



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

INFRASTRUCTURE AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

Wednesday 10 June 2015

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CONTENTS

	Col.
MAJOR URBAN RAILWAY STATIONS (ACCESS).....	1

INFRASTRUCTURE AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT COMMITTEE
13th Meeting 2015, Session 4

CONVENER

*Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Adam Ingram (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)

*Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab)

*Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con)

*Mike MacKenzie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)

*David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Neil Gellatly (Dundee City Council)

Councillor Lesley Hinds (City of Edinburgh Council)

Bruce Kiloh (Strathclyde Partnership for Transport)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Steve Farrell

LOCATION

the Adam Smith Room (CR5)

Scottish Parliament

Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee

Wednesday 10 June 2015

[The Convener opened the meeting at 10:00]

Major Urban Railway Stations (Access)

The Convener (Jim Eadie): Good morning. I welcome everyone to the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee's 13th meeting in 2015 and I remind everyone present to switch off any mobile phones, as they affect the broadcasting system. As meeting papers are provided in digital format, you may see tablets being used during the meeting. No apologies have been received.

Agenda item 1 is for the committee to continue to take evidence for its piece of work on access to Scotland's major urban railway stations. I welcome Neil Gellatly, head of transportation at Dundee City Council; Councillor Lesley Hinds, convener of the transport and environment committee at the City of Edinburgh Council; and Bruce Kiloh, head of policy and planning at Strathclyde partnership for transport.

Adam Ingram will kick off our questions.

Adam Ingram (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP): Good morning, everyone. The committee heard evidence at its previous meeting that there seems to be little joint working between local authorities, Network Rail and transport providers, which leads to poor transport integration and limits the accessibility of major railway stations. Do you share those views? If so, how might they be addressed?

Councillor Lesley Hinds (City of Edinburgh Council): The matter has concerned me since I became convener of the City of Edinburgh Council's transport and environment committee more than three years ago. My concern is particularly about access into and out of Waverley station, but it is also about the situation around the station—the committee has had evidence on that.

I was looking back through some of my files—it is sometimes quite useful to keep files—and the issue goes back to a briefing that I had in December 2012, when it was suggested that vehicles would be taken out of Waverley station. We have concerns about Haymarket, but we are particularly concerned about Waverley.

A working group was set up in March 2009 between Network Rail, the Department for Transport, the British Transport Police and the City of Edinburgh Council to look at security issues and the refurbishment that was coming. One of the frustrations that council officers and I feel is that there has been the working group and working together but the goalposts keep on moving, and Network Rail tends to make decisions without going back to the working group. An example comes from the access to Waverley station.

The Convener: Rather than discussing specific stations, we are looking for general views at this point.

Councillor Hinds: I am just giving an example. The working group was meeting and discussing the issues. At one point, it was announced in the press that all vehicles would be coming out of the station within a few weeks. I had a meeting with Network Rail and it said that it would change that and have a control mechanism for taxis, which it spent quite a lot of money on. There was then an accident and, unfortunately, the death of a pedestrian on Waverley Bridge, and within a few weeks—again, notice came to us at the same time as to the press—Network Rail said that it was going to take all vehicles out of the station.

All that I am saying is that, although there are mechanisms and there has been working between officers in particular and Network Rail, it appears that Network Rail makes decisions on its own rather than having discussions with the council and reaching a consensus.

The Convener: That is helpful. We would like to explore that in more detail later.

Adam Ingram: Essentially, we are saying that there is a problem with joint working. Does Mr Kiloh agree?

Bruce Kiloh (Strathclyde Partnership for Transport): There is good and bad. It is necessary to look at the range of roles and responsibilities of the different organisations that are involved in a transport project. The example that I know is Glasgow Queen Street station, which we will probably come on to.

Queen Street is one of Scotland's major rail stations, and a number of partners are involved, not just in the station development but in the surrounding developments that are happening at the same time. There is the Buchanan Galleries redevelopment, the Strathclyde partnership for transport refurbishment of Buchanan Street subway station, the Queen Street station development and various other projects, which involve a range of organisations.

SPT has led the way in the Queen Street development by ensuring that planning,

programming and the delivery of the end product are all co-ordinated. We have done that through the Queen Street passenger forum. It brings together all the development bodies and organisations such as Transport Focus and the Glasgow Access Panel to address a range of concerns about how things will dovetail.

To us, that is a positive step forward. Our previous experience was that delivering major projects on the rail network was challenging and could take time. We were part of a group that carried out the development of Dalmarnock station in the east end of Glasgow for regeneration purposes and for the Commonwealth games. At the beginning of that project, one of the most important things to get right was thinking through who had ownership of the project and would be involved and making that clear from the outset. That worked well for that project.

Overall, there can be good and bad. It is important to be clear about who the stakeholders and clients are and to make sure that the right officers or elected members are round the table and that there is a clear commitment to a joint-working approach.

Adam Ingram: Are you suggesting that it is the regional transport authority's role to do this?

Bruce Kiloh: That depends on the scale of the project. In the Queen Street project, which is the live one that we are involved in at the moment, when we saw what else was happening in the area we took a step back to assess that. We are always particularly concerned about how a project will impact on the customer—the passenger.

