

Rail Travel in South East of Scotland

1. Introduction

- 1.1** This paper provides an update to the Board of current and future rail issues within the SEStran region.

2 Cross Country Rail Franchise

- 2.1** The Department for Transport (DfT) set up a public consultation¹ to ask for views on ideas to improve train services on the Cross Country rail network. Responses were to be submitted by the 30th August 2018.
- 2.2** SEStran contributed to a joint RTP response (Appendix 1) and also developed a SEStran specific response (Appendix 2) in collaboration with Fife Council and East Lothian Officers. Key points highlighted in both responses included:
- 2.3** In the 2006 consultation for the 2007 franchise award, SEStran highlighted the benefits that the franchise brings to commuter services from Dunbar to Edinburgh, Edinburgh to Fife and further north. In 2018 maintaining these would be paramount, especially in the context of the questions 5 to 9 (page 22-25) of the DfT document for consultation. These questions are related to allowing bidders the flexibility to make changes in services at the periphery of the network, including frequency of service and calling patterns (timings).
- 2.4** SEStran would take the position that any reduction to service frequency and capacity would be detrimental to the citizens of the region, especially if we have no clear vision as to how any reduction would be offset. SEStran emphasised that care must be taken to ensure there are no reductions in overall service frequencies, journey times, quality of rolling stock, ticket integration and interchangeability.
- 2.5** In addition, SEStran would like to see increased cycle storage capacity on rolling-stock and easier access both on train and when booking for people with bikes, to support and encourage inter-model travel and tourism.

3. ScotRail Update

- 3.1** Scott Prentice from ScotRail will be presenting to the September meeting of the SEStran Partnership Board. In the presentation he will be highlighting ScotRail's approach to maximising the improved infrastructure in the rail network and £475m investment in new and enhanced trains to provide capacity for long term.
- 3.2** ScotRail aim to do this by:
- Providing the "right" service for each travel market rather than make one train do everything

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/cross-country-rail-franchise>

- Connect communities with their nearest city – this is how most journeys are done.
- Ensure the majority of stations have a minimum of an hourly service all day
- Introduce very limited stop city to city services to reduce journey times and enable bespoke customer service for this travel market
- Introduce 96 new trains - 70 Hitachi class 385 electric trains and 26 high speed, primarily on central belt routes which will benefit SEStran region. Timing delayed due to supplier issues.

4. High Speed 2 Update

- 4.1 HS2 will accommodate a step change in capability for Anglo Scottish routes, but its outputs and timescales are still in development. SEStran attended the recent High-Speed Rail Stakeholders meeting in July 2018 and received an update from Transport Scotland and HS2.
- 4.2 Alastair Young the High Speed Rail Project Manager from the Rail Policy unit at Transport Scotland will be presenting to the September meeting of the SEStran Partnership Board providing an update on the HS2 project.

5 Local Rail Development Fund – Newburgh

- 5.1 This £2 million Scottish Government fund² was announced in February 2018 with the aim of providing funding to develop community led options to improve local rail connections.
- 5.2 Applications were invited to the Local Rail Development Fund from any stakeholder organisation with a responsibility, or interest in, local transport issues. In June 2018 SEStran together with the Newburgh Rail Station Group and Fife Council submitted an application to develop an appraisal on the transport options in the Newburgh area.
- 5.3 The proposal focussed on building on the initial appraisal study work done by the Newburgh Train Station Group³ which represented the first step in the overall transport appraisal process (STAG) recognised by Transport Scotland and made the case for change to the current transport situation the community faces. The LRDF application focused on the next steps developing a more measured in-depth examination and costing of the kinds of solutions that could deliver improvement in the Newburgh area.
- 5.4 Transport Scotland reviewed over 30 applications to the fund and SEStran are pleased to confirm that the Newburgh application was successful, with £82,000 allocated from the fund to progress the project.
- 5.5 The project management team will consist of SEStran, the Newburgh Rail Group and Fife Council. The project team will work closely with Tactran Officers as they

² <https://www.transport.gov.scot/public-transport/rail/rail-policy-and-strategy/local-rail-development-fund/>

³ http://newburghtrainstation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Newburgh_STAG_Pre-Appraisal_June2018.pdf

will be working on a STAG appraisal in the Bridge of Earn/Oudenarde area. Both Tactran & SEStran officers will be represented on each of the projects review groups.

- 5.6** The first step will be to appoint a consultant to develop the STAG appraisal. The procurement process will be managed by SEStran through Public Contract Scotland framework, with the process completed and an appointment made before the end of 2018.
- 5.7** The appointed consultant will work with the project management team on The STAG appraisal with the work to be completed and a final report issued by end March 2020.

6. Levenmouth Sustainable Transport Study

- 6.1** Transport Scotland is leading on the Levenmouth Sustainable Transport Study⁴ working in close collaboration with Fife Council and SEStran.
- 6.2** This new work builds on the earlier STAG Report dated December 2016, which concluded with a preferred option to re-open the existing rail line at Levenmouth.
- 6.3** Peter Brett Associates are progressing the transport appraisal work in line with Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG). The study will consider the role of future transport investment to support the economy in the Levenmouth area, particularly looking at inclusive growth aspects.
- 6.4** A wide ranging engagement exercise with key stakeholders including SEStran, elected members, local groups and businesses and professional stakeholders, has been undertaken as part of the initial stage of the study.
- 6.5** The appraisal work is due to be completed by before the end of the 2018 calendar year.

