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ScotRail Franchise Consultation

HITRANS response to the Transport Scotland Consultation on the ScotRail Franchise Extension.

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

1.1 Far North Recast - this a major step change in connectivity from rural Scotland to Central Belt and beyond. This enables people from Skye and Lochalsh and mid Sutherland to get to Inverness before 0900 and Central Scotland around mid-day.

1.2 Additional early morning services from Perth, Gourock, and Ayr enabling pre 1200 arrivals in London are again good examples of rail demonstrating its value.

1.3 St Andrews bus link will provide useful evidence for the possible roll-out of other schemes to connect communities off the rail network.

Q2 Is our schedule for new service introduction right?

2.1 The planning of rail services requires a long lead time that doesn't necessarily fit in with political and budgetary timetables. There is a role for Regional Transport Partnerships in this process.

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

3.1 We would be interested in 'Delivering better efficiency, performance and sustainability'. We have been at the forefront of maximizing the use of resources in rural services operating out of Inverness, with Invernet and Invernextra due to come in with the December timetable change. With high rolling stock lease costs, units must be deployed for as long a working day as possible. Thus the stabling of a unit overnight at Oban from 2126 to 0811 the next day does not represent an efficient use of resources. Furthermore track access can be achieved at little or no additional cost since the signalling centre is staffed 24 hours per day.

3.2 Similarly the empty working and positioning trains such as those that form the 0757 Aviemore-Inverness and the 0712 Blair Atholl-Edinburgh could be reworked to produce new 0543 Inverness-Perth-Edinburgh and 0620 Perth-Inverness all stations trains which would allow accelerated services later. This could also be covered by the use of a seated coach on the northbound sleeper, freeing up a 158 unit. The two Elgin-Inverness short workings could also be maximized. Connectivity could be improved if splitting/joining of Edinburgh and Glasgow portions at Perth was utilized, avoiding the up to 25 minute journey time delay for passengers who happen to require the non-through destination.

3.3 Use of additional rolling stock. Currently there is little provision for strengthening services for the holiday peaks. From December 08 the only seasonal variations will be: the West Highland Oban 0821/Mallaig 0851 separation; the extra Saturday Oban, achieved by borrowing a 156 from Strathclyde services; Mallaig 4-car for the summer to cope with heavy demand. A pool of rolling stock is needed to cover spikes in local demand. The use of loco hauled stock in Fife may offer a solution to Saturday Highland Main Line frequency enhancement.

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

4.1 Journey time reductions must be achieved on Inverness-Central Belt and Inverness-Aberdeen. Modal shift from the private car in order to meet climate change targets will require a more competitive journey time.

4.2 The Highland Main Line is currently being studied by Network Rail and its consultants in order to progress hourly, faster services, and features as an HLOS Tier 3 project. We acknowledge that some time can be gained through skip-stopping.

4.3 Inverness-Aberdeen links the Highland Capital with the oil capital of Europe. Currently frequency and journey time are determined by the single track nature of the route. Investment is required to exploit demand from the sizeable towns along the route, which all have conveniently located stations.

4.4 Journey time reductions are needed on all rural routes (North Highland Lines and West Highland Lines) in order to compete with the private car. The HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy has identified a package of measures which could deliver significant journey time improvements.

These should be considered in conjunction with the objectives of the National Transport Strategy and the strategic outcomes detailed in the table on pages 25-26 of *Scotland's Railways*. Both of these documents can be accessed through the Transport Scotland website at:

<http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/reports/publications-and-guidance>

On our station environments

- **We want to ensure that passengers can buy their ticket as quickly and efficiently as possible.**

Q5 How can buying a ticket be made easier?

- **More 'over-the-counter' services**
- **More 'ticket vending machines'**
- **'Customer service' staff to offer assistance and advice when buying a ticket**
- **Internet purchase facilities**
- **Telesales**
- **Through mobile phones**
- **Smart cards.**
- **Currently, the facilities, at stations vary. At larger stations a number of services are available, while smaller stations with less passenger demand can have few.**

5.1 Ticketing using mobile phone technology is a practical way of providing access to advance purchase fares from remote areas. Wrexham and Shropshire uses a system of bar codes sent to mobile phones. Potential passengers would not be disadvantaged by the lack of ticket vending machines or the need to rely on the post which in some areas may be delivered in the afternoon.

