



3rd October 2013

Edinburgh ~ Glasgow Improvement Programme (EGIP)

Railfuture (Scotland) this week launches its campaign to avoid the absolute disruption of Scotland's flagship rail service during the works to electrify the main line between Edinburgh and Glasgow via Falkirk High through the tunnel at Winchburgh. This tunnel does not have enough headroom to install the overhead electric wiring necessary for the electrification of the route. These works will entail closing the line, lifting all the track through the tunnel, lowering the tunnel floor, laying a slab base, installing new rails, reconnecting the signalling systems and erecting the overhead electric wiring. This process has been estimated to take up to **three months** during which time no trains can run with no suitable alternative routes available for the six trains per hour in each direction currently passing through the tunnel (excluding freight and other irregular services).

The services involved are not only those between Edinburgh and Glasgow (carrying 20,000 passengers per day) but also those between Edinburgh and Stirling, Dunblane and beyond. Although passengers on the end-to-end journey between Edinburgh and Glasgow can use the longer routes via Bathgate, Shotts or Carstairs, there is **no alternative** for passengers between Edinburgh and any of the intermediate stations, Croy, Falkirk High, Polmont and Linlithgow and those on the Stirling services, Dunblane, Bridge of Allan, Stirling, Larbert, Camelon and Falkirk Grahamston.

This disruption is not necessary. Part of the original EGIP project was to build a new 3km long line (known as the Almond Chord or the Dalmeny Chord) linking the line between Linlithgow and Dalmeny with the line between Dalmeny and the new station (Edinburgh Gateway) at Gogar (connecting to the tram for Edinburgh Airport). If this line were to be built before the tunnel closure all the affected trains could be diverted over this line with no loss of journey time on the route. Network Rail had already fully designed the chord and commenced land purchase over the route before the EGIP was shamefully truncated in 2012. It would not be necessary to build the flyover junction originally proposed at Winchburgh for the route as there would be no conflicting movements during the tunnel closure.

Construction of the Almond Chord would not only remove the threat of three months of total closure of the major rail routes to Edinburgh but would remain as a permanent diversionary route in case of future disruptions on the line. However it is envisaged that certain journeys would be permanently provided via the chord to give a connection from Edinburgh Airport to the west without which the new station at Edinburgh Gateway will not reach its full potential.

Construction of the Almond Chord would also allow a new station at Winchburgh to be built. Winchburgh Station was an integral part of the proposal for the major new development at Winchburgh to provide sustainable commuter transport to Edinburgh. Transport Scotland have consistently refused consent to construct a station at Winchburgh on the basis that an additional station would increase end to end journey times for existing rail users and that a new station on the line would disrupt efficient timetabling of services on the line, this despite the fact that the proposed station would be totally privately financed by the developers. Construction of the Almond Chord would eliminate these objections. **No Almond Chord - No Winchburgh Station.**

We estimate the construction of the Almond Chord would cost under £30m, this equates to £10m per kilometre (cf. Borders railway at £5.5m/km including stations). The costs of not building the chord would comprise the cost of providing alternative means of transport for over 20,000 passengers per day between Linlithgow and Edinburgh for three months, plus the loss of income from those passengers changing to other modes of transport (some of whom may never return to rail travel) and the fines likely to be imposed by the Office of Rail Regulation on Network Rail, for failing to ensure the rail network is available for the rail operators to maintain scheduled services, the combination of which could amount to £½m per day. In addition there are wider economic costs of adding at least 20min to every passenger's journey. Stewart Stevenson, when in charge of transport issues, often quoted in relation to EGIP that every minute saved on the journey between Edinburgh and Glasgow was worth £60m to the national economy, if so, the converse must be held to be true, i.e. every minute added to the journey would cost the national economy £60m thus even if only for three months, 20 minutes added time at £60m per minute is a substantial cost. It must also be appreciated that the overall costs of not building the chord are totally wasted with nothing to show for the expenditure at the end of the project whereas building the chord results in a permanent asset.

It has been suggested that trains could run from Linlithgow through to Dalmeny and reverse to Edinburgh and vice versa. This is not practical. 12 trains per hour use the tunnel. Each would take 5 minutes for the driver to change ends at Dalmeny plus 2-3 minutes running the wrong way on the track between the station and the crossover during which time the main line to the Forth Bridge would be blocked however there are at least 6 trains per hour in each direction timetabled to cross the Bridge. There are not enough minutes in the hour to enable both sets of movements to take place. Even if it were feasible, possibly on Sundays, the journey times between Linlithgow and Edinburgh would increase by at least 10 minutes.

Railfuture's Roddy McDougall says

“Closing the Winchburgh Tunnel before building the Almond Chord is akin to sending Central Scotland back to the dark ages.”