We wanted to cause minimum fuss and disruption to passengers' travel patterns. That was why, when we had discussions with Transport Scotland, Network Rail and others, we said that we all needed to be co-ordinated to avoid, for example, SPT doing major work in the subway at the same time as others were doing something in Queen Street station or Buchanan Galleries. We have tried to co-ordinate things as best we can. There is certainly a role for an organisation such as SPT, but it depends on the scale of the project.

Neil Gellatly (Dundee City Council): A very challenging interface is entered when a station redevelopment or refurbishment is undertaken. Stations play such a major role in the functioning of a city that Dundee City Council has taken a lead role in creating a new station facility in Dundee.

The council has probably spent the best part of a decade, or even 15 years, working with the rail industry—both the operating and infrastructure sides—to seek a new and better facility. The council is lobbied regularly to improve the facilities by colleagues from local councils round about, by our access forums and by public transport users.

As I mentioned in my submission, the existing facilities were deemed fit for purpose by the rail industry and were therefore not prioritised for investment. The council has had to take the lead on aspects such as design and architect appointments.

Fortuitously, the station land is right where a major regeneration process is taking place in the city of Dundee, which is led by the department that I work for—the city development department. That brings in land use planning, transport planning, engineering and other parts of urban design. It presents challenges, but we are used to working in multi-agency groups.

Dundee City Council decided that the station was a priority for the city, and it has taken a lead. It is difficult to demonstrate that what is a priority for a city is a priority for the national rail infrastructure company; it is a challenge to sit that alongside national priorities. We have received technical assistance from the rail industry, but we have to pay for that service. We pay for the engineering and technical support that we get from the rail industry.

Adam Ingram: Councillor Hinds outlined the problems that the City of Edinburgh Council has had with Network Rail. How did you sort out your relationship with Network Rail?

Neil Gellatly: That took a lot of hard work and a lot of senior officer time in building relationships. There is a danger that individuals will move on and that it will be necessary to start again. It takes time to build up an understanding and to go through the official appraisal processes.

A lot of time and money has been invested, and specialist support has to be sought. As a local government officer, I do not necessarily have the skills to deal with rail industry specialisms, so I have to rely on advice. We have to engage the right advisers and experts to ensure that we push forward with the right project, because a lot of time and money can be wasted by going down the wrong track.

Adam Ingram: Does Transport Scotland have a role to play in setting down a protocol or a methodology and facilitating joint working, given that it is the main funder of ScotRail and Network Rail in Scotland?

Bruce Kiloh: As I said, that depends on the scale of the project. The new alliance between Network Rail and ScotRail that has come about as part of the new franchise is certainly a positive step forward. We will wait to see how it works. That is a positive development for organisations such as councils that are looking to engage with the rail industry; it might mean that they will have a single point of contact.

There is a role for Transport Scotland to play in ensuring co-ordination at the national level when a project is of a significant scale. We do that for projects that could be described as being of regional scale. The committee will be aware of the fastlink bus system that we are putting in place in Glasgow; we have just launched the fastlink bus to the new south Glasgow hospital. That involved us working with Glasgow City Council. Transport Scotland was not too involved in that, although it funded the project.

Transport Scotland certainly has a role to play in national-scale projects. In other projects, organisations such as SPT or councils could take the lead on co-ordination. That depends on the project; transport projects vary greatly. Formalising arrangements might create more bureaucracy and more difficulty. We need to look at the approach project by project, but it might be good to have some sort of formal commitment from an organisation such as Network Rail, ScotRail, SPT or a council at the beginning of a project, whereby that organisation says, "We'll engage with you, we'll set up a project steering group and we're committed to sharing information." If the organisation involved is a commercial organisation, that is sometimes a difficulty. It is in passengers' interests for things to be co-ordinated throughout the planning, development and delivery process.

Councillor Hinds: I agree that each project is different. There are small projects and very large projects, so it might be difficult to come up with a protocol for who should take the lead.

We were working well with Network Rail, but the issue is more about the decision-making process—particularly that of Network Rail. What is Network Rail's decision-making process? We can have all the working groups and all the good relationships we like, but the difficulty arises if Network Rail makes a decision regardless of the effect that it will have on the local authority and on passengers. The committee might want to ask Network Rail about the power that it has and how governance and responsibility operate in relation to the decision-making process.

Another issue is permitted development rights, which we might come on to. Network Rail can do almost whatever it likes under the planning legislation; section 75 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 does not help us in that regard. We face the same challenge out at Edinburgh airport. I am not sure whether other authorities find that that is an issue; the committee might want to look at that.

It is necessary to consider each project in turn. A protocol is needed for large projects, but Network Rail needs to make decisions in partnership with others. At the moment, it does not

do that—ultimately, it makes the decision. We can try to influence it all we like, but it makes the decision.

Adam Ingram: Would you like to answer your own question? What should we do about Network Rail?

Councillor Hinds: Maybe there should be discussions with Network Rail at the Government level and, I presume, discussions with Westminster and the Scottish Parliament on where the responsibilities lie. I do not know about the committee, but I am quite confused about exactly where the decision making lies. I know that arrangements have been changed recently, but does the decision making lie in Scotland, at Westminster or at a local level?

I wrote to Network Rail following our meeting that involved users, which Mr Eadie was at, and got a letter back that said that I should get in touch with the Scottish person. We had done that and had meetings. We should clarify Network Rail's governance and responsibilities because, at the end of the day, it is publicly owned.

