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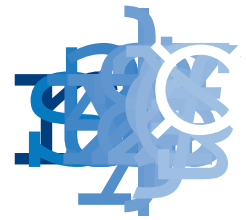
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Mr Fergus D Cochrane
Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee
TG.01
The Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP

4 March 2008

Dear Fergus,

CONSIDERATION OF PETITION PE1115

Petition by Pat Graham on behalf of the Campaign to Open Blackford Railway-station Again, calling for the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to ensure that national and regional transport strategies consider and focus on public transport solutions such as the reopening of Blackford railway station which is identified as a priority action in the latest Tayside and Central Regional Transport Strategy, and in doing so, recognises and supports the positive environmental, economic and social impacts of such local solutions.

As set out in the Government Economic Strategy, the approach to transport is to focus investment on making connections across and with Scotland better, improving reliability and journey times, and seeking to maximise the opportunities for employment, business, leisure and tourism. Investment will also provide sustainable, integrated and cost effective public transport alternatives to private car, connecting people, places and work, across Scotland.

Scotland’s Railways set out a vision for rail in Scotland over the next 20 years and emphasised that rail is best at providing fast, long-distance passenger services between our major urban centres and high quality commuter services into the major areas of employment, education and leisure activities.

I appreciate that TACTRAN’s draft Regional Transport Strategy stated that it wished to “support and promote rail infrastructure enhancements proposed under TERS (Tay Estuary Rail Study) including a new Dundee West Station and station enhancements at Montrose, Arbroath, Carnoustie, Broughty Ferry, Dundee and Perth, and possible new stations at locations such as Blackford and Greenloaning.” These regional transport strategies are intended as high-level strategic documents and it will be for local authorities in conjunction with their Regional Transport Partnership to establish priorities and funding for regional and local transport interventions as part of their delivery plan deliberations.

In considering the case for additional stations, it is important to clearly establish whether the surrounding population, workplace or visitor need is sufficient to generate a high level of demand and full account should be given to the implications they may have on existing

passenger and freight services and whether, for shorter journeys, potential bus – based alternatives should be considered.

Transport Scotland, meanwhile, is carrying out the Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR) examining the longer term needs of Scotland's nationally strategic transport networks to allow Ministers to develop an indicative investment plan for the period 2012 to 2022. The national strategic transport corridor linking Glasgow to Perth will be considered as part of this review and this will include consideration of proposals to further enhance rail services in this corridor. The review will be completed this summer and Transport Scotland will continue to engage with key stakeholder reference groups , including TACTRANS throughout this process.

This Review will support the Scottish Government in ensuring that the transport projects it supports are affordable, provide value for money, fit with our overall transport priorities and achieve the stated objectives.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

RICHARD LYALL
Committee Liaison Officer