8 Accessibility

- 8.1** A Station Travel Plan (STP) is a management tool for improving access to and from a station and mitigating local transport and parking problems, supporting sustainable growth in rail patronage and the strategic objectives of the rail industry. The STP is jointly agreed and delivered by the rail industry, LAs, other stakeholders and the local community working in partnership. The STP process is outlined in Appendix 3.
- 8.2** Phase 2 of the STP process will be delivered in 2018/19 with 5 stations in the SEStran region proposed. SEStran will be working with ScotRail, local authorities and key stakeholders on delivering the STPs in the SEStran area. The STPs will be delivered for the following stations: Falkirk High & Grahamston, Linlithgow, Bathgate with the fifth proposed for Dunfermline.

⁴ <https://www.transport.gov.scot/our-approach/strategy/levenmouth-sustainable-transport-study/>

8.3 The five STPs in the SEStran region will be funded by ScotRail.

9. Recommendations

9.1 It is requested that the Board note the contents of this report.

Appendix 1 – Joint RTP Response to Cross Country Passenger Rail Franchise Public Consultation

Appendix 2 – SEStran Response - Cross Country Rail Franchise Public Consultation August 2018

Appendix 3 – Station Travel Plan (STP) Process

Keith Fisken
Business Partner
9th March 2018

Policy Implications	None
Financial Implications	£82,000 LRDF funding will be claimed via Transport Scotland and added into the 2018/19 & 2019/20 SEStran budgets with corresponding spend. Note any underspend will be returned to TS.
Equalities Implications	None
Climate Change Implications	None

Appendix 1 - Joint RTP Response to Cross Country Passenger Rail Franchise Public Consultation

To Reduce crowding on current train services for Cross Rail Passengers.

(1) What are the particular services, routes and times of day where you think crowding on Cross Country services needs to be addressed most urgently?

Given the slightly atypical pattern of usage on Cross Country it appears that a larger proportion of patronage comes from the leisure and recreational market which is unusual on the rail network, this has implications for staff, route, rolling stock and service pattern planning. It also begs the question as to what the Franchise is specifically designed to achieve within the wider rail network. It is considered that Cross Country should be a long distance operator focussing on providing good quality direct long distance and inter-regional services, without the need to interchange.

Peak patterns of course exist and Cross Country services in Scotland fulfil a certain amount of urban centre peak purposes however, some patterns at weekends would also appear to be in need of additional capacity – longer rather than necessarily more trains. Furthermore electrification of the network needs to be exploited by new bi-modal rolling stock.

The consultation document identifies routes in and around Birmingham and between Exeter and Bristol as particularly suffering from overcrowding. However, the issue of overcrowding occurs in general where the Cross Country service provides for both short distance commuting in morning or evening peaks as well as for long distance travellers. It is recognised that as well as commuting journeys causing overcrowding, the Cross Country service is currently part of the solution by adding much needed passenger seating capacity for commuter journeys into major cities.

Examples of this in Scotland include North of Edinburgh services to/from Aberdeen and Edinburgh and also between Glasgow and Edinburgh via Motherwell and East Lothian to/from Edinburgh, where a significant proportion of the services are provided by Cross Country. If these services were rescheduled outside the peaks, other capacity provision would need to be provided for these commuters.

(2) Which of the following potential measures do you think could overcome crowding caused by short distance commuters using long distance Cross Country trains, assuming that suitable alternative services are available?

Removing calls from towns closest to the conurbation centre either completely or just at peak times.

Yes or No? Yes

Removing calls from towns closest to the conurbation centre either completely or just at peak times could potentially overcome overcrowding in particular circumstances. However, it is recognised that as well as commuting journeys

causing overcrowding, the Cross Country service is currently part of the solution by adding much needed passenger seating capacity for commuter journeys into major cities.

Retaining calls at such stations but restricting them to pickup/set down only?

Yes or No? No

Retaining calls at stations but restricting to pick up/set down only is not supported as it would be too difficult to manage and be confusing to passengers.

Removing the validity of multi-modal tickets on long distance trains?

Yes or No? No

Removing the validity of multi-modal tickets is not supported as it would be too difficult to manage and be confusing to passengers.

Other:

Provide specific instances where these may be applicable.

No specific instances given.

To improve the service pattern and network to offer journeys that better meet your needs

(3) Rank the following in order of priority for improvement for your future Cross Country services. Rank 1 for most important to 6 for least important.

more additional summer only services

6

later times of last trains

4

more frequent weekend services

2

earlier Sunday morning services

5

earlier times of first trains

3

more frequent weekday services

1

Which routes and stations and why?

Aberdeen/Dundee to/from West Midlands/South West England

More frequent direct services without the need to interchange at Edinburgh would provide better connections to West Midlands and South West England. Given the significant leisure use this would be applicable 7 days per week.

Edinburgh – Glasgow via Motherwell

More services to call at Motherwell specifically, where the significance of the station as a rail-head for a large section of the built up conurbation might suggest that more long distance services should serve the station rather than fewer.

