

President: Tom Hart
Chairman: Dr. John McCormick
Secretary: Arthur Homan-Elsy
Membership
Secretary: Scott Simpson
Treasurer: John Ferris



11 Queens Crescent
Glasgow G4 9BL
Tel: 07760 381 729
email: mail@sapt.org.uk
web: www.sapt.org.uk

Scottish Association for Public Transport

To: The Newsdesk

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PRESS RELEASE: for Immediate Release

The New Railway Race to the North*

ScotRail Refranchising Opportunity

The ScotRail refranchising Invitation to Tender is due to be issued this winter by Transport Scotland.

The Scottish Association for Public Transport welcomes the investment in rail that is planned for Central Belt rail electrification between Edinburgh, Glasgow and Stirling, the new Edinburgh-Glasgow High Speed Line, and the prospect of a fleet of new electric trains.

But we are concerned that progress on improving InterCity links from Inverness, Aberdeen, Dundee, and Perth is lagging far behind. Planned road spending on the A9 and A96 will make rail much less competitive with the car, unless there is a major improvement in train speed and comfort in the near future.

Our Association is today calling for a major upgrade of train services linking **Inverness, Aberdeen, Dundee, Perth** and the **Central Belt**. This should be specified by Transport Scotland in the ScotRail franchise Invitation to Tender. Details of our analysis are appended. These have also been sent to Transport Scotland, HITRANS, NESTRANS and TACTRAN.

Dr. John McCormick, SAPT Chairman, said today: ***"The new ScotRail franchise to start in 2015 is expected to last for up to 10 years. This is a once-in-a-decade opportunity for a step-change in train travel in the Highlands, the North-east, and Tayside. We urge Transport Minister Keith Brown to ensure that the whole of Scotland benefits from much better rail services from 2015, not just the Central Belt."***

For further information contact: Dr. John McCormick
Chairman, Scottish Association for Public Transport
Email: sapt@btinternet.com
Phone: 07760 381729

** The first "Railway Race to the North" took place in the 1890s between the East and West Coast rail companies to Aberdeen.*

The new race proposed by SAPT is between bidders for the ScotRail franchise!

Note on SAPT: The Scottish Association for Public Transport (SAPT) is Scotland's leading public transport campaign group. SAPT celebrated its 50th anniversary last year, and is a founder member of Transform Scotland, the environmental transport lobby group.

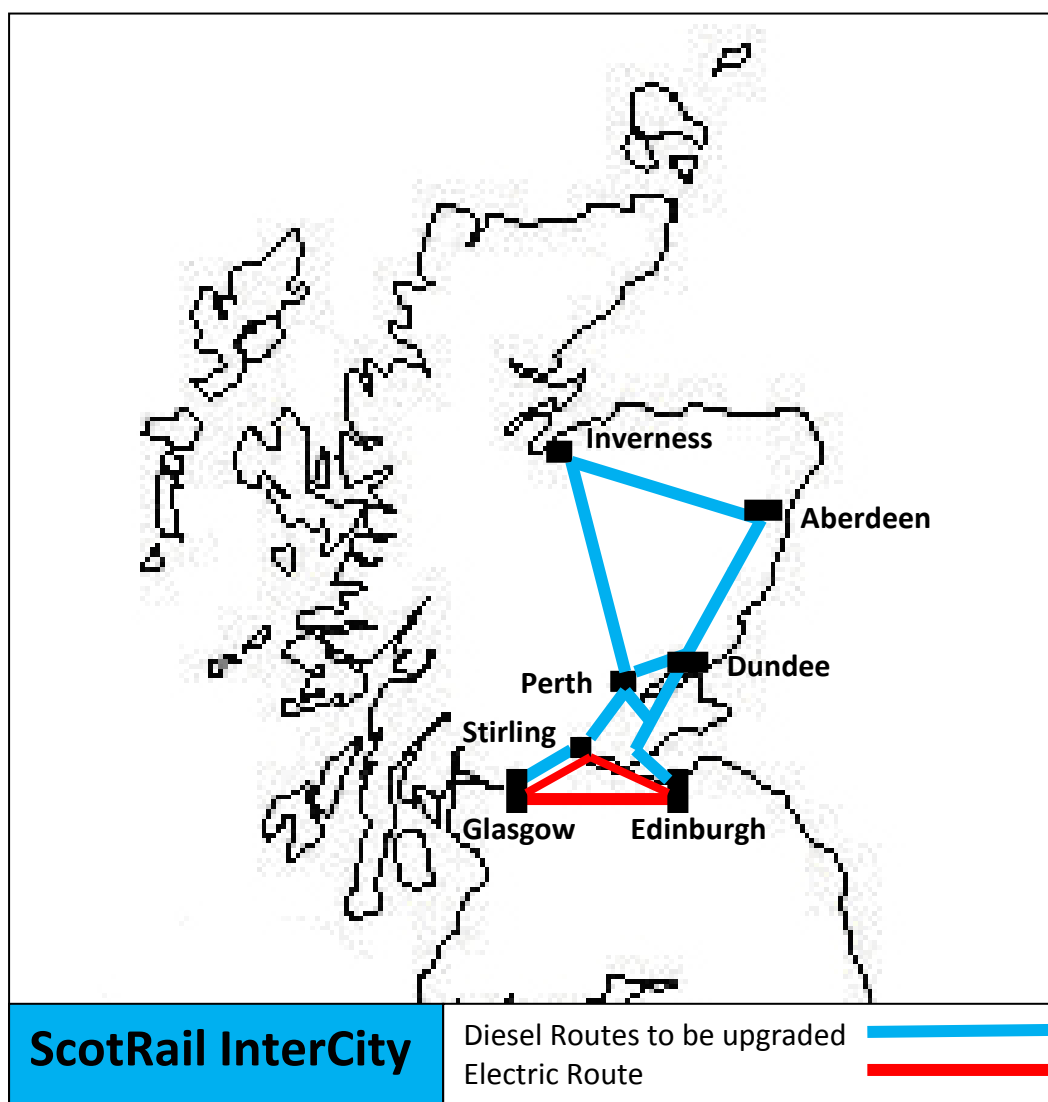
ScotRail InterCity Refranchising Strategy