10:15

Adam Ingram: Does Mr Gellatly have anything to add?

Neil Gellatly: Rail transport is a significant form of transport. It is certainly not just a local transport form; at the very least, it is a regional transport form. The regional transport partnerships as well as local government need support, possibly from Transport Scotland. Guidance should certainly be given at the outset of a major project to ensure that the correct routes are followed. That would be a helping hand to assist and support us.

Not all authorities have the engineering, design and consultancy skills or the volume of staff to handle such projects. Guidance would help the decision makers locally to decide that something is a priority and decide how to push for it. I think that Councillor Hinds touched on that. Who should be pushed for additional support beyond our local wishes? That fits in with a national agenda and a regional agenda as well as with what is happening in a local urban area.

Adam Ingram: Do both gentlemen agree that there is an issue with Network Rail and the decision-making process?

Bruce Kiloh: Yes—there is. I echo what Councillor Hinds said. This is a lot to do with transparency. Strathclyde partnership for transport and Dundee City Council are democratically accountable organisations. We report to our partnership board. Every major decision that we make is reported and is available publicly on our

website, and the public are welcome to come along to our board meetings.

Perhaps there is confusion about the transparency of Network Rail's governance arrangements. I am not sure that too many people are aware that it is controlled at the United Kingdom level, even though there is Network Rail Scotland.

There are issues to do with the legislation that is in place. For example, Network Rail took forward the Queen Street station redevelopment through the Transport and Works (Scotland) Act 2007 process, which meant that there was a red line around the station. Network Rail was restricted to looking at its development within that red line.

Our concern is about how that development integrates with the rest of the transport network. What happens to the bus stops that are 3 or 4 yards outside the red line, the pick-up and drop-off points, the blue badge parking and integration with the cycle network? Cycle hubs, for example, are planned for the new station. Whether Network Rail is a victim of that approach perhaps needs to be looked at.

I am aware that the transport minister has said that he will look at the roles and responsibilities of the various organisations as part of the national transport strategy refresh. Perhaps there is an opportunity to clarify the decision-making processes and governance arrangements with Network Rail and to clarify its roles and responsibilities through that process. That is something to consider.

Neil Gellatly: There is a great opportunity in 2015 with the new deep alliance between Network Rail and Abellio ScotRail. We are looking forward to working with Abellio. It has some great vision in its franchise offer that it will wish to realise over and above the straight running of trains. I would like that to develop over the next three to six months as Abellio establishes its new way of working. It has indicated that working more closely with Network Rail is key to giving us a successful rail-based public transport system. The operator side is so important to Network Rail because the majority of stations are managed by ScotRail as opposed to Network Rail in Scotland.

The Convener: When Network Rail appears before the committee, I think that we will want to explore the issues that Councillor Hinds and Mr Kiloh have highlighted in relation to the lack of transparency around the governance arrangements and decision-making processes that Network Rail adhere to.

I want to explore with Councillor Hinds the specific issues around Waverley Station. In your written evidence to the committee, you say that both Waverley and Haymarket

"have been the subject of major improvement providing additional capacity and passenger facilities, but the ... recent improvements did not address wider accessibility issues".

That has been echoed in evidence that we have received from other stakeholders. We heard from Sustrans, Cycling Scotland, the Scottish Taxi Federation and the Confederation of Passenger Transport Scotland, who all indicated that Network Rail did not consult on the closure of the vehicle access ramps. What level of consultation and discussion was there between Network Rail and the City of Edinburgh Council prior to the decision to close the vehicle access ramps on Waverley Bridge?

Councillor Hinds: It is important that we go back. Originally, the refurbishment was taking place, but linked to that was an issue about security, which was coming from the Westminster Government, the events at Glasgow airport and so on. The security mechanisms were to be put in and some of that was done alongside the refurbishment. The discussion that the council officers had was to raise their concern about access and vehicle access to the station. Before, people could go into the station in a vehicle to drop off or pick up, and they could get a taxi there—people with disabilities and others who needed support and help could do that.

I am not sure of the exact dates, but Network Rail then decided to say that all vehicles were to be kept out of the station. The council and I lobbied Network Rail to say that we thought that that was not the right way to go and that it would be wrong just to make the decision to take all the vehicles out without considering the consequences for passengers and the surrounding area. As Bruce Kiloh said, one of the constraints that Network Rail has is the red line, which is something that the committee might want to investigate further.

We lobbied Network Rail and we had a meeting in Waverley. Network Rail decided that it would agree to have access for taxis that were registered, for Handicabs—HcL, as it now is—and so on. It spent quite a lot of money—almost £0.5 million—on putting in barriers and a control mechanism, which I have to say appeared to break down repeatedly.

We were not particularly happy. We consulted the taxi trade and they were not particularly happy either, because now they had to pay to get access to the station. However, at least that gave passengers the opportunity to get a taxi in the station.

The Convener: Was there a consultation with the City of Edinburgh Council?

Councillor Hinds: No. There was a consultation in that Network Rail decided that it would take all vehicles—everything, including taxis—out of the station and then, because we lobbied, it decided to have a controlled taxi mechanism. There was also access for people with disabilities using services such as HcL, which would have to register. That system did not work, because the barriers kept on breaking; there was a bit of a problem with that. Then, a few weeks after the fatality that happened just outside the station, the council got a press release saying that Network Rail was closing the ramps the following week. There was no consultation of the council on taking all taxis out of the station.

