



for sustainable transport

tel: +44 (0)131 243 2691
email: colin.howden@transformscotland.org.uk
web: www.transformscotland.org.uk

Transform Scotland 5 Rose Street Edinburgh EH2 2PR

Department for Transport
InterCity West Coast Franchise Consultation Manager
Zone 5/26
Great Minster House, 76 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DR

Monday 11 July 2011

Dear Sir / Madam

InterCity West Coast Draft Invitation to Tender (ITT) consultation

Thank you for the further opportunity to comment on the West Coast franchise renewal.

We believe that the delay in the process offers the opportunity for the Government to further review the major changes in travel patterns that are likely to take place during the period of the franchise. These changes will be driven by the need to deliver major reductions in CO2 emissions from the transport sector coupled with the increasing scarcity of oil supplies and large increases in the price of oil.

These trends will lead a significant further increase in the demand for rail travel and we would highlight the importance of the following aspects of our earlier submission:

- 1 Journey times, frequency and capacity need to be significantly improved on the routes from Scotland to the North of England, the Midlands and London. Infrastructure along the northern part of the route will need to be upgraded to eliminate pinchpoints, improve signalling and generally create more route capacity and higher speed running. The full 140mph capability of the Pendolino trains should be utilised.
- 2 Cities along the route will require improvements to rail services as other modes become more expensive and less attractive. In a Scottish context the routes into Glasgow and Edinburgh from Carlisle require better services, Lockerbie being a prime example.
- 3 The rail travel experience needs to be improved with particular attention being paid to fares policy, on-train experience and the station environment.
- 4 It is likely that HS2 services to Scotland will be using the route soon after the end of the new franchise. The terms of the franchise must ensure that preparation is undertaken during the period of the franchise to allow these services to run at competitive speeds along the route and that appropriate city centre terminal facilities are available in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

I am including a further copy of our earlier submission.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Colin Howden'.

Colin Howden
Director, Transform Scotland

Transform Scotland Limited is a registered Scottish charity (SC041516).

Transform Scotland is the national alliance for sustainable transport, bringing together the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Transform Scotland is a member of the European Federation for Transport and Environment.



DfT *InterCity West Coast Franchise* consultation

Response from Transform Scotland

Friday 15 April 2011 (as amended 20 April 2011)

1 About Transform Scotland

- 1.1 Transform Scotland is the national sustainable transport alliance. We campaign for a more sensible transport system, one less dependent on unsustainable modes such as the car, the plane and road freight, and more reliant on sustainable modes like walking, cycling, public transport, and freight by rail or sea. We are a membership organisation bringing together rail, bus and shipping operators; local authorities; national environment and conservation organisations; local environment and transport campaign groups; and individual supporters.

2 Introduction and General Comments

- 2.1 Transform Scotland welcomes the opportunity to comment on this important strategy document¹ looking forward to the needs and opportunities on the West Coast Main Line to 2026. Our comments are confined to journeys between Scotland and England and within Scotland.
- 2.2 This key rail route offers tremendous potential for modal shift to rail from both the plane and the car. It is a telling fact that people in the UK fly more km per head of population than anywhere else in the world — including the US. This is dramatically borne out by the Glasgow to London route where only around 20% of journeys are by rail. Even on the much shorter Manchester and Birmingham routes significant number of people are currently flying; additionally, on these routes, the train also competes with the car.
- 2.3 Given the urgency to reduce our climate change emissions and our dependency on oil the need to invest in rail has never been more apparent. Rail offers many advantages over other modes both directly to passengers and to society at large. To the business community, rail journeys provide for productive travel time as compared to flying. When compared to the car, rail offers passengers a more relaxed and hugely safer form of transport. The renewal of this franchise provides the opportunity to significantly upgrade current journeys on the route as well as to serve new destinations.
- 2.4 Additionally, it is essential that during the time period of this franchise the route is prepared for the introduction of services continuing north from phase one of HS2.