New Railway Race to the North

Fast rail links between neighbouring cities are an essential feature of developed economies. In Scotland, rail links need to be upgraded to keep pace with the high level of Scottish road spending. Road schemes including the M8 completion, the £3 billion A9 dualling, and A96 improvements will generate increased car traffic and reduce rail's market share unless train travel also improves. The 3-car Class 170 Turbostars currently used by ScotRail are limited both in capacity and engine power to maintain principal intercity services into the future.

The new ScotRail franchise starting in 2015 is an opportunity to transform Scottish intercity journey times and travel experience. The successful franchise bidder will be committed to provide a new electric train fleet for the **Edinburgh-Glasgow** and **Stirling/Dunblane/Alloa** electrification projects, cutting Edinburgh-Glasgow journey times from 50 minutes to 42 minutes by 2018.

But there are no committed journey time improvements to cities north of the Central Belt. **The booming economies of Aberdeen and Inverness justify better rail links. This paper discusses how this might be achieved. ScotRail franchise bidders should join the new "Railway Race to the North"**



Bidders should be required to devise a service improvement strategy for rail services linking **Aberdeen, Dundee, Inverness, Perth and the Central Belt**. The target should be journey times and quality much better than by road, with 20% faster rail journey times than now.

Comparing current road and rail journey times (table below) shows the Edinburgh-Glasgow journey by rail is faster than by road. But Glasgow/Edinburgh-Inverness and Edinburgh-Perth trains are slower than road travel. On the other routes, trains have no speed advantage.

<i>Intercity Road and Rail Journey Times</i>				
To:	From Edinburgh		From Glasgow	
	By road	by rail	By road	by rail
Glasgow	64 mins	50 mins	(42 mins from 2018)	
Perth	57 mins	1 hr 17 mins	1 hr 7 mins	1 hr 2 mins
Aberdeen	2 hr 26 mins	2 hr 27 mins	2 hr 39 mins	2 hr 38 mins
Inverness	2 hr 55 mins	3 hr 26 mins	3 hr 2 mins	3 hr 14 mins

Road times from RAC route planner (Transport Scotland quote faster road times on some routes)

Rail times are typical times for direct trains.

Intercity rail journey speeds north from Edinburgh compare badly with rail speeds around London. For instance, the Edinburgh-Aberdeen time of 2 hours 27 minutes for 130 miles is an average speed of **53 mph**. The Edinburgh-Inverness rail journey of 3 hours 26 minutes for 175 miles is an average of **51 mph**. This compares with an average between London and Birmingham of **84 mph**, or **77 mph** from London to Sheffield.

