



CYMRU | WALES

Promoting Britain's
Railway
for Passengers
and Freight

Transport Policy, Planning and Partnership
Welsh Government
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27th February 2015

Dear Sir

Draft National Transport Plan 2015

Railfuture is the UK's leading independent organisation campaigning for better services for passengers and freight. A voluntary organisation to which many rail user groups are affiliated, the organisation is independent both politically and commercially.

This response is made by Railfuture Cymru Wales on behalf of the Director of Policy. The comments made are not confidential, and we would be happy for them to appear on your website and you are welcome to use them in discussion with funders and other stakeholders. We would be happy to enlarge on any of the points made above or to work with you to identify the best options for the future.

Introduction

We consider that the plan over-emphasises development and expenditure on roads at the expense of other modes of transport especially rail. This contrast has its origins in the different ways in which the transport infrastructure is funded. Road infrastructure expenditure is devolved but rail infrastructure expenditure is not devolved. The Welsh Government has little direct control of rail other than sponsoring particular projects, rolling stock and services. However this should not be the case in the future. The Welsh Government has already set up a not-for-dividend company to assist with projects such as the South East Wales Metro and procuring the next franchise, but it's remit could be expanded. It could become the core of a not-for-dividend franchise, or it could specify the concession details should a concession rather than franchise be deemed the best way forward. Either of these would give Welsh Government a much greater say in the provision of rail in Wales. The Welsh Government should also have greater control over Network Rail and ensure that it receives the appropriate finance devolved to deliver the infrastructure that is appropriate for Wales. There may be scope for an arm's length company to take control of the infrastructure in Wales.

Professor Stuart Cole of the University of South Wales has said 'Currently the Welsh road network is devolved but not the rail network. The Welsh Government needs to have both in the same budget so that the minister can make a decision between one form of investment or another' i.e. in road or rail.

The draft plan does not mention these opportunities or the schemes that are being jointly funded with Network Rail and other rail transport operating companies in Wales.

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The plan for Government involvement in rail schemes is limited and unambitious with only one short section of line Ebbw Vale Parkway to Ebbw Vale opening during the plan period. There are no new line openings listed in the plan (except possibly to Llangefni) and no new station openings to take place in the first five years of the plan. However major expensive road projects are underway in both South and North Wales including the Heads of the Valleys road and the Newport Relief road.

A number of line openings are possible, for these we refer you to 'On track for the 21st Century' Railfuture's Development for the Railways of Wales. A copy is attached to this submission.

Urgent consideration should be given to schemes that could be electrified such as Aberdare to Hirwaun and Aberbeeg to Abertillery as well as completion of the Maesteg and Ebbw Vale service enhancement schemes. Welsh Government should ensure that the following links are electrified to give flexibility to the network Park Junction to Newport and Grangetown to Ninian Park.

The need for electrification from Wrexham Central to Bidston should also be a priority to give direct access to Liverpool as should the Halton curve. These should be joint projects with DFT. We are also concerned at the refusal to increase the number of trains from North Wales to Manchester Airport in favour of retaining paths for additional trains from the North east of England. It appears that the convenience of passengers has a lower priority.

We consider that the Welsh Rail Network should have new build diesel and electric rolling stock and not cast off older and more unsuitable stock from other parts of the country. This stock must be fit for purpose and be able to encourage the further development of the Welsh tourist industry.

The minimum rail provision including on Sundays should be a two hourly interval service with appropriate bus links.

1 Policy Context and Transport Planning Framework

1.1.9 Railfuture is concerned that Local Transport Plans do not show how they are integrated with rail developments. The Local Transport plans especially in South Wales cover small areas and do not consider the needs of travel in the wider region. These plans should support regional development as well as local development. We consider that Government should reconsider the role of Local Transport plans in association with proposed local government reorganisation.

Fig 1.2 The Wales Transport Strategy long term outcomes environmental section could be improved by replacing 'improve by reduce and add' with 'reduce the need to travel'.

1.3.4 Should have as a key priority to provide an integrated public transport system in Wales together with excellent links with other parts of Great Britain.

2 Current Position and Future Trends

Figure 2.3 shows the population change between 2001-2011 however rail service improvements have not always followed in the areas of greatest growth.

Figures 2.8 and 2.9 indicate that road traffic growth has remained stagnant over the last seven years.

There is no supporting evidence for future growth. Railfuture expresses its concern that a greater proportion of Welsh Government's expenditure is for road schemes where as some of this expenditure could be diverted to rail schemes to give greater benefits.

2.8.21 'the railway on the west coast should' read the Dyfi estuary and the Cambrian Coast line from Machynlleth to Portmadoc. Line 2 should be the Conwy Valley railway Llandudno Junction to Blaenau Ffestiniog. We are concerned at the recurring flooding in the Conwy valley. Llanelli to Carmarthen should be added.

3 Delivering Improvements

3.2.20 The proposed measures will encourage additional road traffic in the short to medium term and result in an associated increase in emissions. They will also abstract income from more sustainable options such as rail for passengers and freight. Other public transport cycling and walking.

3.2.21 Recent forecasts have been higher than those experienced in recent years.

3.3.3 Both the Heads of the Valleys and duplicate M4 schemes are very expensive and environmentally damaging. An improved rail service between South Wales and Bristol would reduce traffic on the M4 There is limited access to cars in the Heads of the Valleys so expanding the Heads of the Valleys road will do little to improve accessibility from those communities. Investment in public transport would be more effective.

