

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE – 11 JANUARY 2006

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE CONSULTATION ON RAIL PRIORITIES

Report by the Executive Director of Development and Property Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** The purpose of the report is to inform the Committee of the Scottish Executive's consultation paper on rail priorities and the Head of Roads & Transportation's response to the consultation.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** Following the Railways Act 2005, Scottish Ministers have a new power to produce a long term rail strategy and a new duty to specify outputs to buy from Network Rail. In order to reach a decision on Strategic Rail Priorities for Scotland, the Executive issued a consultation document in October 2005 and requested responses be submitted by December 28th 2005. The timing of Committee meetings did not allow a response to be considered by the Committee prior to submission. The Head of Roads and Transportation has therefore responded to the consultation.
- 2.2** The consultation takes the form of a series of questions relating to stakeholders' views on the priorities for the rail network in Scotland. Attached is the response from WESTRANS on behalf of the 13 local authorities in the Strathclyde area which provides direct responses to the consultation questions; Appendix 1. Also attached is the response sent by the Head of Roads & Transportation which deals more specifically with the main rail issues affecting East Ayrshire directly; Appendix 2.
- 2.3** The outputs from the rail consultation will feed in to the Executive's developing Transport Strategy for Scotland which is expected to be finalised by summer 2006. The National Transport Strategy will set out the long-term framework for Scottish transport with a 20-year horizon.

3. NEW RAILWAY STRUCTURE IN SCOTLAND

- 3.1** The rail devolution brought about by the introduction of the Railways Act 2005 brings new responsibilities to Scottish Ministers, transfers the finances related to those duties to the Executive, and changes the relationships within the rail industry in Scotland. By 1st April 2006, Scottish Ministers will have responsibility for the majority of rail functions within Scotland. From October 2005 the Executive began directly managing the First ScotRail franchise, and from April 2006, the Executive will have assumed the new role of funder of rail infrastructure within Scotland.
- 3.2** The Executive will specify, via the Office of Rail Regulation, those network outputs that Network Rail will be tasked with delivering in Scotland. In return, Network Rail will identify, monitor and report separately for Scotland on how it is performing in delivering the agreed outputs in Scotland.

4. EAST AYRSHIRE CONSULTATION RESPONSE

4.1 The main points of the consultation response submitted by the Head of Roads & Transportation is summarised below: -

4.2 Kilmarnock-Barrhead Line

- a)** Due to existing capacity restrictions, Kilmarnock is the only major centre in the Strathclyde area which is not currently served by a half-hourly or better train service;
- b)** Studies by SPT and Network Rail have indicated that the improved frequency can be provided by redoubling of the line between Dunlop and Stewarton. It is understood SPT have made additional funding available to continue the studies needed for the provision of the dynamic loop required to facilitate a half-hourly or better service;
- c)** Studies are also currently ongoing to assess the requirement for platform extensions on the route to accommodate 6-car trains;
- d)** The Executive is urged to accelerate the development work on the line to allow for early implementation of capacity improvements.

4.3 Kilmarnock-Carlisle Line

- a)** Passenger services south of Kilmarnock currently run on an approximate 2-hourly frequency;
- b)** There are significant pinch-points in track and signalling capacity which limits the enhancement of passenger services and the development of rail freight;
- c)** Capacity improvements would have the potential to bring about a significant transfer of freight from road to rail alleviating the environmental problems associated with the movement of bulk goods such as coal and timber;
- d)** An improved line would also provide an alternative route for trains on the West Coast Main Line during works and when incidents occur;
- e)** Upgrading the line would also facilitate a more regular passenger service improving access to job opportunities for people living in the former coalfield areas in the south of East Ayrshire.

