STATION CAR PARKING POLICY IN SCOTLAND CONSULTATION

ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES – FEBRUARY 2010

Contents

1.   Introduction

1.1   This paper provides an analysis of the responses received to Transport Scotland's car parking policy consultation, carried out in summer 2009. The number of passengers choosing to use rail services in Scotland is continuing to grow and has resulted in an increase in demand for additional parking at many stations across the country. Currently parking provision and expansion has evolved on a station by station basis. From existing evidence and our involvement in Network Rail's Car Parking Strategy Group, we have found that there is no consistent policy on parking charges, levels of charges or on redeeming the costs of parking against the cost of tickets and onward travel. This position is further complicated by the mixed pattern of ownership of station car parks.

1.2   The purpose of the consultation was to seek the views of stakeholders and interested parties on how we should develop and deliver a Government policy on station car parking, which takes into account the existing parking arrangements at railway stations. The consultation began on 31 July 2009 and closed on 25 September 2009.   This report provides an analysis of the responses we have received and indicates the main conclusions that will be used to help shape the development of our policy. The report does not contain a detailed description of every point raised in the consultation, but rather describes the main themes raised in the answers to the consultation questions.

Policy Context

1.3   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 & Ride facilities to facilitate modal shift from road to rail.

1.4   Our policy document 'Scotland's Railways'[1] published in 2006, sets out the Government's vision for rail in Scotland. It recognises the contribution that rail makes in achieving the Government's desired outcomes, including improved journey times and connections, which are set out in its Economic Strategy. Developing an efficient transport system that enhances productivity and delivers faster, more sustainable growth is a key purpose of this Government. Indeed, the car parking policy has the potential to contribute both directly and indirectly to this purpose through a number of outcomes contained in the National Performance Framework, National Transport Strategy, Strategic Transport Projects Review[2], which are supported in Network Rail's Route Utilisation Strategy[3] for Scotland.

2.   Consultation

2.1   Government policy focuses on encouraging people to bus, walk or cycle to railway stations rather than using the car. However, we realise that each station has

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[1] Scottish Executive, 2006, Scotland's Railways, Edinburgh, Astron
[2] Transport Scotland, 2008, Strategic Transport Projects Review, Glasgow
[3] Network Rail, 2007, Scotland: Route Utilisation Strategy, London

different types of catchments areas, and people continue to use the car for at least part of the journey, particularly in rural and semi-rural areas where access to public transport is limited. The consultation document explored stakeholder views on the development and delivery of a policy consistent with our 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.

2.2   In the consultation paper, we set out a summary of evidence relating to key challenges on car parking. This provided a focus for consideration by stakeholders. Additionally, respondents had the opportunity to raise any other related matters. The key challenges we identified in the consultation were:

- Suppressed demand,
- Station choice,
- Pricing for car parking, and
- Supply and demand.

2.3   This paper provides a summary of the responses and concentrates on the main emerging views. A copy of the consultation paper and all of the responses are available on the Transport Scotland website (www.transportscotland.gov.uk/reports/rail).

2.4   A total of 201 stakeholders were invited to take part in the consultation, including all Scottish local authorities, MSPs, Regional Transport Partnerships, Train Operating Companies, Community Councils and Lobby/user groups. It was also published on the Transport Scotland website to allow any other interested organisations or individuals to contribute.

2.5   A total of 42 responses were received. Of these 32 were from invited stakeholders and 10 responses were submitted by other groups and individuals. The responses comprised of the following groups Local Authorities (8 responses), Regional Transport Partnerships (5 responses), MSPs (7 responses – although 2 represent the views of a particular party), rail industry (5 responses), Invited groups (7 responses), and 10 responses were submitted by other groups and individuals.

2.6   The breakdown of respondent types is shown in Figure 1 below and a list of all respondents is included at **Appendix A**.

