SUBMISSION FROM GLASGOW ECONOMIC FORUM

I am writing to set out the views of Glasgow Economic Forum on the general principles of the Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill which was discussed at the Forum’s March meeting.

The Forum would like to express its strong support for the general principles of the Bill. We believe the proposed new rail link between Glasgow Airport and Glasgow Central Station will give a significant boost to the economy of Glasgow, its metropolitan region, and therefore to Scotland as a whole. From the economic perspective the main points to note are:

1. Glasgow’s economy has grown rapidly in recent years, it is now Scotland’s major centre of employment growth, and is expected to have a rapid rate of jobs and investment growth in the future. Glasgow's ‘growth sectors’ include global industries (for example financial services, business services, business and leisure tourism) in which international competition is strong and for which excellent international air travel facilities are needed. Airport-to-City Centre rail links are now commonplace among competitor cities in Western Europe, and the proposed 16 minute travel time will be a significant attraction for overseas businesses wishing to do business in Glasgow and its wider region.

2. It is clear that passenger numbers at Glasgow Airport will rise steeply in the years ahead (we understand BAA expect a rise to around 24m by 2030). Because most of the new investment in the Glasgow economy is located in the city centre /Clyde Waterfront area, we expect a high proportion of airport users will require efficient access to and from the city centre. The proposed rail link will be of real benefit not only in improving convenience to visitors, but also in encouraging mode shift, reducing road congestion associated with higher air traffic volumes. However we believe the 5% estimated modal shift to be an underestimate as evidence from other cities appears to suggest much greater shift is often achieved. For this reason we would recommend the maximum of built-in flexibility in terms of future capacity.

3. We would take this opportunity to emphasise the importance of having rolling stock and service provision to the standard now expected by international business travellers. This should include carriages specialised for carrying luggage. Equivalent systems in Europe are of a very high standard and we believe the Glasgow rail link can contribute much to the image of the city as a place where business can be done efficiently and with the minimum of distraction and inconvenience.

4. While the GARL will be invaluable in its own right, we believe that its full potential will only be realised if it is combined with a Crossrail connection linking the North and South rail networks, which would improve travel times and convenience for those passing through Glasgow (eg from the airport) and also increase the number of commuters into Glasgow by rail.
I hope that the above comments, which have been discussed and agreed by the membership of Glasgow Economic Forum, will be of use in securing the successful passage of the Bill.