4.4 New Stations & Park & Ride

- a)** Further consideration needs to be given to new station openings on the Barrhead-Kilmarnock-Carlisle line;
- b)** A previous feasibility study has been undertaken for re-opening of Mauchline station;
- c)** Assessments are required to consider the opportunities for new stations at Altonhill on the west side of Kilmarnock and on the eastern side of Kilmarnock to give improved access to the Queens Drive development area, New Farm Loch and the Irvine Valley towns;
- d)** New stations should be assessed in conjunction with land-use development and opportunities for park and ride.

5 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 None

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 It is recommended that the Committee: -

- (a) Note the contents of the report; and
- (b) Endorse the consultation comments previously submitted by the Head of Roads and Transportation and WESTRANS.

James Lavery
Executive Director of Development and Property Services
19 December 2005
KC

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

For further information contact Keith Orton on 01563 - 555714

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Appendix 1

WESTRANS Response to the Consultation on Rail Priorities in the National Transport Strategy

Introduction

The West of Scotland Transport Partnership (WESTRANS) is a Joint Committee of 13 local authorities: Argyll and Bute; East Ayrshire; East Dunbartonshire; East Renfrewshire; Dumfries and Galloway; Glasgow; Inverclyde; North Ayrshire; North Lanarkshire; Renfrewshire; South Ayrshire; South Lanarkshire and West Dunbartonshire Councils, which operates in association with Strathclyde Passenger Transport (SPT). The two organisations have come together, with the support of the Glasgow and Clyde Valley and Ayrshire Structure Plan core teams to produce a Joint Transport Strategy (JTS) for the west of Scotland.

The JTS sets out an integrated strategy for development and investment in transport in the west of Scotland for the next 20 years. The Strategy's vision is to 'invest in and maintain the best possible sustainable transport system for western Scotland that supports the economy, promotes social inclusion and enhances the environment for the people who live, work, visit and enjoy the region.' Enhancing rail infrastructure to improve internal and external connections is one of the four core actions set out in the JTS.

The west of Scotland has a substantial rail network. It has the largest commuter rail network in Britain outside London, and four of the six busiest rail stations in Scotland, including Glasgow Central which is Scotland's busiest station.

45 million passengers per annum travel 787 million kms on SPT-supported rail services. The network has 181 stations and 538km of route. The rail network connects to the wider transport network through links with bus, subway, ferry and Park-and-Ride car parks. An efficient and effective rail network is crucial to the economy of the west of Scotland. Increasing congestion on the road system in the west of Scotland can be reduced by the transfer of journeys from road to rail. It is vital that the rail network in the west continues to be supported and enhanced in order to meet the needs of the whole of Scotland.

Responses to Consultation Questions

Question 1

a. Following the delivery of the current major projects, should we change the focus of investment in the railways to concentrate on securing the benefits from the existing network, or are there further new benefits that rail could achieve?

Rail has the ability to carry large numbers of people with a low impact on the environment. It is, therefore, essential to increase capacity on the existing routes as well as seek to grow the rail market by adding new routes and attracting new customers. New stations should be introduced where they benefit the local community but where there is no overall detriment to network performance.

Improving services across much of the west of Scotland is dependent upon the resolution of capacity constraints at key points. Enhanced capacity on the rail network is crucial to stimulating modal shift to public transport. Improving the quality of the key stations in the west of Scotland, including linking this with improvements to the surrounding environment and the interchange with other forms of transport, is also important to retaining existing customers and attracting new customers.

As the conurbation develops and the land use changes set out in the Structure Plans are implemented, the provision of new stations to serve these new communities should be evaluated. The key regeneration priorities set out in the Structure Plans have transport implications that need to be addressed. If public transport accessibility to these priority areas is not adequately addressed, social exclusion and increasing car use could result.

The length of time taken to develop and implement rail projects should be reduced. Some form of fast tracking of the implementation of new stations should be agreed with Network Rail so that stations are in place before new housing and businesses are completed and car driving patterns are established, making travel behaviour change difficult.

Seeking contributions to rail infrastructure provision from increases in land values adjacent to new station should be pursued.

b. Would you like to see current rail resources used in different ways? Please be specific.