The Convener: Thank you. That is the clarification that I was seeking.

Did the City of Edinburgh Council learn about the decision to remove vehicles from the station at the same time as the press?

Councillor Hinds: Yes.

The Convener: What reasons for closure of the vehicle access ramps were given by Network Rail? You mentioned security. After the decision was announced to the press, did Network Rail write to the council to explain its reasons?

Councillor Hinds: It did not, as far as I am aware. It did not tell me—I had at least three meetings with Network rail and I met people from it on site on a couple of occasions. I do not remember getting anything from Network Rail following that. It made the decision and implemented it.

The Convener: At the meetings, what explanation did Network Rail give for why it had closed the vehicle access ramps?

Councillor Hinds: We have not had any meetings with Network Rail since the closure; there has been some contact with officers. To be honest, I felt as though I was going to meetings at which we would get an agreement, but then I would go away and the agreement would not be implemented. One of the frustrations was that we would sit in the meetings and agree a certain process, and we would then want to put out a joint press release to say that we were agreeing to better access, better signage or better advertising on websites. On two occasions, we agreed all that and we said that we would put out a joint press release to let the public know about action that we would be taking together, and on both occasions we could not get agreement from Network Rail to put out the press release. That was frustrating for us. Some of the things did happen—for example, signposting in the station has improved, although it is still not good enough—but agreements were not followed through.

The Convener: Does it concern you that Network Rail, as a public body that is funded by the taxpayer, is behaving in that way?

Councillor Hinds: Yes. As I said in my answer to the previous question, my concern is accountability, given that we are working in partnership and we appeared to have reached agreement around the table on a way forward.

In particular, when all taxis were taken out of the station, there were consequences for the surrounding areas but also for passengers. Where do they pick up taxis? We had to deal with those issues over a short period of time in what was kind of an emergency situation.

The Convener: One of the council's concerns, I presume, is that decisions are being taken by Network Rail on which you have not been consulted, and you are then having to live with the consequences of those decisions and having to alleviate their impact on passengers.

Councillor Hinds: Yes. We had plans, working with Network Rail, to put in improvements on Waverley Bridge and Market Street. We have spent about £1 million on improvements that are just about finished—there are still bits and pieces to be done. One of the consequences of all taxis being taken out of the station is that we have had to move the taxi rank on Market Street. We are about to do that—we are about to lose income from the high parking charges in that area, which is well used for parking, because we have had to put the taxi rank there. That loss of income for us as a council is because we want to provide the best service possible. As a consequence of Network Rail's decision to take taxis out of the station, we have had to readjust our taxi stances in Market Street and look at whether we can improve the Calton Road provision, too. There are also add-on difficulties on Princes Street, where there are taxis double-parking and other such problems. Network Rail basically said, "We'll take all the taxis out, and it's your problem", with no consideration of the consequences and what that decision would mean for us.

The Convener: Has the council had to take any other measures that you have not mentioned so far to alleviate the consequences of closing the vehicle access ramps?

Councillor Hinds: The other issue is to do with access. I do not know whether you want to talk about the ramps, but it seems to me to be pretty ludicrous that we have two ramps—a north ramp and a south ramp—for which where there is a narrow entrance on both with a large bit of road that is never used apart from by delivery vehicles. That always seems peculiar to me and to people in the outside world. The decision on taxis was somehow about security, but delivery vehicles can

go into the station. People wonder why they are not a security risk; taxis cannot go in, despite the fact that all drivers are checked out.

The main access ramp from Waverley Bridge—you will see the photographs in our submission—has a very narrow place for people, which includes pedestrians, people with buggies and cyclists who have to dismount and push their bikes down the ramp. You can imagine the consequences of that.

At the bottom of the north ramp there is some pretty tacky-looking fencing. We have spent millions of pounds on upgrading Waverley station, and there is a temporary, pretty crappy-looking thing at the bottom in the station. We were trying to encourage Network Rail and the person in charge of the station to have delivery access on one of the ramps and to open up the other ramp for pedestrians and cyclists, which would at least be more welcoming.

Millions of people use the station. There are pedestrians and cyclists coming in and out, and people using public transport, and there are visitors to the city. We have made improvements on Waverley Bridge to make it easier for pedestrians and public transport, and we are dealing with the consequences on Market Street of Network Rail's decision.

I hope that you might put some pressure on Network Rail about those ramps when its witnesses come to the committee next week. It is ludicrous that we have that situation.

The Convener: We have heard evidence from a range of stakeholders, and one of the suggestions was that the vehicle access ramp should be re-opened for cyclists, and the space that is available for pedestrians could be increased. Would you support that?

10:30

Councillor Hinds: Yes. To be fair to Network Rail, it considered having all deliveries at Waverley made to Calton Road. That would be one of the developments. I am not sure what the timescale for that is. We would prefer there to be no deliveries at all in the station. If we are going to take out all vehicles, why not also take out delivery vehicles? They could go down Calton Road, and all deliveries could go there. We would be able to open up both ramps for pedestrians and cyclists—perhaps we could make one of them only for cyclists.

