

Report to Partnership Meeting 23 June 2017

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

Rail Update

Purpose of the Report

This report provides members with information on the various rail workstreams being undertaken by HITRANS.

1. Train2Ride

Consultants Aecom have been appointed to carry out this piece of work.

The consultant is establishing current level of demand for on-train cycle carrying on ScotRail services on the West Highland Lines and on Serco Caledonian Sleeper services to Inverness and Fort William, identifying the associated benefits of rail/cycle visitors and pointing to future trends and options for managing the demand.

Our funding partners are Transport Scotland.

The consultant is engaging with VisitScotland, Sustrans, Cycling Scotland and other cycling organisations.

The project features in CAPS 2017- the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland:

Key Objectives

1. An understanding of current demand through the reservation system (data will be available from ScotRail) for Glasgow-Oban/Fort William/Mallaig
2. An understanding of current demand through the reservation system (data will be available from Serco) and Euston-Ft William/Inverness
3. An appraisal of cycle carrying conditions in the UK and Europe
4. An appraisal of the value to the area of cycle tourism

Surveys

On train surveys/observation in the summer peak on two/three days, covering all WHL services and the sleeper services will be carried out under separate contract from HITRANS by UHI Fort William Travel and Tourism students. A key output will be reconciling reservations with actual use.

Current progress

The consultants have analysed demand from last year and developed a slider tool which identifies the incidence of over-demand when capacity is flexed. Planning the questionnaires and the deployment of students is also underway.

2. Skyefall - Road Rail Solum Sharing on the Kyle Line

HITRANS has appointed consultants Mott Macdonald to investigate the feasibility of road and rail sharing the railway solum in the rockfall area of the Stromeferry bypass beside the Kyle railway. Options 5, 6 and 7 in the paper previously circulated are to be considered.

Key Outputs

1. An understanding of the current problem.
2. Recommendations on the management of demand for both road and rail traffic on the shared solum (including rail charter and freight traffic).
3. Reports on signalling, safety and operational implications.
4. A review outlining rolling stock options.

Background

HITRANS has been investigating the possibility of sharing the railway solum with road vehicles in the rockfall area west of the Stromeferry bypass. The rationale for this is:

- The 2012 experience may recur
- Increased interest in tram trains, with a Rotherham trial underway
- Evidence of UK corridor sharing
- A need to consider lower cost rural rail operations that are tourist friendly
- Increasing capacity and frequency of the route, currently constrained by a 45 minute section Strathcarron-Kyle

Options considered

The site visit identified that the delivery of geotechnical engineering works that are required to provide a full length, at grade interlaced rail and highway section, or a number of discrete interlaced rail and highway sections presents no significant engineering problems, other than the risk of rock fall and the requirement for the development of an appropriate rail and highway traffic management system. A number of options were identified for consideration to define the scope of a feasibility study, and 5,6,7 were selected for further investigation.

5. Permanent version of track sharing

Permanent version of the 2012 temporary track sharing arrangement would require similar barrier arrangements to enter the shared section with the use of modified signalling to replace the Controller of Site Safety (COSS).

6. Convert shared section to tramway

Convert the shared section to a tramway, using line of sight operation with an integrated tramway/highway interlocked traffic management system, designed to clear the section for the train within the RETB section which is activated by a treadle placed a sufficient distance ahead of the entry point to allow the section to be cleared of road traffic; rail vehicles would be fitted with track brakes.

7. Convert whole route to a tramway

Convert whole route to tramway operation and either operate as a dedicated service from Dingwall with trams, or operate from Inverness with tram train vehicles. This allows the RETB section to be replaced and operated as per 5 and 6 above, however only special traffic vehicles designated to operate over tramways, or operated with special road closure arrangements would be allowed.

The shared options were originally not progressed by URS as it was believed that the safety risk would be unacceptable to Network Rail, in spite of all being significantly cheaper than the by-pass options. Recent developments in introducing tram trains to the network, and the now operational example on the Welsh Highland Railway (WHR) in Porthmadog, make revisiting these options realistic.

