

28 November 2008

Consultation
Rail Performance Team
Transport Scotland
7th floor
Buchanan House
58 Port Dundas Road
Glasgow
G4 OHF

Dear Sir/Madam

Response to the ScotRail franchise consultation

The Glasgow-Edinburgh Collaboration initiative welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation on initiatives related to the ScotRail franchise extension.

The Collaboration initiative is a partnership between the two city councils and Scottish Enterprise. It aims to facilitate the acceleration of sustainable economic growth in Scotland's largest cities, thereby in their surrounding (and overlapping) economic regions, and Scotland as a whole.

The initiative's primary role is as a catalyst and champion for change, supporting and influencing partners and wider stakeholders. There are three broad areas of focus: key sector development, connectivity and international profile.

Collaborative efforts to date have had significant influence on the policy agenda, with the importance of collaboration's contribution being recognised in the Government Economic Strategy, National Planning Framework 2 (draft), and the National Transport Strategy.

Our responses to the ScotRail franchise consultation do not address every single question - only those where there is a particular economic relevance to Glasgow and Edinburgh. Our partners and stakeholders address more of the consultation questions: our response is intended to complement and reinforce their own submissions in specific areas.

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

We note that some of these options are already in delivery, and welcome the extension of the 15-minute frequency on the Glasgow-Edinburgh (via Falkirk High) route. The Priced Options we are particularly keen to see implemented are:

- procurement of additional rolling stock to enable it to deliver services required by major projects
- additional Edinburgh-Glasgow Queen Street and Glasgow Queen Street-Edinburgh services
- introduction of an hourly semi-fast service between Edinburgh and Glasgow Central via Shotts
- projects related to the Commonwealth Games
- an additional fully accessible ticket counter at Haymarket Station, subject to planning permission
- smartcard and mobile phone ticketing for the service linking Edinburgh and Glasgow Queen Street
- free wireless internet access on services linking Edinburgh and Glasgow Queen Street.

Only limited information on these options was provided: our selections were made on the basis of this.

Q2 Is our schedule for new service introduction right?

We welcome those of our preferred options already in delivery. Additionally, we would like to see the accelerated introduction of an hourly semi-fast service between Edinburgh and Glasgow Central via Shotts. This proposal has demonstrated a notably-high benefit:cost ratio of 3.8¹.

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

It is not clear whether any elements of the Scottish Government's strategic programme (notably Edinburgh-Glasgow Improvements Programme) comprise a potential Priced Option. We would argue strongly for implementation of the full range of options set out in EGIP, whether these are defined as Priced Options or not.

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

An assessment of costs and benefits should be used in each case, with their contribution to sustainable economic growth (the Government's overarching purpose) as the guiding principle.

The greatest time savings are most likely on longer routes from the Glasgow and Edinburgh to Aberdeen and Inverness, and these should be pursued. However, savings on shorter routes that are more heavily used may offer more minutes saved in total (e.g. 10 minutes saved by 10 people outweighs 30 minutes saved by 3 people).

TransportScotland's own research has found that each minute saved on the Glasgow-Edinburgh journey should offer £60million in benefits to Scotland's economyⁱⁱ. Thus, it seems likely that reductions in this journey time – even if apparently more modest than possible on longer routes – offer an especially compelling investment case.

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

The Collaboration initiative has sought to encourage the introduction and promotion of a Central Scotland Rover-type ticket that would allow easy door-to-door travel using rail and bus transport, especially for tourists and day-trippers visiting a number of destinations by way of several services. Integrated rail/bus (and rail/subway) tickets have been attempted before but these have been relatively inflexible and poorly promoted. A more flexible ticket, better-promoted, might meet with more success.

The proposed Glasgow-Edinburgh smartcard might offer financial benefits (such as discounts on single fares and capped daily spend) along the lines of the London Oystercard for residents and regular travellers.

Q14 How could we improve the travel interchange at stations?

There are particular issues at Haymarket station, which is planned for redevelopment as an interchange, and the amended franchise should seek to facilitate greatest success in this process.

Improved – more comprehensive, up-to-date, easily found and assimilated – information on onward travel, especially by bus, would be useful. Improved cross-modal ticketing (ref; Q11) would also enhance the opportunities for interchange between public transport modes.

Q16 Would wireless internet technology significantly benefit passengers?

Q17 Would you pay for this service?

The Collaboration initiative recently commissioned SQW Consultants to investigate the case and options for wireless connectivity on the Glasgow-Edinburgh route. The research findings highlighted that the main push in terms of demand for better wireless connectivity (both voice and data) is from business, from the financial services in particular and SMEs – given the importance of the E&G as a business route, this is perhaps unsurprising. The cities' Chambers of Commerce see this kind of connectivity as an important competitiveness factor and, increasingly, business users in particular expect good connectivity. Studies also show that connectivity is a key attractiveness feature for rail travel and a factor influencing people to make a modal shift from road to rail.

