Glasgow Chamber of Commerce (GCC) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the consultation of the Glasgow Airport Rail Link (GARL) and our focus is on the perceived impacts to Glasgow’s businesses.

GCC would like to reiterate its ongoing support for the general principles of the outlined Bill as we believe GARL would bring significant improvements to the infrastructure of the city, ensuring that Glasgow Airport’s transport links are comparable with other major international airports. In addition to improving the infrastructure of the city, the link will also provide a major boost for the economy of Glasgow and for Scotland.

Glasgow City Centre

Glasgow City Centre is the commercial heart of the city and stands amongst Europe’s major city regions. The significant and ongoing investment in the city has established an exciting, modern business community and a world class retail, leisure and cultural destination.

Glasgow is the second largest retail destination outside of London and continues to attract significant investment in the development of retail, business and leisure and residential units. Glasgow is also an increasingly popular conference destination.

The development of GARL between the City Centre and Glasgow Airport will improve public transport access to the city from the airport and enhance the appeal of the city both for investment and as a tourist and convention destination.
The rail link will not only increase convenience for tourists and commuters but will also help reduce road congestion through the modal shift offered as Glasgow Airport continues to grow.

**Employment**

Glasgow is Scotland’s major centre of employment growth and this is expected to continue into the future. Some of the key industries for Glasgow include finance, business services and tourism, for which there is strong international competition, enforcing the need for a substantial infrastructure network.

The link offers the concept of a 16 minute travel time between the city centre and the Airport which will make Glasgow even more attractive and accessible to business travellers. It also increases Glasgow’s attractiveness as a location for corporate headquarters where there is an accessible and direct rail link to a major international airport.

**The Future of Glasgow Airport**

GCC responded to the GA Master Plan in October 2005 in which BAA envisages passenger numbers rising to approximately 24 million by 2030. Accompanied by the significant investment taking place in the City Centre, it is even more vital to have a fast and efficient rail link between the airport and the City Centre.

**CrossRail**

In addition to GARL, we would also like to see the progression of the CrossRail development to link Central Station and Queen Street Station, connecting North and South rail networks. This development would link the rail networks and further increase the appeal and benefits of the Airport Rail link by improving travel times and increasing convenience and access to a wider rail network.

**Planning Delays**

As discussed, GCC is fully supportive of this development and of the general principles outlined in the Bill. However we do have a concern regarding any potential delays to the project.

We recognise that the new Planning Bill gives the opportunity to speed up unfounded appeals; however we would like to see the Airport Rail Link Bill address options to speed up the appeal process.

Further, we would like to see GICAL delivered at the earliest opportunity and have concerns that Transport Scotland has been given a 10 year timescale for the compulsory land purchase instead of the normal 5 years (plus the possible extension).

**Conclusions**

We consider the Airport Rail Link to be a vital infrastructural development to meet the growth of Glasgow as a business centre and tourist destination.
In our support of the business members we represent, we welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Bill and will be happy to assist further if required.