CÒMHDHAIL ALBA TRANSPORT SCOTLAND

RAIL STATION CAR PARKING STRATEGY

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Introduction

This Government aims to promote sustainable access to stations – by bus, cycle and walking – however, it is clear that there is a continuing demand for car use, particularly in rural areas, where access to public transport is limited. The Scottish Government's existing transport policy context is conducive to sustainability and growth and this strategy aims to focus efforts to achieve our transport policy aims.

The *Government Economic Strategy* (GES) (2011)[1] sets out this Government's Purpose of increasing sustainable economic growth. In relation to transport, the GES's aims include 'investment in public transport to provide viable and reliable alternatives to the car', to 'drive down emissions and promote sustainability'.

The *National Transport Strategy* (NTS) (2006)[2] commits the Scottish Government to seeking to achieve improved journey times and connections, reduced emissions and improved quality, accessibility and affordability. The station car park strategy considers parking at stations in the context of the NTS, recognising the importance of: parking ticket solutions to allow a smooth connection from car park to train; attractive parking facilities, to encourage a shift to rail for part of the journey, to reduce transport emissions; and an approach to charging that makes parking at stations an affordable alternative to making an entire journey by car.

Scotland's Railways[3] creates a vision for the rail network in Scotland to deliver services that offer a sustainable and effective alternative to the private car. It commits the Scottish Government to taking action to increase demand for rail services, to providing sufficient capacity and to customer service improvements, 'improving access to stations for all modes and expanded car parking at stations where appropriate'.

This strategy document aims to guide station car park operators and promoters, including Local Authorities and the franchisee, in their consideration of parking provision, charging and investment, and in their consideration of the resultant impact on rail passenger .

Consultation

Public consultation[4] was carried out on the impact of price and supply on the demand for rail Park & Ride sites. It was determined that a 'one size fits all' solution would not be appropriate across Scotland, due to distinct characteristics at each station location.

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[1] http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/09/13091128/0
[2] http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/12/04104414/0
[3] http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/12/04104648/0
[4] http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/consultation/station-car-parking-scotland-consultation-5261#4

The analysis of consultation responses summarises the key themes emerging from stakeholder comments. It states that the impact of car park expansion on suppressed demand was not fully understood and there were mixed views on the need for intervention to balance parking provision with service frequency and on the use of parking charges.

Research into the effect of pricing and supply on the use of public transport: conclusions

Following the consultation, original research[5] was commissioned to help improve our understanding of the relationships between passenger behaviour and car parking demand as there had been little previous study in this area.

The research assessed the impacts of expanding car parking availability at fourteen stations in comparison with control stations featuring no such expansion. In addition to the primary research undertaken, several existing data sources were reviewed including historic rail journey patterns, parking availability at stations and a range of socio-economic data. The results were modelled using two forms of data, i.e. ticket sales data, denoting actual changes in demand, and survey data, denoting the diversion factors resulting from any changes in parking policy.

The research found only a small shift to rail following car park expansion at the locations included in the study and that any emissions benefit derived from reducing road miles as a result of mode shift to rail would largely be offset by the increased number of existing rail passengers driving to the station. In addition, the capital cost of extending car parks is unlikely to be off-set by the extra revenue from additional users during a typical franchise period. Any positive business case for a new or expanded rail station car park is, therefore, likely to rely on other benefits beyond the environmental benefits derived from mode shift and the anticipated revenue from increased passenger numbers. For example, the social and economic benefits of better access to city centre employment and the resulting reduction in congestion levels by encouraging motorists to switch modes for at least part of their journey.

The survey of rail users suggested that an increase in the charge to park at a station by £1 would result in a 4.9% reduction in rail demand, or a 3% reduction if there was ample free local parking. Of the remaining rail passengers using the park and ride facility, 55% would park elsewhere; and the rail ticket revenue lost would exceed the increase in parking revenue.

The research supports the consultation conclusion that there is no “one size fits all” solution. However, if a proposal for a new or expanded station car park is pursued, the promoter may find the research document useful, as its case studies demonstrate the types of issues to consider. The relevant

[5] http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/strategy-and-research/publications-and-consultations/j253322-00.htm

issues will vary from location to location, depending on unique, local circumstances. These include the existing car park being at, or close to, capacity; the availability and cost of alternative parking nearby and at destination locations; and a competitive rail service operating parallel to congested roads.

It should be noted that local factors will also feature in any decision to expand parking space, such as the desire to ease the burden of parking from nearby residential streets.

Lastly, stakeholder feedback and primary research together highlighted the importance of adequate lighting and CCTV at car parks to make the Park & Ride option more attractive to potential rail customers.

Recommendations

The recommendations set out in this document are underpinned by the public consultation findings and research conclusions, discussed above.

It is recommended that all publicly funded rail station car parks should take this strategy into account, whether the car park is to be operated by the Franchisee, the Local Authority or any third party. As the research and consultation findings show that there is "no one size fits all" solution, local circumstances should always be taken into account.

1. The introduction or expansion of station car parking in Scotland should be considered in the context of our aims to reduce emissions and road congestion, on both trunk and local roads.

2. The ScotRail Franchisee will work with Transport Scotland, Regional Transport Partnerships, other rail operators, Local Authorities and other appropriate stakeholders to encourage greater access to stations by active modes, such as walking and cycling and by other public transport modes.

3. Careful consideration should be given to any decision to increase car park charges, or introduce charges at car parks that currently do not charge. This is to help ensure that rail is a sustainable and effective alternative to the private car.

    3.1 If a charge is currently applied at a station car park which is not operating at full capacity, consideration should be given to the negative impacts of the charge. Mitigation measures could include reducing or removing the charge where appropriate.

    3.2 Where car park use for rail users is constrained by non-rail users, a high charge should be considered which would be redeemable against the purchase of a rail ticket. Consideration could also be given to charging for a proportion of the day to encourage off-peak rail use.

4. Where charges currently apply, steps should be considered to minimise the adverse impacts of the charges on rail demand, taking account of regional and local car parking strategies

    4.1 Provision of automated ticket machines should be considered for car park payments to minimise delays to passenger journeys.

    4.2 Consideration should be given to providing multi-trip tickets where practicable.

    4.3 A partial or full refund should be considered (determined on a commercial basis) when a car park user purchases a train ticket for their onward journey.

5. Where a Local Authority is concerned about the availability of parking or the implementation of this parking strategy at a particular rail station, the ScotRail Franchisee will work with the Local Authority to consider a solution on a case-by-case basis.

6. Transport Scotland will work with promoters to consider proposals for new and enhanced car parking facilities prior to submission to Network Rail for consideration. Part-funding may then be available from the Scottish Stations Fund (SSF). The SSF was specified in the Scottish Ministers' High Level Output Specification (HLOS) with one of its aims being to lever in third-party funding to provide improved and new stations.

7. A judgement should be made on whether there is any need to increase the number of Blue Badge spaces when a car park is being expanded, based on evidence of whether the current disabled spaces are being fully utilised.

8. Network Rail and the franchisee should ensure that station car parks have adequate lighting and CCTV where appropriate.

9. The Traffic Scotland website will be used to provide information on station car park locations, capacity and charges. Local Authorities and ScotRail will work with Traffic Scotland to facilitate this.

Conclusion

In conclusion, both the public consultation and the research found that there is no "one size fits all" solution to car parking. The research document can be used to identify issues to consider in relation to car park provision but local circumstances must always be taken into account. The recommendations outlined above aim to promote a modal shift to rail by improving access to railway station car parks and should be used as a guide by station car park operators when considering car park provision.

Rail Policy Team
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