

**REPORT TO: PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE -
13 FEBRUARY 2006**

**REPORT ON: TOWARDS A TRANSPORT STRATEGY FOR SCOTLAND:
CONSULTATION ON RAIL PRIORITIES**

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & TRANSPORTATION

REPORT NO: 81-2006

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report outlines the purpose of the Scottish Executive consultation document "Towards a Transport Strategy for Scotland: Consultation on Rail Priorities" and Dundee City Council's response.

2 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee note the purpose of the consultation and Dundee City Council's response, as given in Appendix A.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no financial implications arising as a result of this report.

4 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no Local Agenda 21 implications arising as a result of this report.

5 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no equal opportunities implications arising as a result of this report.

6 BACKGROUND

6.1 This consultation is set in the context of rail devolution. Rail devolution brings new responsibilities to Scottish Ministers, transfers the finances related to these duties to the Executive and changes the relationships within the rail industry in Scotland. In future the Executive will directly manage the First ScotRail franchise, fund rail infrastructure within Scotland, and specify network outputs that Network Rail will be tasked with delivering in Scotland. In addition, Ministers will advise the Department for Transport on the outcomes that they wish to see from cross border passenger services and will advise the Office for Rail Regulation on the outcomes desired from freight services, both within Scotland and cross border.

6.2 This consultation should also be seen against the background of the significant investment already committed to the railway, through the current ScotRail franchise and some major infrastructure projects such as Waverly Station capacity enhancement.

6.3 The purpose of this consultation is to ask stakeholders what the strategic priorities for rail in Scotland should be. The aim is to help Ministers to set appropriate strategic priorities for rail that can be delivered through Network Rail, First ScotRail and others, and that are focussed on where rail can contribute most to the economy and

society of Scotland. Responses to this consultation will also inform both the Freight Strategy and the National Transport Strategy, as well as inform specific decisions about rail.

- 6.4 Due to the tight timescales involved in developing a National Transport Strategy for Scotland a limited period was given to respond to this consultation with the closing date being 28 December 2005. Dundee City Council submitted a response within this timescale. The detailed responses to the questions asked are set out with Appendix A of this report.
- 6.5 Two key components of the City Council's response are, firstly, the strategic need to reduce rail travel times between Dundee and Edinburgh and, secondly, the opportunity that needs to be grasped to provide local City-Region rail services through the Tay Estuary Rail Study proposals which have been submitted to Ministers. In addition, the response also highlights the need to invest in Dundee Railway Station as part of the Central Waterfront Project.

7 CONSULTATIONS

- 7.1 The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Depute Chief Executive (Finance) and Assistant Chief Executive (Community Planning) have been consulted and are in agreement with the contents of this report.

8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 None.

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APPENDIX A

TOWARDS A TRANSPORT STRATEGY FOR SCOTLAND: CONSULTATION ON RAIL PRIORITIES

RESPONSE BY DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

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

For the passenger, rail has two main benefits over road transport. Firstly, it should be faster than road transport not just for long journeys but also into congested cities and secondly, it should be more comfortable and relaxing particularly as an alternative to driving (rather than car passenger).

Investment in railways should focus on this by:

- i improving line speed and reducing journey times between Scotland's major cities - in particular between Aberdeen, Dundee and Edinburgh (The 50 mile journey between Dundee and Edinburgh by train takes approximately 1hr 15min travelling at an average speed of just over 40mph). This is not acceptable in a modern heavy rail service.
- ii increasing capacity on sections of the network that would permit a two tier system that would permit inter-city trains to travel between cities with very few stops, supported by local trains that provide for commuters and travellers into major cities and urban areas from their immediate hinterland. The current inter-city service tries to provide both these services and as such does neither particularly well.
- iii increasing passenger comfort through improving information and its availability, improving the quality of rail station facilities and integration with other forms of transport to provide an overall positive journey experience.

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?**

See answer to previous question.

- 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 is still top priority for existing users but this should be a given as part of service delivery. The focus should be on achieving time savings to reduce journey times and on the passenger comfort over the full door to door journey in order to make rail travel an attractive reliable fast and comfortable alternative to the car.

- 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?**

Punctuality and reliability should also be a priority for freight. However, speed of journey is less important and when allocating track access for timetabling, freight should be allotted paths that fit around passenger trains ie off peak and lay over points should be utilised. "Just in time" delivery practices in non perishable goods should be balanced against commercial needs and environmental consequences.