Figure 1   Respondent Groups
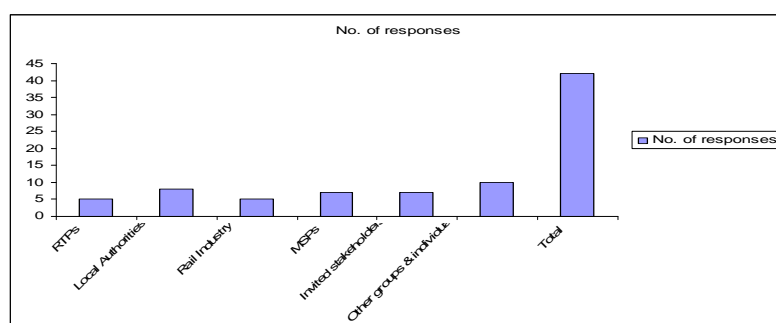
2.7   Transport Scotland is grateful to all those who submitted feedback. Where respondents have given permission, their consultation responses have been published on the Transport Scotland website and are available from the Scottish Government library.

3.   Analysis of responses

3.1   This section sets out the emerging themes that respondents have highlighted as important to consider when developing a policy that encourages the efficient use of existing parking facilities. It summarises the emerging messages for each of the key challenges identified.

Suppressed Demand

3.2   It is not possible to determine future demand for car parking by simply applying a growth factor to current usage as it would not be able to take account of suppressed demand because the car park is already full. Some stakeholders, including Passenger Focus see this as a barrier to off-peak travel. Work undertaken by Transport Scotland's Service Quality Incentive Regime (SQUIRE) team and Network Rail's Car Parking Strategy Group presents a picture of car park use across Scotland. The data indicates that car parks on key commuter routes tend to be occupied to full capacity by the end of the peak travel period[4].

We therefore asked would further expansion of car parking provision in effect just service suppressed demand.

3.3   It was recognised that parking provision and servicing of suppressed demand is an extremely complex matter that requires a greater degree of understanding, particularly as parking at rural, semi-rural and urban stations will vary considerably. However, Virgin Trains also highlighted that any car parking expansion programme should always "identify future patronage based upon business plans of the train operators". Network Rail's Car Parking Strategy Group noted that local plans, including those from housing developers must also be taken into consideration when proposing expansion to existing station car parks, as this can have a significant impact on suppressed demand. Both positions are reflected in advice from SEStran's Park & Ride Strategy which notes that "future investment should be thought of in two main strands, 'regionally focused' and 'inter-regionally focused'"[5].

3.4   Passenger Focus expressed concern that a lack of parking expansion could in fact be a barrier to off-peak use when spare seats are available and additional passengers represent no extra cost to the rail industry. However, SAYLSA, TACTRANS and East Renfrewshire Council suggested that increasing parking spaces was more likely to increase congestion and travel problems for the area than solve problems.

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[4] Transport Scotland: Service Quality Incentive Regime (SQUIRE) Team, 2009, Audit Count on Car Park Utilisation for November-December 2008, Glasgow, Transport Scotland
[5] MVA Consultancy, 2009, SEStran: Setting Strategic Direction: Park & Ride Strategy

3.5   While there was general support for car park expansion, there was an underlying concern from some cycling groups that expanding car parks might discourage people from considering more sustainable ways of travelling to and from railway stations.

Summary

Although there was general support for car park expansion, the responses provided made it clear that more work is needed to fully understand the issue of suppressed demand and its impact to car park expansion, particularly when demand in rural or semi-rural stations will vary to those in urban areas. Further research is needed to fully understand the wider ramifications of any change in policy.

Station choice

3.6   We know that, across Scotland, car parks on key commuter routes tend to be occupied to full capacity by the end of the peak travel period. We also know that around 25% of rail passengers travel to stations by car[6]. However, we do not fully know the factors affecting station choice, how far passengers have travelled to the station or purpose of travel.

3.7   Research published by Passenger Focus[7] 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; and 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.

We asked if there is an element of self-regulation in assessing the balance of parking and service provision, and is an intervention required?

3.8   Some responses, including National Express East Coast agreed that passengers already make travel decisions based on train capacity and service levels at different stations, and did not necessarily choose the closest station, which indicates an element of self regulation.

