

Numbers of trains running between Waverley and Haymarket, peak and off-peak: there's room for a South Suburban service

by Lawrence Marshall

One reason usually given for the long delay in re-opening Edinburgh's South Suburban Line to local passenger trains is that capacity at Waverley station and through to Haymarket is not available. Since North Berwick services run to and from Haymarket during the peak periods the Crossrail 2 proposal (see link on this site) assumed that these train paths could be utilised to also serve the South Sub. and that such paths should even more easily be found off-peak to allow a half-hourly service round the line in each direction. Some folk, however, suggested that spare capacity off-peak is actually even more scarce than during the peak! This seemed counter-intuitive but I hadn't gone to the trouble before now to actually check this out. It turns out that this suggestion isn't correct - as you might have expected.

Please, therefore, find pasted in immediately below figures for the number of trains running in each direction between Waverley station and Haymarket station during the peak and off-peak periods - these statistics come from Network Rail's Working Timetable (Section GC) for 11 June to 09 December 2006. ECS means Empty Coaching Stock (mainly between Waverley station and Haymarket depot but also to and from Slateford - via Haymarket - in the case of North Berwick services). Freight trains aren't included in the Working Timetable - so I've only mentioned below the one definite freight train which I know about and which seemed to run every day. There are one or two others spread throughout the day.

These figures, revealing that there are indeed more services at peak than off-peak, strongly suggest to me that the assumption made in the Crossrail 2 proposal is correct - namely that, if there are train paths available to run North Berwick services to/from Haymarket (in actuality, to/from Slateford) in the peak, then these paths (and more) should be available to run services to/from Haymarket off-peak as well, in both cases continuing around the South Sub. to perhaps terminate at Newcraighall. This would give the South Sub. at least a half-hourly service frequency - as well as, if tied in with the North Berwick service, giving East Lothian the same half-hourly frequency Monday to Friday (currently only hourly off-peak Monday to Friday) which it enjoys on Saturdays. Musselburgh is also the "home" station for the new Queen Margaret University College campus right next door at Craighall and will no doubt see a large rise, from a very good existing customer base, as a result. A half-hourly frequency would, in this context, be even more welcome during the working week.

Of course, this combination is only a suggestion. You could continue the existing Newcraighall via Brunstane to Waverley shuttle round the South Sub. via Haymarket to Newcraighall to form an Edinburgh suburban "circle" pending the re-opening of the extension to Galashiels/Tweedbank, for instance. This would at least give direct access once more to Haymarket from Newcraighall and Brunstane.

The railway has always changed the ways in which it puts its services together - the point is that running trains between Waverley and Haymarket to then run round the South Sub. seems, on the figures below, to be eminently possible, even allowing for the fact that it's best to leave a little slack in the system.

At the time of this timetable the capacity between Waverley and Haymarket was 24 trains per hour in each direction - this will increase to 28 once the current improvement works are complete at the end of this year. Further works at Waverley could increase train capacity to 32 trains per hour in each direction according to Network Rail and Transport Scotland.

I hope that these figures are of interest to you.

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Waverley to Haymarket

0700 - 0759	14
0800 - 0859	22 (incl. 1 ECS) + 1 Freightliner cement train
0900 - 0959	21 (incl. 3 ECS)
1200 - 1259	15 + 1 Monday only when required
1400 - 1459	16
1600 - 1659	18
1700 - 1759	21 (incl. 1 ECS)
1800 - 1859	16

Haymarket to Waverley

0700 - 0759	14 (incl. 2 ECS)
0800 - 0859	23
0900 - 0959	18
1200 - 1259	18
1400 - 1459	17
1600 - 1659	19 (incl. 2 ECS)
1700 - 1759	20 (incl. 1 ECS)
1800 - 1859	16 (incl. 1 ECS)

I've also pasted in below some benefit cost ratios (BCRs) for the South Sub from the Atkins report which I hope will, in conjunction with the train statistics above, help persuade Transport Scotland of the practicality of re-opening and of how worthwhile the scheme is in terms of benefit cost ratios to be achieved.

Crossrail 2 proposal to Newcraighall (see attachment above): +1.42 (with accident savings); +1.27 (without accident savings)

E-Rail proposal to Niddrie: +1.64 (with accident savings); +1.46 (without accident savings)

Full ESSR circle: +1.57 (with accident savings); +1.38 (without accident savings)