



**Report to:** Development Committee

**Subject:** Future Railway Investment Consultation

**Date:** 23 April 2013

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<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	The Department for Regional Development recently published a consultation paper seeking the views on how to take forward and prioritise future investment in the region's railways up to 2035.
1.2	The outcome of the consultation will be used to inform future decisions on how DRD prioritises future spending across all areas of transport.
1.3	<b>Appendix 1</b> contains a summary of the 8 packages of future investment contained in the consultation document and <b>Appendix 2</b> contains a draft Council response for consideration by Members.

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	The current strategy for rail in Northern Ireland is to keep existing lines open and maintained. Whilst this does not provide for extension of the network, it has enabled a 50% increase in the frequency of rail services between the main economic centres through supporting the procurement of additional rolling stock.
2.2	The existing railway network comprises 211 route miles of track linking Belfast along 5 lines with Derry / Londonderry, Portrush, Larne, Bangor, and Portadown / Newry and extending south to the border to connect with the line to Dublin. There is also the "mothballed" section of line between Knockmore in Lisburn to Antrim, which is maintained and used for training purposes only.
2.3	The consultation document outlines 8 packages which cover a variety of investment options ranging from maintaining the present network (cost £620 million for the period 2015-2035) to the most expensive option of expanding the railways from the west to Letterkenny; Donegal Town; and Sligo (cost of any rail line extension is stated as £11 million per mile of track).

2.4	<p><b>Investment Options</b></p> <p>The consultation relates to investment in railway across the entire region, however, due to Belfast's central role as the hub of rail transport for the Northern Ireland - almost 1000 Weekly Return Journeys take place on the main Belfast line - a number of the packages are relevant to the City. Appendix 2 contains a draft Council response, the main elements of which are outlined below.</p>
2.5	<p>It is considered that Package One, "<i>Maintaining the Existing Network</i>", is essential if the City is to continue to develop both in economic and accessibility terms.</p>
2.6	<p>Packages 2 (£600m) and 3 (£260m) relate to "<i>Improving Passenger Capacity on Existing Network</i>" and "<i>Increase Network Capacity to Accommodate More Trains</i>" respectively and despite being two separate packages, internal consideration has concluded that these investment options are interdependent and should be considered in tandem.</p>
2.7	<p>Package 3 includes the development of a Transport Hub at Great Victoria Street Station which it is suggested would, amongst other benefits, facilitate an hourly service to Dublin. Package Three also provides for dualling of the track between Central Station and York Gate, which would accommodate a new halt at Donegall Quay to help serve the University of Ulster campus and the development of the North of the City Centre.</p>
2.8	<p>Package 4 considers the costs of enhancing the <i>Enterprise</i> service to Dublin with the aim of providing a 90-minute journey. To achieve this and remain within emissions targets, it is proposed that electrification of the Dublin to Belfast Line would be required, bringing the total cost of this package alone to £460 million. It is considered that whilst this may be a desirable objective for both Northern Ireland Railways and Iarnród Éireann in light of the enhanced motorway connections to Dublin, the cost may prove prohibitive.</p>
2.9	<p>Packages 5 – 8 outline the costs and benefits of conversion to an electrified system (£350 million); the potential for re-opening of the Knockmore (Lisburn) to Antrim line which may facilitate connectivity to the International Airport (£50.5 million); and extending railway lines to the West and to Donegal (£11 million per mile of track). These proposals have high projected costs and would be dependent on a number of the packages being implemented.</p>
2.10	<p>There may, however, be longer-term considerations that need to be factored in to future investment considerations in respect of the energy supply and sustainability.</p>
2.11	<p>By way of example, the 2012 Department for Regional Development publication 'Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future: A New Approach to Regional Transportation' acknowledges that air and other pollution from transport can have a significant impact on the quality of life and health of communities, especially in urban areas.</p>
2.12	<p>Accordingly, a lack of adequate support and future investment in our railway infrastructure would put these commitments at risk and would be likely to have an adverse impact upon public health.</p>

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
	None

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
	There are no equality and good relations attached to this report at this time.

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	Members are requested to consider the appended draft response and agree a formal submission to the Department for Regional Development in respect of the current consultation.

<b>6</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
Appendix 1 – Summary of the Rail Investment Packages Appendix 2 – Draft Council Response	

## Appendix 1 Consultation Summary

### Packages

In the current budget period, capital rail investment per annum is on average £44 million, which is a higher rate of investment than at any time over the past decade. Over the 20 years following 2015, this would equate to potential investment of £880 million. However, in the current economic climate there are no guarantees that level of investment will be maintained.

