Respondent Information Form and Questions

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

1. Name/Organisation

Organisation Name

West Lothian Council

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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**

(d) We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

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:

One of the strengths of the current structure in Scotland is the high level of integration and coordination. The current strengthening of Route Directors in Network Rail should add to this, splitting the franchise into two parts, even if this is only internally, will weaken the structure and lead to duplication of effort and loss of focus.

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

Q2 comments: no comment

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

Q3 comments: no comment

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

Q4 comments: no comment

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

Q5 comments: no comment

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

Q6 comments: no comment

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

Q7 comments: no comment

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

Q8 comments: no comment

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments: no comment

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:

All routes in Scotland require a high level of performance delivery and the franchise agreement should not permit the operator to neglect routes and services outside of the major centres. Accordingly the council would be opposed to any differential performance regime.

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

Q11 comments:

The performance regime should more closely reflect the passenger experience. One way to achieve this would be to move from the on time arrival at final destination model used currently to a measure of on time arrival at every station. This would ensure the operator prioritises all users and doesn't simply add time to the end of journeys to ensure an on time arrival.

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

Q12 comments:

Journey times should not be lengthened purely to improve performance regimes. Some "Pathing Time" may be required to ensure a robust service but this should be minimised to incentivise the franchisee to deliver on time arrivals for all services across the network.

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 current SQUIRE regime has proved an effective mechanism for ensuring standards that are met by the franchisee. Any replacement for the current SQUIRE system should be at least as robust as the current system and ensure that performance across the network is taken into account, not just stations on major routes.

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

Q14 comments: no comment

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:

The council would not support any moves to increase the permitted standing time on any service. Passengers paying for travel should be entitled to expect a seat to be available on all but the very busiest services.

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:

The council would support an increase in availability and funding of interchange opportunities between the train and other transport modes.

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:

A robust minimum frequency must be specified by the government otherwise any future franchisee could reduce services which provide an essential social function while not necessarily being commercially attractive.

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

Q18 comments:

A similar specification to the existing franchise with minimum services levels and controls on fare increases should be the minimum aspiration.

Efforts should also be made to infill current service gaps that reduce the utility of existing services. In West Lothian, the Edinburgh to Glasgow via Shotts line, which receives a 2-trains per hour service throughout the day, currently has a two hour gap in services between 19.30 and 21.30 in both directions. An additional 20.18 departure from Glasgow Central and 20.26 departure

from Edinburgh Waverley would fill this gap both improving the service for local residents and providing an enhanced service for shoulder peak commuters.

In addition, the council requests that consideration is given to enhanced evening services at Livingston South station to complement the improved daytime service introduced in 2009. Livingston South serves a very large catchment area and, with over 250,000 entries and exits per year, is the 4th busiest station in West Lothian.

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

Q19 comments:

Any innovative provision of services should not be at the expense of the provision of a minimum level of services

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments:

Rail is an attractive and sustainable mode of mass transit that plays an important role in achieving the Scottish Government's three main objectives for transport: Improvement of journey times and connections; Reduction of emissions; Improvement of quality, accessibility and affordability.

In order to achieve these objectives and support sustainable economic growth, it is necessary to reduce the population's and economy's dependency on the private car by making trip destinations such as employment and education sites, shops, health and leisure facilities accessible by active and public transport.

Real modal shift, however, is only possible if these modes of transport are perceived as equal to, or better than, the private car in terms of convenience, journey times and cost.

The rail fare policy in Scotland needs to reflect the Scottish Government's aspiration for making travel more sustainable and socially inclusive. To this end, rail fares need to be affordable for all sectors of society and, ideally, be cheaper than the cost of travelling the same route by car. Annual price increases should be kept to the minimum and the council, therefore, supports the 'Retail Price Index plus 1 per cent' principle for regulated fares as it sets a ceiling for fare increases.

It is recognised that keeping fares at a low level will require substantial Government subsidies but the council is of the opinion that the social, environmental and economic benefits of an affordable rail system justify the cost to the taxpayer. Lower fares also encourage more train use hence increasing the revenue generated by the service.

Higher investment in rail travel will also partly be off-set by reduced investment in other modes of transport especially road infrastructure and maintenance, reduced money lost through congestion and poor public health, and for fines imposed by the European Union for exceeding agreed emission targets.

