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Sent: 25 November 2008 07:20
To: Scotrail Franchise Mailbox
Subject: RESPONSE TO THE SCOTRAIL FRANCHISE EXTENSION CONSULTATION

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Dear Sir or Madam,

While the primary area of interest of the Campaign for Borders Rail is the reinstatement of the former Waverley Line, our membership is predisposed to use rail services whenever possible, albeit this tends to be on an occasional rather than a regular basis. Accordingly, I will confine myself to general issues and in particular to question 11, which asks ... ***'Which pilot scheme changes to fares should we make to encourage modal shift [to rail]' ?***

It was disappointing that the (Scottish) National Concessionary Travel scheme excluded free rail travel from the start and it is now of great concern for any supporter of rail that this scheme appears to be having a detrimental affect on rail patronage (as was easily foreseeable), particularly on lines such as the Far North and West Highland where journey times are barely competitive with the parallel road coach services.

Desirable as it would be for the NCT scheme to be simply extended to rail, one can imagine that this would find little favour with the Scottish Government given the potential budgetary implications. Having said that, a limited application, say to the West Highland / Oban / Kyle and Far North lines would surely result in little if any additional cost, bearing in mind that the ordinary single fares on Scottish Citylink and First ScotRail now appear to be pitched at similar levels (e.g. Glasgow to Tyndrum by either operator costs exactly the same at £15.30).

For wider application, a scheme which is fiscally neutral, would no doubt be required. In fact such a scheme has already been put forward by others, and I would like to add the support of this organisation for it. The essential feature is that for any rail journey, NCT card holders would receive a fare reduction of just under 74% of the equivalent bus / coach single fare, this being the amount that the bus operator receives. The NCT card holder would still be faced with having to pay for his / her rail ticket, but the amount would be relatively small and might be considered well worthwhile for the improved comfort, accessible toilets, availability of refreshments etc.

For anyone combining a NCT card with a Senior Railcard, the cost of any rail journey might actually be zero (disregarding the up-front cost of the Senior Railcard), depending on the relative levels of the bus and rail fares. No doubt there would be some minor

issues to be resolved and the now normal peak hour restrictions would probably have to apply, at least in the Central Belt, but, given the sophistication of current ticket issuing machines, implementation would surely be straightforward.

Yours faithfully,

Bill Jamieson
Committee Member
Campaign for Borders Rail

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