**It is important to note, over that time period £620 million would be required to maintain the current network, considerably limiting amount available for expansion.** Possible options have been designed on how to utilise the available funding over the next 20 years. These are laid out below:

#### **Package One: Maintain Present Network Only**

**Estimated Cost:** £620 million

**Timescale:** 2015/16 – 2034/35

**Aim/Impact:** Preserve standard of existing network and deliver current levels of service

**Benefits for Passenger:** Reduces potential for speeding restrictions, increasing delays and reductions in standard and level of service

**Consequences of not investing:** Non-maintenance of network will result in reductions in standard and of service with serious consequences for viability of existing network. Failure to maintain network will also impact deliverability of other packages

**Alternatives:** there are no alternatives if we are to reduced services and longer term closure. A reduced maintenance programme could be implemented, but this would leave no provision to respond to future requirements and developments.

**Details:** Completion of phase 3 Coleraine – Londonderry track renewal project;

- Enterprise fleet overhaul
- Refurbishment of 23 Class 3000 trains
- Replacement of ticketing & information systems
- Routine vehicle maintenance &;
- Routine maintenance of stations & car parks.

### **Package Two: Improving Passenger Capacity on Existing Network**

**Estimated Cost:** £600 million

**Timescale:** 2015/16 – 2034/35

**Aim/Impact:** Increase passenger usage and capacity by improving level and quality to service.

**Benefits for Passenger:** Increases passenger capacity by adding more carriages to trains and enhancement of ticketing & information and increasing Park & Ride at stations. This option does not extend the network.

**Consequences of not investing:** If measures are not introduced could lead to fall in passenger numbers, and could impact deliverability of other projects and lead to stagnation.

**Alternatives:** No alternatives to improve passenger capacity

**Details:** Developing new halts where passenger demand can be identified, particularly where associated with new Park & Ride

- Purchasing additional carriages to run longer trains
- Adding additional services to timetables
- Improving Park & Ride capacity at existing stations and halts
- Improved ticketing projects and passenger access to information

### **Package Three: Increase Network Capacity to Accommodate More Trains**

**Estimated Cost:** £260 million

**Timescale:** 2025 - 2035

**Aim/Impact:** Remove bottlenecks and enhance infrastructure to facilitate free flowing rail traffic as services and passenger numbers increase.

**Benefits for Passenger:** Improve levels of service and reliability across network with more frequent timetables.

**Consequences of not investing:** Failure to remove bottlenecks may place limitation on timetables.

**Alternatives:** Less frequent services with no changes to current timetable.

**Details:** Construction of integrated Transport Hub at Great Victoria Street

- Addition of third lines and associated platforms serving Central Station and Great Victoria Street
- Widening and dualling of track between Central Station & York Gate to facilitate new halt at Donegal Quay

**Package Four: Enhancing the Enterprise Service**

**Estimated Cost:** £460 million with reciprocal funding from ROI

**Timescale:** 2020/25

**Aim/Impact:** Improve journey times and frequency of Enterprise service.

**Benefits for Passenger:** Shorter journey times and higher frequency of service.

**Consequences of not investing:** Could lead to more people opting for road service endangering the viability of the Enterprise service.

**Alternatives:** Maintain current level of service. Necessary speeds required to increase service would be unfeasible with regard to emission legislation on non-electrified trains.

**Details:** At least 6 high speed electric trains

- Track upgrade from Belfast to the border to permit speeds of 125mph
- Electrification of track from Belfast to border
- Associated running cost subsidy

**Package Five: Electrification of Northern Ireland Network**

**Estimated Cost:** £350 million

**Timescale:** 2030-35

**Aim/Impact:** Providing a fast, efficient, and environmentally friendly scheme on par with GB and EU. Electrification can lead to a 20% running costs reduction.

**Benefits for Passenger:** Faster and quieter service. They are also more reliable and significantly lighter than diesel trains doing less damage to the track.

**Consequences of not investing:** Long-term higher costs due to rising oil prices or may require investment in trains that use alternate fuels.