3.9   Similarly, responses from SEStran, Passenger Focus and First Scotrail suggested that some passengers do also chase capacity and frequency of rail services, and that considering revisions to service frequency at stations with lower patronage may be a longer term objective, which would relieve pressure on other busy stations. However, the City of Edinburgh Council pointed out that demand of rail services should not be determined by car park management issues.

3.10   In practice, operational and other constraints may affect proposals to revise service frequency. The condition of local roads and the provision of adequate parking may be a factor in influencing demand. However, local transport strategies could assist in resolving these problems by examining how local authorities can work

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[6] Arup Scotland, 2005, Scottish Planning Assessment: Part 1: Volume 1 (Baselining), Scottish Executive/ Strategic Rail Authority
[7] Steer Davies and Gleave, March 2007, Getting to the Station: Findings of research conducted in the East of England, Passenger Focus.

with bus operators to bring about improvements to integration between rail and other public transport modes (e.g. enhanced infrastructure, integrated ticketing and where possible co-ordinated timetables) will help provide alternatives to the car.

3.11   Evidence confirms that some passengers chase capacity but the overriding factors to choice are service frequency, station facilities, and the cost of rail fares.

Summary

There were mixed views from stakeholders about the need for intervention to balance parking provision with service frequency. Some responses stressed the impact to residential areas of frequent services and high demand for parking spaces. Others questioned if an intervention was really necessary since self-regulation was taking place based on fares, frequency and wider issues, such as working practices. However, in developing this policy we accept that there are a range of factors that affect passenger behaviour and influence station choice.

Pricing for car parking

3.12   We know that pricing of rail fares already acts as rationing and a controller of demand. However, we do not know in detail passenger attitudes to car park pricing: how much is too much, what would deter passengers from using rail, and how much would passengers pay to secure a parking space.

We asked; how any additional car parking charges could affect the current position. Would charging discourage passengers from using rail or could charging be used as a mechanism to protect station parking for rail passengers? Could charges be redeemable against ticket costs and how would this be managed?

3.13   Research from Network Rail's Route Utilisation Strategy for Scotland 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. This suggests that the benefit of higher revenue from car parking must be weighed against the charges suppressing use of rail altogether.

3.14   A number of responses from local authorities, organisations and individuals such as Glasgow City Council and the Scottish Labour Party suggested the impact parking charges could have in dissuading people to use the rail network, particularly if parking charges are too high.   However, other respondents noted that the underlying problem is that some station car parks are already oversubscribed; charging for these spaces may simply displace drivers onto adjacent roads.

3.15   When asked how parking charges could be managed a number of respondents, including those from Network Rail agreed that car parking charges should be combined with the onward rail fare. Work undertaken by Network Rail's Car Parking Strategy Group considered the use of zone cards as a means of encouraging drivers to use their local station thereby reducing congestion and on-street parking at other stations. However, not every consultee agreed with the proposal to combine parking charges with rail fares, in particular some individuals and organisations promoting sustainable transport questioned why car users should

reclaim the cost of parking while those who use more sustainable forms of transport do not benefit from reduced fares.

3.16   Considering the use of parking charges as a demand management tool has been the most contentious issue, with some MSPs expressing concern about the impact charges could have in more rural stations. The Scottish Labour Party, in particular, stressed that "introducing charging would be a considerable disincentive" to the public. In addition, South Lanarkshire Council argued that "parking charges should not be considered simply for generating income". However, Strathclyde Partnership for Transport upholds the view that effective design coupled with appropriate pricing and regulatory regimes would be necessary to ensure the most efficient use of existing station car parking facilities.

Summary
There were mixed views from stakeholders on the use of parking charges. This is a complex matter which cannot be considered in isolation.   We accept that further work on the practical implications is required on this matter and it will need careful consideration with Network Rail, Regional Transport Partnerships and the rail industry.   If parking charges were to be introduced price incentives or through-ticketing initiatives will be considered to encourage efficient use of existing car parks.

Supply and demand

3.17   As with suppressed demand, similar challenges surround supply and demand. We know from usage data from ScotRail, Network Rail's Car Parking Strategy Group and Transport Scotland's SQUIRE Team that car parks on key commuter routes are generally full by 09:30 am. However, we do not understand the levels of demand across the day. Simply, how many people do not drive to the station because they are unable to park there, and how many more would choose to drive if car parking places were increased.