The Convener: Could we do that at the same time as creating a taxi rank on Calton Road, as you mentioned previously?

Councillor Hinds: Yes. There is temporary rank there at the moment, but most people do not know it is there. We have discussed that issue

with Network Rail and the station. How do we publicise the rank? How do we promote where the taxis are? My daughter lives in Glasgow, and when I drop her off at the station I use the Calton Road exit because it is a good place to do that—perhaps if more people know about it, it will not be as good. We need to publicise and promote that, and put up new signage in the surrounding area to let people know about it.

People can go into the station car park and have half an hour of free parking. That will take people up through the New Street car park, but most people do not know that it is available. It is about how we promote it. Someone might want to drop off an elderly parent and they are happy to use the lift, but most of that is not publicised. We keep saying that to Network Rail and Waverley station. How do we promote all the station's exits and entrances rather than just Market street and Waverley Bridge? With the development of Calton Road and the St James quarter, there is an opportunity to enhance that area linking down into Leith.

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):

You probably watched the evidence that we took last week on this subject. I picked up a slightly different version of events about the reasons for banning vehicles from Waverley—in particular, the removal of taxis. Network Rail received security advice that stations that are effectively underground should have taxis removed, and that cars should also be removed, apart for deliveries. Obviously in Parliament we are fairly used to security advice—we will not get the detail, but it is reasonable to know whether advice was given. That information would normally come from Police Scotland, the security services and the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure, which advises public bodies. If it is true that Network Rail received such advice, it would suggest a different version of events—in other words, it was merely following security advice. It may not tell us that, but I understand that version of events. Does that strike a chord with you?

Councillor Hinds: It does. As I said, that decision was about security, but refurbishment took place at the same time. To be fair to Network Rail, it told us that it had been given that advice. Calton Road has steps and large bollards, and that is part of the security.

David Stewart: We will hear evidence from Network Rail and put these points to it, but I would have thought that if it had received security advice, even though it might not reveal the detail, as a public body it might well say, "We have had security advice; we have to do this because of that." I presume that you would have understood that, which would have made decision making a

little easier. Did Network Rail make that clear to you?

Councillor Hinds: Network Rail made it clear that it had received security advice to consider the issue of vehicles under the station. If security involves taxis and vehicles, why do delivery vehicles still come into the station? I think the public would question that. You are right to say that Network Rail was given security advice, and it told us about that. The difficulty is that if the advice was to remove all vehicles, it did not do that. Why did it decide to remove all vehicles but then allow only taxis, and then take all the vehicles out? It has not been consistent.

David Stewart: The situation has obviously been more difficult for passengers. At Glasgow Queen Street station, the taxis are adjacent to the station, which is convenient for passengers. We have taken evidence from passengers who have sight and physical difficulties. It is much more difficult for them to access taxis at Edinburgh on their arrival. You also mentioned the signage issues.

I will move on to Calton Road. The convener has cruelly taken my question.

The Convener: I set it up for you.

David Stewart: What is the council's position on the creation of a taxi rank at Calton Road? I understand that that would depend on remodelling the junction at Leith Street. Is there a council policy on that and the knock-on effect for road redesign?

Councillor Hinds: We would like to look at the taxi rank in Calton Road. I have had discussions with the taxi trade and council officers about Market Street, Waverley Bridge and Calton Road. Part of the difficulty is that the taxi drivers and company owners are not that keen on Calton Road because it is not well used and the signage in the station does not encourage people to go there. However, with better signage, more people would perhaps go that distance to get a taxi. In addition, Leith Street will be developed as part of the St James quarter, so there is an opportunity there. If you have travelled up to Leith Street, you will know that it is pretty appalling for pedestrians—there are very narrow pavements.

We put in a bid to the stations fund to improve access for taxis, pedestrians and cyclists to that whole area. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful in getting that match funding. I do not know whether you would want to talk about that with Network Rail. I am keen to talk about the issue because the fund is worth £30 million-odd. Some of it has been used, but a lot of it is still sitting there.

I would welcome the opportunity to improve access, but that would depend on resources. We would look to put in some of our resources if we could get funding and support to improve the taxi rank at Calton Road.

David Stewart: That is good to hear. It is also good to hear you mention facilities for cyclists, which are crucial.

I presume that if the signage was changed so that it was clear that there is a drop-off point in the station, taxi drivers would be keener to use that facility.

Councillor Hinds: You would think so, but that is not what I got from my discussions with them. Tony Kenmuir was before the committee last week. I have had discussions with him. There is a problem in persuading people that there is the required footfall and demand for the service. It is a chicken-and-egg situation. Until the taxis and the facilities are in place, people will not be able to use them. There is an issue about persuading taxi drivers of the effect of better signage.

It makes sense to have a taxi rank at Calton Road. Depending on where a person leaves the station, it may be quicker to go there to get a taxi. It would also depend on where a person wants to go, because of the Leith Street issue. Also, you can only turn left at the end of Calton Road; you cannot turn right to go down to Leith, which is a bit of a complication. However, there is an opportunity through the St James quarter development and the changes that will be made to Leith Street, to make improvements to Calton Road for everyone.

David Stewart: You expressed disappointment that the council was turned down for funding. What improvements do you want to see in the funding that is available for local authorities that would allow you to make the improvements that you mentioned?

