

11 January 2011

Our Ref RGM/LS/N13/6
Your Ref

Scotland RUS (Generation Two)
Network Rail
Buchanan House
58 Port Dundas Road
Glasgow
G4 0LQ

Dear Sirs

Generation 2 Scotland Route Utilisation Strategy

This letter is in response to your consultation on the 2nd generation Scotland Route Utilisation Strategy.

Nestrans is the statutory Regional Transport Partnership for the North East of Scotland covering the geographical areas of Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils. This letter follows the Nestrans Board's consideration of the draft strategy. A copy of the report the Board considered is attached.

I would highlight the following issues:

- **Future passenger forecasts**

Whilst Edinburgh and Glasgow are considered as separate markets Aberdeen is considered only as part of the interurban market. We consider that this underestimates the potential for increased commuter traffic in the Aberdeen travel to work area and does not take into account the growth anticipated as a result of the approved Structure Plan for the area.

- **Overcrowding**

- ~ The report discusses overcrowding but appears to underestimate the degree of overcrowding already experienced on some routes particularly between Inverurie and Stonehaven. The suggestion that acceptable standing times be extended from 10 to 20 minutes is not supported.
- ~ An option of adding extra carriages is discounted on the grounds of cost on the basis that it is not economic for only the Stonehaven to Aberdeen or Inverurie part of the route. However overcrowding is already experienced on the route, including trains between Glasgow and Perth.

- **Aberdeen suburban service**

The document discusses that significant investment would be required to bring about even small improvements. Surely this implies a previous lack of investment that should be addressed to meet current and importantly future demand.

- **Aberdeen to central belt express service**

The report dismisses this possibility as there are a number of passengers from stations between Aberdeen and Dundee who wish to travel south of Dundee. There are two issues with this:

- ~ An express service is something that the STPR would envisage being provided.
- ~ There is no account taken of the possibility of improving local services to complement the express service.

- **Stonehaven-Portlethen-Aberdeen morning peak gap**

There is a suggestion that there is a gap in the timetable that could be filled but proposes that doesn't happen until 2014. As this gap in the timetable has been identified and a solution found, this should be implemented now instead of waiting for the new franchise.

- **Aberdeen to central belt journey times**

The document discusses the STPR commitment to reduce journey times by 20 mins. It concludes that this is not possible on the existing track although it is not clear why this is. The document doesn't try to identify what would be required to meet the STPR requirement. Nestrans believes that this should have been done to clarify what was required to meet the STPR.

As it stands the overall impression of the document is that it has looked to try and meet the STPR requirement but found it too difficult or too costly. Consequently the document proposes little to meet the requirement of the traveling public which we believe has been underestimated. Nestrans would like to see positive proposals to meet the aspirations of the STPR, the approved planning documentation and the North East traveling public, costed to a level where decisions on the viability can be assessed against the impact of the proposed improvements.

Yours faithfully

Derick Murray
Director