Historically shared operations for bridges have been used in the past, see <http://movingimage.nls.uk/film/5122>

Rotherham will see the UK's first tram train pilot in 2017. Also, a number of examples of heavy rail trains sharing roads still operate in the Americas and mainland Europe.

Additional Information

The rail option would require or benefit from the following:

- A retaining wall between the road and the cliff to catch falling rocks;
- A parapet on the lochside to prevent vehicles being pushed into the loch in the unlikely event of a collision;
- A segregated carriageway for non-powered traffic e.g. walkers, cyclists; and
- Splitting the current RETB section between Strathcarron and Kyle of Lochalsh at Stromeferry.

The option selection process should also take proposed growth into account. With the current ScotRail fleet of Class 158 vehicles approaching 30 years in service with an expected life of 40 a new fleet will be required. From the current franchise commitment this is likely to be a "scenic train" offering passengers better views of the route, potentially with an increased frequency, possibly up to 8 each way per day. Adopting the shared tramway options would strengthen the case for new rolling stock as the Class 158s are unsuitable for retro fitting magnetic track brakes, a requirement for tramway operation. A modern light rail vehicle that can operate as both a tram and a train could with a suitably designed interior meet the "scenic" specification. The improved performance (acceleration and braking) would deliver improved journey times with potential for increasing the line speed on some sections of the route. However special working arrangements will be required for conventional trains without track brakes.

3. Midnight Train to Georgemas MT2G

Scottish Internal Sleeper Pre-Feasibility Study

Systra have been appointed into the feasibility of running an internal Scottish overnight rail service from Caithness to Edinburgh/Central Belt and vice versa.

Key Outcomes

1. An investigation of current passenger and freight markets and connectivity from Orkney/Caithness to Central Belt.

2. An understanding of train pathing to permit MT2N to operate, including access to Central Belt for pax and freight, including Rules of the Route.
3. A review of possible rolling stock and traction.
4. An appraisal of freight opportunities.
5. A review of mixed train operations.
6. Indicative costings for the service.

Background

Some early discussions have been held with Serco Caledonian Sleepers about the feasibility of running an internal Scottish Sleeper service from Caithness (for Orkney) to Central Scotland, greatly improving connectivity for some of the remoter parts of the country. With the retendering of the Northlink contract in 2018, MT2G may provide an alternative way of planning public services.

Sleeper trends

As noted in Sleepers Uncoupled, while Western European sleeper services are on the decline, notably in France and Germany, the UK is bucking the trend with new investment.

Scottish sleeper operations

Northlink operator Serco hold the current 15 year sleeper franchise, from 1 April 2015. New vehicles from CAF are under construction in Spain, and refurbished locos provided by GBRF have been deployed. The Caledonian Sleeper is formed of two cross-border trains in each direction per night, the Lowlander serving Glasgow and Edinburgh, and the Highlander serving Aberdeen, Fort William and Inverness. All train convey seated portions in addition to berths. The current Mark 3 fleet of sleepers will be redundant in 2018 when the Mark 5 vehicles replace them. CS MD Peter Strachan has already expressed interest in serving Oban.

Mixed views

A key advantage would be for the train to carry freight, providing baseline income for the service all year round. Intermodal traffic was conveyed to Caithness/Orkney for Safeway in the late 1990s/early 2000s. In 1984 containers were carried between Wick and Aberdeen on passenger trains. The ability to carry perhaps 4 x 40' and 2 x 20' boxes on twin wagons would provide welcome revenue with retail products and parcels north, locally produced food south. However freight needs terminals, and while Georgemas can provide cramage, the train would have to get out of Waverley shortly after arrival to get to Grangemouth/Coatbridge for freight and somewhere else for sleeper carriage servicing. There would be no lounging about in berths after 0600!

Current progress

Options have been sifted, and a likely proposal is for a loco hauled train with a Driving Vehicle Trailer (DVT), serving both Edinburgh and Glasgow. The DVT will take freight, parcels, seafood etc.

Mobile data capturing movements between Caithness/Orkney and Central Belt have been accessed for analysis.

4. Inverness Airport Dalcross

Planning

Planning permission for the station was obtained at the meeting of the Highland Council South Planning Committee held on 28 Feb 2017. The Action note appears below.

Applicant: HITRANS (16/04540/FUL) (PLS/015/17)

Location: Land 685m South of Inverness Airport, Dalcross (Ward 18)

Nature of Development: Construction of a single platform railway station with associated facilities and works to facilitate physical closure of an existing level crossing.

Recommendation: Grant

Agreed: to GRANT planning permission for (1) the construction of the single platform railway station with associated facilities and (2) works to facilitate the physical closure of Petty Level Crossing

subject to the conditions recommended in the report, however, taking into account additional wording to be added to Condition 1i which is now to read as follows:

- *The works to facilitate physical closure of the Petty Level Crossing shall not be implemented until (a) the rail halt and its associated 50 space car park become operational and the pedestrian link on the south side of the rail line between the Woodend Crossing and the C1020 road is available, and (b) an order under section 207 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (the Act) authorising the stopping up of the Petty Level Crossing has been made by the planning authority and has been confirmed either by Scottish Ministers if the order is opposed or, if it is not opposed, by the planning authority, pursuant to paragraph 5 of Schedule 16 to the Act.*

Further AGREED to authorise the making of an order under section 207 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 for the stopping up of the Petty Level Crossing.

Action Plan

We have formulated the following plan of action:

1. Network Rail to produce rationale for level crossing closure, and also to prepare, for internal use, reaction to issues raised through the planning objections.
2. HITRANS and Network Rail to brief THC officers- including transport, planning, legal.
3. Organise public drop in event for the public so that local concerns can be informally discussed (NR/HITRANS).
5. Brief council members post- election, as per the Town House meeting in Sept 15 (NR/HITRANS/THC).
6. Meet Ardersier and Petty Community Council (NR/HITRANS).
7. Advertise stopping up order (THC).

There may be objections which will then trigger a Public Local Inquiry. The crossing closure must be achieved to permit the station opening.

Current progress

Discussions have been held with the Transport Minister on the funding situation (there is a £1.3m shortfall). The Network Rail Case for Crossing Closure (C3) is under development.

4. Oban Hub

History

Our interest in this goes back to 2009 when we part-funded the Faber report 'Opportunities to improve interchange at Oban transport hub'. This was discussed by the Oban Harbour Development Group, and it helped to inform the Oban element of the CHORD programme.

In 2012 we funded the HITRANS Rail Freight Capability Study which concluded that due to weight and speed restriction on the Oban line there was little prospect of freight returning to Oban, thus pointing to the potential of siding capacity re-appraisal in the future.

In 2013 discussions were held with First ScotRail and Argyll and Bute Council on reigniting the proposals. From a HITRANS point of view the situation changed with the introduction of new Oban rail services in May 2014 which highlighted the poor facilities at the station. Encouraged by the late Cllr Duncan Macintyre's temporary return to health, opportunities for development were discussed with bidders for the ScotRail franchise (commencing 2015).

The HITRANS/CalMac Transport Integration Forum was held in Oban on 30 October 2014; the report noted that:

a visit to the Oban ferry terminal provided the opportunity for a review of the challenges to delivering a more integrated transport service presented by the connectivity between the ferry, train, bus and cycling facilities in Oban.

The visit identified several observations on practical short and longer term steps that could be taken to improve this important interchange which is among the busiest transport interchanges in Scotland. These ranged from improved signage, information displays, cycle parking and bus shelters through to major reconfiguration of public space that would better integrate the bus, rail and ferry facilities.

Subsequently, Tom Docherty of CMAL presented to the HITRANS Board on 3 September 2015 and we discussed Oban. Later in the month TS asked for information on Oban following an approach to Transport Minister Derek Mackay by a member of the public at a ferry event.

Martin Dorchester, Phil Verster and I had a discussion at the Transport Focus conference on 16 September 2015 and as a result in January 2016 we convened a meeting on Oban with attendees from HITRANS, ScotRail Alliance, Serco Caledonian Sleepers, IDP, BID4OBAN, Argyll and Bute Council, plus Ramsay Muirhead CMAL, and Ross Moran and David Taylor from Calmac. Professor Richard Laing from RGU spoke about his project to 3D scan the Railway Pier to allow visualisations to be created. The presentation noted that:

the refranchising of the CalMac CHFS services following the commencement of the Serco and ScotRail franchises provides an opportunity for looking the interchange experience at Oban, particularly as passenger numbers on all modes are growing very strongly.

The 3D scans were shown at the Argyll FUG in February 2016. The aim of the work together with discussions with the various transport and other stakeholders was to develop proposals for a more integrated transport interchange which would be able to cope with the anticipated increased demand from all modes over the coming years.'

The HITRANS presentation on 8 June 2016 to the Oban and Lorn Area Committee of Argyll and Bute Council highlighted the changing landscape

- *Ferry Franchising-RET intro / double-Mull*
- *Oban 6.2 rail -39% increase in station usage on route in last year*
- *Public Realm £2m Oban Waterfront area includes improvements at Station Square*
- *Smart ticketing initiatives on rail and bus - renewed focus for improving connectivity between modes*
- *Caledonian sleepers!*

The last reference to sleepers noted the diversion of the Fort William sleeper to Oban in March 2016 (and subsequently March 2017) which provided franchisee Serco with an opportunity to test the market for serving Oban; under the terms of the franchise it has to provide a connection. Subsequent discussions with Serco have indicated a desire to serve both Oban and Fort William on a nightly basis.

In November 2016 a workshop supported by HITRANS and Argyll and Bute Council was held on Oban to explore the potential to develop active/low carbon travel hubs noting the pier was 'the logical place for a multi-modal hub and rapid charging point for electric vehicles.'

Recent developments

Douglas Binns and IDP were commissioned to do feasibility work on improvements to the railway pier. CMAL indicated a requirement for increased vehicle marshalling capacity and so options were drawn up for a scheme that may overcome the difficulties of releasing operational railway land through the regulatory process, and:

- doubles vehicle marshalling capacity (well above the 40% requested by CMAL)
- has a greater chance of rail industry buy-in
- is in the interests of the travelling public- creating seamless travel by co-locating ferry, bus and rail terminals
- allows for the development of sleeper and charter rail services
- makes best use of flexible space in peak demand for ferry services, maintains rail access at other times
- improves public realm
- reinforces the hierarchy of mode from active travel, through public transport to the private car
- looks to a future of EV car clubs/autonomous vehicles
- fits with the HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy

Additionally, HITRANS is about to install a large multi-modal real-time information display hosted on a totem at the edge of the newly streetscaped area adjacent to the rail station. This £34k project is funded through the Bus Investment Fund, but has been expanded to include rail and ferry information as a result of support from Abellio ScotRail's Integration Fund.

Next steps:

We plan to meet with all stakeholders to agree a way forward for further feasibility and outline business case work that meets local, regional and national aspirations.

RISK REGISTER

RTS Delivery

Impact – Positive.

Comment –These projects are supported in the RTS Refresh

Policy

Impact – Positive

Comment –Optimisation of the rail network, mode shift, integration and active travel

Financial

Impact – Neutral

Budget line and value – This item has financial costs.

Comment –This research/feasibility work is fully funded through the CP5 Rail budget line. (Train2Ride is part funded by Transport Scotland)

Equality

Impact – Positive

Comment –No equalities issues

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Members are asked to note the report.

Report by: Frank Roach
Designation: Partnership Manager
Date: 13 June 2017