



Scottish Association for Public Transport

SCOTTISH TRANSPORT MATTERS

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The new ScotRail franchise, due to start in April 2015, is to feature faster intercity expresses, scenic trains, and bus/rail/ferry integration, as recommended by SAPT in the Rail2014 consultation. Lines to Kyle of Lochalsh (above), Mallaig and Oban will see tourist trains with better catering and more comfortable seats.

Season's Greetings to all our Members

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Transport Scotland issued the following press release for the new ScotRail franchise on November 19th:

“Transport Minister Keith Brown has revealed the details of the next ScotRail franchise, placing passengers at the heart of Scotland’s railways.

Faster trains, better connections for passengers and an improved service for cyclists and disabled travellers who wish to travel more spontaneously than current arrangements allow will all feature when the new franchise begins in 2015.

More comfortable and faster trains will connect Scotland’s seven cities and services will be tailored to attract tourists to Scotland’s scenic railways.

Peak time ticket prices will be pegged to inflation for commuters, there will be continual innovation to improve Wi-Fi access for business and leisure travellers, and additional services will be laid on for major events.

The successful bidder for the franchise, the single biggest contract let by the Scottish Government, will be required to work with Transport Scotland, regional transport partnerships and other public transport providers to drive towards seamless inter-modal travel for passengers throughout Scotland.

Investment in the current franchise is already delivering the infrastructure for SMART tickets across the whole ScotRail network. The next franchisee will be required to drive up use of SMART across all ticket-types and play a full part in developing a smart ticketing scheme which can be used across all Scottish public transport.”

SAPT welcomed many of the requirements in the Invitation to Tender, which contained most of the ideas we put forward in our response to the Rail2014 consultation. Indeed, SAPT’s positive response at a pre-release briefing was highlighted in the Transport Scotland Press Release.

The franchise runs from April 2015 for 10 years, with a break point after 5 years. The five bidders are: First Group, National Express, Arriva (Deutsche Bahn), Abellio (Dutch Railways), and MTR (Hong Kong Metro). SAPT has issued to all the bidders a paper expanding on improvements that we would like to see, which should be within the scope of the ITT. The main issues we have highlighted are:

- 1 National Regular Interval Timetable and Transport Co-ordination:** Most Central Scotland trains already have regular interval timetables. A fully regular timetable on the Aberdeen-Dundee-Edinburgh/Glasgow routes would be a major step forward. A clockface timetable is also needed for the **Fife Circle**. Hourly Edinburgh/Glasgow-Inverness and Inverness-Aberdeen train services have long been promised. The new franchisee should prioritise working with Network Rail to achieve this.
- 2 Express Services:** Edinburgh-Glasgow electrification will cut journey times between the cities to 42 minutes from 2018. An action plan for speeding up all other intercity links is needed.
- 3 Urban Services:** Introducing new, high capacity lightweight “Metro” trains could bring faster and more frequent services on busy commuter lines to Cathcart, Neilston and Newton. Other short distance routes to **Paisley Canal, Dalmuir, Larkhall, Motherwell, Whifflet**, and, after electrification, to **East Kilbride and Anniesland via Maryhill** could also be suitable for this type of “Metro” service.
- 4 Tourism and Trains:** An eight-point plan to boost travel on Scotland’s scenic railways including:
 - **New or refurbished trains** to give a high quality journey experience, air conditioning, and good visibility
 - **Convenient train departure times** timed to suit day trippers and visitors staying in tourist accommodation
 - **Fares offers** to encourage optional travel, including affordable day trips from cities to rural destinations
 - **Combined train/coach tours** to tourist attractions like Loch Ness, Glencoe, Galloway and the Borders
 - **Combined train/ferry excursions** to Mull, Skye, Arran etc
 - **Visitor Attraction days out** to many National Trust and Historic Scotland sites that can be reached by train
 - **Special Rail Land Cruises** could be organised at weekends, when spare rolling stock is usually available
 - **Marketing**, distributing leaflets in tourist outlets, and posters in all stations, to advertise trips by rail

Bidders are keen to engage with transport interests, and most have already met SAPT to discuss our ideas for meeting the ambitious Transport Scotland requirements. We look forward to hearing the outcome, when the winning franchise bid is revealed in autumn 2014.

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Electrification Progress

Electrification associated with the Edinburgh-Glasgow Improvement Programme (EGIP) is now visibly progressing. The Springburn-Cumbernauld line will be electrified by May 2014.

