

East Lothian Council

Response to the Consultation on Initiatives related to the ScotRail Franchise Extension

Core Services

Q1 Which of the Priced Options do you think best support the delivery of Scotland's Railways?

It is disappointing to note that despite what the consultation document suggests, there may be no additional services between Dunbar and Edinburgh as a result of implementing this option (Priced Option 10) as two of the three services mentioned are currently being run by another operator. In the case of the 06.30 Dunbar to Edinburgh on Monday to Friday and the 22.50 from Edinburgh on Fridays only, these are currently operated by Cross Country and funded by Transport Scotland. The third service is a proposed 21.30 arrival at Dunbar on Mondays to Thursdays. This is close to the 21.00 departure from Edinburgh calling at Dunbar at 21.20 operated by National Express East Coast and it is unclear if the proposed service is additional to or a replacement for this existing service. The Council would like assurance that this existing service will continue to operate as it provides an opportunity for southbound travel from Dunbar as far as York.

A better service could be provided if the 21.00 departure from Edinburgh continues to be operated by National Express and a 22.50 departure from Edinburgh is introduced on Monday to Thursday and Saturday evenings. A frequent complaint from Dunbar residents is the lack of a late night service from Edinburgh to Dunbar. This is even worse on a Saturday when the last train from Edinburgh currently departs at 19.00.

If this option is implemented as described in the consultation document, it is essential that there is a seamless transfer of services between operators. There is no mention in the document about where the services to be operated by the Franchisee might call in addition to Edinburgh and Dunbar. The Council's priorities would be Musselburgh and Drem to provide access to Queen Margaret University and connections to North Berwick line services respectively.

With regard to the proposed study into an hourly service between Edinburgh and Dunbar, it is disappointing to note that this will only be carried out if the priced option mentioned above is "called off". It is the understanding of the Council that Transport Scotland had agreed to fund a further STAG 2 appraisal by April 2009 following the Minister's visit to Dunbar and East Linton in August 2008. At the very least, a local service should call at Musselburgh and Drem to provide access to Queen Margaret University and connections to North Berwick line services respectively.

If the study does not make a case for an enhanced local service between Edinburgh and Dunbar, the Council would prefer the service to Dunbar to be provided by the long-distance operators, as at present, as this gives East Lothian residents the opportunity to travel southbound from Dunbar and northbound beyond Edinburgh.

The procurement of new rolling stock (Priced Option 2) will facilitate the introduction of new services and should also enable trains on existing services to be lengthened.

The proposed additional early morning service from North Berwick to Edinburgh (Priced Option 9) to provide a connection in to the London train to enable a London arrival before 12.00 is welcomed.

Q2 Is our schedule for new service introduction right?

Most of the options will be introduced by December 2009. Where it is possible to bring forward the introduction date, this should be done to maximise the benefits to passengers.

Q3 Which future Priced Options would you wish to see Transport Scotland develop?

The Council would like to see a proposal developed for the introduction of 6 car trains on peak hour services to/from North Berwick. Capacity on the current 4 car trains is becoming an issue and demand will continue to grow as new housing sites are developed. In addition, the introduction of one additional train in the evening would enable an hourly service to be run through to the last train from Edinburgh at 23.07. A late night service from Edinburgh to Dunbar on Saturdays should also be considered.

Q4 Where should we concentrate our efforts on improving services, in particular journey times?

Improvements in journey times should be concentrated on the long-distance inter city services to make them more competitive with other modes. Where possible, commuter services should also be speeded up but service reliability is more important for commuter journeys so that passengers can plan their travel with some certainty.

Connecting to Passengers and People

Q5 How can buying a ticket be made easier?

At unmanned stations, there should to be sufficient ticket machines so that the same queueing time criteria as at manned stations are met. There will still be a requirement for tickets to be available on the train in the event of a ticket machine breakdown. Research has shown that many passengers still prefer to purchase tickets at a manned ticket office even when machines are available. This option should be preserved wherever practicable especially for more complex transactions as not all passengers have access to the internet or are comfortable using the telephone.

Q6 To make the best use of available space at stations, how should we balance the use between commercial outlets and other facilities that offer further passenger benefits?

The prime purpose of stations is the provision of travel services. Retail and any other associated functions should therefore be secondary to and support this function at a level appropriate to the station size and location.

Q7 How could the station environment be improved?

All stations should be well lit with sufficient undercover accommodation so that passengers can reasonably expect to be able to wait for trains in comfort during adverse weather conditions. CCTV and help points are particularly important at unmanned stations and the CCTV coverage should also include the car park. Manned stations should have sufficient staff to cover the ticket office and enable a staff presence on platforms during train arrivals and departures.

