

# TRANSform Scotland

*the campaign for sustainable transport*

## Edinburgh Airport Rail Link

Response to the limited consultation  
19th December 2004

### 1. Summary

- 1.1 We wish to record our **opposition** to the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link (EARL) scheme, as currently proposed.
- 1.2 We support the provision of rail access to Edinburgh Airport. However, we consider the current proposal as excessively expensive and poor value in the context of other, more pressing, requirements for investment in the Scottish rail network. The option development process has failed to consider lower-cost, and more swiftly procurable, options for achieving rail access to the Airport.
- 1.3 We also consider the likely lengthening of journey times on the flagship Edinburgh-Glasgow rail line as an unacceptable consequence of this project.
- 1.4 The project also faces a number of serious technical issues, including (i) steep gradients for the rail line in going underground, (ii) the running of diesel trains underground, (iii) emergency egress, and (iv) tunnelling risk factors associated with river courses and mining.

### 2. Opportunity cost for other rail scheme development

- 2.1 At an estimated project cost of up to £500 million, the EARL project is excessively expensive. Should it be pursued as a priority project, it would undoubtedly damage the potential for other, more important, rail schemes to be delivered.
- 2.2 There are many rail schemes in south-east Scotland that the Scottish Executive and local authorities have committed to yet have not provided secured funding. Tram Lines 1 & 2 - despite having promises of Executive funding of £375 million - still have a major funding gap. The long-promised rebuilding of Waverley Station to accommodate new long-distance and regional services has no funding, while important regional projects such as the Borders rail link and the Airdrie-Bathgate rail line, while having the Executive's political commitment, also as yet have no funding.
- 2.3 Furthermore, and in the context of large cost escalation evident with many other schemes of this scale, we are not reassured that the current cost estimates are realistic.
- 2.4 Lastly, the projected increase in public transport modal share of from 16% to 18-19%, as a result of the EARL project, does not suggest that this project is a cost effective means of achieving modal shift towards sustainable modes of transport.

### **3. General benefits to rail infrastructure**

- 3.1 We agree that investing in the rail network of West Edinburgh would have benefits for the rail network in this area. Firstly, such investment would reduce maintenance requirements on Almond Viaduct and Winchburgh Tunnel. Secondly, it would free up capacity on Saughton Junction - Newbridge Junction for Bathgate (and, eventually, Airdrie) trains. However, these benefits could be achieved irrespective of what option is pursued.

### **4. Worsening of journey times for train services**

- 4.1 The consultation leaflet provides no information on impacts of the EARL project on journey times. We understand, however, that the EARL project is estimated to increase Edinburgh-Glasgow journey times by 2.5 minutes, Edinburgh-Perth and Edinburgh-Dunblane by 2 minutes, and Fife Circle services by over 4 minutes.
- 4.2 The consultation leaflet provides no information on other operational issues. For example, we are concerned that shifting Fife trains on to the E&G line introduces capacity constraints on this already busy stretch of track. Furthermore, that the tunnel, if built as 2-track rather than 4-track, introduces additional capacity constraint on the E&G line compared to a surface-level 4-track Dalmeny Chord.

### **5. Errors in option development process**

- 5.1 We find it unacceptable that the option development process specifically excluded the long-standing proposal for the development of a Dalmeny Chord and a station at Turnhouse. We consider this incompetent given that this is existing City of Edinburgh Council policy as set out in the approved Rural West Edinburgh Local Plan, section 7.35. The failure to carry out cost-benefit comparisons for this option severely undermines the option development process.
- 5.2 The option development process should have considered the construction of a station at Gogar or Turnhouse (incorporating check-in facilities), a short link in to the Airport terminals (by travelator or high-frequency people-mover), and the construction of a surface-level 4-track Dalmeny Chord. We would suggest it would not be unreasonable to expect this option to cost in the region of £140 million<sup>1</sup>, a third of the current project's proposed cost.
- 5.3 This alternative proposal has the benefit of being incremental. A rail station at Gogar/Turnhouse could be delivered in relatively short timescale given that it lies within the footprint of the existing railway; it also does not rule out long-term development of a rail tunnel option if and when finances would allow. The sole drawback of this alternative is that it doesn't provide a direct rail link from Edinburgh Park station to Edinburgh Airport - yet Tram Line 2 provides Edinburgh Park with a direct tram link into the Airport.
- 5.4 The consultation leaflet also omits to state that there are already proposals to provide rail access into Edinburgh Airport by means of the Tram Line 2 project. This project could achieve better integration into the heavy rail network by the provision of a heavy rail interchange at Gogar between Tram Line 2 and the E&G line.

---

<sup>1</sup> This generous cost estimate is based on the provision of 8 miles of new track at £10m/mile + £10m flyover + £50m airport station = £140m maximum.

## **6. Conclusions**

- 6.1 The principal benefit of this EARL proposal seems to be that it provides a station within the footprint of the Airport. However, the failure to conduct a robust option development process that looked at other, better value, proposals severely undermines the EARL proposal. The Gogar or Turnhouse Station / Dalmeny Chord proposal would provide the same benefits at greatly reduced costs.
- 6.2 Pursuing a more affordable project would allow finances to be released for higher priority projects such as Waverley station rebuild or steps to improve reliability and line speed for Edinburgh-Glasgow journeys.

**TRANSform Scotland**

*the campaign for sustainable transport*

Lamb's House, Burgess Street, Edinburgh, EH6 6RD

Tel: 0131 467 7714 Fax: 0131 554 8656

Email: [info@transformscotland.org.uk](mailto:info@transformscotland.org.uk)

Web: <http://www.transformscotland.org.uk>