Masts are now installed on much of the route (see photo on the right taken at Greenfaulds on 18th November 2013). Trackwork at Springburn is being remodelled to allow electric trains to accelerate quickly from Springburn station towards Steps.



The initial service will see half-hourly electric trains from Dalmeir via Queen Street Low Level extended from Springburn to Cumbernauld. The slow journey from Low Level to Springburn, together with the need to reverse there, means that electric trains will not improve journey times compared with the current diesel service from Queen Street High Level. The hourly diesel service from Queen Street HL via Cumbernauld to Falkirk Grahamston will continue.

The Cumbernauld electrification scheme will be followed by Glasgow-Whifflet electrification. This is an in-fill electrification from Rutherglen East Junction to Whifflet. These two schemes will use spare ScotRail electric trains, and release diesel trains to operate the new Glasgow-Oban services due from May 2014, and also provide extra capacity for strengthening services for the 2014 Commonwealth Games and Ryder Cup, and the 2015 Borders Rail Link.

Ordering a new electric train fleet for the Edinburgh-Glasgow electrification will await the new ScotRail franchisee. As the preferred bidder for the franchise is not due to be announced until October 2014, the first new electric trains are not expected to enter service until December 2016. Electric trains will be phased in, initially running to existing diesel timings. Maximum train length will be 7 coaches until major work is completed at Queen Street station to lengthen some platforms for 8 coach trains. The full electric timetable, with 42 minute Glasgow-Edinburgh journey times, will be introduced when electrification reaches Stirling/Alloa/Dunblane, expected in December 2018.

Within the EGIP programme, Winchburgh Tunnel will have to be closed over a period of around 44 days for track and electrification work. During this time, the Airdrie-Bathgate line will provide an alternative route for Edinburgh-Glasgow travel. Dunblane-Edinburgh trains are expected to be diverted via Dalmeny, with reversal there. Intermediate stations on the Edinburgh-Glasgow line via Falkirk will see extended journeys and some bus substitution during this time.

Next in the electrification programme is the Edinburgh-Glasgow via Shotts line. This scheme, wiring from Holytown to Midcalder Junction, is scheduled for completion by December 2019.

Concerns have been raised about the future of the Glasgow Queen Street-Maryhill-Anniesland line, which will be left as an isolated diesel operation. Transport Minister Keith Brown has confirmed there is no threat to this line. But SAPT are advocating that the Maryhill line should also be electrified, with the junction at Anniesland re-instated to allow trains to continue onwards through Hyndland to the Argyle line. Trains could operate a Queen Street-Maryhill-Anniesland-Hyndland-Central LL-Whifflet route, effectively doubling Maryhill links to the city centre (with trains providing a half-hourly service to Queen Street High Level, and a half-hourly service to Central Low Level in the opposite direction). However, the feasibility of this idea depends on finding capacity through Hyndland. SAPT have passed on this suggestion to Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT).

By Tom Hart

AVIATION

Edinburgh Airport is aiming for direct seasonal flights to Las Vegas as well as three other destinations in USA - also all-year flights to the Middle East. Edinburgh-Chicago non-stop flights will start in May 2014 when US Airways will also introduce direct Philadelphia-Edinburgh summer flights. Oil business has encouraged direct flights from Aberdeen to Kristiansund and Oslo. Inverness is to have a £1.4m runway resurface.

Boosted by the oil and gas sector, Highlands and Islands Airports saw a 9.7% rise in passenger numbers in September. The highest growth was at Sumburgh and Wick. Inverness had a lesser growth of 3.1%. Dundee, part of HIAL since 2007, fell 53.6%. Aberdeen had a 3.6% rise in October with Glasgow also 2.6% up. Edinburgh reported 8.7% growth to 917,437, a record for October. In a change from previous trends, Glasgow saw higher growth in domestic travel (3.2%) than in international (2.1%). At Edinburgh, the rise in international traffic continued to exceed a 5.6% rise in domestic growth, itself higher than in recent years.