Scotland to/from South West England.

An earlier start and later finish on the route would give better access between Scotland and major conurbations in West Midlands and South West England by providing an earlier arrival and later departure at the destination, thus providing a more useful day.

(4) If it were possible would you agree with transferring these local routes to the West Midlands franchise:

	Yes	No
Birmingham to Nottingham	X	
Birmingham to Leicester	X	

Why?

It is considered that Cross Country should be a long distance operator focussing on providing good quality direct long distance and inter-regional services, without the need to interchange. If these routes can be covered fully within another franchise, without the need for passengers to interchange between services during their journey, consideration should be given to transferring.

Would you like to see any other routes or stations transferred to or from the Cross Country franchise?

Yes	X
No	

Which routes and stations and why?

If there are other franchises which wholly cover the end to end journey of the particular route, then consideration should be given to transferring these local routes. It is considered that Cross Country should be a long distance operator focussing on providing good quality direct long distance and inter-regional services, without the need to interchange.

(5) If the network was unable to cope with all the service enhancement aspirations north of Northallerton on the East Coast mainline, would a:

	Yes	No
curtailment of one of the existing Cross Country services be acceptable (with the resources redeployed to enhance other existing or new routes)?		X
diversion of one of the existing Cross Country services be acceptable (with the resources redeployed to enhance other existing or new routes)?		X

Why / why not?

It is considered that the one train per hour Cross Country service between Scotland and South West England needs to be maintained as a minimum. The proposed increase in TransPennine services between Edinburgh and Manchester from every two hours to hourly is welcomed. It is also considered that the current two trains per hour LNER Edinburgh to London service is the minimum frequency that needs to be maintained. Consideration should be given to bi-mode longer trains (9 carriage) to provided additional capacity. If there are any service curtailments required this should not be on cross border Scotland to England services.

(6) Should bidders be given flexibility to make limited changes to the extremities to the network so that benefits such as reduced crowding in the centre of the network can be provided?

	Yes
X	Yes, but only if alternative services are provided by other operators
	No

Comments:

It is considered that Cross Country should be a long distance operator focussing on providing good quality direct long distance and inter-regional services, without the need to interchange. As such dividing the network into “core” and “extremity” is unhelpful and counter to the long distance purpose of the Cross Country franchise.

Bidders should be given limited flexibility to consider changes to the timing of services, but only if alternative services can be provided. The North of Edinburgh Cross Country service adds much needed passenger seating capacity for commuter journeys into Aberdeen, Dundee and Edinburgh. If these services were rescheduled outside the peaks, other capacity provision would need to be provided for these commuters.

The RTPs would only support rescheduling of these services if resources are provided to Scottish Government to provide the same peak time capacity to/from Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow through the ScotRail franchise and if this is technically feasible within the pathing constraints. The direct services from North of Edinburgh offer good direct connections to West Midlands/Birmingham area and South West England/Bristol area and these direct services provide important business and tourism/leisure connections.

The documentation suggests that Glasgow extensions will be retained at their current frequency – this is to be welcomed, specifically as the service dove-tail with the Scotrail service on the line to offer an hourly service between Edinburgh and Glasgow via Motherwell.

The direct services between Scotland and West Midlands and South West England, including North of Edinburgh route, provides a sustainable alternative to domestic aviation. Transport Focus research identifies that the need to interchange between services can be a significant deterrent to rail use. It is therefore important the direct rail services from North of Edinburgh to West Midlands and South West England are maintained as a minimum and increased, if possible.

(7) Do you agree that the current level of Cross Country services to the following routes are the minimum that must be specified for:

West of Plymouth to Penzance?
Exeter to Paignton?
Newton Abbot to Paignton?
North of Edinburgh to Aberdeen?
Southampton to Bournemouth?
Guildford?
Bath?
Cardiff to Bristol Temple Meads?

Yes	No
Yes	

Do you agree that the changes to the following routes would be acceptable if a similar or improved service was provided by another operator:

West of Plymouth to Penzance?
Exeter to Paignton?
Newton Abbot to Paignton?
North of Edinburgh to Aberdeen?
Southampton to Bournemouth?
Guildford?
Bath?
Cardiff to Bristol Temple Meads?

Yes	No
Yes	

The North of Edinburgh route currently provides for both commuter and long distance passengers. Consideration to retiming the Cross Country service should only be made where alternative resources and services are provided for commuters and it is feasibly possible to provide the same passenger carrying capacity.

(8) Do you think the department's minimum specification should preserve exactly the existing pattern of services and station calls rather than offer an opportunity to change?

	Yes
X	No

Comments:

Not necessarily although it should inform the timetable option it should not necessarily dictate it. Working with other franchise holders could result in a better overall service provision for passengers whilst maintaining local, regional, and long distance rail service patterns – particularly at rush hours but also at less busy times (early/late//weekend/Sunday services for example) when one service might have to meet a multiplicity of service purposes. The franchise should also be mindful of passenger resistance to changing trains or to travel on connecting services – particularly on longer-distance journeys.

Overall there should be a minimum, maybe expressed as a minimum frequency between stations. However regarding specifying routes such as North of Edinburgh, where there are only few services per day, a minimum number of services and time of day should be specified to ensure the service provides a meaningful and useful long distance service.