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

A quick journey to the final destination should be priority. At present there are more stops between Dundee and Edinburgh than there are between Edinburgh and London. This cannot be appropriate. A four hour journey time Edinburgh/Glasgow to London would be an attractive alternative to air travel for many passengers.

- 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?**

Changes to the network that do not have a detrimental effect on reliability and punctuality should be permitted ie whilst improving reliability and punctuality is desirable, maintaining status quo is also acceptable. However, reducing reliability and punctuality is not.

- 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 passenger?**

Using differential pricing for peak and off-peak ticket will not necessarily result in peak spreading but could quite easily result in mode shift with people choosing to use their cars instead. Also differential charging of this type for the same A-B journey will result in the current flexibility available to the passenger being lost (eg a day return ticket is bought that allows the return at any time of the day, therefore the passenger can choose any train regardless of time such as if a meeting runs on longer than expected. This provides real comfort and reliability benefits to the passenger).

Ticket pricing should be more transparent, with clear structures and similar types of tickets available on all routes, anomalies such as return journeys costing 10p more than single journeys should be avoided. However, it is understood that differential pricing for ticket bought in advance and 1st, 2nd class travel is a necessary marketing/selling policy.

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?**

In general rail should be prioritised for what it is good at – moving large volumes of people/goods, quickly over long distances. As such priority should normally be given to inter-city services (see response to 3d).

- b Should the general presumption for Scotland as a whole be to prioritise according to current and anticipated demand for the service, ie what will give the maximum benefit to the economy?**

The aim should be to gain the maximum benefit to society in general from what is a finite asset ie if there is spare capacity in a network, the maximum benefit is not being achieved.

- 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?**

There should not be a presumption that economy always takes precedent and this may vary by time of day and day of week.

In Tayside and Central Region the priority is to have fast efficient services between major cities with few stops in between. However, the Tay Estuary Rail Study has shown that this can be supplemented by a local service serving the hinterland of Dundee and Perth along the Tay Estuary stopping at local rail stations between Arbroath and Perth. This is due to the fact that the single line between Usan and Montrose causes a constraint to inter-city and freight trains between Dundee and Aberdeen and therefore creates spare capacity in the local Tay area. This local service as well as helping the local economy serves to benefit social inclusion and has potential to reduce road based trips into the congested city network.

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

Yes. Freight in general should be targeted for off-peak times and overnight if possible. Also at start and end of working day commuter services should be given priority. Although given the distances people are commuting to work, it may be that inter-city services are also commuter services.

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

More people and freight kilometres could be a measure of centralisation of employment and an indication of production being too far from its end market. The whole thrust of current policy is to reduce the need to travel. As to other measures, economists have a plethora of formulae to evaluate the economy.

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

They should be compared against the five overarching objectives of transport - accessibility, economy, environment, safety and integration. In general road freight is not a major contributor to congestion and whilst the reverse may be true on environmental impact, it could be that passenger movement is more important.

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.**

First ScotRail have been good at promoting the "soft" side of the service on-board trains and recognising that it is a service that is provided. This should be taken forward in the quality of facilities and environment at rail stations as an overall higher quality of journey experience will encourage passenger growth.

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

Yes. There are 3 particular changes.

Firstly, the Dundee Central Waterfront project in Dundee which reconnects the city centre to the waterfront is expected to generate over 90,000m² of residential, retail, business development. This development is taking place around the Dundee Railway Station and there is obvious potential to increase the modal share of rail. This mode shift could be kick started over the next few years when the roads infrastructure is being constructed, as this is likely to cause significant congestion on the city's road network and thereby making rail a much more attractive option.

Secondly, the Tay Estuary Rail Study recommends a new station in the western area of Dundee where much of the employment growth in Dundee has taken place. The proposed Dundee West station is situated adjacent to the route of a new 15 minute frequency bus service promoted by the Bus Route Development Grant which could act as a shuttle service to employment areas such as Ninewells Hospital, Technology Park and Medi Park.

Thirdly, the local service promoted by the Tay Estuary Rail Study could act as a Park and Ride Service for Dundee and Dundee West rail stations.

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

No. This could result in a reduction of capacity being available for other routes. If investment is strictly made on this basis all investment would be made in the Central Belt where the greatest mass of population resides. However, since this would result in greater use of Waverly Station for these services, less capacity would be available for North East Route to Dundee and Aberdeen and other such routes that utilise Waverly Station. Scotland's national rail network must be just that - National, linking the major cities whilst addressing where possible peripherality and social inclusion.