Resources should be provided to make stations fully accessible, making access to rail services available to all.

To encourage transfer from road to rail, capacity improvements should be made to accommodate rail freight movement. We understand that the National Freight Strategy will identify where improvements could be made to achieve modal shift. This should be taken account of in the development of the Rail Strategy. Consideration should be given to setting targets for increased rail freight.

Revenue protection officers are in place at stations and on board trains and automated barriers are provided at some stations. This means that rail users often have their ticket checked three times during their journey. These resources should be used more effectively by introducing more automated ticket barriers. Increased availability of ticket machines at stations would achieve further productivity gains.

Significant investment is being made in heavy rail improvements. Consideration should be given to assessing where alternative transport systems, such as light rail, could provide greater benefits than heavy rail. For example, light rail could provide greater benefits operating on routes where heavy rail operates below capacity and where frequent stops are needed. In such cases investment should be transferred to light rail.

Question 2

a. Are there measures that could be taken to attract new customers to rail, and to encourage more people to use the train instead of the car?

Park-and-Ride can play an important role in providing an alternative to car use particularly for commuters, helping to reduce congestion. The implementation of such schemes should be simplified in consultation with Network Rail. The provision of new Park-and-Ride facilities is being hampered by disagreements between Network Rail and other transport operators about long term maintenance of the car parks. The long term maintenance of car parks built on Network Rail land should be subject to a national agreement between all parties including the Scottish Executive.

While it is important to offer car-based Park-and-Ride at stations, improved integration via feeder bus services to stations should be supported. Multi-modal and multi-operator integrated ticketing, competitive pricing (compared with the car on key commuter routes) and different ticket options (cheaper fares during the off-peak period and close to peak periods) would help to encourage new passengers to rail. Walking and cycling access to stations should also be further developed.

Improved quality of stations, including waiting areas and weather protection, real-time information provision, improved safety and security at stations and on trains, and improved accessibility at stations for the mobility impaired will make rail more attractive.

Rail should recognise that working patterns have changed. Flexi time is commonplace and the working day is therefore longer. Where possible trains should be lengthened at peak period shoulders to take account of increased demand. Improvements to platform lengths on key routes will be important to increasing capacity. Such measures would help to ensure that passengers are able to sit for the duration of their journey.

A Scotland-wide travel awareness and behaviour change campaign would promote public transport options, including rail, with the aim of achieving modal shift from the car. This would need to be reinforced at a regional and local level through campaigns by the new RTP and the local authorities.

Demand management measures, such as congestion charging on the road network, parking restrictions and parking charges, could also help to achieve modal shift in areas where these measures are politically acceptable.

b. Is reliability and punctuality of services still the top priority for passengers? If not, what do you consider is the top priority?

Reliability and punctuality of services are priorities, particularly where rail services are infrequent. However, the attractiveness of rail services cannot be evaluated based on these factors alone. A number of other factors are important to customers, including cleanliness of stations and trains and the ability to have a seat for the duration of the journey.

There is also a need to improve the frequency of services to encourage modal shift. For example, in Ayrshire improving the rail service between Kilmarnock and Glasgow would have benefits to enhancing accessibility to and within Ayrshire and contribute towards the stimulation of the local economy, regeneration and social inclusion by providing access to services and opportunities for those without the use of a car.

Different regions of the country will have different priorities and further market research should be undertaken where appropriate. The west RTP could undertake this in the west of Scotland and share the results with Transport Scotland and operators.

c. What is the top priority for freight customers? Are reliability of access to the network and the timeliness of services also the top priority for freight customers?

To encourage transfer from road to rail, capacity improvements should be made to accommodate freight movement. The resolution of key infrastructure constraints may also release capacity to meet demand for more freight to be carried by rail. Additional funding will be required to address congestion, pollution and safety issues on access to rail/road terminals.

