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Dear Ms Bochel,

**Aberdeen City Council – Draft Scotland Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS)**

Thank you for your letter of 17<sup>th</sup> February in connection with the above.

It is worth noting that in developing the RUS we need to consider options for dealing with issues that provide Value for Money, taking account of socio-economic benefits in accordance with STAG principles, particularly in Scotland where the railway is heavily supported by Government.

We considered loadings on services to/from Aberdeen at peak times during the development of the RUS and we have reviewed this following comments received during consultation. Like most railways around cities, commuter peaks create unbalanced demand at certain times of the day which are very difficult to cater for. The existing franchise agreement requires ScotRail to attempt to mitigate overcrowding where passengers are required to stand for longer than 10 minutes. In calculating this, between Aberdeen and Inverurie, for example, it is noted that a substantial number of passengers alight at Dyce allowing standing passengers to sit with further passengers boarding there who may have to stand to Inverurie.

While the target in Scotland is for passengers to stand no longer than 10 minutes in England and Wales the target is 20 minutes. Meeting this more stringent target is costly as it requires more coaches and the associated mileage related costs. In the RUS we suggested the Scottish Government might wish to consider extending the target to 20 minutes which would substantially reduce costs. It will be for Ministers to consider whether to progress this for future franchises.

In terms of the specifics, we acknowledge there is likely to be some standing to/from Inverurie and Stonehaven at peak times but have suggested the most cost effective

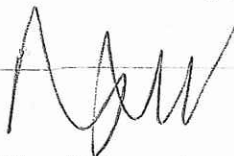


solution to this would be to increase the standing target time to 20 minutes. We also reviewed alternative options of longer/more trains. In both cases this would require ScotRail to lease additional coaches which would be very lightly used (in effect they would only be required for 20 minutes twice a day) and we could not find a business case that allowed us to recommend such an option given that each coach costs the industry c150k-£200k per year plus fuel and maintenance.

In the short term, ScotRail will continue to manage their resources to allocate them as effectively as possible to match supply and demand but I cannot offer any comfort that the long term solution will match your aspirations.

I am not aware of any issues of station overcrowding but if you have any specific examples, I would be happy to investigate as ensuring the safety of rail passengers both on stations and on trains is paramount to the rail industry.

Yours Sincerely,



Nigel Wunsch  
Principal Network Planner (Scotland)