Where currently the North of Edinburgh route provides for both commuter and long distance passengers, consideration to retiming the Cross Country service should only be made where alternative resources and services are provided for commuters and it is feasibly possible to provide the same passenger carrying capacity.

(9) Should bidders have some flexibility to make fewer calls at some stations, for example if that enabled them to accelerate services?

X	Yes
	No

On what routes could this be introduced?

Further information would be required to make an informed decision on this. Fewer calls at stations will not necessarily accelerate services as there are other timetable and infrastructure considerations that may not permit this.

(10) Should the minimum specification have the number of trains from each station to Birmingham but give bidders the flexibility to decide where the trains go after Birmingham?

X	Yes
	No

(11) Are there stations beyond the geography of the Cross Country network that should receive calls that they currently do not receive (include examples and supporting evidence)?

In addition to the current North of Edinburgh services to Dundee and Aberdeen, consideration could be given to extending services North of Edinburgh to Stirling,

Perth and Inverness where rail capacity exists. This would enable the Cross Country franchise to provide a direct service connecting all of Scotland's cities to West Midlands and South West England. A direct connection from Scotland to South Wales should also be considered.

Outside the Cross Country franchise, the intention to increase the frequency of the TransPennine Express service between Manchester and Edinburgh is welcomed and consideration should be given to extending some of these services to provide a direct connection North of Edinburgh to Manchester/Liverpool. Likewise consideration should be given to extending the West Coast Main Line north of Glasgow/Edinburgh to provide direct connections to Carlisle, Crewe, Birmingham and Milton Keynes. Consideration should also be given to some of these services utilising Motherwell station and running though to Larbert via Coatbridge and Cumbernauld to provide more direct services to/from North of Scotland.

(12) Are there stations within the geography of the Cross Country network that should receive calls that they currently do not receive (include examples and supporting evidence)?

Within Scotland the RTPs consider that regional rail head locations should be served by more long distance services.

The RTPs consider that the hourly services between Edinburgh and West Midlands and South West England should be maintained as a minimum. Currently the majority of these services serve Plymouth and Bristol. The RTPs would be supportive of consideration being given to other destinations south of Birmingham, such as Oxford, Reading, Southampton and Cardiff. However, this would need to be evidence based regarding the demand for these destinations to/from Scotland.

To improve and simplify fares and ticketing

(13) What changes would you like to see to the way Cross Country currently sells and provides tickets?

It is agreed that passengers should be provided with widespread and easy access to a full range of tickets and that they have all the information required to select and purchase the most appropriate ticket. All methods of payment should be available. A consistency of offer should be provided between franchises, such as ScotRail "Kids go Free" being able to be used on all franchise services in Scotland.

(14) What changes would you like to see to the current Cross Country current fares structure?

Ticket pricing should be incentivised to encourage off peak use for long distance journeys and simplification of the ticket offer should be prioritised.

(15) What changes would you like to see to the Advanced Purchase on the day (APOD) system?

APOD providing access to cheaper advanced fares up to 10 minutes before departure is welcomed. However, by allocating a seat to these purchases it does give difficulty for other passengers already on the train knowing whether a seat has been reserved or not. Whilst a good idea in theory, it should perhaps be limited to seats in specifically dedicated parts of the train and the signage on the train seat display should make it clear that (for example) "this seat may be subject to reservation" – it should also be made clear that other "non-reservable under any circumstances seats" are available and should be identified as such. As stated later in the document the operator could be encouraged to develop ideas to 'segregate' passenger and one option could be that APOD are intelligently allocated in this manner.

To improve access, information and making connections

(16) What additional information would be useful to you when planning your journeys or making connections onto other services?

As noted in the consultation document, Transport Focus has undertaken research that shows the top ten passengers priorities. The franchise should look to maximise these priorities.

How would you like the information communicated to you?

As noted in the consultation document, Transport Focus has undertaken research that shows the top ten passengers priorities. The franchise should look to maximise these priorities.

(17) How could the way in which Cross Country deals with your complaints and provides compensation to you be improved?

Information on how to make complaints must be clear, easy and readily available for the passengers and staff must be trained in dealing with these efficiently.

(18) What more could be done to improve access and provide facilities for those with disabilities or additional needs?

Legislation covers much of this area but legislation is sometimes not enough when it comes to meeting specific needs. Appropriate and compliant facilities at stations are of paramount importance and the rail industry should address both on and off train facilities for passengers who require assistance.

As noted in the consultation document, Cross Country does not manage any stations, with station management undertaken by ScotRail or directly by Network Rail at stations in Scotland. The Cross Country operator should be required to work

with the station management company to ensure improved access and facilities for those with disabilities or additional needs.

It is agreed that franchise bidders should consider solutions to improve access and interchange for people with accessibility needs; improve passenger assistance systems and offer better and accessible connections with other forms of transport.

(19) How do you believe Cross Country staff could be more effective in providing service and assistance that passengers need on a modern railway network?

Passengers value the presence of staff on-board and at stations. Currently Cross Country staff members are fairly anonymous at stations compared to other franchises and their presence at stations should be increased to be more visible. Staff should be trained to provide information and be present to guide and reassure passengers.

