

5b Rail Matters

o Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide information and updates for the Board in relation to railway matters.

o Background

Members will be aware that Nestrans' Regional Transport Strategy is supported by a number of Action Plans, one of which covers Rail. The Rail Action Plan was approved by the Board at its meeting in September 2011, a copy of which is available at:

http://www.nestrans.org.uk/db_docs/docs/RAP%20second%20draft%20sept%202010.pdf

This report seeks to update members on a number of matters relating to rail, many of which are actions identified within the Rail Action Plan.

o Rail franchises

In recent months, there has been significant progress in regards to the franchises which affect rail services to the north east of Scotland.

East Coast

The Department for Transport is responsible for letting the cross-border franchises, including the East Coast franchise between Aberdeen and London Kings Cross currently operated by Directly Operated Railways, an arms-length agency of DfT under the branding of East Coast.

The Department for Transport (DfT) announced the shortlisted bidders for the InterCity East Coast passenger franchise on 17 January 2014. They are:

- East Coast Trains Ltd (FirstGroup plc);
- Keolis/Eurostar East Coast Ltd (Keolis (UK) Ltd and Eurostar International Ltd);
- Inter City Railways Ltd (90% Stagecoach Transport Holdings Ltd, 10% Virgin Holdings Ltd).

DfT plans to issue invitations to tender at the end of February, with bidders having at least three months to develop their proposals. The new operator would take over the services linking London to Yorkshire, northeast England and Scotland in February 2015.

DfT have said bidders would need to consider how they intend to use the future InterCity Express Programme (IEP) trainsets to be supplied by the Agility Trains consortium, and “capitalise on the significant government investment along this route, including £240m in infrastructure projects over the next five years to improve capacity and reduce journey times.”

Transport Minister Stephen Hammond has asked that “When these companies are developing their proposals they should be looking at ways to innovate and grow the service. We have

embarked on one of the biggest programmes of rail investment ever, with over £35bn being spent to enhance and run our rail network over the next five years. But for our railways to continue to grow, we need strong private sector partners who can invest and innovate in ways that deliver a world class service.”

Caledonian Sleeper

The Final Invitation to Tender for the Caledonian Sleeper franchise was published on 28 October 2013 and three companies have been shortlisted to bid to operate the franchise – Arriva, First Group and Serco.

Transport Scotland have now received their response to the Final Invitation to Tender which was due on 12 December last year. These are being analysed and an announcement is expected soon with a ten-year franchise likely, to start on 15 April 2015.

ScotRail

Transport Scotland announced its Invitation to Tender on 19 November 2013. Five companies have been shortlisted:

- Abellio;
- Arriva,
- First Group,
- MTR and
- National Express.

The ITT seeks to ensure Value for Money, but places an increased weighting on Quality, with bids invited to demonstrate increasing patronage, particularly by improved efficiency through encouraging off-peak travel, improved Passenger Satisfaction, improving journey times and enhanced performance metrics. Performance will be measured to ensure no more than 1.6% cancellation rates and a minimum benchmark of 92.5% target trains arriving within accepted limits. These factors will all be subject to sanctions in the event of non-compliance.

Bidders are also asked to bring forward proposals regarding fares(although regulated fares will be capped at Retail Price Index for the peak and RPI -1% for off-peak), to develop smart and integrated ticketing, to promote integration, to promote cycling particularly to/from stations and for station enhancements.

Nestrans have had a number of discussions with shortlisted companies in advance of submitting their bids, which are required by 17 April 2014 with an Award of Contract expected at the end of October and the new franchise coming into operation on 15 April 2015.

o Aberdeen-Central Belt and Aberdeen-Inverness studies

The Strategic Transport projects Review highlighted the importance of intercity journey times and committed to reducing train journey times between Aberdeen and Edinburgh/Glasgow and between Aberdeen and Inverness.

The first of these has been the subject of a study by Network Rail, who were commissioned to undertake infrastructure studies to ascertain what would be required to cut 20 minutes from the Aberdeen-Central Belt journey times.

Secondly, as members may be aware, a project to enable higher frequencies between Elgin-Inverness and Inverurie-Aberdeen including additional stations at Dalcross (Inverness Airport) and Kintore, with future phases to enable an hourly frequency and end-to-end journey time of less than two hours has been a long-standing commitment.

Network Rail have been undertaking a GRIP 3 assessment of this proposal and were scheduled to report to Transport Scotland during 2013. It is understood that that study has now been submitted to Transport Scotland and that an Executive Summary is being prepared, which will be made available in the public domain this spring.

o **Dyce railway station**

The proposed new overbridge incorporating lifts and being fully Disability Discrimination Act compliant is currently under construction at Dyce and scheduled to be operational before the end of March.

The bus turning circle proposal to provide improved bus and cycle access to the west side of Dyce station was considered at Aberdeen City Council's ESP&I Committee on 21 January and agreed to accept tenders for construction of the access road and turning circle.