There is increasing demand for rail freight in Western Scotland for both new and established markets, including coal, deep sea and intermodal, and international rail freight. Rail freight plays an important part in the economy of the west of Scotland, and coal from Ayrshire to supply the UK power generation market is an important example.

There is a proposal to develop a new deep sea container terminal at Hunterston and this will generate additional rail volumes. Improved rail capacity between Largs and Kilwinning will be required to maximise the terminal's potential.

The provision of single track on key routes is a barrier to increasing rail freight. For example, the line between Kilmarnock and Carlisle will be an increasingly important route for rail freight but is restricted by long stretches of single track.

d. For cross border passenger services, should the priority be a quick journey to the final destination (e.g. London, Birmingham and Manchester) or the ability to stop at intermediate stations?

Improving journey time of rail services between Scotland and London is important to attracting new customers to rail from air services. This could reduce the demand for short haul flights, reducing emissions and climate change impacts. However, it is also important to consider the regeneration and social inclusion benefits of new stations on the West Coast Main Line.

e. If reliability and punctuality of services is the top priority for customers, should we generally only allow changes to the network that provide a net benefit to customers in terms of better reliability and punctuality?

There are many issues that require to be considered and reliability and punctuality cannot be the only criteria that are used.

f. Are there opportunities for a different, and more appropriate, approach to fares setting in particular areas of Scotland or for particular rail routes, or for particular types of passengers?

Fares should be set to encourage modal shift from more polluting types of transport. Any increase in the price of rail travel in the peak may result in increased car use and road congestion. Initiatives to encourage more travel off-peak should be developed to maximise use of existing capacity. Multi-modal and multi-operator integrated ticketing should be further developed.

Question 3

a. How should we prioritise services on different routes, where the fixed network is close to capacity and choices have to be made?

Additional rail capacity should be provided where demand is identified since restricting rail capacity could lead to increased car use.

b. Should the general presumption for Scotland as a whole be to prioritise according to current and anticipated demand for the service i.e. what will give the maximum benefit to the economy?

Economic growth is important, however, this is only one of the Scottish Executive's transport objectives. The other objectives should still be taken into account, although it is accepted that the other objectives would be more easily achieved by increased economic growth.

c. Do you have specific regional priorities that might differ from this? For example, are there particular routes or services in your region where you believe the predominant role should be to meet social inclusion or environmental objectives, rather than to grow the economy?

Regional priorities would meet a number of objectives, including economic growth, social inclusion, environment, safety and integration.

The importance of improving access to healthcare facilities has been highlighted in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005. It will therefore be important to consider further access to hospitals in the region through the provision of new rail stations.

A large number of intra- regional trips in the west of Scotland are made by car. This leads to overcrowding on the roads through Glasgow, and in particular on the M8, causing environmental pollution in the centre of the city. Many of these trips would transfer to rail if the north and south suburban rail systems were better connected. This could be done by constructing the Crossrail link, connecting Ayrshire, Renfrewshire and Inverclyde directly to Dunbartonshire and North Lanarkshire through Glasgow Cross and Queen Street stations.

d. Do you consider that the priorities for specific routes should vary at different times of the day or during different seasons?

Passenger movement should have priority during peak commuting times and freight services in off-peak periods.

e. Would the increase in passenger kms and the volume of freight being carried be an appropriate proxy measure for the benefit to the economy, or are there better measures?

Additional passenger mileage may result from people being prepared to commute for longer and travel further to their place of employment. Therefore, an increase in passenger mileage should not be the only criterion when measuring economic benefit. The volume of freight is a suitable measure.

f. How should we compare the benefits from passenger and freight services?

An option could be to compare the effects of transferring all passengers or freight to road on a particular line. The aim should be to use the rail network effectively so as to benefit both passengers and freight.

Question 4

a. Do you have specific changes you would like to see to the railway? Please be clear what the change would achieve in terms of the overall objectives of promoting economic growth, social inclusion, health and protection of our environment.