We therefore asked how we could bring about a set of circumstances which creates a shift in demand (time or geographic shift) and what, if any, are the implications for timetabling and rail service capacity?

3.18   A number of responses, including those from the Scottish Labour Party called for more research to be undertaken on the issue of demand, particularly to identify potential market opportunities for rail users. We recognise the impact that increased demand could have for existing rail capacity and timetabling. There was concern that introducing inadequate demand management interventions could have the effect of increasing 'on street' parking or encourage car users to continue driving longer distances to better equipped stations with more frequent services.

Summary
The responses confirmed the need for further research to ensure that our policy clearly understands the impact of passenger behaviour to car parking demand. Options such as pricing and regulatory arrangements would need to be given careful consideration, particularly if it has a knock-on effect to local authority parking strategies.

4. Conclusions

4.1   The key conclusion from the responses is that there is no "one size fits all" solution to station car parking and that a more local policy that fits within a national framework would be a more practical approach.   Responses from a number of stakeholders expressed concern about the effectiveness of a 'blanket policy' on station car parking and its impact on local authority travel policies.

4.2   It is also clear from the responses that more research is needed to fully understand some of the complexities on suppressed demand, the impact on timetabling and service capacity, as well as passenger behaviour. This is something we recognised in the early development of the consultation and have planned to examine this matter in more detail.

4.3   Many responses made it clear that parking cannot be considered in isolation. Some stakeholders stressed the need that parking is considered as part of a wider picture of transport and travel consideration. For example, the potential impact to on-street parking could be a particular concern if rail users thought parking charges are unfair and decide to park in residential streets.

5. Moving Forward

5.1   When moving forward on the development of the policy Transport Scotland is aware that it needs to consider the impact on the wider travel and transport policies in place, including those under development. We also know that we must not lose sight of the needs of passengers, and recognise that no one size policy fits all. Transport Scotland therefore accepts that different approaches may sometimes be needed to suit local circumstances.

5.2   Transport Scotland has commissioned research into the effects of car parking supply and pricing demand in public transport, which is expected to be completed in the summer. The research will assess the impacts of changes in car parking supply, quality and pricing on the demand for public transport and its effect on demand growth and how this varies depending on location. It will also assess the impact of car parking supply on other key transport issues and criteria such as congestion and demand management, environmental, safety and accessibility.

5.3   The outcome of the research will build on the evidence we have collated from the consultation, capacity and usage data, work from Passenger Focus, and Regional Transport Partnerships. It will be used to inform policy development and delivery in this area. Officials from Transport Scotland will continue to engage with Network Rail, train operating companies, Regional Transport Partnerships and other partners as we develop this policy.

6.   Invited respondents:

Brian Adam MSP
Bridge of Allan Community Council
City of Edinburgh Council
Cycling Scotland
Des McNulty MSP (on behalf of the Scottish Labour Party)
Dr Ian McKee MBE MSP
East Renfrewshire Council
Elaine Smith MSP
Energy Saving Trust
Fife Council
First ScotRail
Glasgow City Council
Go Bike – Strathclyde Cycle Campaign
Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership (HITRANS)
Jamie Hepburn MSP
National Express East Coast (NXEC)
Network Rail
North East of Scotland Transport Partnership (NESTRAN)
North Lanarkshire Council
Passenger Focus
Scottish Accessible Transport Alliance
Scottish Borders Council
South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)
South Lanarkshire Council
Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT)
Stuart McMillan MSP
Tap O' North Community Council
Tayside and Central Scotland Transport Partnership (TACTRAN)
Torphins Community Council
Virgin Trains
West Lothian Council
British Transport Police

Additional respondents:
Cairngorms National Park Authority
Campaign to open Blackford Railway Station Again (COBRA)
Elspeth Kane
Ian Duncan
Lifeshare
Linlithgow Civic Trust
Living Streets Scotland
Scottish Association for Public Transport
Scottish Conservative Parliamentary Group
Stranraer to Ayr Line Support Association (SAYLSA)