The study concludes that there would be modest but significant productivity benefits from being able to access wireless internet technology on the move. It also identified a number of other, potentially more important, factors:

- Improved competitiveness – as provision is upgraded elsewhere, notably the South East, customer expectations will rise and perceptions of the Glasgow Edinburgh route will be increasingly negative if connectivity is perceived as inadequate.
- Improved safety – this is a big issue in the south and likely to become much more of an issue in Scotland as fear of crime increases
- Environmental impacts – the study indicates that there has been some modal shift from air to rail from improved connectivity.

We believe that the service should be free to all passengers. For rail to attract passengers, it has to constantly improve its product, and we are moving towards a scenario where passengers expect it for free (or at least at no additional cost to the travel ticket). This is the approach taken by National Express East Coastⁱⁱⁱ, Citylink coaches^{iv}, as well as many cafes and libraries.

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

We are not entirely clear on the meaning of this question, and no further information was provided in the supporting document.

As noted previously, however, we would be keen to see development of a system that allowed for easy and cost-effective travel that allowed for public transport modal interchange and which offered financial and convenience incentives to both regular and occasional travellers. It appears that the technology associated with smartcards can facilitate these benefits, although there may be more than one 'product' solution.

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?

Scotland's Commonwealth Games organisers have promised a "car-free" Games with spectators travelling by free public transport. Up to 325,000 spectators a day are reportedly to be offered free public transport, with no public parking at Games' venues.

The volume of people travelling by public transport during the Games period may well strain even well-prepared public transport providers. The franchise holder should undertake the necessary work to anticipate the likely levels of demand during the Games and make preparations to meet this.

Glasgow City Council has previously put forward proposals for a station at Parkhead. Amongst other benefits, this would provide a convenient rail connection for some of the major Games' venues (Celtic Park, the Chris Hoy velodrome; the national indoor sports arena).

We anticipate that the eventual release of the Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR) will provide some clarity on the priority of, and plans for, a cross-Glasgow rail connection – and allow the various relevant agencies to plan for Commonwealth Games travel on a clearer basis.

Concluding remarks

Glasgow and Edinburgh are vital hubs in Scotland's economy^v, and also in Scotland's rail network. The rail connection between the two cities is one of Scotland's most important economic connections, and the network around the cities is vital to the Central Belt's and Scotland's economic and social success.

Recent planning and strategy documents^{vi} have increasingly recognised the importance of Glasgow and Edinburgh, their connection, and the opportunity to reap disproportionate benefit through investment in improving connectivity in, around and between them.

Improved connectivity assists achievement of considerable economic benefit through the kinds of synergies and agglomeration benefits that can only be achieved by significant economic centres in relatively close proximity. Rail services also work best in, around and between major urban centres, where it offer significant advantages over road-based transport^{vii}. In Scotland, these centres are Glasgow and Edinburgh.

We believe that, with the Scottish Government's overarching purpose in mind (i.e. to raise Scotland's underlying trend growth rate to match that of small European countries by 2017 and to reduce carbon emissions) that the case for continued *and* increased focus and investment in rail services in and around Glasgow and Edinburgh represents the best use of scarce resources in pursuit of the Scottish Government's stated national purpose.

Yours faithfully

Laura Gordon
Director
Glasgow-Edinburgh Collaboration initiative

ⁱ <http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/files/documents/projects/StrategicProjectsReviewEtc/Ed-gla-rail-improvements-summary.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Col 6074 <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/officialreports/meetingsparliament/or-08/sor0207-02.htm>; <http://business.scotsman.com/transport/Cutting-travel-time--worth.4560343.jp>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.nationalexpresseastcoast.com/On-Board-Our-Trains/In-your-carriage/WiFi---Internet-Facilities/>

^{iv} http://www.citylink.co.uk/media_15.html

^v For example, the two cities account for one-third of Scotland's jobs and GDP, half the income from overseas visitors; and most of the private sector jobs for new graduates. This is despite housing 'only' 20% of Scotland's people – the cities also provide jobs for around 250,000 in-commuters

^{vi} E.g. the Government Economic Strategy, National Planning Framework 2 (draft), National Transport Strategy, the Rail Utilisation Strategy and much recent UK research on the importance of agglomeration effects in transport investments

^{vii} for example, among Scotland's 32 local authority areas, only in Glasgow and Edinburgh do a majority of employed residents not drive to work (Scottish Household Survey 2007)