**Alternatives:** Continue with diesel fuel until battery power or alternate fuel is developed.

**Details:** Replacement electric trains on rolling basis

- Infrastructure work at stations, halts and bridges
- Third track (electric) where appropriate or overhead cables across network
- Upgrade and signalling and radio communication

**Package Six: Re-opening Antrim-Knockmore line and link to Belfast international**

**Estimated Cost:** £50.5 million

**Timescale:** 2015/16 – 2019/20

**Aim/Impact:** Restore local rail service to Glenavy/Crumlin with potential link to Belfast International.

**Benefits for Passenger:** Provision of rail link to the airport and rail links with commuters living along the Antrim-Knockmore line.

**Consequences of not investing:** No immediate consequences.

**Alternatives:** Invest in high quality and frequent bus connections which offer a degree of flexibility and cost which rail is unlikely to deliver.

**Details:** Construction of single-track spur and rail halt at the airport

- Rehabilitation and re-signalling of track between Antrim and Knockmore
- Two additional Class 4000 trains
- Park & Ride Facilities;
- Additional operating subsidy

#### **Package Seven: Extending Rail lines to the west**

**Estimated Cost:** Portadown – Dungannon = £187 million

Portadown – Omagh = £473 million

Portadown – Enniskillen = £638 million

**Timescale:** 2015/15 – 2034/35

**Aim/Impact:** Rail links to Tyrone & Fermanagh

**Benefits for Passenger:** Availability of rail for those in rural Fermanagh and Tyrone and open up possibility of cross-border links with Sligo or Donegal. Benefits limited as population in area is not sufficient to sustain frequent service.

**Consequences of not investing:** No immediate consequences.

**Alternatives:** More cost effective bus-based alternative.

**Details:** Construction of new stations and halts;

- Land acquisition
- New rolling stock
- Track construction, bridging and tunnelling
- Additional PSO subvention

#### **Package Eight: Rail links to Donegal**

**Estimated Cost:** Londonderry – Letterkenny = £242 million

Londonderry – Donegal Town = £506 million

Londonderry – Sligo = £924 million;

However majority of estimated investment costs would fall to Irish Rail.

**Timescale:** 2014/15 – 2034-35

**Aim/Impact:** Rail links to Donegal

**Benefits for Passenger:** The option would provide rail links to key towns in Donegal on the current Londonderry - Sligo road. However, notwithstanding the potential for tourist interest there is limited evidence to suggest the investment would deliver significant benefits or that passenger numbers would be sufficient to maintain a service.

**Consequences of not investing:** There are no immediate consequences of not investing. Irish Rail has not identified this as an investment priority.

**Alternatives:** Continue to enhance cross-border bus services, offering greater flexibility and choice of destinations than that which could be reasonably provided by rail.

**Details:** As with Package Seven the track beds of the disused railway lines to the west are no longer in the ownership of NIR and, therefore, land acquisition would be required to re-establish any rail links;

- NIR has not made an estimate of costs in Northern Ireland but Irish Rail, in its “2030 Rail Network Strategy Review” considered that the proposal to create a new rail connection through Donegal would not be economically viable; and
- New links would also require the purchase of additional rolling stock and PSO subvention to cover any operating losses.



## Appendix 2 Draft Council Response

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Introduction</b>
	<p>As civic leader Belfast City Council seeks to be proactive in influencing transport policy for Belfast and the wider region, accordingly the Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on future investment in the Region's railway infrastructure. In recent years Belfast has become an attractive tourist destination, a desirable place to live and work and an attractive place to invest. However, with growth and prosperity, there has been a continuing increase in the use of the car, which cannot be sustained.</p> <p>The Council recognises the importance of rail transport to the economic development of the region and in contributing to accessibility, particularly to and within Belfast - the consultation document outlines that almost 1000 Weekly Return Journeys take place on the main Belfast line: Belfast to Dublin; Bangor; Lisburn, Portadown; Whitehead; and Coleraine.</p>
	<p>The Belfast Masterplan advocates greater responsibility for the Council as the sole political authority with a remit for Belfast, based on the view that effective city governance and leadership are key requirements to achieving interrelated regeneration and transport objectives.</p> <p>In this context, the Council developed its own Belfast City Council Transport Policy in 2008 as a framework for the Council to lead by example and help shape transportation in the city in a sustainable, accessible, and cost-effective way for all who live, work and visit the city. Key objectives of the Council's policy include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To seek to influence the development of transportation policies and proposals which improve connectivity and encourage modal shift away from the private car to more sustainable forms of travel such as walking, cycling and public transport; and</li><li>• To seek to ensure a higher level of emphasis of capital on sustainable transportation schemes, ensuring that the priority is allocated to sustainable modes such as walking, cycling and public transport schemes.</li></ul>
	<p>As part of the Council's responsibility to monitor the City's Air Quality a review and assessment of air quality across the city was completed in 2004 and subsequently four Air Quality Management Areas were declared for exceedences of particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub>) and nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) standards. Supplementary research indicated that the principal source of particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide within the Air Quality Management Areas was road traffic. The Council is supportive of investment which contributes to a modal shift away from dependence on the private car with the aim of aiding the reduction in harmful air</p>