Population and topography in Scotland differ from England, but, nevertheless, ScotRail franchise bidders should be invited to develop strategies for much faster Intercity journeys.

Rail Speed Potential

Central Belt: From 2018, electric trains with faster acceleration will cut journey times between Edinburgh, Glasgow and Stirling. The High Speed Edinburgh-Glasgow Line, planned as part of HS2, will support even faster 140 mph speed cutting journeys to 30 minutes.

North: Electrification to Aberdeen and Inverness is unlikely to be complete within the next ScotRail franchise. A more immediate strategy is needed if journey time is to be cut soon.

Journey times on the curvy East Coast line to Aberdeen, and the steeply graded Highland Main Line to Inverness, could be improved by:

1. *Omitting some intermediate stops.*
This is not acceptable unless additional train services are provided to maintain service frequency at important intermediate stops such as Stonehaven and Montrose
2. *Replacement diesel trains with faster acceleration and higher performance on gradients.*
No new diesel trains are likely to be built in the foreseeable future. But electrification will displace existing diesel trains with superior performance, including some Class 185 Trans-Pennine units, Voyager Class 221 trains (West Coast), and Meridian Class 222 (Midland MainLine). Locomotive-hauled trains, as on the Chiltern line, are also possible.
3. *Tilt operation to increase speed on curves (as used on the West Coast Main Line).*
This could save time in Fife, between Dundee and Aberdeen, and on the Highland Main Line. Speeds up to 20% higher can be maintained on curves by tilting trains, for instance Voyager Class 221 trains. An overall 20% cut in journey time, if achievable through faster acceleration and higher speed, would cut the best **Edinburgh-Aberdeen** journeys from **2 hours 20 mins to less than 2 hours**, and **Edinburgh-Inverness to 2 hours 40 minutes**.
4. *New sections of high speed track to bypass speed bottlenecks.* The Strategic Transport Projects Review confirmed that a new railway from Inverkeithing to Perth would save 25 minutes, but costs were estimated to outweigh benefits. This should be reconsidered.

A shorter section of new line from **Inverkeithing to Halbeath**, together with an upgrade of the line through Cowdenbeath to Thornton, could reduce Edinburgh-Inverness and Edinburgh-Aberdeen journey times. Trains take 18.5 minutes for 17 miles from Thornton to Inverkeithing. A straighter route via Halbeath supporting 90 mph average speed would cut 7 minutes from the journey from Edinburgh to both Aberdeen and Inverness. Transport Scotland and Network Rail should evaluate this scheme for CP6 (2019-2024).

Intercity Strategy Recommendation

The new ScotRail franchise in 2015 is an opportunity to introduce a step change in speed and comfort on trains linking Scotland's cities. Tilt technology, as used on the West Coast Main Line, would allow higher speeds on the curvy routes linking Inverness, Aberdeen, Dundee and Perth with the Central Belt. Together with high performance trains and infrastructure upgrades, journey times could be cut by up to 20%, with Aberdeen less than 2 hours and Inverness only 2 hours 40 minutes from Edinburgh, with similar improvements to Glasgow.

Electrification schemes in England, including the Midland and Great Western Main Lines, will release many modern diesel trains which in turn could allow tilt-enabled "Voyager" trains (as pictured on the right, photo courtesy of Bombardier) to be cascaded from the West Coast Main Line to ScotRail Intercity routes.

Full refurbishment of these trains, including more comfortable seats, better catering, and wifi would give Scotland highly competitive Intercity trains which would make lengthy car journeys unnecessary. Rail use would be further boosted through better business class accommodation, and competitive fares to attract leisure travellers.

In the longer term, the Scottish Intercity network should be fully electrified, with tilting electric trains.

Transport Scotland and ScotRail franchise bidders should negotiate with the Department for Transport as soon as possible to agree a UK train cascade programme that fully includes the economic importance of good Scottish intercity rail links.

Infrastructure upgrades, including support for tilt technology, could also be included in the new ScotRail franchise package, partly funded through increased revenue attracted by faster journeys.



Issued September 2013 by: **Scottish Association for Public Transport**
11 Queens Crescent
Glasgow G4 9BL

Web: www.sapt.org.uk
Email: sapt@btinternet.com
Phone: 07760 381729