SUPPLEMENTARY WRITTEN EVIDENCE FROM NETWORK RAIL

At Network Rail’s evidence session before the GARL Committee, questions were raised by the committee concerning the costs which would arise if the scope of this project was expanded to include rail operations to the Airport on a 24 hours per day basis.

This response provides preliminary information from Network Rail’s position as the owner, operator and maintainer of the Network. Changes to the specification and parameters of the project such as were discussed by the Committee would be a matter for the Bill’s promoters, SPT.

As we outlined at the Committee hearing, from Network Rail’s perspective the principal difficulties would be related to ensuring safe access for maintenance staff to the operational railway. The current project specification assumes that maintenance opportunities will be available during each night broadly between the hours of midnight and 6am. If project requirements change to the extent that such access is not available due to 24 hours per day operations then opportunities for safe access would become severely constrained.

To address these issues and ensure that safe and reliable train operations can be assured, we would suggest that the following changes, as a minimum, to the project technical specification will be necessary:

1. All four lines between Paisley Gilmour St and Arkleston Junction would require to be provided with bi-directional signalling. The current project specification provides for only two of these lines to have such signalling. The purpose of this is to enable night time operations over the route to be concentrated on one line at a time, such line varying from night to night, thus facilitating the closure of other lines to allow access for maintenance teams and equipment to carry out essential works.

2. The two existing lines between Arkleston Junction and Shields Junction would require bi-directional signalling. Neither is currently proposed to have this facility in the current project scope. The purpose of this is the same as in 1. above.

3. The new airport branch line would require to have bi-directional signalling. The purpose of this is the same as in 1. above.

4. The new airport branch line would require to be redesigned to allow improved physical separation of the two tracks, such that maintenance works can be carried out safely on one line whilst the other is live to rail traffic. A ten foot separation would be required in this instance.
5. Remote monitoring equipment for key railway components would need to be provided, due to the reduced opportunities for inspection.

All of items 1-5 above would increase the capital costs of the project, with item 4 potentially having both a very significant adverse cost impact and possibly requiring increased land take beyond the current provisions in the Bill. We believe that the Promoters, who have developed the technical scope and capital costings for the project to date, would be best placed to assess the likely additional costs arising from such scope extensions.

In terms of increased ongoing operational/maintenance costs relating to a potential 24 hours per day operation, these would largely fall into three categories:

1. **Network Rail operations costs**

Additional costs related to signalling, signalling supervision and operational control, incident response capability and customer assistance/security at Glasgow Central would be incurred. An additional annual cost of circa £430k at 2006 prices are estimated in this regard. This cost excludes any additional coverage that British Transport Police may consider appropriate, particularly given the potential for Glasgow Central to become a gathering place for late night city centre inhabitants.

2. **Network Rail maintenance costs**

Additional maintenance staffing would be needed due to the inefficiencies created by restricted access and the additional maintenance burden caused by the remote monitoring equipment itself. Incremental staffing costs in the region of £300 – 500k per annum for maintenance could therefore be anticipated.

3. **Train Operator Costs**

There would be increased train operator costs relating to increased use of rolling stock including electricity consumption, provision of train crew, operational supervision and control and customer servicing. First ScotRail will be best placed to advise on the magnitude of such costs.

In terms of general comments, we would advise as follows:

Whilst the above provisions would enable a continuous operation to be achieved for most of the time, there will inevitably be occasions when closure of the route will still be required, sometimes at short notice, because necessary works (eg component replacement) cannot realistically be carried out with live train operations in the vicinity. Such issues occur from time to time on the existing
railway but, as maintenance opportunities are normally available during the night, impact on passenger services is generally avoided. This would not be the case if GARL were to operate 24 hours per day so there would be an adverse impact on perceived reliability of the railway due to the need to effect temporary closures to traffic.

We would also suggest that an assessment is undertaken of the relative costs and benefits arising from a potential extension of rail link operations to provide a 24 hours per day coverage.

Even with the necessary improved infrastructure provision detailed above, operations would require to be of a reduced frequency during night time hours as the use of fewer lines in bi-directional mode will limit the possible service frequency. This will extend waiting times between trains. There may also require to be journey time extensions related to re-routing trains over alternative routes to allow maintenance access to the Shields Junction to Bridge Street section of the route. There are also no services currently operating from Glasgow to the suburban rail network during the hours of midnight to 6am, thus further limiting the benefits of network connectivity that the daytime GARL service will enable.

We believe that these factors will, for any night time services, serve to reduce the passenger benefits that the link would otherwise offer during daytime operations. On that basis we would recommend that a proper assessment of likely rail link patronage during these hours is undertaken so that the value for money aspects of this option can fully be evaluated.

Finally, we can confirm that the distance from the buffers at the end of the extended Platform 11a to the main Gordon St entrance to Glasgow Central would be approximately 240 metres.

We trust that the above information is of assistance to the Committee, however, it should be noted that our evidence is preliminary and indicative, and should in no way be regarded as part of the due process which the promoters would require to undertake should they wish to alter the parameters of the proposed legislation in this way.