

Strategic Policy and Integration Team
Strategy and Investment

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Date:
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Dear Sir

Station Car Parking Policy in Scotland

Since the devolution of rail powers in 2005/2006, Scottish Ministers have the opportunity to develop policy and operations across road and rail in a more integrated way. A key aspect of realising this opportunity is the development and delivery of a policy which encourages more efficient use of existing station car parks and other park and ride facilities to facilitate modal shift from road to rail.

We are writing to invite you to participate in consultation on developing this policy.

Currently, there is no nationally applied consistent policy on provision of car parking, or charging for car parking, at railway stations. Provision (and expansion) of car parks has been developed on an ad hoc, station specific, basis.

Similarly, there is no consistent policy on the level of charges at station car parks, or on redeeming the costs of car parking against the costs of tickets and onward travel. This position is further complicated by the mixed pattern of ownership of station car parks. Local Authorities also provide near-station car parking on non-rail land.

We are, therefore, seeking views from all interested parties on the development and delivery of the Government's policy on station car parking. *Annex A* to this letter provides policy context and evidence. *Annex B* provides issues arising from existing evidence which you may wish to consider when forming your response.

Development of this policy is consistent with Transport Scotland's explicit investment hierarchy of maintaining and safely operating the network, making best use of our existing resources, and then targeting infrastructure improvements subject to funds becoming available.

It is also consistent with the ongoing programme of station car park upgrades and proposals contained within the Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR) (Project 8, 'Park & Ride and Park & Choose'; Project 26, 'Rail Enhancements Between Inverclyde, Ayrshire and Glasgow, which specifies station infrastructure improvements; and Project 13, East of Scotland Rail Improvements, which has an associated target of reducing car use). The development of a policy on station car parking is not intended to influence these proposals, or any existing plans for new car parking provision being taken forward by Transport Scotland, or by partner organisations.

Annex C to this letter provides details of how to respond to this consultation. It also details how your response will be handled and, in particular, asks whether you are happy for your response to be made public.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Yours faithfully

Peter Lloyd

Peter Lloyd
Rail Policy Executive

Background and Context

National Transport Strategy

The National Transport Strategy (NTS), and its related document, 'Scotland's Railways' were published in 2006. The three strategic outcomes of the NTS were endorsed by the current Scottish Government and are aligned to the Government's central Purpose. The three strategic outcomes are:

- Improve journey times and connections, to tackle congestion and the lack of integration and connections in transport
- Reduce emissions, to tackle the issues of climate change, air quality and health improvement
- Improve quality, accessibility and affordability, to give people a choice of public transport where availability means better quality transport services and value for money or an alternative to the car.

'Scotland's Railways' recognises the contribution that both passenger rail and passenger facilities at rail stations can make in achieving the Government's desired outcomes, as identified above.

While current policy encourages passengers to cycle or walk to railway stations rather than using their car, this proposal recognises that taking the car is often the most practical way for passengers to get to the station, especially in semi-rural and rural areas, or for specific reasons: carrying of luggage, dropping children at school en route, weather, etc.

Evidence

Work undertaken within Transport Scotland has collated station car park capacity and usage data from both First ScotRail and Transport Scotland's SQUIRE team reviews.

This data is useful, and presents a picture of car park use across Scotland. While the data has thus far been collected at various times across the day and does not provide a consistent picture of car park usage at specific times (peak / shoulder / off peak periods), it strongly indicates that car parks on key commuter routes tend to be occupied to full capacity by the end of the peak travel period.

There is also data on passengers' mode of travel to stations. Around 25% of rail passengers travel to stations by car (Scottish Planning Assessment 2005). However, this does not provide further passenger information on factors affecting station choice, how far passengers have travelled to the station or purpose of travel.

Research published by Passenger Focus ("Getting to the Station", 2007, conducted by Steer Davies Gleave) shows that:

- most passengers who live within walking distance of a station will generally walk to it
- passengers travelling to a station from rural, semi-rural and edge of town locations will generally choose to drive and park at the station
- many passengers drive to a station with a better (in terms of train frequency or speed of journey) service than the station nearest to their home

When asked what they would do if it became difficult to park at the station they currently use, passengers said they would (in order of preference):

- drive to another station (38% of respondents)
- travel earlier in order to secure a space in the car park at their station (24% of respondents)
- get a lift to that station (18% of respondents) and be collected by car again later
- make the complete journey by car instead (17% of respondents)

Suppressed demand

The study considers the issue of existing suppressed demand for car parking at stations, concluding that it is impossible to determine future demand for car parking by simply applying a growth factor to current demand. The calculation would take no account of current demand that is suppressed because the car park is already full.

