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Date: 08 February 2007
Your Ref:
Our Ref: T6.5/CD
Corr No:

Dear Sirs

SCOTLAND ROUTE UTILISATION STRATEGY

I write in response to the Consultation on the draft Scotland RUS. This comprises the City of Edinburgh Council's formal response, having been approved by the Executive of the Council on 31 October, and the Environmental Quality Scrutiny Panel on 8 November.

Overview

Generally, there is much to welcome in the RUS. In particular, a range of schemes which the RUS proposes be implemented:

- 'Gap 4': Airdrie to Bathgate Rail Link, and Edinburgh Airport Rail Link.
- 'Gap 5': Haymarket station capacity; passenger circulation space and additional platform.
- 'Gap 6': Waverley station capacity enhancements.
- 'Gap 7': Glasgow to Edinburgh via Falkirk capacity enhancements (except see comments regarding Gap 29)
- 'Gap 9': Waverley Railway to Tweedbank.
- 'Gap 10': Larbert to Stirling capacity enhancements.
- 'Gaps 12, 13 and 14': Edinburgh/Fife/Dundee/Aberdeen service and capacity; although we wish to examine stopping patterns in more detail.

General issues for Edinburgh

There are a number of general points which the Council wishes Network Rail to address:

1. The RUS states that the steady increase in passengers commuting by rail into city centres is caused by:
 - population moving from Edinburgh and Glasgow to neighbouring regions
 - growth in employment opportunities (particularly in Edinburgh)
 - increasing road congestion and the rising costs of motoring

However, two of these points are inaccurate, especially in relation to Edinburgh; references which suggest that the population of Edinburgh is declining are incorrect, and where this impacts on demand forecasts, needs to be reassessed (eg Para 5.3.1 'The population of ... Edinburgh ... declined in recent years'). Edinburgh's population is increasing (but the population of neighbouring areas is increasing even more); whilst motoring costs have declined, not risen, over the long term. The growth in rail usage is driven more by a combination of increasing wealth, a generally increasing population, the growth in employment in Edinburgh, and increasing road congestion.

2. Table 5 shows Edinburgh-Stirling-Dunblane to be the 3rd busiest flow between urban centres. This would suggest that the current relatively slow half-hourly service warrants improvement.
3. The Edinburgh South Suburban Railway is not addressed in the Scotland RUS. Nevertheless, a constraint on the reintroduction of passenger services appears to be the junctions (Haymarket Central and Portobello) onto the existing passenger railway ('Gap 8' and Table 16). The Council therefore asks Network Rail to examine Haymarket Central junction and any issues associated with its use as part of an ESSR service, and to deal with Portobello Junction as set out below.

Summary of specific gaps and options

The Council's comments are set out in italics.

Gap 3: Central Belt car parks

Many car parks are full all day, constraining their contribution to future rail growth. Additional use/demand data is required. Network Rail proposes a programme of car park extensions and a review of car park charging policy.

The Council would not agree with a proposal to introduce a charge at station car parks where parking is currently free; this would increase the overall cost of rail journeys and therefore further discourage rail use. The Council will, however, support practical measures to ensure that such car parks are used appropriately, ie by rail passengers. However, as the relevant car park spaces within Edinburgh are Council-owned (except Waverley/Haymarket), charges cannot be introduced without the Council's agreement.

Gap 4: Construct Airdrie to Bathgate Rail Link, and Edinburgh Airport Rail Link

Welcomed.

Gap 5: Haymarket station capacity; passenger circulation space and additional platform

The Haymarket Interchange project will address circulation, whilst Network Rail proposes retaining in the long term the additional platform built to assist operation while Waverley is redeveloped.

Welcomed.

Gap 6: Waverley station capacity

The current works should meet forecast demand for 5-10 years. Additional demand is projected thereafter. Network Rail proposes removing the carriageway ramps and associated vehicle access within the station, to allow:

- platforms 12, 13 and 18 to accommodate six car trains
- removing passenger-vehicle conflicts
- creating additional passenger circulation space

to meet projected demand. Vehicle access would be provided at street level outside the station.

Generally welcomed.

Gap 7: Glasgow to Edinburgh via Falkirk capacity

Demand on this corridor will exceed capacity before the end of the RUS timescales. Network Rail proposes resolving this by a combination of measures including those noted under Gaps 6 and 29.

Generally welcomed (except see comments regarding Gap 29).

Gap 8: Portobello Junction to Niddrie South Junction performance

The performance of Edinburgh CrossRail services to the east of Edinburgh Waverley is very poor, 'largely due to the ... single line section' from Portobello Junction to the turn back siding at Newcraighall and 'the slow junction layout at Portobello'. Network Rail considers two options:

- Timetable recast. This would split the service at Edinburgh to operate independently; through passengers would have to interchange at Waverley.
- Re-doubling to enhance line capacity.

Network Rail recommends the first option.

The Council considers that the description of primary causes of poor performance is incomplete in this case, and the recommended outcome unacceptable because of the loss of a direct Newcraighall/Brunstane-Edinburgh Park service.