(20) What comment do you have on improving the overall passenger experience before, during and after the journey?

The passenger should be suitably informed throughout the journey to have confidence in the journey they are making and for onward connection.

Prior to making the journey, as well as timetable and fare information, the franchise bidder should be asked to consider methods of providing information on crowding and availability of seats.

At the station clear and concise wayfinding should be provided, as well as real time information train times.

On-board there should be clear information given on any delays and the effect this may have on onwards journeys and how to access onward connections. In addition staff should be trained and informed to provide information and, for example direct passengers to suitable seating.

At destination station, clear and concise wayfinding and information on onward connections to all modes to make interchange as easy as possible.

To improve the on-board experience

(21) Rank your priorities for improvement to the carriage layout for local trains on Cross Country? Rank 1 for most important to 7 for least important.

More seats

1

More table seats as opposed to 'airline' seats

6

More comfortable room for short distance standing

3

Cycle storage	4
Seats that align with windows	5
Greater leg-room	7
Extra room for luggage	2

(22) Rank your priorities for improvement to the carriage layout for long distance inter-city Cross Country trains? Rank 1 for most important to 7 for least important.

More seats	1
More table seats as opposed to 'airline' seats	4
More comfortable room for short distance standing	7
Cycle storage	3
Seats that align with windows	6
Greater leg-room	5
Extra room for luggage	2

Where and when do you think these facilities are most required?

It is considered that Cross Country should be a long distance operator focussing on providing good quality direct long distance and inter-regional services and as such the carriage layout should be designed more for the long distance passenger. However, if more seats could be provided this may reduce the overcrowding at peak times.

Consideration could be given to utilising two types of carriages – one catering for shorter journeys and one for longer - and an intelligent booking system used to allocate passengers to seats in the appropriate carriage depending on their journey length.

Increasing cycle storage capacity on rolling stock and easier access both on train and when booking for people with bikes to support and encourage inter-modal travel and tourism, is supported.

(23) What other comments or suggestions do you have about the on-board experience?

The standard of catering is poor, particularly north of Edinburgh where it is curtailed, and this needs to improve. Other requirements valued are provision of power points and free wifi.

If more seats could be provided through longer trains, this may assist in reducing overcrowding at peak times and negate the need for two types of carriages and concentrate on providing a high quality standard carriage layout.

(24) Which initiatives would you suggest to try to reduce the disturbance caused by the ‘churn’ of passengers alighting and boarding at frequent station calls?

The potential approach for the operator to develop ideas to ‘segregate’ passengers according to the distance they travel through intelligent allocation of seat reservations is supported and considered worthwhile exploring. This could allow different carriages for short journeys and long journeys, potentially increasing the seating capacity of the service.

Stakeholder Engagement and Community Rail Partnerships

(25) Are there any improvements to the level stakeholder engagement by Cross Country that you would like to see and how could stakeholder engagement be improved?

The RTPs would welcome direct engagement regarding the Cross Country Passenger Franchise.

TPE are considered to be good at stakeholder engagement – perhaps this franchise should seek to work with stakeholders in a similar fashion.

(26) Does Cross Country provide a sufficient level of support to relevant Community Rail partnerships in your experience?

N/A	Yes
N/A	No

(26) Has their support improved in the last year to 18 months?

N/A	Yes
N/A	No

(27) Provide ideas on what more you feel the franchise could do to help the relevant Community Rail partnerships?

Transport Scotland, ScotRail and Regional Transport Partnerships work closely to develop and advise Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) in Scotland. Where Cross Country Passenger services provide services to stations within a given CRP it would be expected that the operator would engage with the CRP.

(28) Do you have any other views on how the future Cross Country franchise could be improved that have not been captured in the questions above?

The consultation makes no mention of first class travel and consideration needs to be made regarding the proportion of first class and standard class seats, based on demand evidence.

Appendix 2 - SEStran Response - Cross Country Rail Franchise Public Consultation August 2018

SEStran recognises that the rail network and the franchise operators contribute significantly to sustainable development in several key areas. These areas are identified in the SEStran regional transport strategy as follows:

- Social and community – Including accessibility, integration with other transport and Community Rail Partnerships
- Local economy – Including skills, procurement and support for local industry such as tourism
- Environment – Including carbon emissions, air quality and noise

In the 2006 consultation for the 2007 franchise award, SEStran highlighted the benefits that the franchise brings to commuter services from Dunbar to Edinburgh, Edinburgh to Fife and further north. In 2018 maintaining these would be paramount, especially in the context of the questions 5 to 9 (page 22-25) of the document for consultation. These questions are related to allowing bidders the flexibility to make changes in services at the periphery of the network, including frequency of service and calling patterns (timings).

SEStran welcomes the recognition in the current consultation document that elements of the cross-country service perform an important commuter role. However, it is clear that the overall brand for the franchise needs a lot of work. For example, what does it stand for and what role does it provide? Currently it is poorly defined and poorly communicated by the franchise holder to the travelling public.

SEStran would take the position that any reduction to service frequency and capacity would be detrimental to the citizens of the region, especially if we have no clear vision as to how any reduction would be offset. SEStran would like to emphasise that care must be taken to ensure there are no reductions in overall service frequencies, journey times, quality of rolling stock, ticket integration and interchangeability.

