



# Scottish Government

## Ministerial Statement on Rail

### Transform Scotland parliamentary briefing

21 June 2012

#### Key points:

- There should be no further fragmentation of the structure of the rail industry.
- Rail fares should not be set to price travellers off the network.
- The ScotRail franchise should be used to deliver a national smart integrated ticket (smartcard).
- New trains (rolling stock) should be owned by the Scottish Government as opposed to being leased from privately-owned Rolling Stock Operating Companies (ROSCOs).
- Rolling stock should be suitable for the routes which they serve: requirements for long-distance inter-city routes are different from commuter routes, and are different again for rural services.
- The Sleeper services need to be upgraded or replaced to bring it up to modern standards.
- A further specific consultation exercise should be carried out to collect views on both rolling stock provision and new timetables — given the major changes to both areas that will be necessary in the coming years.
- We need to see the already-committed EGIP and Borders Rail projects delivered on their current schedules. Further infrastructure priorities should include: infill electrification schemes; upgrades to the Highland Main Line and Aberdeen-Inverness routes; and doubling the single track at Usan. Re-opening opportunities also exist on the lines to Levenmouth, Grangemouth and the through-route between Alloa and Dunfermline.

## 1 Operation of the ScotRail franchise

- 1.1 We do not believe that fragmentation of the franchise will bring overall benefit. The creation of yet more interfaces is likely to add cost. This may benefit lawyers and consultants but not the travelling public.
- 1.2 We do however believe that devolved management within the franchise is necessary to bring focus to the operation and marketing of the different service types that we have described under section 4.

## 2 The Role of the Railway in Scotland

- 2.1 The new ScotRail franchise represents a unique opportunity to review public transport provision in Scotland and the role played by government in specifying and supporting rail, bus and ferry services. All three modes benefit from government support but do not provide value for money because of the fragmented nature of the services provided. Much greater integration is required between modes through timetabling and ticketing and the creation of high quality interchanges.
- 2.2 The need for improvements in the public transport offering is highlighted by the underlying trend in advanced countries which shows a stabilisation or decline in road traffic. This started in Japan in 1997 with Germany, the UK and France following from 2001 and the USA and Australia from 2004.<sup>1</sup> We now have a clear trend in the UK where rail use is increasing at or above GDP growth while road traffic has failed to grow at annual rates similar to GDP since the late 1990s.

- 2.3 The new franchise should be designed to encourage further rail passenger growth in Scotland within a co-ordinated public transport network.

### **3 Fares and the Role of Government**

#### **3.1 Fares and Demand Management**

- 3.1.1 The railway competes directly with the private car and the consultation document raises the issue of fares and their role in demand management on the railway. Rail fares are already used to manage demand with peak time fares being set at a significantly higher level. There is no similar mechanism on the road network where most cars carry just one occupant at peak times. Furthermore, rail fares have increased above inflation while the overall cost of motoring has fallen — between 1997 and 2009 the overall cost of motoring fell by 13% while rail fares rose by 7% above inflation.<sup>2</sup>
- 3.1.2 The government should ensure that road and rail are treated in a comparable manner and not seek to further penalise rail users.
- 3.1.3 However, we see an early opportunity to spread the peak morning load on the railway by offering cheaper fares on early morning services — say those arriving at their destination by 07:30. For season ticket holders off-peak and early morning travel could be offered at a discounted rate, thus spreading the peak load.

#### **3.2 Concessionary Passes**

- 3.2.1 The provision of concessionary passes has encouraged a significant number of car drivers to switch to bus travel, especially those with senior passes. Other groups have benefited from access to employment opportunities and increased social mobility. Clearly there are wider societal benefits to the provision of concessionary passes and these should not be lost.
- 3.2.2 However, we do not believe that the current funding mechanism is sustainable in the longer term or is leading to the most effective provision of public transport in Scotland. There is now clear evidence of a shift from rail to bus services on longer distance routes with the two services competing against one another rather than complementing each other to provide a more comprehensive service.
- 3.2.3 In the West Yorkshire Metro area, holders of senior concessionary passes are now entitled to half-fare train travel at off-peak times. In Wales, pass holders may use certain rural rail routes on the same basis as rural bus services. Government provides support to both bus and rail operators and should use its powers to ensure that both modes are treated in a manner that encourages co-operation and the increased use of public transport - so benefitting both rail and bus operators.

#### **3.3 A Smartcard for Scotland**

- 3.3.1 Transform Scotland strongly supports the creation of a Scotland-wide public transport smartcard. We believe this will make the use of public transport easier and will attract greater numbers of people onto existing services. Incorporating the ScotRail network into a national smartcard is vital in order to allow people to access the full flexibility of the public transport network.
- 3.3.2 We would hope that by 2014, work will be advanced on enabling the use of smartcards across the ScotRail network. However, we feel that in order to deliver the full benefits of a smartcard system, there has to be an integrated ticket available across Scotland (supported by Transport Scotland's March 2011 *Smart & Integrated Ticketing Report for Scotland*). Therefore, we would wish to see the inclusion of the full ScotRail network in a national smart integrated ticket as a condition of the new franchise.

