

Fergus Cochrane
Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh EH99 1SP

25 January 2008

Dear Mr Cochrane,

please find below the responses from CRAG to the various submissions made to the Public Petitions Committee following their last consideration of Petition 1080 on 6th November 2008.

We are grateful to those organisations who have taken the time and the trouble to put together a submission.

Lawrence Marshall

Chair

Capital Rail Action Group

1080/B - East Lothian Council:

We welcome East Lothian Council's lack of objection to passenger services being reintroduced to the South Sub. - and in particular their view that a full circular service is the best option to pursue.

Re. their comment that they would not support linking services round the South Sub. with North Berwick - Waverley/Haymarket services, we are well aware of and fully understand the Council's concern that this would necessitate the use of diesel rolling stock in place of the current electric units used on this route, the South Sub. not being electrified as yet.

We made this proposal, however, because of an even more pressing concern - namely that at peak periods, when line capacity between Waverley and Haymarket is most under stress, North Berwick services currently take up valuable train paths but serve no other stations to the west. This is not the best use of a scarce resource. Our proposal would result in better use of these paths. Off-peak, the link with North Berwick services is not strictly required as more

train paths are available at these times. Thus only at peak periods would diesel units be needed.

Extending North Berwick services onto the South Sub. throughout the day would, however, allow *all* North Berwick services to run through to Haymarket and hopefully would bring about a half-hourly weekday service to North Berwick/Dunbar in line with the Council's aspirations.

We think that these gains outweigh the reversion to diesel trains on the North Berwick route.

However, there are, as always, other available options and CRAG has long thought that it would make most sense to link the new Helensburgh-Airdrie-Bathgate-Edinburgh electric train service into that to North Berwick/Dunbar. The reason we did not suggest this is because Transport Scotland have so far ruled out such a linkage - largely due to worries of importing any East Coast Main Line unreliability into the Bathgate service (and hence Strathclyde services) and vice-versa.

Such a linkage would, though, achieve the same ends in terms of best use of available train paths at peak and off-peak between Waverley and Haymarket as we sought via linkage with South Sub. services. We would be more than happy, therefore, to campaign with East Lothian Council to make the case for a Helensburgh-North Berwick/Dunbar half-hourly service.

Re. the rejected suggestion that Edinburgh Crossrail services run via the South Sub., it isn't clear what permutation of this suggestion the Council are referring to. We would contend that there may well be merit in extending services from Newcraighall to run onto the South Sub., thus creating a Newcraighall-Brunstane-Waverley-Haymarket-Morningside, etc.-Newcraighall (and vice-versa) half-hourly service. This would retain the current Crossrail link with Haymarket but with the added benefit of there now being four trains per hour from Newcraighall into Edinburgh and serving a wider swathe of the city, two via Brunstane and two via stations round the South Sub.. The one disadvantage of this option would be the loss of a through service to Edinburgh Park - though it's only at peak periods that this would affect many people. It's a case once more of balancing gains and losses and again we can see that there are many service linkages possible in a busy rail network such as that serving Edinburgh. Indeed, we understand that the current Halcrow study is looking at even more potential service combinations for the South Sub.. We await the results of this study with interest.

In summary, we welcome East Lothian Council's submission and note their comments re. a full South Sub. circular service being the "best option". We are happy to work with them to achieve a linkage between Bathgate services and North Berwick/Dunbar as this would achieve the same end as linkage with the South Sub.. But we have to persuade Transport Scotland of the merits of this! Moreover, it may well be that further service combinations will arise from the current study being undertaken by Halcrow.

1080/C - Scottish Government:

As the Glasgow rail network demonstrates - the second largest urban rail network in Britain (after London) - rail can play a vital role in moving people not only between but also into and within cities. This can also be seen in other conurbations down south and Edinburgh is therefore currently disadvantaged in having lost most of its internal rail services during the time of the Beeching cuts.

The approved Edinburgh Tram project will help to replicate for the modern era some of those lost services in the north of the city. Re-opening the South Sub. will help to put rail-based travel back into the options available for travel in a wide swathe of the city stretching from its eastern suburbs through the city centre and round the south of the city. It will moreover link with tram, rail and bus services at both Haymarket and Waverley stations. Further, the South Sub. serves movement flows not only to the city centre but also around the city which have become far more common in recent years as employment, retail and leisure facilities have become more dispersed throughout the city, no longer existing just in the city centre. The South Sub. will provide the very "high quality commuter services into the major areas of employment, education and leisure activities" that the Scottish Government desires.

Any National Transport Strategy must therefore recognise and plan for the need for local rail services - especially so in the nation's capital so long deprived of them.

Mr Henderson states that the business case for re-opening "has not been clear". We would contend that the Benefit Cost Ratios contained within the Atkins report of March 2004 are pretty respectable by comparison with many other projects supported by the Scottish Government. It will be interesting to see what results the current Halcrow study produces given that it is examining yet further permutations for restoring local rail services on the South Sub..

