

Item:
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Report to Partnership Meeting 17 September 2021

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

ScotRail Timetable Consultation

Purpose of Report

To update members on proposed May 2022 ScotRail timetable changes.

Background

ScotRail has carried out extensive analysis of its routes in the post Covid world. At the start of lockdown an emergency timetable was introduced to enable key workers to travel at the same time as government messaging was not to travel. Services were halved and evening services curtailed.

As lockdown restrictions were lifted services were reintroduced with a marked return of leisure, discretionary travel compared to business and commuting use.

Consultation

ScotRail's website outlines the rationale for the changes:

We are unveiling plans for the new timetable from May 2022, showing that it is 'Fit For The Future'. It's part of a public consultation as customers return to using Scotland's Railway.

ScotRail has reviewed the timetable across the whole network to ensure the service meets the needs of customers and the Scottish Government's aims as Scotland recovers from the pandemic and in the future.

We are proposing a new timetable operating around 2,100 services per weekday as the foundation to encourage a return to public transport following the pandemic. Most customers will find the number of calls at their station and the destinations served are similar to today. However, there are some areas where there is greater change, which is being done for several important reasons.

Our analysis shows prior to the pandemic, on a number of routes across the country, significantly more seats were being provided than were required for the number of passengers travelling. For example, under five and a half million passenger journey miles were completed on a typical weekday, which was just 23 per cent of the available

number of seats. In other words, seats were empty for 77 per cent of the distance that was travelled.

Returning to a pre-pandemic timetable would result in trains operating 26 million more vehicle miles each year for little customer benefit. As well as increased emissions, that would increase ScotRail costs to the taxpayer by £30million to £40million each year.

The proposed new timetable will also focus on improved punctuality and reliability of services, building on the record punctuality delivered during the pandemic. Research from Transport Focus has highlighted this is a key priority for customers. The proposed new customer focused timetable will reflect predicted levels of service as well as the need to provide the best value for money for taxpayers. ScotRail said the proposals are a new starting point and in the future, new methods of analysis developed during COVID-19 will refine and improve the service offer as the operator learns more about how customer travel behaviours are changing.

The consultation runs until 1 October and responses can be made on: www.scotrail.co.uk/fit-for-the-future

Note- the consultation does not include Sunday services. Frequencies remain in the era when Sunday travel was not encouraged, and do not reflect current day travel behaviour. However, the industry is currently structured to operate a 6-day railway. Any move to a 7-day railway will require substantial negotiation with the workforce.

What does it mean for us?

Highland Main Line

ScotRail consultation

ScotRail is proposing that the May 2022 timetable will provide the following:

- Ten trains per day from the Central Belt to Inverness and eleven trains per day from Inverness to the Central Belt. These services will be retimed to offer a better overall service to customers between Inverness and Perth.
- The LNER service between Inverness and London will operate in addition to the ScotRail services.
- Services between Inverness and Edinburgh will operate via Stirling. This will provide Stirling with a more frequent direct service to Inverness. Passengers travelling between Inverness and Edinburgh or Glasgow will no longer interchange at Perth, but instead will interchange at Stirling.

HITRANS comment

1. This provides same platform connections on electric services, avoiding the tangle across Perth Station. There are some journey time impacts, detailed below:

(jtx journey time extension jtr- journey time reduction)

Southbound

0539 3' later good. And works through to GLQ. Will the connection to EDB be quicker via PTH or STG?

0648 12' jtx! Very long...

0845 6' jtx but old conn at PTH was only 5 mins for EDB. STG more robust.

1051 better connections off WCK and ABD. DLW sensible insert as pattern is poor

1449 4' jtx
1553 welcome back
1726 2' jtr, old conn at PTH was 26' so STG better
1850 2' jtx but was 16 min conn at PTH
2023 better for WCK conn. 7' jtr to GLQ but EDB arr 0016 6' later

Northbound

0650 PTH starter sensible
0707 7' jtr but EDB conn now means 0620 dep as 0648 too tight
0837 5' jtr
1007 4' jtx
1826 INV tight for 1831 WCK dep
2114 INV misses TAI conn

2. PTH-INV 0503 becomes a Kingussie starter (back to 2005 Invernet1 TT). Services will no longer call at Gleneagles, Dunblane or Bridge of Allan. PTH-EDB trains run via Cowdenbeath vice Kirkcaldy.
3. Journey time reductions were a key part of the STPR HML Upgrade vision, along with hourly services, as per STPR1. Whither Phase 3?

Aberdeen to Inverness

ScotRail consultation

- ScotRail is not proposing to make significant changes on the route between Aberdeen and Inverness from the current timetable and the May 2022 timetable will provide eleven trains per day in each direction between Aberdeen and Inverness, along with additional services between Elgin and Inverness and between Inverurie, Aberdeen and Montrose.
- Time has been included within the timetable to enable stops to be added at Inverness Airport railway station when the station opens.

HITRANS comment

1. It is good to see the Elgins return. But after Inverness Airport station opens how long will we have to wait for before planning for the full hourly, sub-2-hour timetable as per STPR1 and Infrastructure Investment Plan?

Far North Line

ScotRail consultation

- ScotRail is not proposing to make significant changes on the Far North Line from the current timetable and the May 2022 timetable will continue to operate four trains per day to Wick and Thurso with additional peak and off -peak services at the southern end of the route.
- The future timetable will be developed as part of the delivery of the Far North Line corridor enhancements.

HITRANS comment

1. 2335 INV TAI FO SO and return to MOO remains off.
2. FNL corridor enhancements are under development, with Request to Stop likely to be the first milestone (milepost).

Inverness to Kyle of Lochalsh

ScotRail consultation

- ScotRail is not proposing to make significant changes between Inverness and Kyle of Lochalsh from the current timetable and the May 2022 timetable will continue to operate the same level of service as it did in 2019.
- The future timetable will consider any opportunities created through the delivery of the Far North Line corridor enhancements.

HITRANS comment

1. Good to see all services remain untouched.
2. Fair Exchange, the installation of an intermediate signalling block at Stromeferry, is a live project and part funded by HITRANS and Smart Cities.

West Highland Lines

ScotRail consultation

- ScotRail is not proposing to make significant changes on the West Highland Lines from the current timetable and the May 2022 timetable will continue to operate the same level of service as it did in 2019.
- The future timetable will consider development work undertaken through the Transport Scotland West Highland Line Review Group; however, it is recognised that this will be further considered as part of Transport Scotland's Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 (STPR2).
- Irrespective of that on-going activity, it is evident that there is a medium-term requirement for more capacity during the summer period and options such as additional services or the use of InterCity trains are being considered for when resources are available.

HITRANS comment

1. Good news on the recognition of capacity problems which may be exacerbated by the deployment of 153 cycle units. HSTs will be exciting!
2. The WHL Review Group is currently suspended due to Covid.

RISK REGISTER

RTS Delivery

Impact –Journey time reductions? Frequency? Economy, tourism

Policy

Impact – Decarbonisation, mode shift.

Financial

Impact – Nil

Equality

Impact – Access to the network.

Recommendation

1. Members are asked to note the report.
2. Members are asked to consider the Officer Comments in the report and consider, in particular, our position on the ever-moving horizon for frequency and journey time improvements. E.g South and east of Inverness.
3. Members are invited to identify other areas for inclusion in the formal response which is due in on 1 October.

Report by: Frank Roach
Designation: Partnership Manager,
Date: 7th September 2021