3 Glasgow to London route

- 3.1 Comparison between rail and air on this route shows that only 20% of journeys are by rail. However this figure is climbing and service improvements will certainly persuade more people to choose rail. European experience suggests that a journey time of around four hours should be capable of capturing approximately 50% of the market share. We believe that in the UK a sub-four-hour journey time is required to achieve this split.
- 3.2 The Pendolino trains currently running on the route are capable of speeds of 140mph but the required infrastructure improvements to allow this to happen have not been made. The duration of the new franchise offers the opportunity to develop the route to both increase line speeds and line capacity. The

¹ <<http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/open/2011-01/>>

franchise operator will need to work with Network Rail and perhaps also third party private sector investors to bring this about. It is essential that this work is carried out during the duration of this franchise.

- 3.3 In addition to increasing line speeds, more frequent trains with greater passenger capacity will also be required for rail to capture a significant modal share.

4 Edinburgh and Glasgow to Birmingham route

- 4.1 On these routes the train competes with both the car and the plane and yet rail only captures a 30% modal share when compared to air. There is a need for greater capacity and frequency and improved journey times and there is a very large market for which to aim. The current diesel trains used on the route are not appropriate for a fully electrified railway. Electric traction capable of running at full line speed with tilt should be provided and significant journey time reductions are required. Longer and more frequent trains will allow for full market penetration by rail and we believe that both Edinburgh and Glasgow should be served hourly.

5 Other Destinations from Scotland

- 5.1 We believe that there is a market for other destinations to be served from Edinburgh and Glasgow. Both Liverpool and, seasonally, Blackpool would provide a market for direct trains and allow rail to capture a greater modal share.
- 5.2 The current Manchester to Scotland trains have been developed by Transpennine Express and, as with Birmingham, there is a very large market for rail to capture. The current diesel rolling stock is not appropriate for a 125mph electrified railway let alone one with maximum line speeds of up to 140mph. It may be more efficient to transfer these services to the West Coast franchise. If this option is not chosen then it is essential that appropriate traction is provided when the Transpennine Express franchise is renewed. As on the Birmingham route we believe that an hourly frequency to both Edinburgh and Glasgow is appropriate.
- 5.3 For greater market penetration by rail, destinations north of the Central Belt in Scotland and south of Birmingham should be served by direct rail services. Birmingham is currently served by three trains an hour from Euston. By extending one of these to Scotland, through rail journeys to destinations such as Birmingham International and Coventry could be created.
- 5.4 In Scotland the Edinburgh to Glasgow Improvement Programme will create an electrified railway to Stirling. Services starting here could serve Motherwell before running on south via the West Coast Main Line. This would have the dual benefit of, firstly, capturing many journeys from north of Edinburgh and Glasgow that are currently undertaken by air and, secondly, providing additional services from Motherwell.

6 Glasgow to Carlisle route and intermediate stations

- 6.1 Whilst we believe that the long distance services to London, the North and the Midlands all need journey time reductions, we remain concerned about the service provided to the intermediate stations on the route between Glasgow and Carlisle.
- 6.2 Motherwell is ideally placed to capture the large market south of Glasgow, while Lockerbie is an important railhead for Dumfries and Galloway and parts of the Borders for journeys both to the north and south.
- 6.3 It appears to us that a Glasgow–Carlisle service should be introduced to serve these stations with a very much enhanced service to Carstairs which again has the potential to be a railhead for a large area and an interchange for services to Edinburgh. However, the current franchise renewal offers the opportunity to enhance services from these stations if additional trains are provided to Birmingham, Manchester, south of Birmingham and from Stirling as outlined in the earlier parts of our response.