### **4 Service Types and Rolling Stock**

#### **4.1 General comments**

- 4.1.1 We do not believe that the current 'one size fits all' approach is appropriate for a country the size of Scotland. The same rolling stock can be found on commuter routes into Edinburgh, Edinburgh-Glasgow inter-urban services, and long distance inter-city routes.
- 4.1.2 This approach fails to recognise the very different journeys and is not the most appropriate use of rolling stock. We believe that there are five distinctive type of rail services in Scotland, each requiring a distinctive type of rolling stock and marketing strategy. We believe that the ScotRail branding should signify trains that the country can be proud of - whichever type of route they serve. Aligned to this is the ownership of trains, in our view there is a good case to be made for new trains to be owned by the Scottish Government as opposed to being leased from ROSCOs.
- 4.1.3 In our view the provision of appropriate rolling stock is a crucial area upon which further consultation is required. Neither Rail 2014 or the parallel EGIP consultation process allow stakeholders sufficient opportunity to engage in this important area.
- 4.1.4 We would suggest that a specific consultation exercise should be carried out to collect views on both rolling stock provision and new timetables — given the major changes to both areas that will be necessary in the coming years.

## **4.2 Inter-City Routes**

- 4.2.1 The routes connecting Edinburgh and Glasgow to Inverness and Aberdeen and that between the latter two are long-distance inter-city journeys. The train is competing with the car and coach services. They require longer, more powerful trains with adequate space for luggage and bikes. The on-board environment should be such that seats line up with windows, food and drink is available at all times and people are able to work on the train. These routes are also highly scenic and many of the marketing initiatives outlined below for rural routes will also apply here.

## **4.3 Rural Routes**

- 4.3.1 Rural routes in Scotland are world-renowned and an intrinsic part of the marketing of Scotland to visitors from all parts of the world. Glenfinnan viaduct appears constantly in Visit Scotland promotions and the West Highland Line has twice won an award for the best railway journey in the world. Additionally, rural lines provide lifeline services to many remote communities and so fulfil a vital social need.
- 4.3.2 However, they are currently under-valued, lacking appropriate rolling stock and marketing — and consequently fall well short of their potential. The objective should be to grow passenger numbers and allow these routes to play their full part in attracting tourism to Scotland and serving the needs of the local communities. Rolling stock should be appropriate for the long and scenic journeys with comfortable seats that align with the windows, sufficient space for luggage and bikes and a service of on board refreshments. Switzerland provides a good model of how to serve such scenic routes.

## **4.4 Commuter and Inter-Urban Services**

- 4.4.1 These types of route, particularly those in the Central Belt, play a vital role in sustaining Scotland's largest cities and help to reduce congestion and pollution as rail is a much more efficient means of moving large numbers of people. Journeys may be up to 50 miles in length and so the rolling stock provided should ensure that for all but the shortest journeys (15 minutes or less) passengers have a seat and are able to work during the journey. The current Class 170 diesel trains and Class 380 electric trains provide appropriate accommodation.

## **4.5 Metro Services**

- 4.5.1 The short distance, intensive services around Glasgow should be considered for Metro style operation. New electric rolling stock should provide more standing room and the London Overground services may well provide an appropriate model. Standing times could then be relaxed as many passengers now prefer to

stand for short journeys. This network could be operated by or in conjunction with SPT, the aim being to create an integrated rail and bus network. As the concept develops additional stations can be added and consideration should be given to tram/train operation for parts of the network with on-street running in the city centre. We recommend the *2020 Vision for Rail in Scotland* publication produced by SAPT in January 2011 for a fuller appraisal of how this network might develop.<sup>3</sup>

## 4.6 Sleeper Services

- 4.6.1 Sleeper services provide an alternative to flying and connect remote parts of Scotland to North West England and London, additionally offering the opportunity to connect to European train services from London. They are also used to bolster local rural services. As with many rural routes the sleepers are an iconic part of what Scotland has to offer and should be marketed as such. Many of the initiatives for rural routes apply equally to the sleeper services.
- 4.6.2 It now seems likely that current the rolling stock is to be upgraded or replaced. This provides an opportunity to tailor it to the needs of the modern traveller. We believe that the Lowland Sleepers require first and second class accommodation both served by upgraded washing and toilet facilities – that in first class being en-suite. For the Highland Sleepers there is the additional opportunity to market a wider range of accommodation and on-board facilities. Observation coaches would allow passengers to take in the views and dine, creating new passenger markets.
- 4.6.3 Consideration should also be given to the provision on both routes of family or group rooms where up to four people can sleep in one room.

## 5 Infrastructure Improvements and New Services

- 5.1 There are a number of already identified infrastructure upgrades that need to be progressed during the period of the new franchise. It is essential that this is a clear element of the new franchise and the improvements progress in conjunction with the franchise operator. Specifically these works would include infill electrification schemes, upgrades to the Highland Main Line and Aberdeen-Inverness route and doubling the single track at Usan.
- 5.2 Beyond that there are re-opening opportunities on the lines to Levenmouth, Grangemouth and the through route between Alloa and Dunfermline. New service opportunities will arise from the EGIP upgrade and the aspirations of Regional Transport Partnerships such as Tactran's Tay Estuary Rail Strategy. Bidders should be invited to propose ways to develop these opportunities.

## 6 Full Transform Scotland response to Rail 2014 consultation

- 6.1 This is available at <<http://www.transformscotland.org.uk/GetFile.aspx?ItemId=522>>.

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<sup>1</sup> Local Transport Today, 3 June 2011, p19.

<sup>2</sup> Rail Magazine issue 687 page 33.

<sup>3</sup> Available at <<http://www.networkrail.co.uk/browse%20documents/rus%20documents/route%20utilisation%20strategies/rus%20generation%20/scotland/consultation%20responses/s/scottish%20association%20for%20public%20transport%20response.pdf>>.

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

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