Notes for Editors:-

Railfuture

Railfuture is the UK's leading independent organisation campaigning for better rail services for passengers and freight. Railfuture is a voluntary group representing rail users, with 20,000 affiliated and individual members. It is not affiliated to or funded by train companies, political parties or trade unions, and uses one-member one-vote democracy.

Railfuture campaigns for cheap and convenient rail services for everyone; better links for buses, bikes and pedestrians; policies to get more heavy lorries on to rail; new lines, stations and freight terminals – a better rail service and a bigger rail system for both passengers and freight. Our volunteer members in **branches** campaign to get stations and lines reopened, and services and facilities improved, for the benefit of the community, economy and environment.

Over the past 50 years we have played a major part in getting over 370 new and reopened stations and over 500 miles of route to join the network.

Short History of EGIP

2007 Programme Vision as announced in a Ministerial Statement to Parliament on 27th September 2007

- An electrified railway between Edinburgh and Glasgow Queen Street (including diversion routes), the line via Cumbernauld and lines to Dunblane and Alloa.
- A new station at Gogar to serve Edinburgh Airport (via tram) and a new curve at Dalmeny to allow Edinburgh to Glasgow services to access the new station.
- Increasing service with six services per hour with a fastest journey time of around 35 minutes.

Key Proposals as at Aug 2008 jointly from Transport Scotland and Network Rail

- Previously considered proposals to electrify the route endorsed.
- Upgrading the existing infrastructure in parallel with electrification proposed to provide the additional capacity needed to allow a 6tph E&G service to operate by 2016.
- The electrification works should incorporate the local services from Glasgow and Edinburgh to Stirling, Dunblane and Alloa.
- 350 single track kilometres of electrification proposed.
- A connection between the Airport and the existing rail network will be achieved by building a new Tram interchange station on the Edinburgh to Fife Line at Gogar by 2011.
- A new chord will be constructed at Dalmeny by 2016 to allow services from Glasgow Queen St and Stirling / Dunblane to be diverted onto the Edinburgh to Fife line and also call at the new Gogar interchange station.
- Electrify the Cumbernauld route, construct a new chord at Garngad and provide an improved interchange station at Bellgrove.

Strategic Transport Projects Review, Dec. 2008

- Re-stated above vision and proposals after STAG appraisal.

Network Rail 6 Month Long Public Consultation commenced Jun 2011

- Shortest journey time increased from 35 min to 37 min.
- Garngad chord removed from programme by Transport Scotland to save £80m and bring capital programme cost down to £1bn at the expense of increasing the journey time between Cumbernauld and Queen Street by 10 minutes due to requiring reversal of the trains at Springburn. The additional running costs of this extra journey time and loss of custom have never been published.
- Freedom of Information request shows cost of Garngad Chord reduced from £80m to £50m.
- Network Rail extends consultation period by 2 months due to unexpectedly high level of interest.
- Gauge clearance work underway (raising Bridges etc.) underway for whole project.

Transport Scotland Rail 2014 Public Consultation published November 2011

- Outcry over suggestion of closing stations deemed too close together and of severing Glasgow North (Maryhill) line from Queen Street by terminating it at Ashfield.
- Minister forced to step in to deny any closure proposals, deny severing of Glasgow North Line and announce £30m fund for opening new stations or improving existing ones.
- Over 1,200 responses by time consultation closed in Feb 2012.

Network Rail EGIP Consultation ends February 2012

- Over 450 responses to consultation proposals. 'The response was more extensive than we expected,' said Network Rail spokesman Owen Campbell. 'In particular, we had around 20 suggestions for new stations'. 'We understood there were community aspirations for stations, but we didn't expect quite as many to come through.'
- 2nd Phase of Consultation promised for autumn by which time consultations would have been analysed and the results published.

4th July Shock Announcement by Minister on Cuts to EGIP from £1bn to £650m

- Cancellation of train depot at Stirling, cancellation of additional 2 Edinburgh/ Glasgow services per hour.
- Fastest journey time further increased from 37min to 42 min.
- Deletion or postponement of electrification from Polmont to Dunblane, Croy to Alloa and Cumbernauld to Camelon.
- Deletion or postponement of fast flyover junctions at Greenhill and Winchburgh and construction of Almond Chord.

- Increase of maximum train length to 8 coaches resulting in longer platforms being required at Linlithgow, Polmont, Falkirk High, Croy and Queen Street, the last of these involving a major demolition and reconstruction programme.

From August 2012 to date

- Network Rail consultation stalled, results of 8 month long consultation never published.
- Springburn to Cumbernauld electrification underway (part of EGIP), Rutherglen to Whifflet electrification promised by mid-2014 (never intended as part of EGIP).
- 3 month closure of Winchburgh Tunnel admitted.
- Massive works at Queen Street Station revealed but suggested long term closure of the station refuted.