7 Fares Policy, Ticketing and On-train Facilities

- 7.1 One of the current barriers to rail travel is the price of walk-on fares and peak time travel. Peak time demand on rail is managed by making passengers pay higher fares for travelling at such times and yet certain trains operate at well beyond 100% seating capacity. So we have a railway whose track capacity is saturated with some passengers standing on their journey. In spite of this there is talk of yet more 'pricing policies' to control demand. We are aware of no similar strategy for the road network where the vast majority of cars carry just one occupant at peak times. If demand management is to be exercised then the competing modes must be treated in a similar manner.
- 7.2 We have already outlined how additional services should be provided and we would expect to see the new franchise operator rationalising the fares structure to create a level playing field between the competing modes. We believe that DfT should make this a stated aim of the franchise.
- 7.3 Additionally, we would wish to see readily available and good value add-on fares for those travelling by rail and other modes to destinations off the main routes plus the use of smartcard technology to simplify ticket purchase.
- 7.4 The other important aspect of encouraging greater modal shift to rail is on-board facilities. We believe that seating arrangements on long distance trains should allow passengers ample leg room and seats that align with windows as is the case on most European railways. On board services should include the provision of both light snacks and meals. Additionally, there is the need for much greater luggage space as it is evident that passengers now travel with much more luggage on such routes.

8 Infrastructure improvements

- 8.1 We have already referred to the need to tackle infrastructure improvements as part of this franchise both to improve existing services and to prepare for the time when services from HS2 will continue north to Scotland.
- 8.2 In particular we would refer to the route north to Scotland from Weaver Junction. The WCML upgrade was de-scoped on the northern parts of the route and additionally much of the signalling system has been in place since the mid-1970s and is in need of replacement. It is essential that this re-signalling is not merely replaced on a like-for-like basis thereby locking in the 1970s constraints. The work must include improved line speeds and capacity, bidirectional signalling and additional freight loops.
- 8.3 If this work is not undertaken during this franchise then HS2 services on the West Coast Main Line are likely to be restricted to 100 or 110mph as well as operating in non-tilt mode. Under such a scenario Scotland will be condemned to a second class service from the outset of HS2.
- 8.4 Perhaps the most glaring example of inadequate infrastructure is the East-South curve at Carstairs Junction. Frankly the 15 mph speed restriction here is quite appalling; a 125mph train is reduced to a crawl. (We compared this in our response to the West Coast Main Line RUS to a motorway suddenly being interrupted by a section of Medieval cart track.) It is our belief that as much as 5 minutes is added to the journey time on the East-South curve.
- 8.5 We believe that this franchise offers the opportunity to create public-private partnerships to deliver the necessary infrastructure improvements.

9 Better Stations/Interchanges

- 9.1 For rail to compete effectively with other modes it is essential that the complete package on offer is of an appropriate standard. As well as the trains, speed and frequency of service the station environment is the other key aspect. Many stations on the West Coast Main Line compare very poorly with airports in terms of passenger facilities and with the convenience of stepping into a private car outside your own front door.

- 9.2 Once again, public-private partnerships can be created as part of this franchise to ensure that the stations themselves are brought up to a high standard and quality interchanges with other modes are formed as an integral part of the station. Excellent examples exist at St Pancras and Manchester Piccadilly in the UK and many more can be found on mainland Europe.

10 Summary

- 10.1 We believe that the WCML has huge potential for modal shift from the car and the plane to the train and that this will be driven by concerns over climate change and reducing our dependency on foreign oil. The West Coast franchise renewal offers an ideal opportunity to develop more services to cater for this demand. In particular:
- A sub-four-hour journey time from Glasgow to London with more frequent and longer trains will capture 50% of the rail/air market on this route.
 - Electric traction should be introduced on the Birmingham to Edinburgh and Glasgow routes, capable of running at line speed with tilt. We also support the introduction of hourly services on these routes.
 - The introduction of new routes to Liverpool and other destinations such as Blackpool should also be considered. There is a case for transferring the Manchester to Scotland trains to the West Coast franchise and these services should be hourly and use electric traction as per the Birmingham route.
 - There is a strong case for through journeys from Scotland including south from Birmingham to London. In Scotland we wish to see new direct London services starting from Stirling and serving Motherwell.
 - New services should be introduced between Glasgow and Carlisle and intermediate stations such as Lockerbie should gain new stops from the additional services to Manchester, Birmingham and London.
 - The franchise renewal should be used as an opportunity to upgrade the 1970s infrastructure and signalling on the route allowing for more and faster journeys and preparing for through services from HS2.
 - The current fares policy should be overhauled to make rail more attractive and to stop punishing rail passengers who travel at peak times when no similar mechanism applies to car drivers.

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