



InterCity East Coast franchise consultation

Response from Transform Scotland

Thursday 1st April 2010

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The comments offered on the proposed new franchise to commence in autumn 2011 are set in the context that it will be 15 years at the very earliest before Scotland receives any benefit from new high speed lines – and even then this will be only via the West Coast route. It is therefore essential that maximum value is delivered by the ECML. This is all the more pressing given government commitments on climate change reduction and the urgent need to reduce our dependency on oil. To address these issues we need to see significant modal shifts from plane and car to train on routes such as the ECML.

2 About Transform Scotland

- 2.1 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.

3 Specific comments

- 3.1 Given the collapse of the last two franchises on this route it is essential that any re-letting is on a sustainable long- term basis which delivers major benefits for passengers and the community at large. It is simply not acceptable for the Treasury to seek to milk this route to subsidise other elements of government spending.
- 3.2 Any new franchise must deliver significant investment in the route to allow for more and faster services.
- 3.3 We believe that the Edinburgh to London journey time must be reduced to below 4 hours as the norm with a significant proportion of journeys being around 3 hours 30 minutes. This should then generate significant modal shift from air to rail.
- 3.4 Train frequency on the Edinburgh to London section of the route should be every 30 minutes with easy connections available at key interchanges.
- 3.5 New rolling stock will be required on the route to cater for growth in demand and higher speeds. It may be possible to also retain the existing 225 trains utilising their 140mph capability.
- 3.6 Current and new stations on the route should be to the highest standards to ensure that rail travel is the preferred choice.
- 3.7 The fare structure also needs to be radically overhauled to ensure that train travel becomes the preferred choice for business, leisure and the family markets. In particular tickets aimed at different markets should offer 'frequent flier' incentives for business travel, family and student tickets and Club 55 type offers. It is a nonsense that people making the same journey can be paying less than £10 compared to others paying several hundred pounds. The concept of wringing large amounts of money from those who have no choice but to book tickets on the day is self-defeating – as it simply generates huge adverse publicity for the railway and ensures that most are unlikely to travel again. Walk-on tickets should be available at competitive prices.

- 3.8 On-train services should be of a high quality to ensure ease of working on the train and appropriate facilities such as at-seat meals and refreshments, and improvements to wi-fi operation.
- 3.9 The travelling environment and train layout should be such that all passengers can sit comfortably with adequate space provided for luggage and those with disabilities. Only in very exceptional circumstances should passengers have to stand and consideration should be given to refunding a proportion of the fare if this is the case. This is one of our premier rail routes and the facilities provided should match the importance of the route.
- 3.10 King's Cross Station is being fully refurbished and will be a gateway to the north for many UK and overseas travellers. It is essential that seamless transfer and ticketing arrangements are put in place for transfer between Eurostar and the ECML services and similarly for domestic passengers connecting with the ECML.
- 3.11 As journey times reduce it will be appropriate to establish later in the day departure times. As a first step the 19:00 King's Cross to Edinburgh train should become a daily departure.
- 3.12 Services north of Edinburgh should be enhanced with a second daily train to Inverness and improved journey times to Inverness and Aberdeen. The DfT should work with the Scottish Government to bring forward electrification of the routes to Aberdeen and Inverness.
- 3.13 Services on the Newcastle to Edinburgh corridor should be enhanced and a second platform re-instated at Dunbar. This will allow both long distance and local trains to better serve current and newly re-opened stations on this section of the ECML.

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Transform Scotland is the national sustainable transport alliance, campaigning for a more sustainable and socially-just transport system. Our membership includes bus, rail and shipping operators; local authorities; national environment and conservation groups; consultancies; and local transport campaigns.

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