



TransPennine Express Rail Franchise stakeholder consultation

Transform Scotland response

13 August 2014

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Transform Scotland is the national sustainable transport alliance. We campaign for a more sensible transport system, one less dependent on unsustainable modes such as the car, the plane and road freight, and more reliant on sustainable modes like walking, cycling, public transport, and freight by rail or sea. We are a membership organisation bringing together rail, bus and shipping operators; local authorities; national environment and conservation organisations; local environment and transport campaign groups; and individual supporters.
- 1.2. In section 2 of this response we set out some general comments regarding key issues that we believe need to be addressed in the new franchise. In section 3, we then answer a number of specific questions posed in the consultation.

2. General comments

- 2.1. Our comments are confined to the TPE Anglo-Scottish routes – those to Edinburgh and Glasgow. These routes from Manchester and the rest of the north west of England have seen considerable growth under the current franchise operator and can now be seen to be victims of their own success. We note that passenger satisfaction is below the long distance average and is falling. At some 230 miles in length these are by far the longest TPE routes and connect major cities and their hinterland and compete with both air and the car. The government's vision for rail as described in section 1 of the consultation makes clear that such routes are ideally suited to rail and that *"rail is greener than air travel, and safer and greener than road travel."* We therefore believe that the new franchise should be structured in such a way as to deliver significant modal shift from air and the car to rail.

2.2. Train Type and Line Speed

- 2.2.1. The majority of the journey is on the 125mph West Coast Main Line where other inter-city trains run at line speed and are equipped with tilting technology. It is our view that the current class 350 four coach electric trains are not suited to these routes. They are not inter-city trains but are inter-regional commuter trains which with their 110 mph maximum speed are ideally suited to transfer elsewhere on the TPE network. New 125 mph tilting trains are needed for these routes and it is essential that these are equipped to inter-city standards with sufficient room for bikes and luggage and appropriate on-board facilities including electronic displays, wi-fi and hot food services. New 125 mph trains will allow the journey time to be reduced and enable rail to capture more of the modal share by transfer of journeys from air and the car. Given the growth so far experienced on these routes it is our view that new trains should be at least six coaches in length; we note that Virgin now frequently runs 11 coach trains on the Edinburgh and Glasgow to Birmingham routes.

2.3. Infrastructure

- 2.3.1. Other journey time improvements can be achieved by enhancing the infrastructure on the route. We note that upgrades at Carstairs have been agreed as part of the Virgin West Coast franchise extension but this still leaves other areas along the route where line speed can be improved. There are a number of stretches where 125mph running is currently not possible and the approaches to Carlisle from both north and south are in need of a radical improvement. The re-letting of the TPE franchise offers an opportunity for a partnership with Network Rail to further enhance the infrastructure and so enable additional journey time improvements.

2.4. Additional Destinations and Stopping Patterns

- 2.4.1. We support the introduction of direct trains from Scotland to Liverpool. In Scotland the catchment area in the Central Belt could be significantly extended by starting and terminating some trains at Stirling. This would tap into the market of those currently opting to fly as well as those using the motorway network to drive south. These and some Glasgow trains could then serve Motherwell which has a catchment population of some 650,000, is well served by local trains, lies only one mile from the M74 motorway, and yet has a very poor service of Anglo-Scottish trains. If track capacity on the WCML is an issue then these Stirling trains could run combined with Edinburgh trains as far as Carlisle or combined with a Glasgow train as far as Motherwell.
- 2.4.2. From 2018 TPE services onwards from York to Newcastle will be using electric traction. An opportunity will then exist to extend some of these services to Edinburgh and so tap into new markets and provide additional journey opportunities. Bidders could be encouraged to bring forward proposals for such new services.

2.5. Train Frequency

- 2.5.1. We do not support any reduction in train frequency and given the opportunity to serve additional destinations we believe that frequency should be increased. Any attempt to reduce frequency by making passengers change trains is likely to lead to loss of patronage. It is well established that passengers much prefer to complete their journey on the same train. Given that these routes compete with both air and the car then we believe that a significant opportunity exists to capture much greater modal share and so justify greater frequency and new destinations.

2.6. Connections, Onward Travel and Ticketing

- 2.6.1. Smart ticketing of the type so successfully developed in London should be extended to the north of England and Scotland. For TPE services which connect the north of England with Scotland the operator needs to ensure that there is ticket compatibility with smart ticket strategies developed along the route. Opportunities for onward travel from the stations served by TPE should be well promoted so that, when combined with smart ticketing, they would provide passengers with seamless travel and so attract greater modal share to rail.
- 2.6.2. As an example, the creation of the Edinburgh tram network serving the airport now provides the opportunity for TPE to seamlessly serve airports at both ends of the route. Easy interchange with the tram is available at Haymarket and through ticketing should be developed by the operator.

3. Specific Response to Questions

DTD1 and DTD2. *These questions relate to better integration with other modes at stations, the door to door journey experience and how this might be funded.*

We do not believe that any significant additional funding is required for a major improvement in these areas. It is more a matter of the franchise operator working in co-operation with other transport providers to enable through ticketing and clear and concise information for passengers. As an example, we have highlighted above the opportunity at Haymarket interchange to provide through ticketing by the new tram system to Edinburgh airport.

In terms of active travel access to stations the operator should set out to work with Network Rail and local authorities. Active travel routes should be safe, well signed and prioritised to increase their use by passengers. These will normally be funded by the local authority but it is essential that the franchise operator plays a proactive role to ensure that routes to stations are of a high standard.

TPE1. *What are your views on the degree of flexibility proposed for the train service specification for the new TPE franchise?*

We believe that a basic service provision should be specified – one at least as good as that currently provided. However, as outlined above we see great potential for passenger growth on these routes and believe that the franchise operator should be encouraged to bring forward innovative ideas to develop the route and serve additional destinations.

New 125mph tilting trains coupled with infrastructure enhancements will significantly improve journey times and allow rail to capture greater market share from air and the car. We have outlined above options for new services from Motherwell, Stirling and Liverpool. These coupled with improved journey times will mean that longer inter-city trains will be required and we believe that these should be of a minimum length of six coaches.

TPE2. *Where, if anywhere, would you like to see changes to first and last trains on the TPE network and why?*

The last departure from Manchester Piccadilly to Glasgow (currently 17.15) is too early and a later departure should be provided. Similarly in a southbound direction the last departure from Glasgow (currently 17.06) is too early.

NW3. *What factors do you consider should be taken into account in the assessment of the options for Anglo-Scottish services?*

As stated in your document: “*rail is greener than air travel, and safer and greener than road travel.*” We make no apology for repeating the message contained in the consultation in the section on the Government’s vision for rail.

These routes compete with both air and the car and so a modal shift to rail has real potential to reduce emissions, reduce accidents and contribute to the economic wellbeing of the cities connected by the TPE services to Scotland. These broader benefits should be given serious weight by the department when assessing the bids to ensure that the winning bidder brings forward a range of services which will grow patronage and bring a significant modal shift to rail.

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Transform Scotland is the national sustainable transport alliance, campaigning for a more sustainable and socially-just transport system. Our membership includes bus, rail and shipping operators; local authorities; national environment and conservation groups; consultancies; and local transport campaigns. Transform Scotland Limited is a registered Scottish charity (SC041516).

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