SUBMISSION FROM THE MOBILITY AND ACCESS COMMITTEE FOR SCOTLAND

Introduction
1. The Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS) was set up in 2002 as the Scottish Ministers’ statutory advisor on disability issues in relation to transport and transport policy in Scotland. Our vision is of a Scotland where anyone with a mobility problem due to some physical, mental or sensory impairment can go when and where everyone else can and have the information and opportunities to do so. All of MACS work is designed towards achieving this long-term vision and our key tasks are concentrated on five specific themes. These are:

   i. Ensuring that all travel information is accurate and accessible.
   ii. Removing barriers to the accessibility of public transport services and infrastructure.
   iii. The identification and promotion of best practice in all areas of public transport provision.
   iv. Ensuring that all public transport staff undergo appropriate disability equality and awareness training.
   v. Ensuring that public transport networks make full use of all potential service providers and that transport options are in place for people who cannot get to or use conventional public transport services.

Comments
2. MACS supports the general principles of the Bill and supporting documentation. MACS realises that the development of this rail link is an opportunity for Scotland to showcase to all users, both domestic and international, of its ability to provide an effective and efficient transport link from one of its main airports to one of its main cities. This will be very relevant and essential when Glasgow wins its bid to hold the Commonwealth Games. It is therefore imperative that this link is as accessible as possible for people with a disability and who can travel by rail. We note, in the supporting documentation, that the promoter states at page 10 paragraph 54 of the memorandum that “the new rail link would ensure, where practical and reasonable, compliance under the DDA 1995. The Promoter intends to deliver a modern, fully accessible transport system”. In order to achieve this we would draw the following information to the Committee’s attention.

Accessibility
3. MACS recognises that not all modes of public transport will ever be accessible for all people with a disability. We welcome the desire expressed that this rail link will be made as accessible as possible for those people with a disability who can use rail. Since this rail link is so important MACS wishes to draw the committee’s attention to going beyond
‘compliance under DDA 1995’, and that the committee moves towards ensuring the establishment of a rail link that not only is as accessible as possible but also that relevant stations, the links between airport and stations, and that travel information both at stations and on the trains, is equally accessible, as this is important to the delivery of an effective and inclusive link and supporting infrastructure. The type of trains used on this link should be of the newest models that have the highest specification for the provision of access by those who have a mobility problem due to some physical, mental or sensory impairment.

4. There will be a need for an access consultant to work with the project team from an early stage. This is intrinsic to the delivery of an effective accessible link, and as said above should include the accessibility of the supporting pedestrian environment and stations. Details of access consultants are available from www.nrac.org.uk/

5. The promoter should take into account the Disability Rights Commission Code of Practice on the Provision and Use of Transport Vehicles that will be published later this month and the Disability Discrimination (Transport Vehicles) Regulations 2005 which come into force on 4 December 2006. These regulations apply certain duties to the providers of transport services, which include trains, trams and light rail to ensure that they do not discriminate against a disabled person

   - When providing, or not providing a disabled person with a vehicle; or

   - When providing or not providing a disabled person with services when he/she is travelling in a vehicle provided in the course of a transport service

6. The promoter should also take into account the principles contained in the Department for Transport publication “Inclusive Mobility: A Guide to Best Practice on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure”.

7. Each Train Operating Company (TOC) must produce a Disabled Persons Protection Policy (DPPP) which explains how the company assists disabled passengers in using their stations and trains and the promoter should ensure that this is put in place. As a new project this would be an opportune time to consult with disabled people regarding the contents of this policy.

8. By employing an access consultant and in adhering to the regulations and guidance mentioned above the promoter will ensure inclusive design and accessibility and through that achieve social inclusion.

Information and Training

9. We would also wish to highlight the importance of a clear information strategy to promote the use of the service and also to provide details about the service. For many disabled people two of the main barriers to travel
are the lack of information in an accessible format and lack of confidence in using the service.

10. Appropriately trained staff makes a very positive contribution to the confidence of disabled people and their ability to travel. In recognition of the importance of travel information and staff training MACS has published the following two documents

“Valuable for anyone, valuable for everyone – providing accessible transport information”
“Recommended training standard for staff assisting disabled people”.

11. We therefore suggest that the promoter takes these publications into account.

Interchange
12. We note that the Glasgow Airport Rail Link will provide interchange facilities with Glasgow Central and Paisley Gilmore Station. It will be imperative therefore that an access audit of these stations is undertaken as a matter of urgency to identify any changes that need to be implemented to ensure that they deliver an environment which is as accessible as possible for people with a disability. This may include some refurbishment of existing platforms to ensure the guidelines of the need for tactile and visual warning of platform edges are applied.

13. We also note that the proposal includes the loss of some 66 short-term parking spaces within Central Station and that the promoter has agreed in principle with NCP that three additional parking spaces for disabled people can be accommodated in the Oswald Street Multi Storey car park. (Para 101 of memorandum). This will be much less convenient than the existing arrangements and we would ask that these proposals be reconsidered. At the same time consideration should be given to the length of the walks between interchange facilities. This further highlights the need for an access consultant to work with the project team from an early stage. Without adequate improvements at Central Station disabled people will be discouraged from using the Rail Link.

14. The European Union has recently consulted on a proposal to introduce regulations covering the rights of persons with reduced mobility when travelling by air and the promoter should ensure that comparable assistance is offered to those disabled passengers who wish to continue their journey by train.

Summary
15. MACS supports the general principles of the Bill and accompanying documentation but wished to draw to the attention of the Committee the above factors that need to be taken into account to ensure that the Glasgow Airport Rail Link provides a service that meets the needs of disabled people. It should be noted that changes that are made to take
account of the needs of disabled passengers often make transport more user friendly for others too.