Mr Henderson further notes that services round the South Sub. will be "low speed". That is not to be denied when compared with main line rail services. But the journey times offered through an increasingly congested city are in most cases much better than can be achieved by road-based transport, sometimes startlingly so. Someone wishing to travel during the First World War between Portobello and Morningside, for instance, could do so far faster by rail than anyone can even by car today. Our cities have slowed down considerably not just due to road congestion but also due to the withdrawal of urban rail services after the Second World War. Moreover, to meet the needs of today's developing city, such useful journeys as Craigmillar-Edinburgh Park are perfectly feasible either directly by heavy rail or through interchange with the tram at Haymarket. I doubt very much that those who would take advantage of such a service would regard it as "low speed" when compared with journey times by other modes.

It is true that South Sub. services need to access the current Edinburgh-Glasgow lines at Haymarket Central junction. This will require careful timetabling and would be helped by re-doubling of the chord from there to Gorgie junction. It should be noted, however, that the Scottish Government have recently announced their intention to divert some Edinburgh-Glasgow services to the current Fife lines to serve a new station at Gogar in order to provide

access (via tram) to Edinburgh airport. This could, of course, help to relieve train path pressure at Haymarket Central junction.

We too await the Halcrow study with interest. Considering an even wider range of options than the Atkins report we hope that it will show that the South Sub. is eminently "affordable", providing "value for money" and fitting with "transport priorities" and "stated objectives" - particularly if these include better transport services and choice of services in the nation's capital.

1080/D - City of Edinburgh Council:

We welcome the laying out chronologically within Mr Grieve's letter of recent work on the South Sub. (ESSR).

We would emphasise the unanimous decision of the Full Council meeting of 11 November 2004 (contained in the report to the Council Executive of 24 May 2005):

- a) To note the report by the Director of City Development and, in particular, the indication that the ESSR, the Borders Railway and Tram Line 3 would complement each other.
- b) To note that the re-introduction of passenger services to the ESSR by extending the current North Berwick services to Niddrie or Newcraighall via Morningside would have a positive net present value and benefit cost ratio.
- c) To recognise that, whilst not without difficulty, the re-introduction of passenger services to the ESSR would help the Council achieve the objectives of its Local Transport Strategy.
- d) To work with the Scottish Executive and the rail industry to secure, in a time similar to the Borders Railway, the re-introduction of passenger services to the ESSR by extending the current North Berwick services to Niddrie or Newcraighall via Morningside.
- e) To ask the Director of City Development to commence discussions with the Scottish Executive with a view to securing the re-introduction of passenger services to the ESSR.

1080/E - Lothian Buses:

We very much welcome the support offered by Lothian Buses to the re-opening of the South Sub. to local passenger services. It would indeed "provide a fast inner orbital service, capable of by-passing known congestion black spots" and "would undoubtedly improve connectivity and support sustainable development which, if properly developed and

integrated with [Lothian Buses'] services, would be a welcome step forward and one we would support".

We note that Lothian Buses know their travel market very well and congratulate them on being voted Best UK Bus Company again last year.

1080/F - Passengers' View Scotland:

We note that, due to "time and resource limitations" since their establishment at the start of April 2007, they are "not currently in a position to respond to such a petition".

1080/G - E-Rail Ltd:

We very much welcome this supportive letter from E-Rail Ltd and note their estimate of available funding for the re-introduction of local passenger services on the South Sub. as being between £6m and £7.875m.

"Land Uplift Capture" seems to us to be an eminently sensible way of raising enabling funds from developers who can see that a particular transport project, as yet unfunded by government, will help to increase the value of development proposals served by that project - which developments will, of course, in turn provide additional customers for the transport project when implemented.

We note that the Voluntary Contribution Agreements (VCAs) entered into by developers must of necessity be time limited. If the work to re-introduce local passenger services on the South Sub. is not contracted within 5 years of the VCA being signed (and the first was signed in the spring of 2007) then the VCA will lapse. Since these contributions reduce the call on the public purse and thereby increase the Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of a project, it is important that the timing of public funding be synchronised with that available via the VCAs now in place.

One small point: E-Rail Ltd are not in fact co-petitioners with us - but we did think their work of sufficient interest to invite them along to give evidence in our support at the meeting of the Public Petitions Committee held on 6th November 2007.

1080/H - First ScotRail:

Under the franchising system now in place for the provision of passenger rail services in Great Britain, train operating companies such as First are tasked not with the development of the rail network but rather with the provision of contracted rail services.

The submission received from First ScotRail is, therefore, exactly as we would have expected given their current role.

1080/I - Network Rail:

Although received very late in the day, allowing only a few hours to compile a response, we very much welcome the substantive nature of this submission. It is, however, depressingly familiar in its negativity towards carefully considered suggestions by informed organisations as to how to fashion a railway fit for the needs of today and tomorrow. We are forcefully reminded of the many arguments advanced by Railtrack to stymie for years the building of a station at Edinburgh Park - delays which drove officials both at local and national government level to express the view privately that, were it not for the fact that they themselves were so convinced of the case for a station there, they would long ago have given up in their attempts to secure agreement with Railtrack. Indeed, even once Railtrack had included a station stop in their Working Timetable, it took several more years before an agreement was cobbled together to actually allow the station to be built and trains to stop there.