A significant component of the causes of unreliability of Crossrail is the long section of single track railway on the Bathgate line (eastbound Crossrail services presently come from Bathgate). However

- a) This will be removed under the Bathgate–Airdrie railway scheme.*
- b) The Crossrail timetable will in any case require to be re-cast when the above proposal is implemented, as the current use of the same trains to run Bathgate and Dunblane services will no longer be possible (one will be electric operated, the other diesel).*

Surveys carried out for the Council suggest that over a third of all trips from Newcraighall and Brunstane stations are to stations west of Waverley (ref 'Edinburgh Crossrail Customer Satisfaction Survey - July 2005). Planned growth in west Edinburgh, and the opening of Edinburgh Airport Rail Link and station, mean that this percentage is likely to grow substantially over time. Cross-city rail is a crucial component in the public transport network of South-East Scotland and will become even more important when the Brunstane/Newcraighall service is extended under the Borders Railway proposal. Therefore the Council opposes the proposal to terminate the Crossrail service at Waverley. Reliability issues should be addressed by improving Portobello Junction and by improving capacity between Portobello and Niddrie South junctions.

Therefore a third option - that of improving Portobello junction, must be taken forward. Very low speeds (15mph) through the current junction mean that it is a major constraint on Crossrail, the future Borders services, and potential further developments, such as reintroducing passenger services on the Edinburgh South Suburban Railway. It is a significant source of unreliability because it makes timetabling Crossrail/Borders rail services in with East Coast main line services much more difficult than would be the case with a higher-speed junction. Low cost options offer potential for improvement, and significant changes to the junction, whilst potentially expensive, would offer major benefits for Crossrail, the Borders railway, and potentially the re-introduction of passenger trains to the South Suburban Railway. Taking account also of its interface with the ECML, and therefore long-distance and North Berwick services, this is a key junction on the Scottish Network and its capacity needs to reflect the demands now placed on it. The second (re-doubling) option, should also be taken forward.

Gap 9: Midlothian and Borders; Waverley Railway to Tweedbank

Welcomed.

Gap 10: Larbert to Stirling capacity

On completion of the Stirling/Alloa/Kincardine project, this section is likely to be full, significantly affecting performance (including the Edinburgh-Dunblane service). Network Rail proposes additional signalling and/or remodelling Stirling station to reduce conflicts.

Welcomed.

Gaps 12 and 13: Edinburgh/Fife/Dundee/Aberdeen service and capacity

Single line near Montrose limits capacity and can lead to poor performance. There is no consistent stopping pattern on longer-distance services, and journey times are uncompetitive. Options to be pursued are:

- Timetable recast to provide consistent stopping pattern between Edinburgh-Aberdeen. Includes a faster Edinburgh-Aberdeen service, a new Edinburgh-Dundee semi fast service, additional Edinburgh-Perth services.
- Creation of a bi-directional loop at Montrose.

Both options are welcomed, though there may be some issues regarding stopping patterns.

Current Fife Circle performance is relatively poor as any late running on the outward journey cannot be recovered due to the circular route. Passenger demand to Edinburgh is predicted to grow and the current combination of infrastructure and train service will be insufficient.

- Network Rail proposes splitting the Fife Circle into two independent services (whilst maintaining current service levels).
- Additional signalling to enhance capacity and reduce headways Haymarket-Inverkeithing. This would allow additional trains particularly during peak periods and reduce delays.
- Edinburgh/Fife/Perth: linespeed enhancements Hilton-Ladybank (reducing journey time by about 4 minutes 30 seconds).

Generally welcomed.

Gap 14: Edinburgh/Fife service and capacity

Passenger numbers are expected to grow. Restrictive signalling headways Edinburgh-Fife limit the number of trains and increase delays; there are also difficulties accommodating express and stopping services. The timetable recast (see above) would provide an enhanced service, plus improved AM shoulder peak services.

Welcomed.

Gap 15: Lightly used stations

Across Scotland, 23 stations generate under 1,000 trips each per year; a number are on capacity constrained corridors. The RUS does not specify which are in the geographical areas it is examining, although this appears to include Breich (118 journeys/yr), Golf St (30), and Barry Links (26). Network Rail proposes that the 'renewals plan for low footfall stations, particularly on capacity constrained routes, be reviewed ... to ascertain the best future strategy'.

Supported.

Gap 29: Shotts line capacity and service

Ongoing increase in demand on this route, whilst journey times are uncompetitive. Two options are examined:

- An hourly semi-fast service additional to the existing stopping service (Caledonian Express).
- half hourly limited stop service giving each station between one train every two hours and two trains/hr depending on the volume of business.

Network Rail proposes the latter.

We welcome the recognition of the importance of this route, including the Edinburgh-Glasgow travel context. However, we cannot support the recommended option, which would reduce the level of service to some stations significantly. The Council continues to support the Caledonian Express scheme instead.

Finally, the Council expresses concern over the omission of stopping Edinburgh/Glasgow Services via Falkirk at Edinburgh Park.

If you have any queries, please contact Chris Day on 0131 469 3568.

Yours sincerely

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