

Way to urban mobility

By Trevor Garrod

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Passengers have responded to the European Commission's Green Paper entitled *Towards a new culture for urban mobility* after comments were invited on 25 questions.

The European Passengers' Federation (to which Railfuture is affiliated) welcomed the Green Paper's aims of tackling urban congestion by promoting public transport and encouraging "less car-dependent lifestyles".

The EPF submission points out that private cars work on a whole network whereas public transport normally works as a constellation of individual networks.

Integrated public transport information and easy, convenient ticketing are therefore essential, so that an alternative to the car is provided.

For example, if you plan to visit a town or city for pleasure or business, you may well log on to its website.

The website should contain a quick and easy link to information about

local trains, trams and buses. The European Union should, in our view, encourage the construction of metros in major conurbations and light rapid transit or bus priority measures in medium-sized towns and cities.

If buses, trains and trams are faster, more business will be attracted and fares brought down – and, as EPF points out, "it is important to attract, not force, people on to public transport".

A single transport authority is likely to ensure "a seamless experience for passengers as if part of a single integrated system".

We argue the case for a "technology research platform at EU level" to advise on EU investment in research and development on urban mobility issues.

On finance, EPF supports the inclusion of external costs when transport schemes are being assessed and points to the experience of congestion charges in such cities as London, Stockholm, Milan and Durham in generating funds to help improve public transport.

Questions about Eurostar

The Railfuture survey of Eurostar journeys is attracting a lively and interesting response, with 100 completed questionnaires received by 18 January.

The questionnaire, enclosed with *Railwatch* 115, is also available on our website and has been distributed by local rail users' associations.

It asks questions about specific

Eurostar journeys made in the period up to 31 March 2008 and all replies received by 10 April will be entered into a prize draw.

We will analyse the replies and issue a report in May.

If you would like a further questionnaire, please print it from the website or contact Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ.

New campaign for Dornoch

A new dedicated group has been formed to fight for the Dornoch rail link which could drastically improve journey times on the Far North of Scotland line.



DORLAG, the Dornoch Rail Link Action Group, is led by Railfuture member Mark Norton.

He is highlighting the fact that, despite rolling stock improvements and the cost advantages of travelling by rail, the length of the rail journey is a big disincentive.

He says the three and a quarter hours from Thurso to Inverness are a serious impediment to the full development of the line.

A new Dornoch Firth rail crossing would however save 45 minutes on the journey.

The group is also calling for the retention of and improvements to the existing line via Lairg. For more information, see <http://www.dorlag.co.uk>.

Thanks to publicity by the group,

the Caithness community is well aware that it is quicker to get from London to Paris than it is to travel by rail from Caithness to Inverness.

As a result, Caithness West Community Council is now affiliated to DORLAG. A report by the MVA Consultancy concluded that, according to Scottish Government assessment standards, the Dornoch Rail Link has the "greatest merit".

It recommended further appraisal, based on comparisons with an improved bus service.

The £14,000 report aimed at assessing the benefits of a Dornoch crossing and the construction of a new station at Dornoch.

DORLAG follows on the campaign fought for many years by Railfuture member Ken Sutherland for a Dornoch crossing which was also supported by Chris Green when he was general manager of ScotRail in the 1980s.

North West

LOCAL ACTION

By Trevor Bishop

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Woodhead campaign

See Yorkshire notes on page 19

DfT ploughs on with CrossCountry 2008

The consultation over the new timetables for CrossCountry services from 2008 has been exposed as a sham. In a reply to East Cheshire Lines Rail User Group's response to the consultation, it points out that the proposals for alternate Manchester-Birmingham services to leave out calls at either Macclesfield or Stockport to speed up the service, were included in the franchise specification produced by DfT and are needed to accommodate the three times per hour Manchester-Euston services.

It goes on to suggest that the reduction in calling points for the Manchester-Birmingham services would be offset by a proposed hourly Manchester to Stoke-on-Trent service, that Northern is apparently developing. How an hourly stopping service can be accommodated, when a few minutes extra for calls on long-distance services cannot, is not stated.



Thames Valley

By Chris Wright

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Network Rail business plan

There are several references to Bletchley to Oxford and Aylesbury reopening in Network Rail's business plan (to 2014) as a means of meeting the Government's target to increase capacity on the rail network. The plan must now be considered by the Rail Regulator and Government.

Oxford-Milton Keynes is seen as "a reasonable possibility" while multiple aspirations could be met by upgrading the Aylesbury-Princes Risborough line for a Marylebone-Wycombe-Aylesbury to Milton Keynes service. Aylesbury to Milton Keynes or Bedford are other options.

The Oxford-Bletchley line is also seen as an option for Manchester-Reading services with potential time savings of 40 minutes.

The aspirations of Chiltern Railways and the possibility of a Marylebone-Wycombe-Bicester-Oxford service would help relieve capacity issues at Reading when remodelling is under way.

Stations at Bicester Village and Water Eaton Parkway and 90-100 mph running are suggested.

Aylesbury Vale Parkway

Construction work on the new station has been well under way since October. Carrillion won the main contract and has been replacing existing track and ballast. Work on the platform and bay platform is due for completion by May 2008. Resignalling and commissioning is due in late 2008. Phase 2 work on the station and parking and bus interchange will follow in 2009. Services are due to start in 2010 by extending existing London trains from Aylesbury.

Aylesbury South

Aylesbury Vale District Council has published draft proposals to expand south of Aylesbury. The controversial plans include a new Aylesbury South rail station.