

4. Scotland's Rail Infrastructure Strategy Consultation

Consultation on Scotland's Rail Infrastructure Strategy

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The report provides the forum with a summary of the consultation paper from the Scottish Government setting out their vision for rail infrastructure, considers the challenges and opportunities for Scottish railways and outlines a number of proposals that Scottish Ministers believe can help to maximise investment in rail infrastructure to support the growth predicted and to deliver dependable customer services from 2019 onwards. SEStran have received an extension to the 24 February deadline to allow a position to be agreed by the Board at their 2 March meeting.

2. CONSULTATION

- 2.1 Transport Scotland are seeking views on its proposed approach to the rail infrastructure investment strategy from April 2019. The results from this consultation will help to inform the Scottish Minister's High Level Output Specification (HLOS) which is a process aimed at improving performance, reducing journey times and increasing capacity and capability of the Scottish rail network. A copy of the consultation document can be found here: <https://consult.scotland.gov.uk/rail-policy/rail-infrastructure-strategy-from-2019> and a copy of the consultation questions are outlined in the appendix to this report for information.
- 2.2 Rail in the South East of Scotland plays a significant and increasing role in the transport mix of the region and the outcome of the Rail Infrastructure Strategy, Network Rail's periodic review and forthcoming plans for specific rail investments will have great relevance to the region. Growth and development in South East Scotland has led to the location of important areas of employment and housing in new locations, and resulted in a more dispersed pattern of travel demand. One obvious effect of this is the rapid growth in traffic levels on the Edinburgh outer city bypass. Given the substantial increase in population and households anticipated over the next 10 to 15 years this trend can be expected to increase. It will be key for inclusive growth moving forward that we have a sustainable strategy for rail investment.
- 2.3 Rail services in the SEStran area are used by 43 million passengers in 2014/15, with a significant focus on gateways such as Waverley and Haymarket and represents nearly a quarter of the total Scottish usage. Indeed, rail use in the SEStran area since the end of the recession has been close to 6% per annum, higher than both Scottish and UK averages analysing Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) figures. There is also clearly a significant role for Rail Freight services, albeit with a clear potential for reduction in volume, given amongst other factors, the ending of significant coal-fired power production within the SEStran area, but hopefully there is also an opportunity for greater inter-modal freight traffic.

- 2.4** Transport Scotland have been clear that this consultation is on the pillars of an infrastructure strategy and not on specific projects. Therefore, this paper does not go into detail on specific priority projects for SEStran. Instead it is proposed that we support the outlined vision and approach in our response. Whilst, highlighting that there continues to be key connectivity priorities around major Edinburgh gateways, Falkirk and Clackmannshire to both Edinburgh and Glasgow and also clear gaps in cross-regional connectivity with East Lothian and Midlothian, clear growth potential in West Lothian, as well as a need for continued analysis of further enhancement to Borders infrastructure and services, alongside increased investment in key Fife based infrastructure and service priorities.
- 2.5** One of the specific issues the Strategy consultation raises is the previous establishment of several broad-based funding streams e.g. Station Funds, a Freight Fund and the need for a discussion as to whether these should continue into the future. There has previously been clear support within SESTRAN for the continuation of these funds but also a recognition that whilst well-intentioned may not be the best way in the future for delivering certain investments. It would also seem sensible given the scarcity of resource to move towards a more flexible and responsive approach to planning scheme delivery and enables the delivery of a well-planned, realistically timetabled and robustly financed approach.
- 2.6** Within the SEStran area, rail is becoming an increasingly significant mode for local journeys, and is the best alternative to car use for longer distance commuter journeys. Between 2001 and 2011, the proportion of SEStran residents travelling to work by train increased by over 40%. Whilst, this may be due to as the Scotland Route Study suggests, that the regional geography prevents car-based commuting from achieving high market shares into many of the key employment areas, this shouldn't be a source of complacency in terms of continued objectives of a greater modal share for sustainable and collective modes of travel. It would seem integral to the Scottish climate change commitments that we continue with a strategic approach to rail infrastructure investment that facilitates outcomes that reduce further emissions from transport but also make our infrastructure resilience to the change in climate which is already unavoidable given previous cumulative emissions.
- 2.7** Investment in Rail is also critical for the continued inclusive growth of not only South-East of Scotland but Scotland as a whole. Whether that is longer-term connectivity investment regarding High-Speed Rail or short/medium term investment in East Coast Main line connectivity for example. SESTRAN as part of the East Coast Mainline Authorities (ECMA) alliance view this line is not "just" a railway, but a key strategic economic artery for the UK. In Scotland it connects all of Scotland's 7 Cities with London and the intervening regional economies of the UK's East Coast. It is also critical that the complementary investment in High Speed 2 services to Yorkshire and the north is made by 2032, so that the East Coast route can be freed up to let the nation [and regions] breathe more easily economically e.g. expansion of

commuter services and stations in the expanding Edinburgh City Region. ECMA research shows this investment will represent excellent value for money delivering up to well over £3 of economic benefit for every £1 spent. This ratio goes up to nearly £6 when through HS2 East services are added. However, with resources tight we need a discussion about how we best fund investment in the timescale of Strategic Transport Projects Review 2.

- 2.8** The consultation also seeks comment on how trade-offs between different types of investments will be prioritised, alternative sources of funding for an investment programme, proposes an approach to specifying performance outputs and how these are balanced with wider priorities. There are also specific questions on safety and in particular closure of level crossings, as well as how innovation can be supported in the future delivery of rail infrastructure.

3. CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1** The forum are invited to provide comment on the consultation paper, which will be incorporated as appropriate into the final report to the Board in early March and the initial issues highlighted for further discussion at the meeting within the paper. The forum should also note that Transport Scotland are hosting further workshops within the SEStran area at the Town House, Kirkcaldy 6th February 1200 - 1600 and Serenity Café, Edinburgh 21st February 09:30-13:00.

George Eckton
Partnership Director
27th January 2017

Appendix 1 – List of Consultation Questions

Appendix: Consultation Questions

1. Do you agree with our vision and approach? Will they help us to achieve the Scottish Government's purpose of increasing sustainable and inclusive economic growth?
2. How might we make trade-offs and prioritise between different types of investments, while ensuring that our actions are aligned with our vision?

Note that this question refers to the types of trade-offs that may be required (e.g. where improvements to journey times may impact on levels of connectivity, or vice versa) rather than actual names/locations of schemes promoted or supported by stakeholders.

3. Do you support the move to a more flexible 'pipeline' approach to scheme delivery, that does not force us to make early decisions on a detailed specification prior to the commencement of the five-year regulatory control period, without receipt of a robust business case?
4. What are your views on the retention or removal of individual ring-fenced funds?
5. What alternative sources of funding could be used to help deliver the rail investment programme?
6. Do you agree with our approach to emissions reductions and climate change adaptation? What else should be considered?
7. Do you agree with the proposed approach to specifying performance outputs?
8. How should performance be balanced against the wider priorities for reduced journey times and the full utilisation of existing and new capacity?
9. Do you have a view on our approach to safety? How can the closure of level crossings be better supported?
10. Do you support our approach to innovation and new technologies?
11. Do you have any other views on how innovation could be better supported through the HLOS process and Network Rail's broader management of the rail infrastructure?