Air France has withdrawn afternoon flights from London City to Dundee. Ryanair is presenting a 'softer' approach to passengers but is dropping flights from Prestwick to Paris Beauvais and winter flights to Faro. The Scottish Government has bought loss-making Prestwick Airport. Reservations have been expressed about the ability to turn this airport round but the local MP sees hope if a direct service to Heathrow or nearby Northolt could be started. Direct rail services from Ayr and Prestwick Airport to Edinburgh could benefit the airport. However, there are concerns that Glasgow Airport could suffer from a state-subsidised competitor at Prestwick. Air Passenger Duty is claimed to have severe adverse impacts on Dundee airport and, more generally, at airports across Scotland.

BMI Regional has announced 500 job cuts across the UK. At present, there are 315 staff in Scotland but the Edinburgh base is to close, leaving Aberdeen as the only remaining base in Scotland. Services from Edinburgh to Copenhagen and Brussels will cease. Flybe is to shed 100 staff in Scotland. Bases at Inverness and Aberdeen will be closed, leaving only Glasgow and Edinburgh in Scotland.

SHIPPING & FERRIES

Scottish Government has agreed to a three-year pilot for direct services from South Uist to Mallaig but these will run only on winter Tuesdays and Saturdays. Initial reliability of this route has been very badly affected by winds, with the "Lord of the Isles" unable to berth in the exposed harbour at Mallaig in windy conditions. Summer services on this route would require provision of an additional ferry.

Loss of the Northlink ferry tender has brought a slide in revenue and in profits at David MacBrayne.

Waverley, the last sea-going paddle steamer, has had a good season in 2013, and has secured funding for the next three years from Argyll and Bute Council. There are revived calls for Glasgow to have a maritime heritage centre.

Russell Imrie of SEStran has called for more interest to be shown in improving ferries on the Forth and developing sea freight as an alternative to trunk HGV use. SEStran is to support a tourist-related passenger ferry from North Berwick via the Isle of May to Anstruther. Prof Alf Baird says more action is needed to move from monohull internal Scottish ferries to more efficient catamarans, though, with stormier winter conditions expected, there would be concern over reliability if this was adopted.

Rail

Alex Sharkey, a senior Network Rail official in Scotland, says that rising demand is strengthening the case for more consideration of rail reopening in Scotland – including extending the Waverley route to Carlisle. Transform Scotland has called for a greater shift from trunk and urban road investment to rail spending in Scotland as a better means of moving to a sustainable Scottish economy backed by the evidence of a major change in consumer preferences from car to rail use.

Campaigns to keep the profitable East Coast Main Line franchise in state ownership continue, but the UK government wants a return to a private operator by February 2015.

The Campaign for Borders Rail is seeking changes in bridge design to facilitate future double-tracking of a higher proportion of the Central Borders rail route. It has also suggested higher on-train space for cycles and a start to planning for an extension from Tweedbank to Hawick.

A further 160 spaces have been added to Bathgate station car park, bringing the total to 560 but Linlithgow continues to have an acute shortage of parking space.

Sunday trains from Edinburgh to Stirling and Perth will have increased frequency from December and, for the first time, Fife Circle will have Sunday services. There are prospects that some Ayr-Glasgow and Kilmarnock-Glasgow trains will be extended through to Edinburgh.

Though the alcohol ban on trains has helped, a crackdown by British Transport Police on misbehaviour in stations has led to a rise in recorded offences.

Enable Scotland is seeking more help for disabled train travellers. A HUBS (Help us to be Spontaneous) campaign is seeking to make it easier for the disabled to use rail without giving advance notice.

Electrical faults have contributed to disruption at Waverley due to all power being switched off while the source of the problem was identified. Network Rail has been set tougher standards for improving punctuality. The ORR target is for 90% of trains to run on time though this is lowered to 88% due to capacity issues on the West Coast and East Coast approaches to London.

ScotRail passenger trips in the SPT area have continued to rise. Usage is 13% higher than in 2010/11.

Usage has also risen elsewhere in Scotland. Shortage of rolling stock is now an acute problem, especially on services to Aberdeen and into Edinburgh from Fife & Falkirk.

BUS, TRAM & TAXI

Completion of Edinburgh tramway construction work has eased problems for bus operations in Edinburgh. Trial running of trams between the Airport and Edinburgh Park has started with these extended to the whole route in December. Lothian Buses has been shortlisted for seven national awards. Bus operators are concerned about the adverse impact on bus costs and revenue of growth in the number of streets with 20mph limits.

The Labour-led Aberdeen City administration is seeking a Scottish Government feasibility study of trams as part of a strategic infrastructure plan. A suggested route runs from Dyce via the Airport and through the city centre to Torry and Cove. The previous city trams stopped running in 1958.