3.6 Railfuture supports Active travel. It is important that active travel routes are provided between communities and railway stations. Cycle storage should be available at stations.

3.8.4 Railfuture has published ' On Track for the 21st Century' its Development Plan for the Railways of Wales in which are its recommendations for the replacement Wales and Borders franchise. It is noticeable in the draft National Transport Plan that there is one short rail line being built but there are 22 road schemes. This is completely out of balance.

Railfuture wishes to make the following comments on the Rail Infrastructure. 3.8.7 We are concerned that the expansion of the Welsh Rail network is slowing down with a reduction in schemes supported by Welsh Government. We are also concerned that Rail projects such as Wrexham to Chester are not producing high line speeds. The class 175 units cannot be used to their full potential.

3.9.1 R11 This section should included the list of improvements associated with the provision of Harrington Humps.

R14' short term' should be added in the timing column. The present service provides only one morning commuter service into Cardiff before 08.45. The line serves an area which has seen rapid population and passenger growth where as the Llynfi Valley needs an improved service to stimulate economic growth together with improved links to Cardiff.

R15 There should be long-term provision for a rail link to Newport.

R16 This route has seen increased use by freight traffic. This includes coal from the Bristol ports to English power stations at Fiddlers Ferry and Rugeley and stone from Moreton on Lugg to a number of locations in England. There is a possibility that more traffic could be diverted to the route from the north south route through Birmingham as capacity problems increase in the Midlands. Railfuture considers that improvements on this route should ensure that passenger trains are not delayed by freight trains. There is a need for improvements in the provision of longer loops and for bi directional signing with adequate crossovers between both tracks. There should be a substantial funding contribution for this work from DfT

R11 Railfuture has included in its Development Plan for the Railways of Wales a number of suggestions for new stations many of which are included in this section. The role of light rail should be considered for some of these stations in the Metro area.

3.9.2 Welsh Government must ensure that Network Rail's long term planning process embraces the requirements for rail travellers in Wales

This section does not refer to improvements required for freight traffic. Provision should be made for larger containers to be brought on services to Wentloog. Increased use could be made of existing privately owned terminals including those located within dock areas such as Newport, Cardiff, Barry and Mostyn. Railfuture also advocates the provision of smaller strategic freight terminals in Wales.

3.10.3 Railfuture appreciates the endeavours of Welsh Government and Arriva Trains Wales to increase the capacity of Welsh Rail services and provide improved services using life expired stock. There is a need for new replacement stock for both electric and diesel worked services.

3.11.1 Consideration should be given to additional services on Sundays including the provision of services on those lines, which do not at present, have a Sunday service.

3.12 Bus and Community services

3.12.10 All these services must link with local services and with rail services to provide an integrated transport system in Wales. Railfuture considers that there should be no further reduction in bus services in Wales and that there is a need for more Sunday bus services. Bus services should continue to be provided in and to National Parks.

3.13 BC6 Railfuture's Development Plan suggests strategic bus routes supplementing rail routes. These routes are listed in the plan and supported by a map.

3.18 Ports

There is minimal reference to rail links to Ports. There is considerable rail activity at Newport (including Birdport) and Cardiff Docks. Petroleum products are transferred to rail at Milford Haven.

Ports also offer the facilities for the transfer of containers and other materials from road to rail and vice versa. Stone from Wenvoe Quarry is loaded to rail in Cardiff Docks. There is a container transfer facility in Barry Docks.

We are concerned at the reduction in facilities and services for foot passengers at the ferry ports of Pembroke Dock, Fishguard Harbour and Holyhead. Convenient day services for the use by rail passengers have been withdrawn

3.20.3 Railfuture would like to see improved rail links. There is no adequate link from Bridgend and stations to the west of Bridgend.

3.23 Integrated Transport and Metro.

Railfuture considers that there should be more consultation with stakeholders with regard to Metro developments

Fig 3.2 There should be more priority links in the west of the region. There should be a priority link from Bridgend to Pontypridd. Travel time by public transport from Maesteg to Pontypridd almost 2 hours. There should also be links from Porthcawl to Bridgend and Cowbridge to Pontyclun. There is the need for improved car parking at rail and bus stations.

3.32 CCRM12 LRT in Cardiff needs to be far more than a Cardiff Bay to City centre shuttle Page 28 of Railfuture's Development plan lists our proposals. Railfuture considers that LRT should be considered for other Welsh towns and cities and has given examples in its plan. Tram trains should also be considered including routes proposed for the Metro.

3.23.8 It is important to have reliable real time information and services with improved shelters. Railfuture strongly supports what is stated in this paragraph.

3.24 Specific Interventions

Railfuture welcomes the rail service improvements especially to Maesteg. Improvements are long overdue between Cardiff, Bridgend and Pyle (and Swansea) rail services and enhancement of the Cardiff to Maesteg service. Bridgend is the 5th station in Wales for number of passengers but does not have a regular service in frequency from Cardiff and a 20-minute interval service to Cardiff. This compares with 15-minute interval services from Bargoed, Abercynon and Penarth to Cardiff.

We trust these comments and suggestions will be of use.

Yours faithfully,

RPittard

Rowland Pittard
Railfuture Cymru | Wales
for Director of Policy