

The Rages Rag

Newsletter of Rail Action Group, East of Scotland
Issue No. 5 - April 2000

East Lothian Rail Study No East Linton, no Haddington

Introduction

The eagerly awaited Rail Study for East Lothian finally arrived with our Secretary. From his summary that follows, it is seen as somewhat disappointing with respect to some of the aims of RAGES. The document contained 81 pages with as many pages as appendices!

The study partnership comprised:

- GNER
- Lothian and Edinburgh Enterprise Limited
- ScotRail
- City of Edinburgh Council
- East Lothian Council

The study objectives were:

- a detailed summary of all potential track and signalling improvements
- a review of existing and potential services
- a full assessment of all existing services
- a full assessment of the potential for a new station at East Linton
- a full assessment of the re-instatement of local services to Dunbar
- a full assessment of re-opening the line to Haddington
- an appraisal of rail fare levels and comparison with competitive modes
- a full assessment of service improvements to North Berwick
- a full assessment of potential sources of income, capital and revenue for achieving these aims.

A prime objective of the partnership is to:

“Achieve a modal shift from car to rail within the study area and encourage the development of a sustainable and integrated transport system without

jeopardising any existing or proposed freight movements.”

Enhancement strategies would cover short term (2001), medium term (up to 2004) and long term (2005-2010). The initial phase (Phase 1) would identify a range of possible options and determine those to be carried forward to Phase 2.

The following projects had been identified as committed or being required during the next ten years:

- Railtrack station regeneration
 - Edinburgh re-signalling
 - Edinburgh CrossRail
 - ECML upgrade
 - Waverley station re-development
 - Musselburgh Parkway
 - Drem and North Berwick station platform extensions
 - North Berwick 150 year celebration
- Also having an impact in the longer term were:
- the Waverley line re-opening
 - development of Millerhill freight

The opportunities for infrastructure enhancements are discussed regarding existing line speeds with a statement of the current restrictions and the possible increase in line speeds. The latter may have a consequent reduction in line capacity and scope for local service improvements.

Freight opportunities are discussed with a summary of the existing freight operations.

Station enhancements

The ‘meat’ of the study is covered in this section. Each of the existing stations (Dunbar, North Berwick, Drem, Longniddry, Prestonpans, Wallyford and Musselburgh) are

The Aims of RAGES

- To improve the rail service between Edinburgh and Dunbar with extension to Berwick upon Tweed at a later stage.
- To have East Linton Station re-opened for active use and to press for the re-opening of Reston Station.
- To consider the implications with regard to car parking and bicycle storage at Stations between Waverley and Berwick upon Tweed.
- To improve the level of service to North Berwick.
- To keep under scrutiny the standards of passenger facilities at stations between Waverley and Berwick upon Tweed, including North Berwick, and to draw the attention of the relevant bodies to shortcomings which arise.
- To re-open the branch line from Longniddry to Haddington.
- The group, being environmentally minded, will actively strive to encourage rail travel within its geographical area.

Welcome to this issue of The Rages Rag, which we intend to publish quarterly. It will be the main means of communication to our members.

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The editor invites contributions which should be sent to him at the address at the foot of page 4.

East Lothian Rail Study

From Page 1

assessed under the headings:

- overview
- interface with local bus services
- how it is situated with respect to the local community
- a review of the arrangements at each station
- a detailed map showing the surrounding area
- proposals to enhance the performance of the station

Additional services

Six options are identified:

- 1 Additional hourly service to North Berwick giving a combined half hourly frequency
- 2 Hourly Dunbar service calling at Wallyford only, as a Park and Ride option, assuming that the existing GNER service is supplemented by ScotRail during off-peak
- 3 Hourly Dunbar service calling at all stations, assuming that the existing GNER service is supplemented by ScotRail during off-peak and therefore cannot realistically serve East Linton
- 4 Hourly Dunbar service calling at all stations, as per option 3, but including a new station at East Linton
- 5 Hourly all day Haddington service over re-opened branch line (Editor is getting excited at this point) calling at all stations, assumed to be operated by ScotRail
- 6 Combination of options 1 and 2 developed to give a 20

additional services, it would bring less benefits that option 3, would remove the excellent although infrequent GNER service from Dunbar and introduce additional pathing complexities

- Although option 5 is just viable, it was less viable than other options to Dunbar and North Berwick. If it was implemented first, then it would trigger the need for additional track capacity which would greatly worsen its fundability. (Editor is down hearted again!)

The remaining options went forward to Phase 2, where the methodology adopted covered:

- modelling approach
- the mode-choice model
- service patterns and annual operating costs
- de-congestion benefits
- accident benefits
- operating assumptions
- Railtrack track access policy

Under operating assumptions, it was noted that train splitting at Drem (for North Berwick and Dunbar) was not operationally acceptable.

In the Railtrack pricing section, the report says “The notional figures ... are a clear indication that Railtrack wish to maximise their revenue from Track Access Charges, with the prices quoted seeking to deter local services to retain paths for which Railtrack believe will be able to pay a

higher charge.” (This concern was also felt by RAGES).