To return to the specifics of the submission from Network Rail, however.

We note Network Rail's comment that, although the route of the South Sub. "remains largely intact", there is today "considerably less railway" than was available in 1962 when local passenger services on the line ceased. We also note that this deficit in infrastructure capacity largely relates to the single lead junctions at Haymarket Central and Portobello where the South Sub. meets the main line railway. Work to restore capacity at Portobello is, however, now accepted as policy by Network Rail themselves. A similar commitment would be welcome at Haymarket Central junction - though main line capacity is more the issue here. In themselves these works are not all that major an undertaking in comparison with railway developments elsewhere in Britain and abroad.

Regarding main line capacity at Haymarket Central junction, conflict with main line services really only occurs with the 2 trains per hour coming off the South Sub. heading towards Haymarket station since these trains will cross over or onto the tracks used by trains on the Edinburgh/Glasgow line. The 2 trains per hour heading onto the South Sub. will simply turn off out of the way (in exactly the same way as do trains heading in the direction of Slateford at Haymarket East junction just now) and cause no conflict at all. The Atkins study of March 2004 stated (para. 3.10) that "there appears to be some capacity available for additional train movements through Haymarket East and Haymarket Central junctions in the off-peak period, given that North Berwick services are extended to or from Waverley to Haymarket or Glasgow Central via Carstairs at peak times". In our response above to the submission from East Lothian Council we referred to possible service linkages which reduce the need for additional train paths along the main line. Although the situations at

Haymarket East and Haymarket Central junctions are not 100% similar, there can be little practical difference in effect of substituting a train crossing onto the main line at Haymarket East junction for one crossing at Haymarket Central junction just a few hundreds yards west.

At Portobello, we simply note again that Network Rail, in their Route Utilisation Strategy of 2007, have accepted the need to re-double this presently single-lead junction in conjunction with the current Edinburgh Crossrail service and the proposed extension of this to Tweedbank via Galashiels in the central Borders.

We accept that freight trains running around the South Sub. are not evenly spaced throughout the day. The Atkins study was well aware of this as well, of course, and noted (pages 3-4 and 3-5) that a "very flexible" bi-directional central loop arrangement could be provided at one of the proposed stations on the line. More pertinently they also noted (page 3-5) that "the provision of additional signal sections is almost certainly the most practicable and cost-effective way to increase line capacity and address ... timetabling issues". This isn't rocket science. Moreover, providing these few extra signals was factored by Atkins into their estimates (page 5-7) of the capital costs associated with re-introducing local passenger services on the South Sub..

As regards capacity at Waverley, we have always been aware that the increase from 24 to 28 train paths per hour resulting from the work to Waverley during 2007 was already fully booked. That's why we took issue with Network Rail's insistent contention that they had provided enough sufficient extra capacity for the next decade or more! That assumes a railway frozen at 2007 levels - something we don't accept as the way forward for an ambitious Scotland. We, in any case, have never sought to claim the 4 additional train paths now available. Rather, we have always thought that spare train paths are available off-peak and that better use can be made of train paths during the busier peak periods.

Reference is made to the need for additional rolling stock if a local passenger service round the South Sub. is to be restored. We took this as read. So did Atkins who factored train leasing costs (as well as train crew, fuel and maintenance, track usage, track congestion and station usage costs) into their equations (see pages 5-1 to 5-6). As for electrification of the South Sub., this is a Network Rail aspiration. As the surrounding rail network becomes almost completely electrified under current Scottish Government plans, the case for this will become even more obvious. But it's not a requirement for the re-introduction of local passenger services on the line.

In terms of the passenger numbers predicted to use such services, we agree that robust numbers are required. While the headline figure of 10,675 passengers per day predicted by Atkins for a full circular service can be dissected in the way suggested by Network Rail, when you drill down into the figures then we don't think that 42 people boarding per train at Waverley or 39 at Haymarket or 12 at Morningside station is all that outrageous an estimate of likely demand given current traffic flows on the corridors served – and hopefully with a rail industry keen to market the revival of urban rail services in the nation's capital. We await with interest the further work now being undertaken by Halcrow.

Finally, as regards costs, we are sure that an update specific to the various options examined will be provided by Halcrow. Moreover, Network Rail are themselves on record as stating that one of their main priorities has to be the more cost-effective provision of rail

infrastructure in Britain - especially when one compares costs in Britain with those obtaining (more often than not involving the same construction companies) in Europe.

1080/J - Passenger Focus:

We very much welcome the support offered in principle by Passenger Focus (the independent national rail consumer watchdog set up by the UK government) for the re-opening of the South Sub..