Councillor Hinds: My understanding is that not all the stations fund is allocated. You may want to question whoever makes the decisions on bids. I understand that it is Scottish Government funding, which is given through a mechanism with Network Rail. Network Rail, Transport Scotland and the train operators make the decisions. A constraint that they face is the red line. The funding is supposed to be for station and rail users.

In the statistics in our written evidence, the Halcrow study shows that a large percentage of people on Waverley Bridge, Market Street and Calton Road are using the station. In particular, we were looking to make improvements at the top of the Waverley escalator, including to the bus links for the people waiting for buses. If any one has stood there—I have—they will know that it is not best experience. Part of our bid was to improve the facilities, so that there would be a good

interchange between coming out the station on the escalator and the buses and trams. We want a good combination of links for people.

I have questioned the decision on our bid. We were told that we would not be successful, but in my view, it was a good application for improvements for rail users. However, because it was not exclusively aimed at rail users, we could not get the funding. That is a frustration.

David Stewart: I met the Scottish head of Network Rail—as, I am sure, other members did—and he mentioned the ring-fenced funds that are available. That seems to take us back to the question of whether something is inside or outside the red line. It seems a very strange argument to say that a taxi rank next to a major Scottish rail station is not going to be used exclusively by rail passengers. That goes back to the old issue about the integration of different modes of transport—but that is another theme. I thank Councillor Hinds for her answers.

The Convener: Councillor Hinds, would you be able to ask your officials to share some information with the committee on the bid that the City of Edinburgh Council has made to the stations fund?

Councillor Hinds: Yes. Do you want that information now or later?

The Convener: If you want to place any other comments on the record, I am happy for you to do that now. However, I am equally happy for your officials to write to the committee.

Councillor Hinds: Okay. We can send you the full details of the submission that we made. There is some funding for cycle racks at Haymarket station. The design of Haymarket was a permitted planning development, but the area surrounding the station is such that it is almost impossible for anyone to park their bike there. We have funding but it has come after the station has been refurbished, so the question is, why was there no thought of providing the funding when the refurbishment was happening?

As I understand it, the stations fund is still underspent, and that situation needs to be looked at. If it is Scottish Government funding, surely you, as elected members, should be asking the Scottish Government why we cannot spend that funding outwith the railway stations when that would be to the benefit of rail users. I really question that position.

I am happy to send all the detailed information about the application for Haymarket. We have been told that we might be funded for a bridge at Haymarket that would take people over to Dalry Road, but it would cost the council nearly £200,000 just to build up the proposal into a

design. The difficulty with that, of course, is that we do not want to spend that amount of money only for the proposal to be unsuccessful.

I am not sure whether you will agree with this, but I think that it would be helpful if the stations fund provided some money to let local authorities build up design work towards putting in an application with more detailed design. Some funds provide a sum of money in that way. For example, it is possible to get lottery funding to help a project up to a certain stage, and it would be useful to consider having that kind of funding.

The stations fund is sitting there with money in it, however, and we would like to make more improvements, particularly in Calton Road, at Haymarket and at Waverley Bridge where the buses are. Our bid was unsuccessful, but I would welcome any influence that the committee could exercise that would help us to resubmit our bid and be more successful.

David Stewart: This is an observation rather than a question, convener. Councillor Hinds makes a very good point. If memory serves me correctly, the Big Lottery Fund made provision for people to apply for funding for applications. This is probably not a very good analogy but, on a much larger scale, the unsuccessful consortia who submitted applications for the new Forth crossing contract received £5 million—I think—as an unsuccessful bidder premium. There is, therefore, a track record of facilities and various grants having been provided to fund applications, even if those applications were eventually unsuccessful.

The Convener: Does either of the gentlemen on the panel have a comment to make on the stations fund?

Neil Gellatly: In the days of the public transport fund under the former Scottish Executive, there was a preparation fund for major public transport projects that would provide sums of, say, £200,000 or £300,000 for the scale of project to which Councillor Hinds refers in order to allow the project, with partners, to get the technical advice to put in a sound bid. That pump-priming or seed-corn funding took away an element of risk.

The development control side for stations is interesting, because permitted development allows them to do what they need to do. If a road layout—for example, Calton Road or Leith Street, with regard to Waverley—is reconfigured, that is normally incorporated in a transport statement or transport assessment with a planning application. However, the element of city-to-rail-station planning gain is lost and anything beyond the doors of the station is the city's or local authority's responsibility. That can be costly and can make for a very ugly interface between what is shiny and brand new and what is left behind.

Bruce Kiloh: I echo some of the points that have been made. It is important to remember that rail users will also be bus users, taxi users and cycle users and that people are not dedicated to one mode of transport. When the general public see that organisations such as ours or those within the industry cannot get integration right, they question that—rightly, in my view.

10:45

That is the view that we take as a regional transport authority with multimodal responsibilities. We try to look across the board. For example, at Queen Street station we have had concerns about cycling, pick-up and drop-off, taxis, blue badge parking, the inter-station bus between Queen Street and Glasgow Central stations and so on. It is important to remember the integration issue.

On the Scottish stations fund, there are challenges in relation to funding the sometimes eye-watering costs of getting projects through feasibility stages and so on. It can be difficult for organisations—local authorities or whatever—to pull that money together. There are probably opportunities to work on that.