5.2 TVMs are very useful in busier stations such as Inverness but should not be seen as a replacement for human interaction, which can be particularly appreciated by tourists and older passengers.

5.3 The development of smart card technology whilst providing the benefit of portability across modes also has costs that may be inherently disproportionate for low-volume, rural applications

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? Please consider:

- The size of station based on passenger numbers and demand
- Type of facilities (e.g. food outlets, news-stands, pharmacies, etc.)
- Community-based initiatives supported by the Stations Community Regeneration Fund.
- The layout of a station may have an affect on the comfort and safety of passengers.

6.1 Most stations in the HITRANS area are not able to realize commercial rents. The emphasis must be on appropriate station development to meet the needs of the passenger. In stations such as Inverness there are sound proposals for station development that will enhance the travelling experience and realize new income.

6.2 HITRANS has been involved in the development of station facilities on rural stations, and in finding uses for vacant accommodation.

Q7 How could the station environment be improved? Please consider:

- Lighting
- Availability of seating/furniture
- Safety (e.g. through technology such as CCTV, 'Help-Points')
- A visible staff presence.

7.1 A staff presence where possible is invaluable but CCTV even in semi-rural locations can be a useful tool in ensuring that station maintenance costs are kept to a minimum.

7.2 Staffing of ticket offices should reflect local patterns of usage, with a less onerous process required to alter opening hours.

7.3 There has been adverse comment, however, about the deployment of Ticket Examiners at Inverness Station. There are some 5 minute connections between trains and the current system seems not to make this easier, with passengers having to exit the holding area and then re-enter it.

Q8 How could signage be improved at stations?

- Directions within stations to ticket office, platforms, toilets, etc.
- Directions to facilities nearby, e.g. hospitals.

On customer service

- Everyone should have an equal opportunity to access our rail services, but we recognise that our passengers have different needs.

8.1 Signage within stations is generally clear and concise but signage to popular destinations e.g. hospitals, colleges, shops etc would be useful.

Q9 How can we improve assisted travel at stations? In particular, please consider:

- Station access (such as wheelchair ramps, facilities for light scooters, facilities for passengers with assistance dogs)
- Assistance for people with hearing or learning difficulties
- Increased training for existing staff
- The availability of dedicated staff.

• Currently, a free 'RailLink' bus service provides transport for passengers travelling between Glasgow Central and Glasgow Queen Street Stations. Another 'Rail Link' is also being considered for passengers travelling to Edinburgh Royal Infirmary from Newcraighall and Musselburgh.

9.1 Assisted travel can be improved by efficient response to pre-notified requests. The recent Passenger Focus report 'Assisted Passenger Reservation Service: Mystery Shop' (Sept 2008) painted a rather inconsistent picture of provision for those in need. Staff training is the key.

Q10 Do you have any ideas for further 'RailLinks'? Please consider the accessibility of:

- Hospitals
- Bus station interchange
- Car parking
- Park and Ride
- Traveline
- Walking routes.
- On fares

10.1 Parking inclusive and more rail/bus products should be developed.

10.2 A bus connection is required between Aberdeen Bus and Rail Stations and the Northern Isles Ferry Terminal.

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

- Reduced fares for (disabled passengers, families, students, low income groups, ex-servicemen)
- Reduced fares at targeted times of day/ year
- Annual season tickets
- Geographical tickets, i.e. tickets for a particular region
- Other rail cards.

Please consider how these initiatives might improve the travel experience for rail passengers, in particular:

11.1 First ScotRail's Kids Go Free and Scottish Government's one third off for 16-18 year olds is to be applauded. The extension of free concessionary travel to rail for seniors may cause overcrowding and undermine existing revenue streams from that age group. Club 55 goes towards providing good access to the network for seniors at a value fare for longer journeys, and it will be interesting to assess the impact of the current extended period of availability. It would be helpful to trial a similar product with no age bar in a quieter month such as November or January.

11.2 More intelligent reservation systems should permit advance purchase closer to or during the train journey itself. This again would succeed in including the remote rural users.

11.3 Runabout and other geographical tickets are very useful in attracting both domestic and foreign visitors, and may incorporate other modes.

