CRAG
CAPITAL RAIL ACTION GROUP

Edinburgh South Suburban Railway

Submission to Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee for its consideration of Petition 1080 at its meeting on 16/12/08

CRAG is grateful for your continued consideration of our petition calling for the re-introduction of local passenger services on the Edinburgh South Suburban Railway.

All the relevant reports together with submissions by various parties have already been made available to the committee. Nothing new has been added to this body of evidence since your last consideration of the petition on June 24th of this year.

As we near the end of 2008, however, what has become abundantly clear in the past 12 months is that, although track capacity is constrained in the Edinburgh area, the running of a heavy rail service on the Edinburgh South Suburban Railway is achievable - and, requiring only 2 train paths out of 28 available per hour, without great detriment to existing rail users. Indeed, Table 6.4 of the March 2008 Halcrow report reveals plans for at least 11 extra train services per hour heading west from Edinburgh in future years: 2 extra to Glasgow Queen Street High Level via Falkirk High, 2 extra to Bathgate (extended via Airdrie to Glasgow Queen Street Low Level), 2 extra to Inverkeithing, 2 extra to Falkirk Grahamston, 1 extra to Dundee (commencing December 2008), 1 extra to Perth and 1 extra to Glasgow Central High Level.

So, as CRAG has argued for many years, train paths are available.

However, both Transport Scotland and Network Rail are firm in their view - a view which permeates all of the Halcrow report - that no train paths in the Edinburgh area should be utilised for services serving internal Edinburgh destinations. Rather, all investment and allocation of resources is to be directed at serving the growing commuter flows into the capital from the Lothians, Fife and central Scotland.

It might be thought that Edinburgh taxpayers might not wish to be so generous in their support of railway services as to willingly deprive themselves of the ability to move about the city quickly by rail - whilst their taxes help fund an increasing number of services allowing commuters from outwith the city to get to and from their work often in less time than it takes for far shorter journeys by public transport within the city. The growing patronage of the Edinburgh Crossrail service is witness to the fact that time savings by rail within the city - even with just a half-hourly frequency - can be proportionately just as great as for journeys outwith Edinburgh.

We therefore believe that, just as in Glasgow, rail services should serve city residents as well as those living in the greater travel to work area. Indeed, in Glasgow, such are the number of rail stations, residents often have a choice of 2 or even 3 stations within reach of their home or work.

In the short to medium term we seek the re-introduction of local passenger services on the heavy rail network - building on the work begun by Edinburgh Crossrail.

However, we recognise that the completion of the current Edinburgh tram project opens up the possibility of bringing tram-trains to the capital in the longer term. This would allow trams to run on the South Sub. but serve the city centre and the

Edinburgh Park area by diverting onto the city's tram tracks for the rest of their journey. This would not only free up heavy rail capacity in and around the city centre but would allow a higher frequency of service than would probably be allowed by heavy rail alone. Moreover, given other existing freight lines in the north of the city, it would also be possible to run services off the South Sub. to places such as Leith Docks via Portobello and Granton via Portobello, Easter Road, Leith Walk and Trinity.

We would urge the Scottish Government to take forward work on allowing tram-trains to run in Scotland as a matter of some urgency - an urgency not currently being shown in any meaningful way by the Department for Transport in England. This is not re-inventing the wheel - tram-trains currently run successfully in Germany and France in particular.

Finally, work to re-open a station at Portobello with a journey time to Waverley station of less than 5 minutes (and to Morningside of around 15 minutes once local passenger services are re-introduced on the South Sub.), should also be progressed by the Scottish Government as a matter of urgency. Such a station was originally part of the Edinburgh Crossrail scheme. It would immediately serve not only the city centre but also allow access to stations on the North Berwick line and the proposed local service to Dunbar. In the future it would also serve the South Sub. and stations to the central Borders via Galashiels.

We thank the committee once again for your consideration of these matters.

Yours sincerely

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