

CPG on Rail in the Scottish Parliament - Minutes

Holyrood 7th March 2018

Sederunt

Allan McLean (Campaign for Borders Rail), Cllr Trevor Rogers (WCR250 Group), Rosemary Blumfield (WCR250 Group), Ian Budd (FoFNL), Iain MacDonald (Light Rail UK), James Harkins (Light Rail Scotland), Vic McKinlay (Light Rail Transit Association), Niamh Hegarty (Network Rail), Stewart Leighton (Rail Future Scotland), Roderick McDougall (Rail Futures Scotland), Willie Scott (CRAG), David Johnstone (Grayling), Cameron Buchanan (Former MSP), Don Barclay (LMRC), John Finnie MSP

Co-Convener: John Mason MSP

Co-Convener: Pauline McNeill MSP

Apologies

Alison Cosgrove, Damien Henderson, Alex Hynes, Simon Walton, Atholl Innes, Richard Arden, Paul Tetlaw, Robert Dryside, Pauline McNeil MSP

Welcome & Minutes

Co-Convenor, John Mason MSP, welcomed members to the meeting, and gave a rundown of the programme for the meeting.

Corrections to the minutes were suggested.

Include issues that were raised with Minister:

- Whether STAG had been carried out on the impact of the A9 dualling on rail freight on the Highland Main Line
- Whether any work had been done to estimate the capital cost of double-tracking the Perth – Inverness line
- Made the point that rail can support economic development as it encourages centre to centre connectivity, where productivity is greatest

Subject to the discussed changes, the minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

Matters arising:

Letter from Transport Scotland

- Stewart Leighton received a reply from Transport Scotland
- The decision was taken to dual the A9 as far north as Inverness
- This will improve connectivity and journey times between the north and south of Scotland

- On the HML, work is underway to improve rail service, phase 2 aims to deliver hourly service between Inverness and Perth, further journey time reductions of around 10 minutes, and more efficient freight operations by March 2019
- It was noted that TS did not answer part of question on the cost of double tracking the HML.

Levenmouth update

- Difficult to get information out of TS and Fife Council
- Transport Minister and MSPs said it was worthwhile project
- Transport Minister said to instruct officers to take the project to next level
- Group has already done STAG 3, thought we were going to GRIT 4
- Now group are going back to STAG 3, which feels like a step backwards
- Group still cannot get information about the other consultant appointed by TS to talk to Fife Council to move the process forward
- Wanted to make the CPG aware of the issue
- This is a project to regenerate Levenmouth and the coast of Fife

Noted that the group could write to Minister on this issue.

Presentation

Jim Harkins, from Light Rail UK delivered a presentation on The Utility of Trams on Mixed Rail Lines.

Jim agreed to make the presentation available to members on request.

The presentation covered:

- Background of Tram-Train, and examples of existing projects
- The relationship between fixed tram and economic regeneration
- Covered the key benefits of the technology
 - Operating costs are lower
 - Capacity relief at congested rail stations
 - Frequent, reliable, and inter-urban links
 - With tram-train you have track sharing, no street running
 - Environmental benefits
 - High Modal switch
 - Increased retail footfalls
 - New connectivity
- Why do we need Tram-Train?
 - Climate change – clean at the point of use
 - Congestion - significant modal switch
 - Pollution – no tail-pipe emissions
 - Health benefits – trams prevent “deaths on the pavement” due to air pollution
- What technology is available now, and where it’s being used

Jim switched to his second presentation

- Urban transport corridor pollution
 - Two main pollutions – tail pipe emissions, “Oslo Effect” (road, tyre and brake dust)
- Benefit of tram
 - Year on year savings to health costs
 - Since Manchester tram has started running there have been improvements
 - People moving back in the centre
- Expects the UK to be fined by EU for infringing air quality
- Stats – diseases of old age are due to transport policies

A question and answer session followed.

Topics raised included:

- Problem in persuading people of the benefits of trams, given bad reputation of Edinburgh Trams
- The problems with Edinburgh Trams, and options for improvements and expansions
- Whether tram development require moving the underground infrastructure for utilities
- Feasibility of using buses that are also adapted to run on tram lines, in order to connect people in rural areas to the tram lines
- Discussion on which cities and towns in Scotland could light rail be introduced to, and the costs of this
- The level of modal shift from new lines
- The opposition to tram-trains and why
- The development of Edinburgh Trams and south suburban
- Discussion on the extension of the Edinburgh Trams, and how to counteract the negative campaign that will emerge to oppose more work
- Whether trams can run on rail lines given that faster heavy rail would have to run alongside, with associated signalling issues
- Discussion on having transport infrastructure in place before housing developments are made on brownfield sites
- The effect of long-term land use patterns, discriminating against rail

John Mason MSP thanked Jim Harkins for his presentation to the CPG, and for answering questions.

AOCB

Meeting moved to general discussion of AOCB.

The group agreed that a letter could be sent as group to the Transport Minister and TS. This will be done in coordination in with the individuals who raised the issues on Levenmouth and the unanswered response from TS on the HML.

Next Meeting

The group agreed that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 2nd of May.

John Mason MSP thanked the members for attending, closing the meeting.