11.4 Local residents' railcards such as the Highland Railcard are very valuable in providing direct marketing opportunities and the development of customer loyalty. The extension of availability to cover the HITRANS area would be a logical step.

• A difference between travelling by train and other forms of transport, such as the bus, is that a variety of facilities can be available on board. However, at the same time, increasing demand for rail will put pressure on the available space in trains.

Q12 When travelling on the train, how could passengers' experiences be improved? In particular, please consider:

- The balance between the provision of seating (including tables) and the availability of storage space (for luggage, cycles etc.)
- (Up-to-date) information
- Helpfulness of staff
- Catering

12.1 Trains must offer facilities that are not available in the private car: toilets, space for luggage/cycles/buggies and the possibility of replicating the working environment with tables, power points, wi-fi and refreshments.

12.2 The 158 and 156 refurbishment programmes are good examples of fleet half-life modernization. Cycling is a key component of tourist activity across the HITRANS area and thus cycle accommodation on-train and ease of reservation off it are very important, in addition to the requirements of the utility cyclist.

12.3 As ever, a positive staff attitudes rather than an over-reliance on repetitive Passenger Information System announcements enhance the journey experience.

12.4 Class 170 trains do not offer the optimum environment for capturing the business traveller. There is a lack of first class accommodation and poor working facilities (wifi, electrical sockets etc.).

Q13 Where should we concentrate our efforts in improving the Anglo- Scottish sleeper services? In particular please consider:

- The number of locations served
- Facilities on trains or at stations
- Arrival and departure times
- The provision of airline-style overnight seats
- Catering
- Staffing

13.1 Sleeper services are experiencing steady growth at the current time. Internet retailing has enabled the discounting of fares in order to maximize yield. Some acceleration may be possible by omitting some local calls from the Inverness sleeper; those calls however would be more valuable if seats were available for intra-Scotland journeys, as on the Fort William sleeper.

13.2 A Birmingham call would be useful in the Highlander, but there is a time penalty, and major upgrade at New St would mean it could not happen for a number of years.

13.3 As noted above the provision of a further seated coach on Inverness-Edinburgh-Inverness to mirror the service on the West Highlands should be considered.

13.4 The current levels of staffing and on-board catering must be retained for customer security.

On new technologies...

- We recognise that the easier it is to interconnect with other forms of travel, the more likely passengers will travel by train.

Q14 How could we improve the travel interchange at stations? Please consider this in terms of:

- Ticketing
- Service connections
- Infrastructure (waiting rooms)

- **Facilities for cyclists (cycle racks, National Cycle Route interchange signage)**
- **Car parking**
- **Walking routes**
- **Accessibility for disabled passengers**

14.1 Through and cross-mode ticketing must become a priority in order to create a sense of customer confidence. There is a disconnect between agreed objectives to achieve integration and the performance regime of the rail and ferry franchisees, for example. This could be mitigated by a locally administered fund to compensate the passenger when connections break down.

14.2 Transport Scotland's Car Parking Strategy will help to inform where changes need to be made in terms of provision and pricing. Non railway car parks adjoining stations should have a reduced price for rail ticket holders, although technology may be required to achieve this.

14.3 Cycle parking is important because it reduces demand for car park spaces. The best locations are those nearest to the platform itself, accessible without the need for dismounting to ensure minimum door to door transit time. CCTV coverage of cycle parking creates further customer confidence.

14.4 Where possible walking routes should follow desire lines, rather than be rectilinear.

14.5 It should be acknowledged that at some rural stations full accessibility will be almost impossible to achieve due to platform heights, old style footbridges, island platforms etc. The schemes at Strathcarron and Tain deliver good benefits at reasonable cost.

• **Many businesses are offering wireless internet (WiFi) technology to clients. For reasons of geography and geology, there are cost issues in delivery of this on the Scottish rail network as well as in the delivery of wider issues of connectivity.**

Q15 What should our communications connectivity priorities be?

15.1 Many business users depend on wifi access, although this adds to rolling stock costs. While this is debated, wifi in the short term should be available at all stations of a certain size.

Q16 Would wireless internet technology significantly benefit passengers?

