1. I am grateful that the Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill Committee is seeking comments that Fairline Coaches Ltd may consider to be relevant. Although we have been aware of a proposed Glasgow Airport Rail Link this is the first occasion anyone has asked for our input (or, I believe, that of any other bus operator).

2. Fairline Coaches Ltd have been involved in the express bus service to Glasgow Airport since April 1991 and has been integral with Scottish Citylink Coaches in providing what BAA now describes as a "high-quality, high-frequency bus service". The service has never received a subsidy and has consistently offered concessions to airport staff to help BAA attain its public transport use objectives. The service also provides income to BAA at Glasgow Airport and SPT at Buchanan Bus Station by way of their stance charges.

3. As operators on the main public transport connection from the city centre to Glasgow Airport it is disappointing to have not been consulted prior to this stage in the GARL development. This is exacerbated by the dismissive comments of paragraphs 74 & 75 in the Promoter's Memorandum.

4. MVA did not consult with bus operators for its 2002 report to SPTE. Its approach was to use the preferences exhibited by passengers in the South East UK and assume that these are applicable for Glasgow rather than even consult with those who have actually transported over a million passengers to and from Glasgow Airport in the preceding ten years.

5. While MVA may have been correct in assuming that existing bus frequency (approximately every 7.5 minutes) could not be improved it was wrong to suggest that the service was operating at its optimum level. The patronage on buses is heaviest at peak times and can be very low at other times. Given that a large proportion of passenger growth in the future will come from low cost/no frills carriers who traditionally use off-peak time slots there is ample provision on buses for additional patronage.

6. Road congestion on the M8 at peak times is a major problem for the bus service. Transport Scotland has failed to meet its objectives in maintaining traffic flow on the M8 and Glasgow City Council has failed to meet its objective to reduce car use in the city centre and make public transport more reliable.

7. However, even "bus journey time at peak... in excess of 30 minutes" will be shorter than that afforded by rail travel. While the actual journey time of GARL passengers may be 16 minutes, the majority of passengers will be deposited in the periphery of a station they do not want to go to. Transferring to Queen Street or Buchanan Bus Station will entail an extra journey. At present the bus serves Glasgow Central in 16 minutes, Queen Street Station in 21 minutes and Buchanan Bus Station in 25min.
8. Terminating at Glasgow Central is clearly only a temporary measure and GARL should not be assessed independently of a Cross Rail Link. The true cost at current levels then approaches £400million and the merits of GARL should be assessed at these figures.

9. If GARL becomes operational the competition with the existing bus service will provide the Scottish Executive, Transport Scotland and the SPT with a clear conflict on interest. Can they justify and promote this highly subsidised rail link without prejudicing an existing high quality bus service which operates at no cost to the tax payer?

10. The SPT currently fail that test. They refuse to implement signage of Glasgow Central informing passengers of the existence of a bus service to Glasgow Airport. There is adequate signage at Queen Street Station but at Central the SPT would rather passengers endure the woefully inadequate current rail link rather than give them the choice of using the bus service. The bus stop in Waterloo Street is no further from the main station concourse than platform 11 and the journey time is less than half that of the rail-bus link.

11. The MVA report suggests that bus use will drop initially after the introduction of GARL but will recover as passenger numbers grow at Glasgow Airport. This will only happen if a balanced approach is adopted and conditions should be imposed to ensure that Transport Scotland do not favour GARL at the expense of other modes of transport.