



Network Rail West Coast Main Line Route Utilisation Strategy Draft for Consultation December 2010

Response from Transform Scotland

Friday 11th March 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 document looking forward to the needs and opportunities on the West Coast Main Line to 2024. 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 Scotland-Manchester and Scotland-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. With this in mind we believe that of the two growth scenarios considered 'global responsibility' is by far the most likely future trend.
- 2.4 Longer, more frequent trains are required on the Scotland to London, Manchester and Birmingham routes, accompanied by journey time improvements.

3 Crowding, Demand Management and Fares Policy

- 3.1 Crowding is defined as load factors greater than the number of seats on the train. Given that the bulk of the journeys that we are considering are long distance in nature then we do not consider that this is an appropriate definition. Many passengers will be travelling with luggage and a number will be elderly or infirm. Under such circumstances a train that was 90% full would be considered by most passengers to be overcrowded. We would therefore suggest that in the absence of a radical redesign of the train interiors loadings greater than 90% should be the appropriate measure on which to base crowding.
- 3.2 Peak time demand on rail is already managed by making passengers pay higher fares for travelling at such times. The document discusses load levels at various times and it is clear that 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.

- 3.3 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.

4 Glasgow to London Route

- 4.1 We support the proposals for additional and longer trains on the route as well as improvements in journey times. European experience suggests that a journey time of around 4 hours should be capable of capturing approximately 50% of the market share.
- 4.2 We do however have some concerns about the reduction in the number of Carlisle stops as this is a key interchange point. Given the very restricted speed limits through Carlisle we would question the time savings achieved by the elimination of this stop.

5 Edinburgh and Glasgow to Manchester and Birmingham Routes

- 5.1 As already indicated, on these routes the train competes with both the car and the plane. There is a need for greater capacity and frequency and improved journey times and there is a very large market for which to aim.
- 5.2 We support the proposals to introduce electric traction on these routes and introduce greater capacity. However we would wish to see more discussion on journey time reductions which we believe are necessary to allow rail to fully compete.

6 Other Destinations

- 6.1 We support the proposals to re-introduce through trains to Liverpool and also believe that there is a market for Scotland to Blackpool trains – even if only seasonally.

7 Carstairs Junction

- 7.1 We note the reference to capacity being constrained at Carstairs and are concerned that essential upgrades appear to fall between the Scotland RUS and the West Coast Main Line RUS.
- 7.2 Frankly the 15 mph speed restrictions here are quite appalling; a 125mph train is reduced to a crawl – akin to a motorway suddenly being interrupted by a section of Medieval cart track. It is our belief that as much as five minutes is added to the journey time on the East to South curve.
- 7.3 Much of the trackbed of the former spur from Float Junction to Lampits Junction still exists and the opportunity exists to remodel the route from Edinburgh to the south for high speed running through the area.
- 7.4 As regards the East to North route it appears possible to use a portion of the freight yard to create a high speed curve whilst retaining the existing Carstairs Station for stopping trains. Indeed we believe that Scotrail considered this option almost 20 years ago.

8 Glasgow to Carlisle Route and Intermediate Stations

- 8.1 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. As we have already noted responsibility for the route between Glasgow and Carlisle is shared between the West and Scotland RUS proposals and it appears to us that this has led to a failure to fully consider the market and services required at stations between these two points.
- 8.2 Motherwell is ideally placed to capture the large market south of Glasgow and Lockerbie is an important railhead for Dumfries and Galloway for journeys both to the north and south. If it is not possible to make

more stops using existing services then 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.

9 Summary

9.1 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. In particular:

- We support the proposals for enhanced service frequency and train capacity on the London, Manchester and Birmingham routes.
- We support the introduction of electric traction on the latter two and also believe that journey time improvements are required on all three routes.
- We support the introduction of new routes to Liverpool and believe that others such as Blackpool should also be considered.
- We believe that new services should be introduced between Glasgow and Carlisle.
- We believe that urgent action should be taken to increase line speeds through Carstairs Junction.

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

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