In addition, SEStran would like to see increased cycle storage capacity on rolling-stock and easier access both on train and when booking for people with bikes, to support and encourage inter-model travel and tourism.

Q1. What are the particular services, routes, and times of day where you think crowding on Cross Country services needs to be addressed most urgently?

The services north of Edinburgh also perform a crucial function for commuter services in and out of Edinburgh. Particularly in the morning peak, there are two cross country trains that make up approximately 18% of the overall seating capacity that serves Edinburgh from the north between the hours 0730 – 0930 (Edinburgh Arrivals).

The popularity of these services leads to overcrowding but does indicate how essential they are to this segment of commuters.

Q2. Which of the following potential measures do you think could overcome crowding caused by short distance commuters using long distance Cross Country trains, assuming that suitable alternative services are available?

- a. Removing calls from towns closest to the conurbation centre either completely or just at peak times
- b. Retaining calls at such stations but restricting them to pick up/set down only
- c. Removing the validity of local multi modal tickets on long distance trains
- d. Other (please suggest).

Other: There are restricted intercity services serving the population north of Edinburgh. Therefore, in order to arrive down south at a reasonable time there is a requirement to run in the peak. There is capacity within the longer trains to meet the local commuter need. However, if there is a failure of the ScotRail service, the result will be overcrowding in the morning peaks, which causes the most inconvenience.

Q3. Please rank the following in order of priority for improvement for your future Cross-Country services:

1. More frequent weekday services – Services into and out of Edinburgh
2. Earlier times of first trains – Services into Edinburgh
3. More frequent weekend services – Services out of Edinburgh
4. More additional summer only services
5. Later times of last trains
6. Earlier Sunday morning services

Q4. If it were possible would you agree with transferring these local routes to the West Midlands Franchise?

Yes, if it improves the ability of the franchise to deliver a better long distance experience, by reducing the need for stops and passenger interchanges.

5. If the network was unable to cope with all the service enhancement aspirations north of Northallerton on the East Coast mainline, would a:

- curtailment of one of the existing Cross Country services be acceptable (with the resources redeployed to enhance other existing or new routes?)

SEStran do not want to see a reduction on any of the current Cross Country services to/from Fife for example. All services are essential and in fact more services will be required to meet the future aspirations to encourage switching from road and air.

Any impact on the number and frequency of services to and from Edinburgh is detrimental to the population of East Lothian; however, without knowing the proposed Trans Pennine enhancement or timings, it is premature to be overly critical. With significant planned growth throughout East Lothian, sustainable public transport options are essential, therefore optimising rail connectivity including multiple service operator's key to delivering positive outcomes.

The importance of rail commuting between Edinburgh and Fife/further north is increasing all the time, should any of the cross country trains currently also performing as commuter services be withdrawn or timed to operate out with the peak periods, this will cause serious capacity problems which will have to be addressed by ScotRail and Transport Scotland.

Q6. Should bidders be given flexibility to make limited changes to the extremities to the network so that benefits such as reduced crowding in the centre of the network can be provided?

- Yes
- Yes, but only if alternatives are provided
- No?

Yes, but only if alternatives are provided. This question is important as the definition of extremities is broad and may impact on local services acting as a lifeline for communities. Consequently, this must be caveated to allow for a thorough assessment of the wider community impacts.

The service provision to Edinburgh is very limited at present compared to the service provision to key cities further south (i.e. half hourly services). Therefore, SEStran would not want service provision to be reduced further. Nearly 8% of passengers on the Cross Country services are from Scotland and this is predicted to increase in the future. Edinburgh is a key tourist attraction and therefore encouraging tourist travel on this route would assist in filling the off peak capacity.

Q7a. Do you agree that the current level of Cross Country services to the following routes are the minimum that must be specified for:

- West of Plymouth to Penzance?
- From Exeter/Newton Abbot to Paignton?
- **North of Edinburgh to Aberdeen?**
- Southampton to Bournemouth?
- Guildford?
- Bath?
- Cardiff to Bristol Temple Meads?

Yes, with reference to the north of Edinburgh to Aberdeen.

Q7b. Do you agree that the changes to the following routes would be acceptable if a similar or improved service was provided by another operator:

- West of Plymouth to Penzance?
- From Exeter/Newton Abbot to Paignton?
- **North of Edinburgh to Aberdeen?**
- Southampton to Bournemouth?
- Guildford?
- Bath?
- Cardiff to Bristol Temple Meads?

No, with reference to the north of Edinburgh to Aberdeen. This is a big 'if' as there is no clear understanding of where these alternative services would come from or how they would be funded.

This would require the already congested local services to feed the Cross Country services, which would not be in the best interests of communities. SEStran believes this would result in a poorer service for longer distance travel.

There would potentially be a higher cost of fares for passengers north of Edinburgh, where there would be no benefit from discount savings as they would only be connecting to the Cross Country services in Edinburgh. Passengers would have an additional interchange at Edinburgh causing longer journey times, as well as multiple tickets for the different services.

Further, if the local services are delayed or cancelled there could be loss of connection for onward travel -which raises the question, who would cover the compensation and onward travel costs?

