



**CEC Transport, Infrastructure and Environment Committee:
*Edinburgh South Suburban Railway – Feasibility Report***

Tuesday 6th May 2008

Briefing from Capital Rail Action Group (CRAG)

Introduction:

CRAG campaigns for better public transport for Edinburgh and the surrounding area. CRAG has led the campaign for the reintroduction of local passenger services on the Edinburgh South Suburban Railway ('South Sub').

In 2007, CRAG submitted a petition to the Scottish Parliament which attracted 1923 signatories online and a further 679 signatories on paper – a total of 2602 supporters. This is one of the largest petitions received by the Scottish Parliament. The campaign has also attracted cross-party political support together with the support of a range of community groups and educational institutions.

This briefing identifies key issues arising from the publication of the Halcrow Report, and sets out options for alternative recommendations to those in the report before you today. It is our continued belief that there remain cost-effective ways in which local passenger services can be delivered on the South Sub in order to allow this under-utilised transport asset to play its full role in meeting Edinburgh's transport needs.

Key points for Councillors:

- Train paths for the South Sub. exist - and have existed all along! Besides the extra 2 services per hour to Glasgow Queen Street via Falkirk High announced in October 2007 [making 13 services per hour in all to Glasgow from 5 and half at the moment (7 and a half counting the 2 to Bathgate)], Halcrow reveals for the first time an additional 2 services to Falkirk Grahamston, 2 to Inverkeithing and 1 to Perth [a half-hourly rather than previously planned hourly service]
- A South Sub. service along a new single track from Haymarket central junction to a new platform 5 at Haymarket is possible without any curtailment of these additional services
- Halcrow argue [para. 9.2.3] that re-opening the South Sub. either to heavy rail or tram-trains "would be contrary to the City Council's objective of minimising the need to travel and would serve rather to encourage longer commuting trip patterns" - yet they constantly argue that available train paths would be far better utilised by services travelling far further afield outwith the city!
- Halcrow estimate the capital cost of a heavy rail service with 8 or 9 intermediate stations to be between £38.6m and £37.9m. For comparison, Atkins in 2004 [paras. 5.18 and 5.19] in 2004 predicted around £28m [SEStran had quoted £34m in 2001]

- Halcrow have published South Sub. passenger figures for a mostly half-hourly [hourly in peak periods] service from Fort Kinnaird to Haymarket and Waverley - at 822,000 per annum. [approximately a third of the numbers predicted by Atkins]
- Halcrow believe a half-hourly South Sub. heavy rail service to Edinburgh Park would attract some 888,000 passengers per annum [peak trips per hour would be 710]
- A tram-train service at quarter hour intervals to Gogar interchange via Edinburgh Park would attract 1,432,000 passengers per annum [peak trips per hour would be 1540]. For comparison, the number of passengers using Dundee station in 2005/6 was 1.5m while the number of passengers travelling between Edinburgh and Glasgow was 2.7m
- The operating deficit for a heavy rail service to Haymarket and Waverley is £1.44m and £1.8m to Edinburgh Park [the total First ScotRail subsidy in 2006/7 was £282m, around half of this for services in and around Glasgow]. Per passenger journey the figure is £2 against a Scotland-wide figure of over £3. These deficits are largely the result of the requirement to pay track access charges to Network Rail. The South Sub. is maintained to both passenger and heavy freight train standards at the moment but additional traffic would be charged not at marginal cost but at a standard flat rate. Tram-trains would similarly be required to pay track access charges to Network Rail - although Halcrow assumed that no charges would be payable for tram-trains to access the city's tram tracks
- Whilst Halcrow quantified the costs of various South Sub. service options, they have not quantified the benefits of such services. Hence no benefit cost ratios (BCRs) are available. Atkins estimated BCRs as high as 1.64. Journey time savings must surely count amongst the greatest of these benefits, e.g. Morningside to Haymarket in 10 minutes or Morningside to Edinburgh Park in 13 minutes. Transport Scotland currently estimate that each minute of journey time saved by further Scottish rail electrification adds £60m to Scotland's GDP
- Whilst bus services mimicking rail-based South Sub. provision come at substantially lower capital and operating cost, passenger numbers are frankly pathetic - in a range from 68,000 to 160,000 per annum and at a subsidy per passenger of between £14 and £24
- Lothian Buses [13 December 2007 submission to Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee] are of the view that "this proposed transport initiative would enhance the public transport offering within Edinburgh. The reintroduction of passenger services to the South Sub would, in our opinion, complement existing modes ..."