	pollutants associated with vehicular traffic.
	<b>Current Railway Network and Committed Investment to 2015</b>
	<p>The Council acknowledges that whilst the current strategy for rail in Northern Ireland is to keep existing lines open and maintained there has still been a 50% increase in the frequency of rail services between the main urban economic centres. The growth in passenger numbers that the investment in additional rolling stock has facilitated is welcomed from both an economic, environmental, and accessibility point of view.</p>
	<b>Options for Future Railway Investment</b>
	<p>The consultation document outlines a range of options for railway investment for the period 2015 – 2035, and whilst some packages have more of a direct impact upon Belfast City rail provision than others the improvement of accessible public transport provision across the entire region will be welcomed.</p>
	<p>The Council considers that Package One, which proposes maintenance of the existing network, is an essential investment if public transport via rail is to continue to be a viable option in comparison to the private car. The Council also welcomes the overhaul of the Enterprise fleet which help facilitate an important link between Belfast and Dublin</p>
	<p>The Council considers that Packages 2 and 3 should be combined in order to maximise the benefits of each investment package. The Council would encourage investment that will increase accessibility via public transport within the City, as outlined in the reference to a new halt at Donegall Quay in Package 3, that will contribute to the University of Ulster Belfast campus being more accessible via public transport, where this is economically viable.</p> <p>In the event that destinations within Belfast are being considered for new halts the Council would request to be involved at an early stage in order to provide a positive contribution in terms of halt locations.</p> <p>The Council is aware of the resource demands that the development of a Transport Hub at Great Victoria Street would require however the potential benefits of this investment would bring a welcome boost to this part of the City in terms of physical regeneration and accessibility.</p>
	<p>The Council welcomes the enhancement of the Enterprise Service to Dublin and notes the requirements of converting to electric in order to achieve the necessary average journey speeds whilst staying within future emission targets. From an environmental perspective, the conversion to electrical power is to be welcomed, particularly if the electricity can be sourced from renewable sources. A change to electrical power would mean a reduction in local emissions of ambient air pollution and in addition, shorter journey times may encourage commuters to reduce their reliance on the private car for the journey in favour</p>

	<p>of the rail network, thereby delivering further environmental improvements.</p>
	<p>Packages 6-8, whilst not involving investment directly within Belfast City, would still inevitably impact on the City by virtue of its role as a hub for the rail network. Expansion of the rail network into the West of the region and beyond towards Donegal will involve substantial resources that will unlikely be available in the coming years and have been the subject of adverse cost benefit analysis. Where this investment is undertaken the Department must ensure that it is done with the aim of enhancing a rail network that will remain competitive particularly in terms of cost.</p>
	<p><b>Conclusion</b></p>
	<p>The Council is supportive of investment in the rail network that is justified not only in terms of available budget but also in terms of likely benefits. In this context the Council is particularly supportive of packages of 1, 2 and 3 where suitable consultation would be undertaken with the Council for the larger elements such as new halts and the new Transport Hub. The Council is supportive of the existing provision being maintained and enhanced where possible, including the Enterprise service to Dublin, whilst remaining sensitive to the financial requirements that investment in rail infrastructure will demand.</p> <p>In order to enable a comprehensive approach to be taken to City development, and in light of the upcoming transfer of planning and regeneration powers as part of the Reform of Local Government the Council would request close engagement with the Department and Translink / NITHCO and other relevant stakeholders when large scale investment is planned for the City's transport infrastructure.</p> <p>Further consideration should be given to linking future spatial planning and longer term settlement plans to support transport infrastructure in a sustainable and efficient way. Opportunities to engage in the strategic planning of the region should be explored to ensure synergies between future economic development in the region and suitable public transport infrastructure.</p>