The conclusion for additional services is for an enhanced North Berwick service to use the “one potential path available for additional local services.” The last page is a table of “Suggested Rail Strategy”. Here it states that the proposed East Linton should be protected within local plans and to be reviewed during the medium and long term timescales identified at the beginning of the study. Haddington should be reviewed during the long term timescale (2005-2010) (Editor is slightly less disappointed!) There is no mention of a local Dunbar service in the rail strategy table.

Appendices

The main appendices of interest are those that discuss East Linton and Haddington.

These are reviewed in the same manner as the existing stations. It is suggested that the

station at East Linton would have to be re-sited further west, away from the bend. The (RAGES committee have looked at the site and accept the recommendation, with the exception of the car park and access.) The operational options are discussed in detail.

The case for Haddington is discussed considering bus, light and heavy rail options, but the report recommends a ‘normal’ rail link with an hourly service. Due to factory units being built on the site of the original station, a new site due south of the Roodlands Hospital with access from Hospital Road is put forward.

Option ID	Total Achievable Demand (Total 12 Hour Person Trips)	Maximum Decon-gestion Benefit (£)	% Total Achievable Demand Required to Cover Operating Costs	% Total Achievable Demand Required to Cover Capital Costs	Additional Rail Demand (12 Hour Person Trips Total)	Mode Shift (all)	Viability	Fundability
1. Half Hourly North Berwick	39207	28503	1.74%	0.00%	1,445	3.68%	2.12	N/A
2. Hourly Dunbar – Stopping at Wallyford Only	8313	21861	5.07%	0.00%	305	3.67%	0.72	N/A
3. Hourly Dunbar stopping (no East Linton)	37294	37309	1.62%	0.00%	1,420	3.81%	2.36	N/A
4. Option 3 + East Linton	38572	36073	2.94%	1.25%	1,460	3.78%	1.29	1.79
5. Haddington re-opening (hourly stopping)	45116	45513	2.81%	5.26%	1,482	3.28%	1.17	0.39
6. Option 1 Plus 2	39207	35488	3.10%	0.00%	1,646	4.20%	1.36	N/A

minute service for Wallyford as a Park and Ride example

There is a detailed and complex analysis which leads to a Viability Index. If this index is greater than 1 then the proposal is viable from the operator’s viewpoint.

The results of the outline analysis are shown in the table.

The options not taken forward are:

- Option 2 showed that for local services there is a need to stop at most stations since no single station can generate sufficient passengers to fill a train
- Although option 4 is just viable and fundable, given the assumption that only one path would be available for

GNER's 2020 Vision

In February, GNER unveiled its plans "for the largest single rail investment ever seen on the East Coast Main Line".

Summarising from their press release:

Extra services

- a major increase in services by 2004
- earlier, later and more frequent weekend services to key destinations

More seats, new/refurbished trains, upgraded track

- a totally new, or refurbished, fleet by 2007
- the introduction of new diesel and electric high speed tilting trains
- reduced journey times between Edinburgh and London by 30 minutes
- ten trains to be running by 2004
- further 15 by 2007
- existing HST sets withdrawn by 2007
- London to Aberdeen and London to Inverness journey times reduced by up to an hour
- developing plans with Railtrack to create a 140mph railway by 2009/10

New and better stations

- major improvements at all GNER-managed stations
- Railtrack to re-develop Edinburgh and Kings Cross
- a doubling of car park spaces at existing stations, with CCTV and extra lighting
- out-of-town Parkway stations to include Musselburgh

Ticket buying

- internet retailing
- self service fastticket machines

Improved integration with other transport

- more services brings better connections with local rail services (Ed - ??)
- develop further through-ticketing with bus operators
- all GNER-managed stations to have new maps showing bus connections, help points, improved signage, more secure cycle provision

GNER also reported that since starting its current seven year franchise in April 1996, its track record includes:

- a 22% rise in passenger numbers against an original forecast of 18.5% over the seven years.
- 12% more trains (112 per day) against a contractual commitment of 87 per day
- investment levels at over £40 million is more than double the franchise commitment

This has been achieved against a £50 million reduction in annual subsidy from April 1999 compared to the start of the franchise.

It is hoped that GNER will be allowed to run two leased 373/2 trains from Eurostar UK Ltd from May 2000 between London and York. This will alleviate the growing problem of over-crowding on its Anglo-Scottish services.

2004 Tilt Train Timetable

Edinburgh to London

- 15 tilt train services each way daily, the fastest (one each way per day), calling at Newcastle only, will take 3hrs 40 mins.
- at 3hrs 50 mins, the typical Edinburgh to London tilt train journey will be 30 mins less than the current electric train timing
- frequency increases to two trains per hour with one a tilt train and the other a refurbished 225 electric train
- peak services will be increased to 3 trains per hour
- total to/from Edinburgh each weekday will increase from 44 to more than 60

Glasgow to London

- 2 tilt trains each way each day as part of an overall service of 13 trains a day - 7 from Glasgow and 6 to Glasgow

Aberdeen to London

- 3 trains each way each day as at present with an early Leeds to Aberdeen train
- in 2007, the journey will be reduced by up to an hour

Inverness to London

- 1 train each way each day as at present
- in 2007, the journey will be reduced by up to an hour

All of this depends on GNER being successful in their bid

New GNER service

A new service from Edinburgh to Newcastle will begin from the Summer Timetable.

