SUBMISSION FROM PASSENGER FOCUS

Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill
Passenger Focus welcomes the opportunity to comment on the general principles surrounding the Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill.

Passenger Focus supports the aims of the Bill and believe that the rail link will be of particular benefit in the following areas:

i) Developing the capacity and capability of the national and regional rail network
As well as providing a rail link between Glasgow Central station and Glasgow Airport, the provision of an extra stop at Paisley Gilmour Street will enhance existing services in the Glasgow-Paisley corridor and open up journey opportunities from the Ayrshire and Inverclyde catchment areas.

Work on the existing rail network (particularly at Wallneuk junction) will also create additional capacity that could be used to develop extra services for Ayrshire and Inverclyde. It is important, however, to ensure that the work on the rail link does not compromise the potential to re-instate a 4th track on the existing network rail route.

We would also seek assurances as to the status of the rail link and the services to be provided once the rail link has been completed. Schedule 31 of the Bill states that although SPTE is the promoter of the Bill it will not necessarily own or operate the railway. It also creates the legal framework whereby SPTE can transfer responsibility for the rail link to a third party. This is sensible – as is the expectation (in the notes to the Bill) that the alterations to the existing rail network will transfer to Network Rail. However, this still leaves the issue of the ‘new’ part of the link and the status of the airport services themselves.

We understand that it is not possible to specify issues of ownership in the Bill – the issue of who actually runs services being subject to separate railway licensing regulations. However, we would like to see a commitment to the principles of through-ticketing, inter-available fares, provision of information and passenger representation. In essence we would like a commitment that the rail link will be part of the national rail network rather than a separate operation in the manner of the Heathrow Express.

ii) Enhanced public transport services to Glasgow Airport and modal integration within the area.
Arguments surrounding the sustainability of air travel and the expansion of airport capacity are outside Passenger Focus’ main remit. However, we do take a keen interest in the potential impact on surface access to airports and the way in which rail can play a part in meeting this demand as part of a properly integrated transport package.

The Future of Air Transport White paper (December 2003) outlined the potential growth in demand at Glasgow Airport. Passenger numbers have already grown by nearly 60% in the 10 year period between 1995 and 2004 and the White Paper envisages a continued increase in demand from 6.5 million in 2001 to 10.4 million in 2015 and to 15.4 million in 2030.
However, only 6% of trips to/from the airport are currently made by public transport - either bus or a combination of train and bus (source Faber Maunsel 2005). GARL will help to address this. Patronage forecasts on the new rail services are estimated to be approximately 1.4 million passengers in the opening year, rising to 1.8 million in 2030. Moreover, transport modelling shows that about 80% of passengers using GARL will transfer from private car or taxi. [Source: Promoters memorandum to the Bill]

The air link will, therefore, clearly enhance the provision of public transport in the area and puts rail at the heart of an integrated transport system. The air link and the proposed fast, regular interval Caledonian Express service from Glasgow Central to Edinburgh will reinforce integration, and the business case for each, by providing a straightforward interchange at Glasgow Central for passengers from a wide range of destinations to the east of Glasgow in the event that the latter service is implemented.