

## EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

### NORTHERN AREA LOCAL COMMITTEE - 5 SEPTEMBER 2001

#### PUBLIC TRANSPORT ISSUES (NORTHERN AREA)

##### Report by Director of Development Services

#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform of a reply from Strathclyde Passenger Transport on issues raised regarding rail public transport in the Northern Area.

#### 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Mr Ivor Jones, Rail Franchising Team, Strathclyde Passenger Transport Executive reported to the Northern Area Local Committee on 16 May 2001 on local public transport issues raised by Elected Members and Community Representatives on the Northern Area Local Committee.
- 2.2 Mr Jones agreed to arrange for a response to particular issues raised at that meeting.

#### 3. CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 Hazel Martin, Head of Rail Franchise Management, Strathclyde Passenger Transport Executive, has responded to the issues raised by the Northern Area Local Committee on 16 May 2001 as detailed below:-

(a) **Potential safety issues related to overcrowding on trains at peak times**

- (i) Comments provided on this issue need to be considered in the context that travel on the Railway system is generally recognised as the safest mode of surface transport in the country. The enquiry at the Local Committee meeting made particular reference to the overcrowding issue in relation to situations where emergency stops or collisions was involved. It should be noted that instances of emergency stops are extremely rare and collisions even more infrequent;
- (ii) ScotRail have advised that there are no Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions' limits on the loading of trains. When services are overcrowded the management of safety on trains is the responsibility of the traincrew. It is the Conductors duty to make a judgement if he/she thinks that the train is overcrowded to the point of being unsafe. In such an instance passengers would be instructed to remain on the platform and the train doors would be closed allowing no more passengers to board. Traincrews are regularly assessed for competence in the full range of their duties including safety; and

- (iii) ScotRail wished to emphasise their commitment to maintaining the very good record of safe travel within their area of operation.

**(b) Platform assistance procedures for disabled passengers**

- (i) There were a couple of issues raised under this heading which have been queried with ScotRail. The first was the reported difficulty if getting through on ScotRail's contact telephone number for information, staff assistance or to make arrangements for a journey (0845 605 7021). ScotRail claims that calls to this number are always answered within a few seconds and it would only be unavailable if there was another caller on the line. Then a recorded message offers the caller the opportunity to leave their number to be called back by ScotRail when the staff who answer the enquiries become available;
- (ii) Outwith operating hours (approximately 6.00 - 22.30) an answering machine records details which are then processed at the beginning of the next day. ScotRail advise that their staff had received no complaints from passengers regarding non availability or difficulty in getting through to make a booking. If detailed information can be provided which would suggest otherwise, SPT would be willing to take the matter up further with ScotRail on your behalf (complaints should be directed to Hazel Martin, Head of Rail Franchise Management, Strathclyde Passenger Transport, Consort House, 12 West George Street, Glasgow G2 1HN, Telephone 0141 332 6811);
- (iii) The second matter raised was the availability of ScotRail staff to render assistance to disabled passengers at Kilmaurs, Stewarton or Dunlop stations. Arrangements for assisting disabled passengers to board trains at these stations should be made by calling the ScotRail contact number at least 24 hours in advance of the time of travel giving details of the journey and the information will be relayed to the appropriate ScotRail staff. The arrangements will involve on-train staff assisting passengers to board or alight the train from or to the platform utilising a portable ramp carried on the train if this is necessary. It is not possible for ScotRail staff to provide assistance at these unstaffed stations to access the station platform from the station car park or roadside. Passengers must make their own arrangements; and
- (iv) Further enquiries were made of SPT's Dial-A-Bus service to determine whether assistance from car park or roadside to platform could be provided if the Dial-A-Bus service was used by passengers to and from the railway station. Dial-A-Bus drivers, whilst they would escort passengers on and off the vehicles, could not provide assistance from car park to roadside to the station platform. Passengers would again be responsible for making their own arrangements for this type of assistance. This is a general restriction which applies to the Dial-A-Bus service when used for access to any facility, not only railway stations.

Safety, security and insurance liability requirements mean that the Dial-A-Bus staff must not leave the vehicle unattended therefore passengers can only be uplifted from home, or other journey origin point, and transported to the nearest point to their destination on a public road or suitable designated car park. However the Dial-A-Bus service does allow passengers to travel with an escort who could provide the assistance required.

**(c) Provision of updates on progress on the development of a half hourly service between Kilmarnock and Glasgow**

- (i) SPT offered to provide, through the appropriate officers in East Ayrshire Council, further information on the progress of the above scheme which can be passed on to the Committee as and when there are developments which would be of interest. As explained at the meeting the next significant step in the development of the scheme is likely to be the decision on whether the Strategic Rail Authority will be progressing the "Incremental Output Scheme" for the provision of the necessary additional track capacity on the route. It will be towards the end of 2001 or early in 2002 before further information will be available on that matter.

**(d) Information on usage statistics between Kilmarnock and Glasgow**

- (i) SPT rail services are provided under a commercial contract known as the Franchise Agreement. Both ScotRail and SPT take fare revenue risk on the route so the provisions of the Franchise Agreement on confidentiality would preclude the publication of such information. Passenger usage statistics for services provided under the Franchise are reported to the Passenger Transport Authority at an aggregated level for the network in an agreed format which recognises the need to act within the confidentiality provisions of the Franchise Agreement and to protect the public funds exposed to potential competition as a result of SPT setting fares and taking fares revenue risk on its specified services. Passenger Transport Authority members sometimes request further information on specific routes and enclosed is an example of what is provided to PTA members when such requests are made (attached as an Appendix to this report).

**4. LEGAL/POLICY/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS - Nil**

**5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1** It is recommended that the Local Committee note the response to issues previously raised in relation to local public transport in the Northern Area.

Stephen Chorley  
Director of Development Services  
20 August 2001  
AH/ST

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. Correspondence from SPT - Rail Public Transport Issues - Northern Area.

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers relative to this report should contact Alex Hewetson, Administrative Officer on (01563) 576093. Any person wishing further information on this report should contact Bill Walkinshaw, Administration Manager on (01563) 576135.

**Implementation Officer: Kerr Chalmers, Technical Officer**

**AGENDA**