Options for way forward:

1. Implement a half-hourly heavy rail service either on the full South Sub. circle or to Newcraighall via Haymarket, utilising the 2 train paths per hour currently planned to be assigned to a new terminating Falkirk Grahamston service;
2. Implement a heavy rail service to a new platform 5 at Haymarket via a new single line from Haymarket Central junction (this would not require any conflicting movements with either the main lines to Glasgow or to Fife but would cross the more lightly used tracks to Slateford);
3. Implement a full South Sub. circular tram-train service running on tram tracks from Haymarket Central junction through the city centre to a suitable point east of Waverley;
4. Implement a tram-train service to Gogar via Edinburgh Park (this could be combined with 3.);
5. Commence work on a heavy rail station at Portobello to be served by North Berwick and Newcraighall services.

Campaign Supporters

1. Politicians & political parties

Lib Dems:

Edinburgh Liberal Democrats

Mike Pringle MSP, Member of the Scottish Parliament for Edinburgh South

SNP:

Edinburgh South SNP

Chris Harvie MSP, Member of the Scottish Parliament for Mid Scotland and Fife Region

Conservatives:

Gavin Brown MSP, Member of the Scottish Parliament for Lothians Region

Struan Stevenson MEP, Member of the European Parliament (Scotland)

Greens:

Scottish Green Party

Robin Harper MSP, Member of the Scottish Parliament for Lothians Region

Labour:

Edinburgh East Constituency Labour Party

Edinburgh South Constituency Labour Party

Gavin Strang MP, Member of Parliament for Edinburgh East

Nigel Griffiths MP, Member of Parliament for Edinburgh South

Mark Lazarowicz MP, Member of Parliament for Edinburgh North and Leith

David Martin MEP, Member of the European Parliament (Scotland)

2. Community groups

Craigmillar Community Council

Merchiston Community Council

Morningside Community Council

Portobello Community Council

Southside Community Council

Canongate Community Forum

3. Education sector:

George Watson's College

Queen Margaret University

4. Business groups:

E-Rail

5. NGOs

Capital Rail Action Group (CRAG)

The Cockburn Association, Edinburgh's civic trust

Friends of the Earth Edinburgh, the local group of FoE Scotland

Transform Scotland, the national campaign for sustainable transport

Messages of support for the campaign:

Mike Pringle MSP, Member of the Scottish Parliament for Edinburgh South:

"I am in full support of a return for the South Suburban Railway. It represents a real opportunity for Edinburgh to continue improving its public transport network and would provide a valuable service to my constituents. Green mass transit solutions like this are exactly what we need to ease Edinburgh's congestion problems, it's no surprise to me that this campaign is rapidly gathering momentum as more and more local people back the plans."

Sarah Boyack MSP (Labour), Member of the Scottish Parliament for Edinburgh Central

"Returning local passenger services to Edinburgh's South Suburban railway makes a lot of sense in a city whose roads are increasingly congested. It's achievable - and, since the infrastructure is already largely in place, at relatively little cost. 45 years is too long for the city to have been deprived of the journey opportunities offered by the South Sub. It would complement the development of trams and the redevelopment of Waverley and Haymarket Stations."

Gareth Edwards, Principal, George Watson's College:

"As Principal of George Watson's College, I am keen to support this petition. The School is striving to play its part in reducing traffic congestion and has recently completed a School Travel Plan which has a prime focus on encouraging the use of public transport. The Edinburgh South Suburban Railway, with a station at Craigmillar, would allow many pupils and staff to travel to the School without reliance on the car or road-based public transport."

Professor Anthony Cohen, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Queen Margaret University:

"On behalf of Queen Margaret University, I welcome the opportunity to support the redevelopment of the South Suburban line, which would obviously be of benefit to the staff and students in their efforts to make sustainable travel choices. It is our aim to develop a green QMU community in keeping with our new campus at Musselburgh, which has been awarded accolades for its environmentally sensitive design, and we are keen to encourage a diversity of alternative travel options to serve the campus. With over 5,000 students and nearly 600 staff at the new campus, I am keen that the transport needs of Queen Margaret University should be taken into consideration in the decision making process, and therefore offer our strong support in favour of the proposal."

Jean Thompson of Morningside Community Council:

"Residents of Morningside, together I am sure with others all over Edinburgh and beyond, are eagerly awaiting the re-introduction of the South Sub."

David Walker, Secretary of Craigmillar Community Council:

"We welcome the proposals to site a station in the Craigmillar area. Niddrie Mains Road is one of the most congested streets in the City and the reopening of the South Suburban railway line would, I am sure, go some way to reducing the amount of traffic passing through our area."