If the Cross Country services were to continue to Dundee/Aberdeen without stopping in Fife this would have an economic impact on Fife and its residents, if residents were unable to access the services.

Q8. Do you think the Department's minimum specification should preserve exactly today's pattern of services and station calls rather than offer an opportunity to change? Yes/No

No. The setting of minimum specifications maintains the guarantee of a set standard over time; however, with changing transport behaviour, flexibility to introduce enhancements should be permitted subject to capacity and consultation constraints. With growing demand on the network, step change must be permitted to meet the future forecasts, by local and national carriers.

This needs to be spelt out as to what services are now additional to the previous franchise, including rolling stock and stopping patterns. As with the Abellio ScotRail franchise, at the start of the franchise several trains were removed from the network. ScotRail are still trying to replace these services to meet the franchise provision, as well as delivering against passenger expectations.

SEStran would support passengers in their expectation that there should be improved service provision, plus enhancements and improvements to services with every franchise.

Q9. Should bidders have some flexibility to make fewer calls at some stations, for example if that enabled them to accelerate services? Yes/No If yes, please give examples where this might be justified

In Fife, it is felt that reducing stopping patterns as and when it suits does not provide passengers with confidence in a service, especially if the stations are at the end of routes, which means services to Scotland would receive a reduced service whilst carrying 8% of the overall passengers.

However, in East Lothian a case could be made for 'yes', but again this must reflect a benefit/cost analysis approach and be led by business demand. The analysis must demonstrate significant benefits over local circumstances and an element of profit must be returned to offset local needs.

Q10: Should the minimum specification have the number of trains from each station to Birmingham but give bidders the flexibility to decide where trains go after Birmingham?

No comment.

Q11. Are there stations or routes beyond the geography of the current Cross Country network that should receive calls that they currently do not receive?

North from Edinburgh into Stirling and Inverness.

Q12. Are there stations within the geography of the current Cross Country network that should receive calls that they currently do not receive?

As Q11.

Q13. What changes would you like to see to the way Cross Country currently sells and provides tickets?

The continued improvement to seat reservations welcomed as it improves the complete travel experience, especially for the elderly, disabled, families and frequent traveller.

Q14: What changes would you like to see to the current Cross Country fares structure?

Increased Equity - the fares are rarely discounted for tickets north of Edinburgh on Cross Country Services, with discounts on services from key cities to key cities. If the discounts were to be provided for all passengers regardless of boarding stations the benefits to the users would be more equitable.

With both ticketing provision and fare structure, SEStran believes that all franchises should be aiming for increased integration, transparency and simplification.

Q15: What changes would you like to see to the Advanced Purchase on the Day (APOD) system?

Improved integration with other ticketing systems to avoid confusion with passengers already undertaking a journey, and not knowing that the seat they are in has been reserved by an APOD customer. This confusion results in them having to move which in turn degrades their journey experience.

Q16: What additional information would be useful to you when planning your journeys or making connections onto other services? How would you like it communicated to you?

Intermodal connections at stations communicated using on board real time passenger information screens.

Q17: How could the way in which Cross Country deals with your complaints and provides compensation to you be improved?

No comment

Q18: What more could be done to improve access and provide facilities for those with disabilities or additional needs?

Travel planning websites, satellite navigation and Apps (Google Maps & Traveline) are now common place. People are using these initiatives every day to make their commute, shopping trip or recreational journey planning easier. However, for those in the community with disabilities (seen and unseen), learning difficulties or degenerative conditions such as dementia can find these tools difficult to use or understand.

SEStran would be happy to discuss a project to develop an interface to improve this for passengers with disabilities. We are exploring the development of a platform that can be adjusted for different disabilities to show the relevant route information in a clear and accessible way. For example, providing information about which travel option to use, where to get on and when to get off, providing information about what to do if lost, and enabling a carer (and transport provider) monitoring/communication system.

Q19: How do you believe Cross Country staff could be more effective in providing the service and assistance that passengers need on a modern railway network?

No comment.

Q20: What comment, if any do you have on improving the overall passenger experience before and after the journey?

Improved ticketing with increased transparency and fairness will help with pre/ post journey experiences, by reducing feelings of cognitive dissonance amongst passengers, whilst increasing confidence and reducing confusion and post purchase regret.

Furthermore, SEStran feels that franchise bidders should be required to examine the potential for alternative models of station management to achieve social and community ends. This could include long-term management of stations and associated buildings being passed over to other bodies, allowing operators to focus on train operations rather than asset management

Q21: Please rank your priority for improvement to the carriage layouts for regional/local trains on Cross Country:

1. more seats
2. cycle storage
3. more comfortable room for short distance standing
4. more table seats as opposed to 'airline' seats
5. greater leg-room

- | |
|--|
| <p>6. extra room for luggage
 7. seats that align with windows</p> |
|--|

Q22: Please rank your priority for improvement to the carriage layouts for long distance inter-city trains on Cross Country:

1. more table seats as opposed to 'airline' seats
2. greater leg-room
3. extra room for luggage
4. seats that align with windows
5. cycle storage
6. more seats
7. more comfortable room for short distance standing

Q23: What other comments or suggestions do you have about the on-board experience?