The example of the free bus pass and reduced train fares for the elderly demonstrate that low fares encourage the use of public transport. While the council acknowledges that free train travel would be unaffordable for the government, consideration should be given to actually lowering some rail fares, especially during the middle of the day when many trains have plenty of capacity. Implementing the recommendation in the McNulty report 'Realising the potential of GB rail: Report on the rail value for money study' will help to reduce significantly the cost of operating and extending the railway system systems. As a result, it can be expected that the unit cost per passenger kilometre will start to come down. This, in turn, should allow the rail industry to operate with less subsidy and offer a better deal to passengers and tax payers.

There may also be a future potential for introducing specific shoulder peak fares to ease pressure on the busiest services as mentioned in the consultation document. However, since shoulder-pricing would make the fare structure more complicated, a smartcard system would almost certainly have be in place before its introduction.

With regard to the ticketing structure, the council feels that the current system of advanced, anytime, off-peak and season tickets is simple enough and easy to understand. It is therefore recommended to keep the current categories.

However, the council requests a requirement for the introduction of multimodal through-ticketing options to be included in the next franchise. Experience from elsewhere, including London, shows that multimodal through-ticketing both encourages the use of public transport and benefits train operators. The council would also like to see the introduction of smart card technology to further improve passenger experience and convenience.

Discounts for young people, groups and older people are welcomed but consideration could be given to increasing the eligibility age of the Senior Railcard from 60 to 65 in line with the pension age. This would help to generate more revenue from this customer group while still supporting retired and potentially less well-off passengers.

The introduction of parking charges in Network Rail owned car parks would also help to generate revenue hence reducing the amount of public subsidy required to operate the rail system. However, the impact on surrounding road networks and enforcement on these also needs to be considered if a charging policy were to be implemented.

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:

The council recommends keeping the current regulated fares structure, i.e. allow the franchisee to set fares on all routes except for:

- all ScotRail Season Tickets;
- all ScotRail off-peak returns;
- all fares in the Strathclyde area; and
- standard singles, standard day returns and season tickets in the Edinburgh commuter area

Consideration should, however, be given to applying regulated fares to 'anytime' and 'anytime return' tickets in the Edinburgh commuter area. This would both protect travellers on these routes from excessive fare increases and move towards equalising the fares structures in the Glasgow and Edinburgh areas.

The 'Retail Price Index plus 1 per cent' principle provides a certain protection for the busiest routes and cheapest fares whilst still giving the franchisee the flexibility to adjust fares elsewhere in accordance with demand and other financial considerations. However, the Scottish Government should treat RPI+1% as the upper limit and allow for a lower increase if required. Therefore, the formula should read '≤RPI+1%'.

It is welcomed that existing fare anomalies will be identified and removed.

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:

Current fare levels are already high and fares should not increase further beyond the level of inflation. Fares in West Lothian reflect a historical higher level of fares in the East of Scotland as compared to those in the West and if any rebalancing of fares were to be contemplated it should first look at ensuring parity in similar fare levels across areas of Scotland and not further increase the disparity by increasing all fares by the same amount.

23. What should the difference be between peak and off-peak fares? Will this help encourage people to switch to travelling in the off-peak?

Q23 comments: no comment

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments:

As mentioned in Q20, rail is an attractive and sustainable mode of mass transport that plays an important role in achieving the Scottish Government's main transport objectives. However, the council believes that more could be done to increase the modal share of rail travel. Apart from attractive ticket prices and improved reliability and punctuality, easy access to the rail network is of paramount importance for achieving modal shift from the private car to rail.

The council is therefore fully supportive of the current Scottish Government policy that "new stations, subject to a positive STAG appraisal, will be considered favourably where the surrounding population, workplace or visitor need is sufficient to generate a high level of demand".

However, the policy does not specify what constitutes 'high level of demand' and it is, therefore, suggested that an explanation is added to clarify the meaning this phrase.

It is acknowledged that any increase in the number of stops along a railway line has a detrimental effect on journey times on this line. However, the direct and indirect costs of providing new stations, including longer journey times and overcrowding, need to be considered against the social and economic benefits of improved access to the rail network. This is particularly the case on busy commuter lines which have a great potential for modal shift.

In the particular case of West Lothian, there is a very strong case for the construction of a new developer-funded station as part of the new Winchburgh development. The transport assessment for the station shows that it would generate over 1 million rail journeys per annum making it the 15th or 16th busiest station in the country. The assessment also shows that, even leaving the wider social, environmental and economic benefits aside, the station would generate revenue far in excess of the day-to-day running cost associated with providing a frequent train service at Winchburgh.