Glasgow Subway use has drifted down from 13m trips in 2010/11 to a probable 12.5m in 2013/14 but the new and more flexible ticketing systems now being installed, land use changes and the introduction of automated trains is estimated to increase trips by at least 25%.

Though UK-wide passenger numbers and revenue are up, First Group reports continuing problems in Glasgow and on routes into Edinburgh. Over the past 18 months, bus use in Glasgow was down 5%. Performance in Aberdeen remains strong.

First Bus is trialling fare cuts up to 55% on single fares for passengers who present a Job Centre Travel Discount Card. The offer runs to 19 January. Lothian Buses has launched a £7.50 Family Day Ticket including up to two adults and three children. This ticket has also been a commercial success, increasing total bus use - especially at off-peak times.

Age Concern fears that the loss of ring-fenced funding has slowed growth in community transport. It is proposing that all community transport should be included in present concession travel arrangements with 100% reimbursement to the operator. The existing arrangements are unfair to those who cannot benefit from normal scheduled buses. But the Herald has again questioned the ability to maintain the present system of Scotland wide free bus travel for those over pension age and the disabled. SAPT has again called for a total review of the system with free local bus travel for concession holders extended to all local public transport but financed by an ending of free travel over longer distances and savings from a rise in the pension age.

Edward Hodgson, MD of Stagecoach Scotland West has attacked proposals to force bus companies to run socially needed but unprofitable routes as 'immoral' and a breach of human rights. Labour MSP Iain Gray's proposals for more regulation would leave passengers with higher fares or lower service levels. Iain's response was that it makes economic and social sense to invite operators to bid for packages of routes. He agreed that there is a need to shift the balance of funding for public transport operations from rail to packaged bus support. Both Stagecoach and George Mair of CPT Scotland consider the present Gray proposals unworkable though there was scope for improved results from present public funding. Stagecoach has called for improved bus infrastructure, smart ticketing and other partnership measures to entice people out of cars.

Borders-based Perryman's Buses has secured £1.7m from the Bank of Scotland to upgrade buses and start new routes. Scottish Government has announced a £1m lump sum to help community bus operators to expand services and replace older models.

Pending an appeal, Glasgow-based City Sprinter has been given an 11th hour reprieve by the Traffic Commissioner from a threatened loss of licence. Repairs and service performance is alleged to have been unacceptable

Edinburgh taxi firms have hit out at council plans for a £50 admin fee for every cab fitted with wi-fi.

The Law Commissions have recommended procedures to allow faster removal of railway level crossings where this yields admin savings, fewer accidents and cuts in road delays through alternative provision. Revised DfT estimates put the total annual costs of road accidents at £34bn. UK government is considering rise in the minimum age for a full driving licence from 17 to 19. Strathclyde is the worst area in the UK for drink-driving offences by those over 50.

Road casualties in Scotland in 2012 are now at their lowest since present records began in 1947. 174 people were killed, 43% down over past decade. But pedestrian and cycling deaths have risen. Police Scotland is giving road safety a higher priority.

Scottish Government says that costs of new Forth Road Crossing are expected to fall from £1.65m to £1.45bn. Work has started on detailed studies on how best to improve the notorious Berriedale Braess on the A9 north of Helmsdale. Business is seeking accelerated work on full dualling of the A9 between Perth and Inverness as well as action to complete the £34m Inverness West Link Road but others are seeking a multi-modal plan for the Perth-Inverness corridor with increased rail investment.

The A83 has experienced its seventh recent landside at Rest and be Thankful but this time north-west of the section on which work had been done to create a temporary alternative route.

New data from the Office for National Statistics has shown a total rise of only 2.5% in road vehicle miles in Britain over the past decade. Scottish growth is higher at 5.8% but, in both cases, growth rates are below road traffic growth up to the mid 1990s and contrast with record levels of rail passenger growth.

Plans for central Edinburgh have been revised to make George St one-way for motorists from west to east along with a two-way cycle route and widened pavements. For a pilot year, Princes St will remain a two-way system but restricted to trams, buses and taxis rather than the previous plan for one-way bus operation east to west. Lothian buses was a strong opponent of this plan. The longer-term City Council aim, supporting the economic and environmental strategy for the city centre, is to reduce the number of buses crossing the city centre.