Improved customer experience with better WIFI, charging points and in cabin information showing intermodal RTPI for connections at stations.

Q24: Which initiatives would you suggest to try to reduce the disturbance caused by the 'churn' of passengers alighting and boarding at frequent station calls?

Improved ticketing and increased standing room.

Q25: Are there any improvements to the level of stakeholder engagement by Cross Country that you would like to see? And how could stakeholder engagement be improved?

Engaging and communicating more regularly with stakeholders will improve understanding within the key stakeholder groups and opinion leaders; what is the franchise is doing, what is the strategy and direction of travel? This will also create greater brand awareness which will improve the brand image.

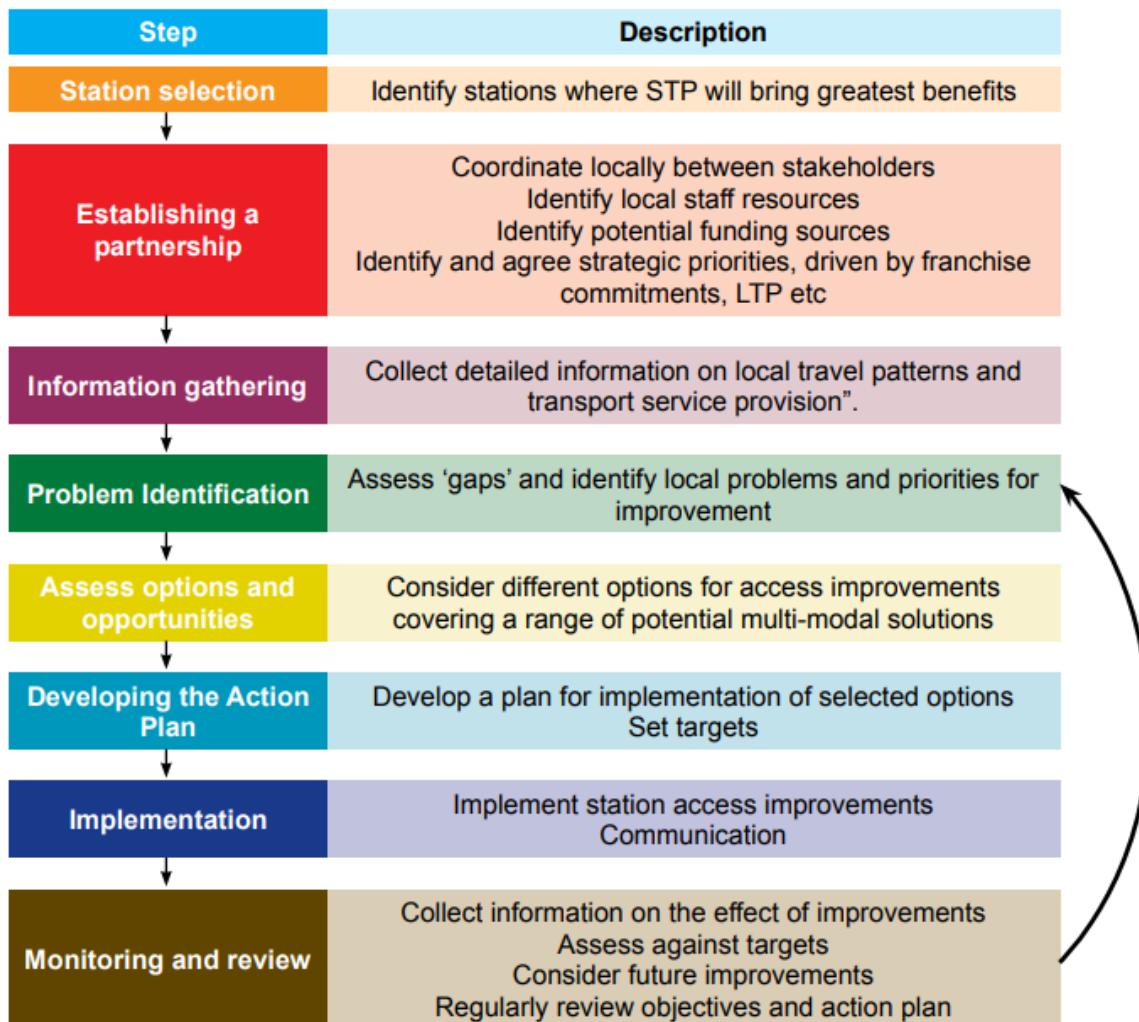
Q26: Does Cross Country provide a sufficient level of support to relevant Community Rail partnerships in your experience? Has this improved in the last year/18 months?

SEStran believes that Cross Country representatives could improve dramatically in this area but understand that the reason to attend meetings must be a worthwhile use of time and resources. SEStran would be happy to support and facilitate increased engagement.

Q27: Please provide ideas on what more you feel the franchise could do to help the relevant Community Rail Partnerships?

Engaging and communicating regularly with CRPs will improve understanding within the communities served by the franchise, in terms of what the franchise is doing, and will also create greater brand awareness which will improve the brand image.

Appendix 3 - Station Travel Plan (STP) Process¹



¹ <https://www.raildeliverygroup.com/our-services/about-my-journey/station-travel-plans/stp-docs.html?task=file.download&id=469762586>