As considered under item 6b of this agenda, Nestrans are suggesting an amendment to the Aberdeen City Local Development Plan to enable a rezoning of land close to Dyce station to be considered for a car park extension. Although the land is currently designated as open space, it is not thought to contain any significant landscape or biodiversity. A redesignation would offer the opportunity to increase parking for Dyce station, to the benefit of residents as cars currently park on-street in the local area and could improve access to the Pitmedden playing fields and Formartine & Buchan Way, which are adjacent to the site.

o **East Coast Mainline Authorities**

Previous reports have made mention of the establishment of an East Coast Mainline Authorities (ECMA) grouping, consisting of local authorities and Regional Transport partnerships along the route of the London Kings Cross-Aberdeen railway. The group hopes to highlight the economic importance of the line and the need for investment to ensure that the economies of the relevant regions continue to prosper.

The ECMA agreed to hold a number of meetings with stakeholders and interested parties to gauge the level of support for investment and the importance of the route for regional economies. Nestrans facilitated a meeting in Aberdeen on 17 January, which was well attended and provided significant input to the ECMA's case.

A note of the meeting is attached as Appendix A to this report.

o **Overcrowding**

As reported to the last meeting of Board, it was agreed to commission consultants to undertake a survey of crowding levels on peak time trains in the north east.

Aecom were appointed and undertook surveys in November 2013. An Executive Summary highlighting the key findings is attached as Appendix B to this report and the full report containing detailed results will be made available on the Nestrans' website. Members will note that the survey indicates that overcrowding in peak time trains is significant and appears to have worsened since the 2011 survey.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board note the contents of this report.

RD/ 4 February 2014

Appendix A

Note of Meeting: East Coast Mainline Authorities Strategic Business Case Stakeholder Meeting

Town House, Aberdeen

Friday 17 January 2014

Present:

CLlr Ramsay Milne - Nestrans	Aberdeen City Council
Ian Armstrong	SCDI
Richard Baker	MSP
Malcom Bruce	MP
Derick Murray	Nestrans
Frank Doran	MP
Gareth Williams	SCDI
James Bream	Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce
Lewis Macdonald	MSP
Alison McInnes	MSP
Rab Dickson	Nestrans
CLlr Angela Taylor - Nestrans	Aberdeen City Council
Dennis Robertson	MSP
Robert Smith	MP
Tony Jarvis	Highland & Islands Enterprise
CLlr Graham Philips - Hitrans	Moray Council
Lesley Miller	Angus Council
Frank Roach	Hitrans
Wilson Metcalfe	Hitrans Board
Niall Gardiner	Tactran
CLlr Graeme Clark - Nestrans	Aberdeenshire Council
Peter Lloyd	Transport Scotland
Rita Stephen	Aberdeen City Council
Alan Beswick	jmp
Tim Steiner	jmp
Plus four others.....	

Comments

The number and calibre of attendees at the event was considered by attendees to be indicative of the importance of the ECML to north/NE Scotland and Tayside.

Attendees noted the current and anticipated future economic growth in the area (especially the Aberdeen city region) which will require improved transport links (both for travellers and also to improve perceptions of connectivity, which will help improve the attractiveness of the region as a place to live or invest).

The ECML is important to Scotland north of the central belt for links to the central belt and for journeys to locations where air connections are not available, notably NE England and Yorkshire as well as the key link to London. Direct services through Edinburgh are considered to be important for these connections, especially as many travellers may have connections onto ECML services.

Many comments were made about restricted capacity on the east coast line in Scotland, especially at Usan, near Montrose. This was considered to have a large impact on the number of trains operating, which particularly limits paths for freight services.

Total seating capacity between Aberdeen/Inverness and Edinburgh was also recognised to be limited, and is considered to be a significant constraint to demand for rail travel to/from the region. There is a significant lack of seats on some services on the route (albeit particularly on ScotRail services).

Service quality improvements were the other main demand, alongside capacity. This includes both on-train and at-station facilities. Many people show a preference for using East Coast services over ScotRail ones for journeys within Scotland, due to comfort and capacity. Journey time improvements are desired, but to be considered along with through journey opportunities and connectivity issues. Fares were not mentioned as an issue by any attendee.

Key sectors reliant on transport in the region were considered to be energy, higher education, food & drink (especially for freight movements) and tourism, including visiting friends and relatives.

As well as business to business connections, important matters demanding rail access were considered to be the pool of labour (especially for the offshore industry's links from NE England), access to NE Scotland for friends/relatives (of people that have relocated or are considering relocation to the region) and for tourists. Direct connections through Edinburgh were felt to be particularly important to encouraging tourists arriving from England to travel north of the central belt.

Other important destinations to the region include fabrication facilities along the East Coast (e.g. Burntisland) and, for freight, East Coast ports. Demand for movement by rail of containers may increase as larger ports, catering for larger ships, open on the East Coast.

Rail journey times to London are uncompetitive with flying. Journey times to the central belt are also no faster than driving; improving them could significantly alter the balance in favour of train. Slow speeds through Fife were perceived to be a key constraint here. Some people rely on rail links to England as a backup option if flights are disrupted.