Q8 How could signage be improved at stations?

Signage should be appropriate to the facilities provided at the station. At smaller unmanned stations, an information board should be provided giving information on local services such as connecting buses, taxi firms, local shops, pub etc

Q9 How can we improve assisted travel at stations?

The presence of appropriately trained staff at manned stations and on board trains serving unmanned stations will go a long way to improving this service. In addition, it should become a requirement of the franchise that disabled passengers can turn up at any station and board any train without having to make a prior booking for assistance.

Q10 Do you have any ideas for further 'RailLinks'?

East Lothian Council has allocated the former Blindwells opencast coal site for development as a new settlement in the Local Plan 2008. Prestonpans station is less than five minutes away and provision of a RailLink service from the site with guaranteed connections to and from trains would encourage the new residents to use the train.

Q11 Which pilot scheme changes to fares should we make to encourage modal shift?

The promotion of the "One-ticket" multi modal pass would encourage public transport use, especially if the cost could be made more competitive. In addition, the "PlusBus" initiative should be more widely publicised and promoted.

Annual season tickets could be more competitively priced and promoted to encourage their use. This would have the advantage of generating up-front revenue for the franchisee and would also reduce the queues at ticket machines and manned ticket offices.

The Future: looking forward

Q12 When travelling on the train, how could passengers' experiences be improved?

On board facilities should be appropriate to the service with long distance services having a variety of seating styles and wider range of catering options. All trains should be capable of carrying cycles and any information provided should be kept up to date. Like stations, trains need to be kept clean and well lit to provide a welcoming ambience.

Q13 Where should we concentrate our efforts in improving the Anglo-Scottish sleeper services?

Perhaps the biggest improvement would be in the marketing and promotion of the service, it should be promoted as a more relaxed option compared with flying for trips to London.

Q14 How could we improve the travel interchange at stations?

Guaranteed connections with bus and train services for onward travel would enable passengers to plan their journey with more certainty. Promotion of "One Ticket" and "Plusbus" would also facilitate integrated travel opportunities. Infrastructure should be fit for purpose and be well signed and lit, clean and dry.

Q15 What should our communications connectivity priorities be?

In the first instance, WiFi technology should be offered at the main stations and then be cascaded onto train services starting with the inter-city routes.

Q16 Would wireless internet technology significantly benefit passengers?

This is a growing technology and the demand is growing all the time. Provision of a wireless internet service would benefit many passengers for both business and personal use. It could be used to help passengers keep up to date with service changes in the event of any incidents.

Q17 Would you pay for this service?

Probably not for personal use.

Q18 Where should the Edinburgh-Glasgow SmartCard pilot project take us?

The results of the pilot project will have to be assessed before a decision is taken on a roll-out to the wider Scottish network.

Q19 How best can we focus the franchisee on the options for delivering better sustainability?

By carrying out an audit of its activities and then setting targets for energy reduction and waste recycling

Q20 How should the Environmental Improvement Works budget be used to further improve our carbon footprint on the railways?

The Environmental Improvement Works Budget could be used to develop projects to deliver the improved sustainability targets.

Q21 What should we consider in station and community regeneration?

The provision of a new station can have a significant regeneration impact on a community, in the East Lothian context this applies to East Linton where there is an aspiration to open a new station. An area of land has been safeguarded in the Local Plan for this purpose.

Q22 Where should we concentrate our efforts on the Station Community Regeneration Fund?

This needs to be identified through partnership working with the relevant local stakeholders and the funding directed where the greatest benefits can be obtained.

Q23 What additional services or projects in furtherance of the Commonwealth Games Bid commitments do you feel would most benefit the city during the Games period?

The Commonwealth Games will be a major event for Scotland and any measures to minimise the volume of traffic to the event will be beneficial. The proposal to offer free rail travel to anyone buying a ticket to the event will be a major contributor to this aim.

Q24 What aspects of the Project Manager's role are priorities to ensure the successful delivery of the projects?

The prime role of the Project manager is to deliver the priced options for the benefit of the travelling public. It is essential that he has the authority to be able to take the necessary decisions to ensure that these are delivered in accordance with the timetable or, if at all practicable, at an earlier date.

Q25 Do you think that any of the improvements and enhancements proposed above will have either a positive or adverse impact on equality groups?

Taken as a package, the priced options should have a positive impact on equality groups although more specific research could be undertaken to see if there are any difficulties being encountered by any of the groups.

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