More information on the need for a new station at Winchburgh can be found in the appended briefing paper (Appendix A).

With regard to the closure of existing stations it is acknowledged that stations that generate very low passenger numbers incur an operational cost and add to the journey time on the respective route.

While the council agrees that the closure of stations with very low patronage should not be ruled out completely, it believes that this should only be the last resort. Station closures should only be considered if it can be demonstrated that a) there is no potential for increasing the usage of the station and b) that the cost of stopping frequent train services at the station outweighs the wider social and economic benefits.

In the case of Breich station, the council appreciates that the current usage is very low but wishes to oppose its closure on the grounds that new housing developments are planned in the area which are likely to increase the number of passengers using the station. There is also a possibility that the low number of passengers is a result of the fact that only two trains per day in each direction stop at Breich. Linked to this, is the general appearance of the station. The access road and available parking area is of poor quality and layout and, more importantly, is uninviting to users.

The council, therefore, would like to see Breich station to be improved and the level of service increased to at least a two-hourly service to establish the real demand for travel before considering any further steps.

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:

According to the McNulty report, the rail industry currently fails to generate any excess revenue that can be used to pay for the expected growth in rail freight and passenger traffic, which could potentially double by 2030. Since it is unlikely that government subsidies increase in line with railway activities, the rail industry needs to become more efficient and innovative to enable the growth of rail traffic while, at the same time, reducing the unit cost per passenger kilometre. Third party involvement offers one way of delivering the extension of rail infrastructure and capacity at a reduced cost to the taxpayer and rail operator. The example of the proposed Winchburgh station demonstrates that there is a role for third parties in proposing, promoting and funding infrastructure and services. Without the involvement of West Lothian Council and the developer, the likelihood of a station at Winchburgh getting built would be extremely low. Equally, it was the council's initiative and funding support that allowed Blackridge station to be built.

It is, however, important that any facility or service that is proposed and funded by third parties is fully integrated in the wider rail system, i.e. is constructed to the same specifications, included in the timetables, maintained to the same standards, etc. and that funding for the operation and maintenance of the infrastructure and/or the services is guaranteed.

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:

Stations should solely be managed and maintained by the franchisee, in accordance with minimum requirements specified by Network Rail and Transport Scotland. To encourage investment in high-quality station facilities, a mechanism needs to be put in place whereby any non-depreciated assets that were purchased with Network Rail's consent, will be taken on and the residual value paid for by Network Rail when the franchise comes to an end.

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

Q27 comments:

The council welcomes local community involvement in the upkeep and improvement of rail stations. Especially in rural locations and at stations with low patronage, local community support can be very beneficial, create a sense of ownership and add extra value to the operation of the station

The ‘adopt a station’ scheme already allows local communities to use unused station buildings and get involved in gardening on the station. While this is to be encouraged, it should not be seen by the operator as a way of off-loading its responsibility for the maintenance of the station to the local community. The involvement of local communities should therefore be restricted to adding extra value such as running businesses, other (social) enterprises and community activities, and to improving the appearance of the station environment.

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

Q28 comments:

The council supports the suggested new station categories types mentioned in the consultation document, e.g. Principal, Commuter, Interchange, Destination, Tourist and Other, and considers the new classification more appropriate than the current A to F categories. One example for this is Livingston North station, which, because it is unmanned, would be classed as F under the current system, i.e. as a station with infrequent services serving mainly rural or low density areas.

However, Livingston North is the busiest station in Scotland and the third busiest in the UK without a ticket office. Under the new system, Livingston North would probably be classified as commuter station more accurately reflecting both its level of use and the facilities that are required.

With regard to which station facilities should be provide at each type of station, these depend on the particular location, use and catchment area.

All stations should be safe and welcoming and, as a minimum, should have ticket vending machines, shelters and seats, secure cycle shelters, real time passenger information facilities/help points, toilets, “onward journey maps” with travel information (buses, cycle routes, taxi companies, etc.), CCTV cameras and car parking according to the accessibility of the station (more parking at rural stations and commuter stations that serve a large catchment area, less parking in locations in town centres and those which can be easily accessed by active and public transport.

Additional facilities such as cafes, shops, bike hire, etc. can be useful at some, mainly principal and commuter, stations but it should be left to the station operator to decide whether they are economically viable and/or add any other extra value.

All stations and station facilities need to be fully accessible by disabled persons and comply with the Disability Discrimination Act.

