



T : 0300 244 4000
E : scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Gerry Cornes
gerry.cornes@eastdunbarton.gov.uk

Our Reference: 202100255254

Your Reference: ScotRail and Transport Scotland - Rail Services on the Milngavie line

6 December 2021

Dear Gerry

Thank you for your correspondence of 11 November regarding the ScotRail timetable consultation.

ScotRail's public timetable consultation closed on 1 October 2021 - I hope East Dunbartonshire Council was able to submit a corporate response to the consultation to ensure its views were captured by ScotRail.

The proposed timetable changes were widely consulted with Regional Transport Partnerships before the public consultation went live, and, as part of the public consultation process, ScotRail have engaged directly with Local Authorities, MSPs and MPs, community group and rail user groups.

In respect of the consultation, ScotRail set out a proposed timetable which sought to align service patterns with forecast demand. It is now analysing around 3,500 responses to its consultation and will feed back, to funders and stakeholders, its analysis and reaction to the issues raised by respondents.

Consideration of the findings of the analysis may cause ScotRail to refine and adjust aspects of the proposed timetable. Indeed, I fully expect ScotRail to review its timetable as demand increases and we move increasingly towards a future of sustainable transport, modal shift and net zero. It is clear that the ability to respond more flexibly will be key to a more successful future.

The proposed Fit for the Future May 2022 timetable will increase passenger capacity, with an additional circa 100 services compared to the current timetable, from around 551,000 seats per weekday to 593,000 seats per weekday. To put this in context, this will be a higher passenger capacity across the network than was being provided at the start of the current franchise (505,000 seats per weekday),

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh www.lobbying.scot



despite the impact of Covid-19 over the past 18 months.

Any timetable should rightly operate to reflect current passenger demand – importantly, with inbuilt capacity for future growth – rather than be based on historical travel patterns. While pre-pandemic services and passengers were at record levels, there was still significant over-capacity and, on average, only 1 in 4 seats were occupied.

Given the significant financial challenge faced by Scotland's railway, it is important that the proposed timetable delivers a more efficient service which better balances the needs of passengers and the cost to public finances.

The latest data from ScotRail suggests average weekday patronage is currently at only 55% of 2019 levels, with Saturday now being the busiest day for rail use at around 75% of 2019 patronage levels. On the Glasgow North Electric line specifically, the average Monday to Friday seat miles utilisation was only 17% pre-Covid - amongst ScotRail's lowest. ScotRail's analysis of revenue against operating costs shows that this service group had amongst the greatest difference between costs and revenue across the network.

Needless to say, it is not in the interests of the environment, or Scotland's public finances, to run a high frequency service with consistently empty carriages. What was operated, pre-Covid, as a 4 trains per hour all day service, with 2 trains per hour in the evenings, will instead be operated as a 4 trains per hour service at morning and evening peaks, with 2 trains per hour off peak. This will ensure a frequent peak service is still available for those who need it whilst running a consistent and more efficient service at off peak times.

On the network as a whole, as ScotRail recently highlighted, immediately returning to a pre-pandemic train service plan would result in trains operating 26 million more vehicle miles each year with little passenger benefit. They also noted that it would increase ScotRail costs to public finances by £30m to £40m each year, and have calculated that the Fit for the Future timetable will achieve a 12.5% reduction in CO2 compared to the pre-pandemic train plan.

It is important to note that the proposed timetables are a starting point – not an end point. They have been designed to reflect changing travel demand while providing room for growth in the future.

The pandemic and its impact across society and the economy has had a significant effect, which cannot be underestimated, on Scotland's railway. Accordingly, ScotRail has had to review its services across Scotland so that its timetable addresses the changed circumstances and better meets user demand.

On the issue of performance, ScotRail did highlight in their supporting information to the consultation that, following from insights gained during the pandemic, the proposed May 2022 timetable has been designed to ensure improved network reliability and performance - gained by not filling the network to absolute capacity.

As you will be aware, Milngavie platform extension works were completed in December 2020 and this enabled performance related enhancements on the line. In addition, to accommodate potential future timetable changes, the existing 6-car platforms required were extended to 9-car platforms to accommodate additional trains in the station.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh www.lobbying.scot

As I am sure you are also aware, ScotRail has committed to undertaking a further review of the Glasgow North Electrics group of services for May 2023 to ensure that the level of service being provided is appropriate for the patronage. If needed, ScotRail can implement changes earlier.

I hope this reply is helpful and provides useful background on the matters raised.

Yours sincerely



GRAEME DEY

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh www.lobbying.scot

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
www.gov.scot



INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE

Accredited
Until 2020

