

ICEC Franchise Replacement Consultation
Manager
DfT Rail Group
Great Minster House
76 Marsham Street
LONDON SW1P 4DR

15th February 2007

Dear Sir/Madam,

INTERCITY EAST COAST FRANCHISE

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed specification for the new ICEC franchise. The following comments are offered on behalf of the Tayside and Central Scotland Transport Partnership (TACTRAN).

Fares

The proposal to continue to cap commuter and protected fares at RPI+1% throughout the franchise term is supported, as are the proposals to require the new franchisee to achieve increased revenue by making the network easier and more attractive to access. Fares on cross-border services should be maintained at levels which are sufficiently attractive to encourage travel by rail in preference to less sustainable modes. Difficulty in accessing information on fares and special promotions can often act as a disincentive to using rail, particularly for longer distance journeys. Bidders should be required to ensure ease of access to simple, understandable fares information.

Service Pattern

The proposal by DfT to retain the current service pattern is welcomed. The present level of services operating through the TACTRAN area to/from Aberdeen and Inverness should be viewed as the minimum on which prospective franchisees are asked to price. It is noted that the opportunity exists for consultees and bidders to suggest increments or decrements to the current specification. Any proposals submitted which would have the effect of reducing the current level and/or pattern of services at the listed stations within the TACTRAN area – namely Arbroath, Blair Atholl, Dunblane, Dundee, Dunkeld, Gleneagles, Montrose, Perth, Pitlochry and Stirling – would be strongly resisted. Prospective bidders should be encouraged to consider options for enhancing services extending beyond Edinburgh and Glasgow to Inverness and Aberdeen, via Stirling, Perth, Dundee and intermediate stations in the TACTRAN area.

Timetable Consultation

The requirement for bidders to carry out their own consultation exercises on the detail of their proposed timetables is supported. This should include consultation with Regional Transport Partnerships.

Disability Discrimination Act

The requirement that bidders should detail in their bids proposals to ensure compliance with the DDA, for both trains and stations, is supported, as is the requirement to submit a consultation strategy with disability groups, to ensure that their needs and requirements are effectively addressed.

Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) and Local Transport Plans (LTPs)

The requirement that bidders will need to demonstrate awareness in their bids of the relevant emerging and adopted transport plans and strategies and highlight their plans to work with Regional Agencies and Local Authorities, should include specific reference to Regional Transport Partnerships and the emerging Regional Transport Strategies, which are currently being developed by RTP's.

Variation to the DfT Base Case Specification

Any proposals submitted by bidders to vary the Base Specification included in the consultation document, or any subsequent variations to the agreed Base Specification post-franchise, should be the subject of consultation with Regional Transport Partnerships.

I hope that the above comments are of assistance and will be taken on board in the forthcoming re-franchising process.

Yours faithfully,

Eric Guthrie
Director
TACTRAN