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:

The council does not wish to comment on the details of cross-border services but would like to point out that if the Scottish Government was to specify the Scottish portions of cross-border franchises, it would have more influence on service levels and stopping patterns, and find it easier to achieve stops at new station such as the proposed Livingston Parkway station on the Shotts line (Edinburgh to Manchester service) hence offering a better service to travellers in Scotland.

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: no comment

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments: no comment

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

Q32 comments:

Minimum facilities on trains should include:

- Seating with sufficient leg room (folding seats in the vestibules are useful)
- Variable seating that can be converted to make extra room for storage
- On-board information display boards and announcements
- Fully accessible toilet facilities
- Sufficient storage for luggage
- Sufficient storage for bicycles, i.e. a minimum of 6 cycle spaces for the first 100 seats in any train formation, plus an additional cycle space for each complete or partial multiple of 24 seats thereafter. At least 50% of these spaces should be dedicated cycle provision; the remainder may be dedicated or flexible provision.

- Charging points for laptops and mobile phones
- CCTV surveillance

On longer services, a trolley service or on-board restaurant should be offered in addition to the above.

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:

In the longer term, all trains should offer mobile internet and WiFi reception to encourage train travel. Having time to work on the train, and the opportunity to access information and entertainment are two of the main advantages over car travel; providing access to WiFi is, therefore, one way of making train travel more attractive, particularly for commuters and business travellers.

Therefore, where significant investment is involved in providing these services, commuter routes and those used by business travellers 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: no comment

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

Q35 comments: no comment

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

Q36 comments:

As mentioned in the consultation document, up-to-date and clear information about train services and disruptions is an important element of making rail travel more attractive by giving travellers both the information they require to make the journey and the confidence that trains will turn up on time. To this end real-time information needs to be available at every station, on the franchisee's website, via telephone and mobile apps. The latter in particular have become an important means of keeping up-to-date with information, especially when things go wrong. The franchisee should be required to offer services that allow traveller to receive automatic updates (by text or email) on particular train services and possible onward connections (if such an app currently exists, it is difficult to find on the current Scotrail website). This is of particular importance for travellers who need to catch a connecting service to

know because they need to know in advance whether and where this service will be waiting when the train arrives at the station.

On-board displays on trains and automatic announcements should also inform travellers about delays and how these affect connecting services. Some insight in how to improve journey information may be gained from studying the information systems in other European countries.

Timetabling information (printed, online and mobile) should also show the platform trains leave from and, where applicable, those of connecting services.

On the platforms themselves, there should be information showing where particular carriages will stop. This would reduce delays caused by passengers looking for their reserved seats, and reduce uncertainty and stress for disabled persons and cyclists.

Every station should have onward journey information with details of the surrounding area including bus services, cycle routes, taxi information, contact information for the operator and a contact point from where it can be contacted. All this information needs to be accessible for deaf and visually impaired travellers.

While the Scotrail online booking facilities work generally fine, it is not possible to book cycle spaces for the services that require a booking. This facility would be easy to provide and it is recommended to include a requirement for a bicycle booking facility in the next franchise.

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: no comment

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: no comment

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: no comment

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:

By taking freight and passenger traffic of the road, rail transport offers many environmental benefits. However, there is significant scope for making the rail industry more sustainable and future agreements should make the reduction of the environmental impact of the industry a priority. The most important element of making rail travel in Scotland more sustainable is the electrification of the network. Some work such as the Edinburgh Glasgow Improvement Programme is already underway but there are still a number of important lines that need to be electrified. This includes the medium-term (post-2016) electrification of the Schotts line as identified in Network Rail's Rail Utilisation Strategy (RUS) 2009.

Every aspect of operating the rail network - from running the trains and stations to the maintenance of track and vehicles, and staff travel - should take the impacts on the environment into account and reduce them as far as possible.

The electricity for running the trains, stations and other facilities should be procured from renewable sources and, wherever possible, produced on site (solar panels, wind turbines, ground source heat pumps, etc.). Rain water should be harvested for toilets, train and vehicle washing, and similar purposes.

Every station and train should have facilities for collecting separate types of waste for recycling/disposal. Contracts for catering services on the trains and in the stations should specify that, as far as practicable, reusable or biodegradable cutlery, crockery and packaging should be used and that waste is recycled or composed/digested.

When new rolling stock, vehicles and other infrastructure or services are procured, every effort must be made to buy low-energy and/or low emission models.

The key performance indicator should include, but not be limited, to:

- CO2 emissions

- Amount of waste generated and percentage recycled/composted
- Amount of energy used
- Amount of water used