One thing that challenges organisations is the need to follow the Scottish transport appraisal guidance process that is set by Transport Scotland, which costs money. My organisation has funded feasibility development work on that. Such work can be expensive, but the main thing for us is that we get the right answer at the end of it and do not spend significant amounts of money only to be told later that, for example, because we did not follow the STAG process, the proposal will be thrown out. Clarification about that might be required and, if any other funding was available for that, that would be welcome.

Mike MacKenzie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): David Stewart talked about the Waverley situation. An alternative hypothesis that I have heard—perhaps it is just a rumour—is that one of the reasons for moving the taxis out of the station concerned air quality. That might or might not be the case, but I would be interested in hearing more about that from Councillor Hinds.

It strikes me that several issues are wrapped up in this. We can argue about the decisions that Network Rail has made or has not made, and we can argue about the lack of consultation. Further, we can talk about the timescale on which Network Rail informed the City of Edinburgh Council that it was making those design decisions and whether it informed the council early enough to enable it to do the ancillary work that is within its jurisdiction.

I accept the idea that Network Rail has no jurisdiction beyond the red line. However, I cannot accept that it cannot think and consult beyond the

red line to enable the council to do ancillary work that complements what it is doing and, in terms of the construction sequence of any works, minimise the overall impact of the main station work and the ancillary work. Can you comment on that and clarify the situation with regard to those issues?

Councillor Hinds: As I said, there was a project group made up of council officials, particularly those who are involved in planning and delivering developments around Waverley Bridge and Market Street. It met to discuss how we could ensure that there was liaison around what we did outwith that red line and what Network Rail did within the red line. The liaison that you talk about took place.

There were delays in the project in Waverley station. The council tried to fit in and find a time when it could implement the changes and improvements on Waverley Bridge and Market Street. That process was quite complex because we cannot do anything during the festival period and—I hate to mention it but, since I am in a transport meeting, I will—we have to deal with the consequences of the trams and the disruption that that project has caused for a number of years.

There were issues around trying to find the funding to facilitate the changes in Market Street and on Waverley Bridge. When the security issue was first discussed, many years back, there was an indication that money might be made available to address that. The informal project groups discussed the idea that, if that were the case, match funding could be made available. That sort of collaboration between developers and the council happens all over the city.

There was all that discussion but no money was forthcoming. I do not know whether that has answered your question. That liaison took place, but Network Rail saw itself as operating within the station and we saw ourselves as being concerned with what happens outside it. How do we make that situation better? I do not have an answer to that, but the liaison did not work properly. We could say that there were faults on both sides.

Does that answer your question?

Mike MacKenzie: I am struggling to process all the information that you have given me. My colleagues will confirm that my brain does not always work as fast as I would like it to. Did Network Rail inform you of its design intentions early enough in the process for you be able to design the complementary work that you are responsible for and fit that into the process?

Councillor Hinds: Part of the project group involved working together with Network Rail on what it was proposing. Some of the things that it was proposing, such as temporary ramps to facilitate the work, would obviously have an

impact. That liaison took place, but the difficulty was that there were changes involving the security issues, and decisions seemed to change, particularly decisions about vehicle access.

You asked about air quality. Network Rail believed that there was an issue with that. As you are aware, vehicles could go in and out, so air quality was another issue, but security was the one that changed the situation. The situation kept changing.

Mike MacKenzie: I think that that is a “yes”. Thank you.

Moving on, I seek a wee bit of clarification on permitted development rights. This might be a question for Mr Gellatly. I understand that Network Rail has permitted development rights, so it is exempt from the normal planning application process in which the local planning authority would consider ancillary matters. Is that correct or have I misunderstood that?

Councillor Hinds: Neil Gellatly is probably more of an expert on that than I am, but I understand that Network Rail had to get planning permission for the roof at Waverley, because of its height.

Neil Gellatly: I am more a transport professional than someone who knows a lot about land use planning, but it seems to me that the rail industry has to consult planning authorities more on heritage and conservation issues than on run-of-the-mill work to change an office into an information centre or whatever. There is a limited amount of integration with the planning system compared with what happens in an ordinary development.

Mike MacKenzie: Is it correct to say that, if Network Rail did not have permitted development rights, it would be forced to consult and make a full planning application, during the course of which transport and all the ancillary arrangements and implications of the overall development could be fully and properly considered? Is it correct to say that the permitted development rights actively militate against that process taking place?

Neil Gellatly: Yes. If we were building a brand new station, it would be a different matter. We would go through a detailed process, as we do for a new retail, education or commercial development. For the refurbishment and redevelopment of existing facilities, however, the interaction with the planning system is much more limited.

The problem is what happens beyond the red line, which has been referred to. Ordinarily, we would expect public realm improvements around the station—things as simple as a new bus shelter—but they are often not considered. It is as

though Network Rail is saying, “We are investing only within the railway grounds. It is over to you, public authority, to deal with issues beyond that.”

Mike MacKenzie: Is that a result of changes in the planning system? Is that a new development or has it always been the case within the planning system?

Neil Gellatly: My knowledge of planning is limited, but nothing has changed in my working life.

Councillor Hinds: The situation is the same at Edinburgh airport. The airport does not have to go through the planning permission process for certain things because it has permitted development rights. I am not sure what happens outwith the airport, but I know that that is the case within the airport, because we have had issues about access to the airport in the past, as well as issues with Waverley station.

