

## **South-West Rail Enhancements: Dumfries to Lockerbie Chord**

\*This idea is based on the passenger perspective, although the economic benefit to Dumfries and surrounding areas of Biggar and Moffat is one to be analysed further to establish the BC ratio of this proposal\*

### **Background**

The town of Dumfries and the surrounding areas yield a population catchment of around 50-60k, yet the railway usage from Dumfries station is only around a third of the total usage of similar sized towns and cities such as Perth, excluding interchange figures. One reason as to why the usage figures are as low could be due to the significant difference in services to Glasgow and Edinburgh. The service frequencies to Glasgow and Edinburgh from both Perth and Dumfries compared, indicate a stark contrast in the catchment of possible rail connections from both stations. Statistics from both stations' usage between 2015-16 (station (population / station usage figures)) compared to the weekday frequency to Edinburgh and Glasgow;

Dumfries (49,221 / 0.361m)

9tpd to Glasgow Central, 0tpd to Edinburgh

Perth (47,180 / 1.146m)

26tpd to Glasgow Queen Street, 19tpd to Edinburgh

Lockerbie is another instance of a station receiving inconsistent and/or few frequencies to Edinburgh and Glasgow, with services to Edinburgh and Glasgow at irregular frequencies with gaps of up to 2 hours for a service North on an average weekday. Furthermore, services to Lockerbie are operated by Transpennine Express and Virgin Trains, despite the station being operated by ScotRail. Having Lockerbie served by two Intercity operators is beneficial for providing Lockerbie extraordinary links to London, Birmingham and Manchester, however, a call at Lockerbie increases Intercity journey times from Edinburgh/Glasgow to the South by around 10 minutes.

### **Proposal**

The proposal takes the form of three stages;

Stage one involves the construction of a new electrified rail cord from the south end of Lockerbie station to the south end of Dumfries station, and turning the loop at Lockerbie station into a bi-directional third platform to allow greater flexibility by allowing Intercity trains to pass through in both directions regardless of whether a service is calling there.

Stage two involves opening interchange stations at Symington and Beattock. Stations at both locations would gain the catchment of Biggar and Moffat, towns which see travelers having to trek over

countryroads in order to reach the North, despite both towns being of a similar size to Laurencekirk, which has seen over 100k users recently since reopening in 2008.

Stage three involves the construction of a new cord linking the WCML to Edinburgh at Carstairs, possibly on the older since closed alignment, allowing much faster running to Edinburgh as opposed to the slow crawl at Carstairs Junction.

### **Why action is needed**

As highlighted, the comparison between Dumfries and similar size towns and cities when it comes to rail usage is particularly poor. Dumfries in particular lacks fast and frequent rail service to Glasgow, as well as Edinburgh, making rail an unattractive option compared to lesser journey times than if you were to drive to Glasgow. Lockerbie's frequency could also be improved, with the introduction of a half hourly link to Dumfries and hourly link to Glasgow and Edinburgh taking the burden off of Intercity services to stop there, and allowing the potential of Lockerbie and the surrounding areas of Lochmaben to be maximised to try and get more people off the road and onto rail. From the perspective of existing services, Carstairs Junction poses a major hindrance to the potential for faster journeys to Edinburgh. The current tightness of the southbound curve, as well as the northbound curve, result in services slowing to around 15mph, when an enhanced alignment would allow speeds of at least 100mph, drastically cutting journey times from Edinburgh to the West Coast.

#### The Initial Service Implementation

- Hourly service from Dumfries to Glasgow (and vice versa) with calling points at Lockerbie, Beattock, Symington and Motherwell
- Hourly service from Dumfries to Edinburgh (and vice versa) with calling points at Lockerbie, Beattock, Symington and Haymarket
- Services operated by 3-car and/or 4-car Class 385 Hitachi EMUs

### **The Initial Benefits**

- Journey times from Dumfries reduced to 75 minutes to Glasgow (from ~ 120 minutes), with similar journey times to Edinburgh with new direct services, encouraging rail travel from Dumfries and surrounding areas.
- Significant increase in capacity on services from Carlisle to Glasgow via Kilmarnock, as well as Dumfries to Glasgow via WCML
- Reduced journey times from Annan and Gretna to Glasgow, and new services to Edinburgh
- Gives Lockerbie an hourly regular service to both Glasgow and Edinburgh, alternating every half an hour
- Speeds up Intercity Journeys by taking the burden off of Transpennine Express to stop at Lockerbie, whilst still maintaining daily links to the South

- Speeds up journeys to Edinburgh by having a new cord with faster line speeds at Carstairs Junction.
- Potential to serve Moffat and Biggar through interchange stations at Symington and Beattock
- Sweats ScotRail's diesel rolling stock by easing the pressure to electrify Glasgow South Western Railway in its entirety where the core benefits of doing so are mainly inflicted upon stations at the extreme ends of the route; Gretna/Annan/Dumfries/Kilmarnock.
- First Class provision from Dumfries further attracting prospective business travelers

#### **Further Room for Potential Post Implementation**

- Electrification of Dumfries to Carlisle
- Introduction of semi-fast services from Edinburgh to Carlisle alternating during the hours when Intercity services don't run (currently ever second hour)
- Caledonian Sleeper serving Lockerbie (providing an adequate marketing strategy utilises the direct rail connection to Dumfries to further increase potential usage from there)