Attendees noted the suppressed demand for rail travel in NE Scotland, as witnessed by the significant growth witnessed by recent improvements (including Portlethen, Broughty Ferry, Dyce, Inverurie).

There was a desire to ensure the north-of-Edinburgh service is an integral part of the ECML franchise (issues where Scottish services were excluded from ticket promotion offers were noted).

Connections from Moray stations to services to/from the south can be poor in both Aberdeen and Inverness.

Attendees wished to ensure that any East Coast service improvements would not jeopardise Aberdeen Crossrail proposals.

The ECML may be able to respond to opportunities from HS2 – by reducing focus on services to London and so improving service levels to other locations.

Distribution

Name/ Signed Tim Steiner

Nestrans Rail Occupancy Survey November 2013: Executive Summary

Introduction

In November 2013, Nestrans commissioned AECOM to gather data to assess occupancy levels on peak period rail services in North East Scotland between Stonehaven and Inverurie. Improved rail links and connections are a key element of Nestrans' external and internal connection strategies in their RTS, and this work follows similar survey work undertaken in June and October 2011.

Methodology

The surveys assessed the level of overcrowding on the following routes/journeys:

AM Peak Services

	Northbound				
Stonehaven- Portlethen- Aberdeen	0724 0734 0747	0736 - 0757	0749 0800 0814	0822 0830 0846	
Aberdeen- Dyce- Inverurie	074807570811		0821 0830 0842	0851 0900 -	
	Southbound				
Inverurie- Dyce- Aberdeen	0713 0726 0737	0743 0757 0809	0817 0830 0843	- 0908 0919	0908 0920 0932
Aberdeen- Portlethen- Stonehaven					

PM Peak Services

	Northbound					
Stonehaven- Portlethen- Aberdeen						
Aberdeen- Dyce- Inverurie	1644 1652 -	1721 1731 1747	1754 1803 1818	1820 1829 1841		
	Southbound					
Inverurie- Dyce- Aberdeen	(1616)* 1630 1641	1638 1654 1705	- 1705 1716		1718 1732 1743	1750 1803 1815
Aberdeen- Portlethen- Stonehaven	1637 1647 1655		1718 1729 1737	1736 - 1752	(1818)* - 1835	1830 1840 1849

*Survey unable to be fully completed

The surveys captured:

- An estimate of the passengers carried for each section of the above journeys (e.g. Stonehaven-Portlethen and Portlethen-Aberdeen);
- The number of passengers as a percentage of the seating capacity (i.e. the assessment of overcrowding); and
- The type of seating / standing (seated, standing, vestibules), plus the seating capacity of the train.

Key Finding 1 – Occupancy Level

The results show that the route which most commonly exceeded the total number of seats available was on journeys between Dyce and Aberdeen rail stations, particularly in the AM peak, suggesting a close alignment with commuting patterns between the two stations. On services between Aberdeen and Stonehaven/Portlethen, high occupancies were also noted on some services in the AM peak, but were found to occur at greater frequency in the PM peak.

Key Finding 2 – Train Capacities

A particular stress point appears to be on southbound journeys into Aberdeen in the AM peak. A number of these services originate in Inverness and by the time they reach stations in the survey area have occupancy levels exceeding 100%.

Key Finding 3 – Assessment of Journey Length and Occupancy Levels

Transport Scotland expects that passengers should not stand on board a journey of longer than 10 minutes. The results of the survey have been further interpreted to highlight those journeys with >100% occupancy, and their journey time. Several individual journeys (i.e. legs of journeys between two stations in North East Scotland) have journey times of 10 minutes or more. More than a third of the passengers on the 07:13 Inverurie-Dyce service, which has a journey time of 13 minutes, were standing. It is generally considered that journey times between station pairs such as Aberdeen and Dyce and Aberdeen and Portlethen are generally around the limits of acceptable standing time as stated by Transport Scotland. However, it also appears from the survey results that as a service reaches 50-60% of capacity, passengers choose to stand or use seats within the vestibule. 87.5% of all surveyed journeys experienced standing passengers.

Key Finding 4 – Comparison of Services North and South of Aberdeen

Prior to the surveys being undertaken, it was anticipated that services north of Aberdeen may experience more overcrowding issues than services to the south. In the survey, the number of journeys with occupancies exceeding 100% was found to be slightly higher on services operating north of Aberdeen.

Key Finding 5 – Comparison of 2011 and 2013 Survey Results

Similar surveys were undertaken on rail services in North East Scotland in 2011. Results of surveys undertaken in October 2011 have been compared with the survey results from November 2013. This comparison showed that 16 of the surveyed journeys had an occupancy level exceeding 100% in the 2013 survey, compared with 11 journeys in the October 2011 survey. An increase in overcrowded journeys on southbound peak services appears to be one of the key outcomes of the 2013 survey, which showed an increase of three journeys in the AM peak and two in the PM peak.