- The Glasgow Airport Rail Link, including improved capacity between Glasgow Central and Paisley Gilmour Street stations, should be supported. This will promote economic growth, improve the environment, promote social inclusion and improve safety.
- The Glasgow Crossrail project addresses the inadequate connection between the rail networks north and south of the Clyde which limits the effectiveness of the rail network to serve the whole region. It also limits inter-regional rail connections to other parts of Scotland and intra-regional movement between Ayrshire, Argyll and Lanarkshire and airports. A tunnel linking Glasgow Central and Glasgow Queen Street stations could provide a step change in rail provision in the longer term allowing the national networks to be connected through Central Glasgow. This would meet economic growth, environment, integration and social inclusion objectives.
- Resolution of the capacity problems at Glasgow Central and Glasgow Queen Street stations would enable additional services to use these stations. This would meet economic growth, environment, and social inclusion and integration objectives.

- The line between Finnieston and Hyndland is operating over practical capacity at peak times and requires investment in infrastructure. This would protect our environment and promote economic growth.
- Capacity between Barrhead, Kilmarnock and Glasgow should be improved to meet economic growth, social inclusion and environment objectives. .
- The Executive should seek to implement the recommendations of the CSTCS study as soon as possible in order to improve rail options in the central belt, protecting our environment and promoting economic growth.
- The potential for local services on the West Coast Main Line should be considered further to meet environment and social inclusion objectives.
- Sections of track on the line used by the main shuttle service between Glasgow Queen Street and Edinburgh Waverley are operating over practical capacity. This limits the scope for introducing additional services which would promote economic growth and protect our environment.
- Motherwell station should be developed as a hub to transfer from national to regional to local services. This would meet a number of objectives, including economic development, social inclusion and the environment.
- Rail capacity enhancements between Ayrshire and Argyll & Bute (through Gourock and Wemyss Bay) will promote economic growth and social inclusion and protect our environment.
- The rail station at Prestwick Airport requires to be upgraded to a standard suitable for an international airport. Frequency of the airport rail service and a reduction in journey time are important to users of the service. Rail services should also operate to meet the needs of passengers. Services do not currently serve those flights departing early in the morning e.g. at 0600 hours. This would promote economic growth and protect the environment.

b. Are there specific changes in your area that could improve integration of rail services with other forms of transport?

WESTRANS and SPT are undertaking a study into Park-and-Ride for the region. This will identify corridors where Park-and-Ride could play an important integration role.

c. Should any additional future investment in the rail network be focussed on the routes that provide the maximum benefit to the economy, where there is the highest use or potential use by people or freight?

While economic growth may be the priority for the Executive, its other transport objectives need to be considered when assessing future investment. However, it is accepted that the other objectives would be more easily achieved by increased economic growth.

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Date : 6 December 2005

Rail Strategy for Scotland
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Dear Sir or Madam

TOWARDS A TRANSPORT STRATEGY FOR SCOTLAND: CONSULTATION ON RAIL PRIORITIES

Thank you for your letter of invitation to comment on the above consultation.

I would endorse the comments submitted by WESTRANS on behalf of the 13 local authorities in the west of Scotland. In addition, I would comment more specifically on the main issues affecting East Ayrshire as follows: -

Introduction

As a whole, Ayrshire has a population of around 370,000 which represents around 16% of the population of the WESTRANS Partnership area. Ayrshire is estimated to account for around 6% of Scotland's total GDP, 11% of Scotland's exports and 7.5% of Scotland's total population. Ayrshire has strong links to the Glasgow conurbation via its existing road and rail network but improvements are crucial to improving economic growth in the area. Enhancements to the strategic transport infrastructure linking Ayrshire to the wider economy and particularly external markets in the east and south are also important.

