained that they were unable to give a definitive answer because the cost of train tickets varies based on a number of factors (time, day, number of people travelling, etc.).

Do You Think That Ticket Costs are Competitive with Other Modes of Transport?

■ Does Not Know/ N/A   ■ No   ■ Yes   ■ Varies/Sometimes

32.40%   26.26%   35.20%   6.15%