This train will leave Edinburgh at 23:00 hrs and call at Dunbar, Berwick and Alnmouth, Monday to Friday from 29th

May 2000.

Not only is this good news for people wishing to get back from city events such as the theatre, Edinburgh Festival etc., but it is also a great opportunity for local hotels and businesses to tap into the lucrative Festival market.

Reston matters

by Tom Thorburn

The Feasibility Study Meeting on 24th February 2000 was held in the Council Chamber, Newtown Street, Duns. Scottish Borders Council (SBC) Transport Manager Peter Fuller read Railtrack's letter of apology re their invitation to the Reston Station Feasibility Study. The letter stated that investment on the East Coast Main Line would be limited to three new freight passing loops, namely at Drem (Prora Farm), Innerwick and Stannington (approximately 5 miles south of Morpeth). In reply to this, I requested that Peter Fuller of SBC write back to Railtrack with the proposal of possibly re-siting the Innerwick loops at Reston thus facilitating an easier/less costly station build and allowing fast GNER/Virgin trains to pass if the need arose.

As no Train Operating Company attended the meeting, it was generally decided that a Reston feasibility study would have to be put on ice for the foreseeable future. Peter Fuller expressed his fear of pursuing a local train service at the expense of possibly losing GNER services at Berwick and Dunbar. In reply, I stated that the local service would be complementary and not to the detriment of GNER services. Council Convenor Tulley stated that all railway property would be protected in the meantime in readiness for the time when services would call at Reston.

Tony Mitchum of Northumberland Council said that £3,000 to £4,000 had been spent on the Belford station feasibility study, Northern Spirit had intimated that they would pick up Belford passengers and that approximately £50,000 would be required to bring the platform up to standard.

At the closing of this meeting I re-iterated my request on the passing loops and also stated that SBC should be looking to get a local service from Edinburgh to Berwick initiated as part of ScotRail's new franchise negotiations when their franchise comes up for re-negotiation in the rumoured near future.

Following the meeting of the 24th February, Council Convenor Drew Tulley and Transport Manager Peter Fuller addressed Reston and Auchencrow Community Council on 7th March at Reston Primary School. Peter again expressed his fear of pursuing a local train service at the expense of possibly losing GNER services at Berwick and Dunbar and was writing to GNER to request more trains to call at these stations. Railtrack had told Peter that they wished to keep the proposed loops at Innerwick as they would be at the north end of Cockburnspath Bank, whereas Grantshouse loops are at the south end of the bank. The community council made it very clear of their desire to have Reston re-opened and much discussion ensued with regard to the Virgin Trains bid for the East Coast Main Line franchise. Convenor Tulley will approach GNER to see if they will come to the Borders to give a show on their 2020 Vision (franchise bid proposals) as they have done in Newcastle and Edinburgh.

As part of our campaign, the groups' meeting with MP/MSP's continued on 17th March 2000 with Euan Robson MSP. Euan apologised for not having a price yet for Reston station but this was still in the hands of Railtrack. He also re-iterated his strong support for our aims for the local service and

would be getting back in touch with Railtrack re the cost of the station build and also the subject of repositioning the loops at Reston.

On 24th March 2000 Barrie Forrest, Joyce McLean and myself met Archy Kirkwood MP and Euan Robson MSP. Joyce informed us that St Abbs sanctuary has the largest number of tourists in the Scottish Borders and a complaint often raised is the lack of public transport i.e. the station. Archy will approach Virgin Trains to see if they will come to the Borders to give a show on their franchise bid proposals (similar to GNER's 2020 vision). Both Archy and Euan will write to Railtrack re the passing loops at Reston after we informed them that there was enough room for a southbound loop. Barrie and myself carried out this survey on 29th March 2000 and the information has been duly passed to our Parliamentarians.

Barrie Forrest and myself attended the Berwickshire Area Committee meeting on 28th March in Duns. This meeting consisted of two topics of which Reston station was the latter. I asked the Chairman of the meeting, "was Reston station now on the Scottish Borders Council Structure Plan and had SBC registered Reston with Railtrack under their Local Government Aspirations". Regrettably the answers that Transport Manager Peter Fuller gave were not ones we wished to have heard. "No, we do not see Reston being in the Structure Plan in the next 5 to 10 years and no we have not registered Reston with Railtrack as there is at this moment no operators interested". I replied to this bombshell that this was all contrary to what we had been led to believe, we were extremely disappointed and it is a Council aspiration not an operator(s) aspiration.

Annual General Meeting

Our first annual general meeting will be held on 10th May 2000 at 19:30 hrs in the West Barns Bowling Club, West Barns, Dunbar.

We are pleased to have as our guest speaker, Mr John Denning of East Lothian Council whose talk will be - Railway Travel in the 21st Century: a Personal View.

Membership

We now have 126 members from around the counties. Please encourage your neighbours or fellow passengers to join RAGES.

Membership forms can be obtained from committee members, whose names can be found on your membership card.