Kilmarnock to Barrhead Line

The existing capacity restraints on the Glasgow-Dumfries-Carlisle line through East Ayrshire are significant impediments to growth and external connections. The section of line between Barrhead and Kilmarnock is single track except for the 'Lugton loop' section of double track. The single-track section restricts the frequency at which trains can be operated. Trains between Glasgow and Kilmarnock operate at approximately hourly intervals throughout the day in both directions. Through trains to Dumfries and the north of England are at approximately 2-hourly intervals. Kilmarnock, is therefore the only major centre within the Strathclyde area not currently served by a 30 minute train frequency or better.

The restrictions associated with the single track section reduces the timetabling options for journeys to Kilmarnock from the north at peak periods and significantly reduces the attractiveness of rail as a means of travelling to work, college or school in East Ayrshire.

Capacity improvement studies carried out by SPT and Network Rail have indicated that the Barrhead to Kilmarnock section of line could be upgraded by the redoubling of the line between Dunlop and Stewarton which would permit the introduction of a half-hourly service mitigating the overcrowding at the morning and evening peaks and creating more journey opportunities. This would have considerable benefits to enhancing accessibility to and within Ayrshire and contribute towards the stimulation of the local economy, regeneration, and social inclusion by providing access to services and opportunities for those without the use of a car. It would also complement the recent M77 extension to Kilmarnock by providing an improved rail-based public transport alternative. A study is also currently ongoing into the proposed extension of platforms on the route to accommodate 6-car trains.

An improved line would also provide an alternative route for trains on the West Coast Main Line during works and when incidents occur.

The Executive is urged to accelerate the development work on the Kilmarnock-Barrhead capacity improvement works to allow for early implementation on this crucial link for East Ayrshire.

Kilmarnock – Carlisle Line

South of Kilmarnock, the line to Carlisle is restricted by significant pinch-points in track and signalling capacity which limits the enhancement of services and the development of rail freight. Passenger rail services currently run on an approximate 2-hourly frequency. An upgraded track could provide a more regular public transport service providing additional access to job opportunities for people living in the deprived former coalfield areas in the south of East Ayrshire.

There are significant opencast coal operations in East Ayrshire with 5 operational rail heads connecting to the Glasgow-Carlisle and Glasgow-Stranraer lines. An improved and expanded rail network would have the potential to bring about a significant transfer of freight from road to rail, alleviate the environmental problems associated with the movement of coal and provide additional capacity to accommodate future increases in output. There is also a significant movement of timber from East Ayrshire. Improved connections to a possible redevelopment of the Hunterston deep water facility could also provide invaluable links to markets further afield.

East Ayrshire Council has been endeavouring to seek partners to commission a detailed investigation into the capacity restrictions on the Kilmarnock-Carlisle line and to assess the opportunities for expansion of passenger and freight services on the line. Devolution of rail powers to the Scottish Executive now provides the ideal opportunity for the Executive to explore the capacity issues and improvement opportunities on this important railway line.

Potential New Station Openings and Park & Ride Opportunities

SPT has previously assessed the technical requirements of re-opening Mauchline station. The Executive is urged to review the scope for new station openings in conjunction with capacity studies on the Kilmarnock-Carlisle line. In conjunction with capacity improvements between Kilmarnock and Barrhead this could result in significant growth in passenger numbers with consequent environmental benefits arising from modal shift.

It is important that new station assessments be considered in conjunction with land-use planning. There has been significant residential and retail development around Kilmarnock in recent years and further evaluation of new station openings linked with park & ride opportunities is required. Detailed studies are required to assess the opportunities at Altonhill on the west side of Kilmarnock and on the eastern side of Kilmarnock to give improved access to the Queens Drive development area, New Farm and Irvine Valley Towns.

Yours faithfully,

James T Kane
Head of Roads & Transportation

CC James Lavery, Executive Director of Development Services
Fiona Lees, Chief Executive
Councillor Eric Ross, Chair of Development Services Committee