

Report to Partnership Meeting Meeting 24 November 2017

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

Train2Ride

Purpose of Report

To update Members on the progress of the Cycle Capacity Study.

Background

A number of potential changes to bike provision on trains in the West Highlands are proposed in coming years. Specifically, the proposed introduction of Class 158 trains on ScotRail services on the West Highland Line in 2019 could see a reduction of on-board cycle space per train. This potential reduction has caused some concern amongst interest groups. The Caledonian Sleeper from London Euston to Scotland will also see some changes to rolling stock in 2018, and currently, on some occasions, sees more bike carriage bookings than formal capacity on-train accommodates.

Study

Funded by HITRANS and Transport Scotland, this study is being carried out by consultant Aecom.

The study seeks to:

- Establish the current level of demand for on-train cycle carrying on ScotRail services on the West Highland Lines (WHL) and on Serco Caledonian Sleeper services to Inverness and Fort William; and
- Identify future trends and options for managing the demand.

The geographical area of interest in this study is predominantly the West Highlands, although train services on the Highland Mainline to Inverness have also been considered with regards to Caledonian Sleeper services only.

The University of Highlands and Islands (UHI), and Sustrans' Research & Monitoring Unit, have both inputted to specific elements of this study. UHI carried out on-train surveys and bike counts in July 2017, whilst Sustrans' Research & Monitoring Unit reviewed the survey design and data outputs of the UHI on-board survey of passengers travelling with bikes.

Bikes on trains – the current situation

For ScotRail services there are six cycle spaces for every two-carriage trainset on the West Highland Line. Bikes must be reserved in advance as per the ScotRail website

The Caledonian Sleeper has six bike spaces per eight-carriage trainset from London Euston, although this reduces as the sets split for onward travel in the Highland Sleeper. Bookings must also be made in advance to carry a bike on the Caledonian Sleeper, and a road-based courier service is available for any surplus bikes which cannot be carried on-board.

It is currently free to carry bikes on trains in the UK and on the services studied in this project, although some peak time restrictions apply in England.

Demand for bikes on trains

A sample of reservation data has been accessed for this study from both Serco and ScotRail. An on-board survey of passengers travelling with bikes was carried out by University of Highlands and Islands in July 2017 for this study, and the Sustrans' Research & Monitoring Unit reviewed the survey design & data outputs.

Broad conclusions from this analysis of reservation data, on-board count data and surveys of passengers suggest:

- Taking the West Highland Line rail network as a whole, there is substantial spare capacity for bikes on trains i.e. spaces that have not been reserved.
- Notwithstanding this overall spare capacity, some specific services and journey legs are subject to higher demand, and demand is highly seasonal.
- The survey work with passengers travelling with bikes suggests the significant majority (on both ScotRail and Caledonian Sleeper services) are travelling for cycle tourism and/or leisure purposes.
- On-board counts for this study by UHI suggests there is a degree of carrying bikes on-board without a reservation, more so on ScotRail services though also on Caledonian Sleeper services to a lesser extent.

Bikes on trains elsewhere

A selective review of approaches to bikes on trains in comparable areas across the world suggests that:

- Carrying bikes on trains is generally possible but there are many examples of peak-time travel being discouraged, particularly on busy lines or in urban areas.
- Booking bikes on trains in advance appears to be common, and paying a small fee to carry bikes also appears to be relatively widespread.
- Factors influencing demand for bikes on trains in the future
- Cycle tourism appears to be growing in Scotland, and access to the 'wild' outdoors is a future tourism trend identified by Visit Scotland. Cycle hire facilities are also increasing across Scotland, led by a number of organisations including ScotRail, local authorities and community organisations.
- Rail operators covering services in this study are potentially open to further partnership opportunities for cycle hire in the future for their passengers. It is clear from the types of bikes being carried on trains however (from the UHI survey work for this study) that more touring bike hire may be required to cater for the market currently represented by rail+bike passengers.

Final Report

The report is due to be completed within the next few weeks.

RISK REGISTER

RTS Delivery

Impact - Positive

Policy

Impact – Positive

Financial

Impact – This project is fully funded

Equality

Impact – Positive

Recommendations

1. Members and Advisors are asked to note the report

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