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Dear Mr Lloyd,

Station Car Parking Policy in Scotland

The Tayside and Central Scotland Transport Partnership considered the above consultation at its meeting on 22 September 2009 and agreed to submit the following comments.

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?*

tactran does not have any information available on suppressed demand and would suggest that this is an issue on which Transport Scotland should commission research. We have detailed information on parking usage and user characteristics at stations in the region which has been supplied to you and hopefully should be of assistance in considering the issue.

It is important to recognise that parking by station users does not just occur in station car parks. Where the station parking is perceived to be too expensive or is operating at capacity passengers will consider parking in other operators' car parks nearby or on-street. Expanding parking provision in such circumstances does not necessarily service suppressed demand but encourages motorists to park appropriately without causing nuisance to neighbouring residential properties or prevent public car parks servicing other needs.

The nature of the suppressed demand also needs consideration. If by providing

additional parking at stations longer journeys already being undertaken by car are substituted completely or partly by rail then this is likely to support national, regional and local aims to tackle congestion and reduce the environmental and other impacts of car usage.

tactran would support Passenger Focus in providing real time information on parking availability, especially if this reduces “rail-heading” or car travel for the whole journey. It is recognised though that there could be significant costs in implementing this measure and therefore it should be subject to a relevant appraisal. We would also suggest that an audit should be undertaken of station car park usage and condition. This would ensure that maximum capacity is achieved through appropriate layouts and bay markings and, where necessary, enforcement to deter use by non-train travelling motorists.

Station choice

- *Passengers will drive to stations which are not 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?*

It is undoubtedly the case that some passengers will “rail-head” to a station further than their nearest station. This should not be subject to self-regulation. Clearly each instance needs to be considered individually however, issues that need to be considered include ensuring that the total journey time between the passenger’s origin and destination is as attractive for making a long train journey as it is for this being a smaller proportion of the overall travel time. Fare structures could be reviewed to encourage a longer train journey, particularly for commuters, with tapered season ticket prices.

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 creating 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?*

Again, the issue of car park charges needs to be considered as part of a wider picture of transport and travel considerations. Rail fares serve a dual function in terms of managing demand on train services and also contributing to the determination of modal choice, particularly between train travel and the main alternative car travel. In some instances it may be possible to give further consideration to these aspects through the use of local authority traffic/transport models where the overall relative cost of travel including actual motoring/train ticket/parking costs can be considered together with the impact of walking and waiting time, etc.

Making parking available at peak times may be more effective at reducing traffic congestion than encouraging off-peak travel. The latter is more likely to be suppressed than essential peak time journeys where if public transport is not feasible for commuting

then the journey will not disappear but be undertaken by car.

The issue of car park charges and whether they should be additional needs to be considered separately for each station. In general, it is believed that, outside major urban centres where there will be a comprehensive network of local/Park & Ride bus services and walking and cycling routes, charges should not be levied. If these are necessary to prevent abuse by non-passengers then the parking charge should be refundable against a train ticket.

Passenger Focus surveys have shown that the majority of passengers (60%) are not satisfied with the value for money for the price of their ticket. Inflating the costs of rail travel further through parking charges will worsen the perception of rail travel being expensive vis-à-vis car travel.

The operation of each station car park and the charging policy should be considered in the local context in consultation with local authority officers, particularly those concerned with parking and traffic management, to give full consideration to the impact on parking demands and controls in the area of each station generally and overall accessibility.

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?*

tactran commends adopting the ATOC Station Travel Plan approach to ensure that station car park charging is put in a context of overall station accessibility. Shifting demand from car to alternative modes to access stations could then be considered as well as peak to off-peak train travel.

There are significant opportunities to work with RTPs and local authorities in promoting alternatives to the car for accessing stations. Employer and school based travel plans may also offer scope to encourage shift from the car both for direct car journeys to and from railway stations and "linked" trips, for example, targeting parents dropping children off at school and then continuing to the station.

The implications for timetabling and rail service capacity can only be determined by Transport Scotland and First ScotRail as the only organisations that have access to detailed patronage figures, though *tactran* would wish to be involved in any discussions.

I trust that the above comments are of assistance. If you require any further information, or clarification of any aspect of this response, please contact Michael Cairns, Strategy Manager on 01738 475774 in the first instance.

Yours sincerely,



Eric Guthrie
Director