Please comment on:

- **For leisure use**
- **For business use**
- **Short 'commuter' journeys**
- **Longer distance journeys.**

16.1 Wifi would benefit both business users and leisure users. It may have limited applications for short journeys of under 30 minutes.

Q17 Would you pay for this service?

17.1 It should be free for first class.

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

Please consider:

- **The outcomes which would determine whether the pilot was successful.**

18.1 No response

- Sustainability on our railways is about ensuring that we continue to operate an efficient, high level of services well into the future. New ways of ensuring sustainability consider economic, environmental and social aspects.

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

19.1 While the franchisee must be incentivised to hand back the franchise at the end of their stewardship in a greener, cleaner state, it is important that Network Rail are fully engaged as they represent greater investment and continuity.

- The Environmental Improvement Works option is designed to carry out small-scale physical alterations or additions which will help to reduce the use of natural resources, reduce carbon and other harmful emissions, or reduce waste from stations, depots, or rolling stock.

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

- Electrification
- Waste recycling
- Time switch lighting
- 'eco' driving training
- LED light installation
- non-traction energy improvements
- Other

21.1 Electrification, achieved through harnessing Scotland's renewable resources (water, wave, wood and wind), represents the greatest step towards carbon reduction. The business case for all the other initiatives is easier to determine as payback can be within the life of the franchise. Electrification requires long-term commitment and planning beyond the life on the standard 7 years+ franchise.

21.2 Rural stations with intelligent low-energy lighting systems (requiring derogation from Group standards) will help to reduce revenue costs.

- We want to make stations a place for communities to come together – the Stations Community Regeneration Fund has been devised to encourage the efficient use of station buildings through community initiatives.

Q21 What should we consider in station and community regeneration?

Please think about:

- The size of station
- Facilities which reflect the needs of each community

22.1 HITRANS has direct experience of this as a lessee of two station buildings and a funder of minor schemes at a number of locations. The division of responsibility between franchisee and owner (Network Rail) must be clearly understood. For historical reasons a number of buildings remain in station lease areas although they are of no use to the operator. There should be an easier way of reverting them to the infrastructure owner, and then a clearer way for third party to identify funding and invest. Many stations across our area have vacant accommodation, not all of which could be offered up to third parties without impacting on the railway.

22.2 Care must be taken when granting accommodation to third parties as new entrants may not have long term financial viability or sufficient social capital. And Network Rail must operate within regulated economic targets. There may be scope for a rail-friendly third party organisation to act as a lessee of last resort to develop the difficult cases.

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

22 see above

On the 2014 Commonwealth Games hosted by Glasgow .

- Glasgow is expecting a large number of international visitors when it hosts the Commonwealth Games in 2014. With major investment in the road and rail infrastructure, a dedicated Games route network and free travel for anyone holding tickets for that day's games,

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?

23.1 Late night rail services to wider Scotland would enable equity of access to the Games from the whole of the population.

Broader Issues and Questions

- The Project Manager's primary role is to ensure the timely and efficient delivery by the franchisee of the anticipated benefits of the priced options.

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

24 No response

- The Priced Options are intended to provide a number of service enhancements from which all rail passengers should benefit.

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

- Age
- Disability
- Gender
- LGBT
- Race
- Religion and belief?

25.1 A number of the proposals will have significant impacts on the ease of travel for the young and the old across Scotland, reducing connection times, simplifying interchange and making it easier for all of us to live, learn and work in the periphery.

RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the details below and return it with your response. This will help ensure we handle your response appropriately. Thank you for your help.

Name: Frank Roach

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1. Are you responding: (please tick one box)

(a) as an individual

(b) on behalf of a group/organisation ✓

INDIVIDUALS

2a. Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (in Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government website)?

Yes (go to 2b below)

Yes

2b. Where *confidentiality is not requested*, we will make your response available to the public on the following basis (please tick one of the following boxes)

Yes, make my response, name and address all available

ON BEHALF OF GROUPS OR ORGANISATIONS:

3. The name and address of your organisation *will be* made available to the public (in the Scottish Government library and/or on the Transport Scotland website). Are you also content for your response to be made available?

Yes

SHARING RESPONSES/FUTURE ENGAGEMENT

4. We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for the Scottish Government to contact you again in the future in relation to this consultation response?

Yes

Report by: Frank Roach
Designation: Partnership Manager