

**AYRSHIRE JOINT STRUCTURE PLAN AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE  
4 MARCH 2005**

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**Kilmarnock to Glasgow Rail Service**

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PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To inform the Committee of the status of the proposed project to enhance the rail network between Kilmarnock and Barrhead, and thus the service frequency to Kilmarnock, and seek approval to lobby through the appropriate channels for the swift implementation of the scheme.

BACKGROUND

- 2 Kilmarnock is currently the only major urban centre in the west of Scotland not served by a minimum half-hourly rail service. The service level to Kilmarnock is dictated by the capacity of the single-track line between Kilmarnock and Barrhead which is limited to, and currently operates at, 3 trains in both directions per hour.
- 3 Network Rail's 2004 Business Plan acknowledges that detailed work has been undertaken by Strathclyde Passenger Transport (SPT) and the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) to ascertain the feasibility of enhancing the infrastructure between Kilmarnock and Barrhead. However, it is stated that, "there is no planned implementation date for this project."
- 4 At a meeting of the Ayrshire Transport Group on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2005 it was agreed that this perceived lack of progress on the proposed improvement to the Kilmarnock to Glasgow line was concerning and that a joint approach should be made through the Ayrshire Economic Forum and Joint Structure Plan Committee to promote an early realisation of improvements to this line.

KILMARNOCK'S ACCESSIBILITY

- 5 Previous work undertaken by the rail industry identified that the preferred option for enhancing the capacity of the rail network between Kilmarnock and Barrhead would involve the installation of a dynamic loop between Dunlop and Stewarton that would allow the operation of a half hourly service in each direction. SPT has identified that the provision of a half hourly service would increase patronage on the route. Previous publications outlined that the cost of the scheme was estimated to be in the region of £8.5 million however it is anticipated that via inflation and the rising cost of materials that this figure will have increased.

- 6 The M77 Extension from Fenwick to Malletsheugh, scheduled to open in Spring 2005, will greatly enhance the accessibility of Kilmarnock by road to the Glasgow conurbation. This level of accessibility for the private car is vastly superior to the public transport alternative offered by the existing rail service. Achievement of the national objective of stimulating modal shift from the car to more sustainable modes of transport will thus be extremely difficult given the prevailing condition of the transport infrastructure serving Kilmarnock.
- 7 Kilmarnock is coming under ever increasing pressure from developers as they seek to capitalise on the accessibility enhancements offered by the construction of the M77 Extension. Further development in Kilmarnock without improvements to the public transport network will entrench the dominance of the private car as the preferred mode of transport and exacerbate the problems of congestion and air and noise pollution already experienced on the road network. The scope to integrate public transport infrastructure into new developments will also be limited where there exists no additional capacity on the existing rail network.
- 8 Enhancements to the transport infrastructure serving Kilmarnock are also fundamental to fostering economic growth in the area. As one of the core towns of Ayrshire it is intended that Kilmarnock will be a focal point for economic development and inward investment in the future. The ability for Kilmarnock to realise this goal will be considerably curtailed if a public transport service capable of meeting the needs of individuals going about their daily business cannot be provided. Public transport is also key to ensuring social inclusion and that opportunities are available to those without access to a private car.

### PROJECT PROGRESSION

- 9 As a result of the aforementioned issues it is considered that enhancement of the rail service to Kilmarnock must be addressed as a priority by the appropriate stakeholders within the industry. The rail industry has a complex hierarchy of agencies with often overlapping responsibilities. Furthermore, the industry is also undergoing restructuring following proposals set out in "The Future of Rail" white paper published by the UK Government in July 2004 which, it is intended, will see the abolition of the SRA and devolution of additional powers over the rail network to Scottish Ministers.
- 10 The complexity of the rail industry and state of flux that it is currently undergoing has seen the Kilmarnock to Barrhead improvements stagnate. Network Rail has acknowledged in print that the project has no planned implementation date. SPT has also failed to affix a timetable for the implementation of the project.

### CONCLUSION

- 11 There are sound transport, land-use, economic and social justifications underpinning the enhancement of the rail service to Kilmarnock. Whilst the rail industry has

undertaken work to investigate the feasibility of improving the infrastructure restricting the service that can be provided to Kilmarnock it has stagnated recently with implementation of the project unforeseeable in the near future as a result.

- 12 It is recognised that East Ayrshire Council has applied considerable pressure to the relevant agencies in pursuit of the removal of this impediment to improvement of the rail service between Kilmarnock and Glasgow. If the aspirations in the draft Joint Structure Plan are to be fully realised then improvements to the Kilmarnock to Glasgow line are a necessity and will have subsidiary benefits for all parts of Ayrshire. The improvement of the rail link is therefore vital to the future of Ayrshire's overall economy. Consequently, it is proposed that a formal campaign is launched and taken forward by all the Ayrshire Councils, the Joint Structure Plan Committee and the Ayrshire Economic Forum working in partnership. This report therefore seeks the formal endorsement of this course of action by the Joint Committee.

### RECOMMENDATION

- 13 It is recommended that the Committee:
- note the contents of the report and the implications for Kilmarnock;
  - ask the Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan and Transportation Manager to consult with the Ayrshire Economic Forum on the possibility of developing an appropriate lobbying mechanism to support the improvement of the Kilmarnock to Glasgow rail service and report back to the Committee after further consideration;
  - ask the Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan and Transportation Manager to bring this issue to the attention of Westrans with a view toward their future involvement in any progress.

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