The study did not deal in detail with passenger attitudes to car park pricing. However, recent Passenger Focus research for the Scotland Route Utilisation Strategy found that approximately two-thirds of passengers who currently drive to the station might not travel by rail at all if car parking charges became what they regard as unfair. The benefit of higher revenue from car parking must be weighed against the charges suppressing use of rail altogether.

The study generates some key, but perhaps conflicting, conclusions which may assist with the development of policy on car parking:

- If car parking capacity at stations is not expanded in line with expected increases in demand for rail travel this is likely to result in increased traffic and additional carbon emissions.
- The level of suppressed demand that has been calculated in the Passenger Focus study suggests that there may be a good commercial case for the rail industry to invest in extra car parking provision – not only will extra parking revenue be generated, but extra revenue will come through fares.
- If a station car park becomes full during the morning peak, it becomes a barrier to off-peak use when spare seats are available and additional passengers represent no extra cost to the railway.

- Approximately two-thirds of passengers who currently drive to the station might not travel by rail at all if car parking charges became what they regard as unfair

Issues for Consideration

Review of existing evidence suggests a number of conclusions and questions which you may wish to consider when forming your response. These are presented below. However, this list is neither directive nor exhaustive, and we would invite and welcome wider response.

Suppressed demand

- Does further expansion of car parking provision in effect just service suppressed demand?
- Can we then assume that creating more space at a particular time (pre 9am) by pricing interventions will just service 'pre 9am' suppressed demand. Passengers who do not currently take their car to the station because of lack of spaces in the peak travel period now would.
- It is proposed by Passenger Focus that by showing parking space availability in real time on websites/text services would allow passengers to make informed choices, avoiding use of alternative modes because they think the station car park is full. Is that a realistic option?

Station choice

- Passengers will drive to stations which aren't the closest to their home but which offer greater service frequency.
- Passengers chase capacity and service. Does this suggest that there is an element of self-regulation of the balance of parking and service provision? Is an intervention required?

Overpricing for car parking dissuades people from rail travel

- Following simple demand and supply considerations, the pricing of rail fares already acts as rationing: it manages passenger demand against the supply capacity of rail services.
- How would any additional car parking charges affect this position? Would that discourage passengers from using rail? Currently, we do not understand in any detail the price sensitivity and elasticity of demand around car park charging interventions to maximise capacity in shoulder and off peak times.
- Conversely, how do we stimulate demand if car parks are already full? By creating peak time capacity by pricing do we only tap into suppressed demand? What are the implications building overall demand by crating a peak to off-peak shift?
- Would car parking charges be additional, or would these be redeemable against ticket costs? How could this be managed?

Supply and demand

- How do we bring about a set of circumstances which create a shift in demand (time or geographic shift)?
- What, if any, are the implications for timetabling and rail service capacity?

Responding to this consultation paper

We are inviting written responses to this paper by **25 September 2009**.

Please send your response to:

Sharon.wood@transportscotland.gsi.gov.uk

Or

Strategy and Policy Integration Team
6TH Floor
Transport Scotland
Buchanan House
58 Port Dundas Road
Glasgow
G4 0HF

If you have any queries on the consultation paper please use the e-mail address above or contact Peter Lloyd on 0141 272 7551.

Handling your response

We need to know how you wish your response to be handled and, in particular, whether you are happy for your response to be made public. Please complete and return the Respondent Information Form which is enclosed with this consultation paper as this will ensure that we treat your response appropriately. If you ask for your response not to be published we will regard it as confidential and we will treat it accordingly.

All respondents should be aware that the Scottish Government is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and would therefore have to consider any request made to it under the Act for information relating to responses made to this consultation exercise.

To allow us to comply with the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, please complete the accompanying Respondent Information Form. This will ensure that only the information you agree to share will be published. Responses where confidentiality is not requested will be made available at the Scottish Government Library. A report on the consultation will also be placed on the Transport Scotland website following analysis of the consultation responses.

What happens next?

Following the closing date, all responses will be analysed and considered along with any other available evidence to help us reach a decision on the development of our station car parking policy.

Comments and complaints

If you have any comments about how this consultation exercise has been conducted, please send them to the person named above.