Neil Gellatly: Ports are the same. They have similar rights.

Mike MacKenzie: That is very helpful.

Let us move on to Haymarket station. The committee has heard concerns about narrow pavements, the poor location of taxi ranks, limited cycle parking—I appreciate that Councillor Hinds has talked about that—and the danger from tramlines. I appreciate that the last issue may be sub judice, so you may not be able to say much about the specifics of it. Is the City of Edinburgh Council doing what it can, or is it doing nothing to address those concerns by improving walking and cycling infrastructure in that area? Maybe you can explain why those improvements were not made as part of the trams project.

Councillor Hinds: With the tramlines came improvements in the integration of tram, bus and rail travel at Haymarket. We applied for funding for bike racks in Haymarket station and were successful, so masses of extra bike racks will be put in there. The question, however, is why that was not done in the first place. Waverley station has the same issue and Network Rail has permitted development rights at both stations, so we are pursuing the issue of bike rack improvements there.

We are also looking at the issue of trade waste. We have a particular problem, which you can see if you look at some of the photographs in our submission. We are taking trade waste off the streets as part of a programme that we are rolling out throughout the city. We have run pilot projects in Haymarket because, as the photographs show, there is street clutter, trade waste and large trade waste bins, which we are taking off the street. We are taking action on that issue.

We are spending a large resource on a study on the link between Roseburn and the city centre. We are looking particularly at having cycle routes going from Leith all the way through the city centre and out to Roseburn as well as at having segregated cycle routes all through the city centre.

There are some restrictions on our ability to widen pavements, although such improvements were part of the bid that we put in for the stations fund and I would love it if we had the money to do that.

We have increased our funding for roads and pavements in the city. We have prioritised Waverley Bridge and Market Street, but we also have plans for improvements around Haymarket that we have put in our stations fund bid. A bridge link that would take pedestrians and cyclists over to Dalry would be helpful.

Passenger numbers at Haymarket are going to grow and grow. It is a popular station because it has links to taxis, cycles, walking, rail and trams. Haymarket is on our list for improvement once we have the funding. We have plans for it.

Mike MacKenzie: I ask for one slight clarification. I am still not sure why those things were not done at a much earlier date. I appreciate that you are doing a lot now, which is terrific, but why were those things not done at an earlier date?

Councillor Hinds: They were not done because of a lack of resources and money. If there had not been permitted development rights, perhaps they would have been part of a planning application—a section 75 agreement for Haymarket station. We are always looking for more resources to spend.

Mike MacKenzie: You have been very helpful. It is back to the convener—I have exhausted my questions.

The Convener: I am not qualified to judge your earlier comment about your brain, Mr MacKenzie, but I think that you were being unduly modest, given the quality of your questions.

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con): I want to move on to the subject of Dundee station. With the waterfront development, there was a unique opportunity to start with a blank slate, at surface level, at least. Many respondents to our survey have noted that they want bus services to call directly at the railway station. Mr Gellatly, your written submission mentions a bus hub that is “a short stroll” from the station. How do you intend to operate that and how could it be improved?

11:00

Neil Gellatly: Bus operations in the city of Dundee are almost exclusively commercially operated by the bus companies, which follow the routes where passengers wish to go. A small amount of public subsidy goes into socially necessary services, but the majority of services are provided by National Express Dundee and Stagecoach, which are limited companies.

The waterfront and streetscape developments in the central area of Dundee are now appearing and a series of attractions, including offices, shops and the V&A museum, will be built in the coming years. We expect bus services to start to migrate into that central waterfront area. However, at the moment, the city centre public transport hub is what I describe as a short stroll across the Marketgait into Whitehall Street, High Street, Crichton Street and Union Street, where almost all bus services in the city and services that go beyond the city call. That is a signed and safe walking route. Over the past decade we have put in a lot of money, through the public transport fund, to make that an attractive environment.

Bus services will not operate directly from the station from the day that it opens, unless the operators make a major change to bus policy. Some services will pass through, but ordinarily we would expect passengers to walk across to the existing bus hub in the city centre. We will have travel information in the rail station to tell people when their buses depart and where they depart from, and there will be additional on-street signage for people to find their way there. That is our strategy.

Alex Johnstone: In the previous system, it was a short but often complicated walk, with a lot of pedestrian crossings and that sort of thing. Respondents to our survey are keen to have better pedestrian and cycle links between the railway station and the city centre. Can anything be done to improve that?

Neil Gellatly: Yes. We designed in the walking routes from the outset, and an almost direct walking route will emerge. Of course there are buildings in the way, and there are decision points where people might be unsure whether to turn or go straight. We will ensure that there is an on-street, static, old-fashioned sign that says to go right or left for bus stops or shops, so that pedestrians are reassured of their route. The sign will include a street map of the surrounding area.

We have a plan. We undertook an audit using a geographic information system that looked at decision points. We have mapped out about 40 to 50 positions in Dundee city centre where on-street information will keep people on the right track to their destination.

Alex Johnstone: You said in your written evidence that

“Currently no provision has been made to upgrade the rail side platform and waiting areas”

at the station. Why is that? Is that improvement likely to be made in the near future?

Neil Gellatly: We are very keen for the track-side platforms to be improved. At the moment, