

Item:

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Report to Partnership Meeting 8 February 2013

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

Oban Rail Service Enhancements

Purpose of Report

To provide Members with background on the work undertaken by HITRANS to make the case for enhancements to be made to rail services between Oban and Glasgow on the West Highland Line.

Developing the Case for Rail Service Enhancement

The Room for Growth study of 2006 highlighted the poor frequency of trains to Oban. HRP/HITRANS engaged consultants Faber to review timetable options for the West Highland lines in 2006.

In 2007 HITRANS commissioned Habtrans to investigate timetable options for enhanced Oban line services. 4, 5 and 6 per day were explored. The Oban service of three trains per day is currently the worst frequency of any route in Scotland.

Halcrow carried out an economic appraisal of the five trains per day option, identifying a Benefit:Cost ratio of 5.0 optimistic, 3.9 pessimistic..

James Laird of the Institute for Transport Studies in Leeds did some further work on option and non-use values and identified WEBs that raise the BCRs above by a further 0.2.

Oban-Glasgow journey times have extended over the years from 2h54 to 3h05 although trains splitting at Crianlarich can take up to 3h19. The proposed timetable creates two through, non-splitting and therefore faster journeys. RETB protocols have also increased radio token exchange time to 1.5 mins.

HITRANS commissioned Delta Rail to carry out a Sectional Running Time study on the West Highland Lines, establishing theoretical journey times for Class 156, Class 170, re-engined Class 170 on existing and enhanced infrastructure, where loop entry/exit is increased to 25mph and 40 mph from the current 15 mph. Journey time reductions of up to 11.5 mins on the Oban route were identified.

HITRANS also commissioned Scott Wilson to consider options for the deployment of motorised switch and crossings on RETB routes that would allow faster loop entry/exit speeds.

In December 2012 HITRANS funded further timetable validation work carried about by ScotRail's consultant.

Announcing in December 2012 the extension of the current ScotRail franchise by 5 months to March 2015, Transport Minister Keith Brown said that there would be additional Oban services introduced.

At the Community Rail Conference on 19 February 2013 the Minister is expected to provide more detail on this.

Proposal

It is suggested that HITRANS provides £15,000 in 2013-14 to ensure the successful start up of new services, including improved station facilities designed to attract new customers, and interaction with the new Sleeper franchise.

Recommendation

1. Members are asked to note the report.
2. Members are asked to approve the allocation of £15,000 in the Research and Strategy Delivery Programme to support West Highland Line service enhancement.

| Risk | Impact | Comment |
|--------------|---------------|--|
| RTS delivery | √ | This project fits well with a number of RTS Horizontal themes. |
| Policy | √ | This project has integration and environmental benefits. |
| Financial | √ | This project is fully funded |
| Equality | - | No impact on equalities issues. |

Report by: Frank Roach
Designation: Partnership Manager
Date: 30 January 2013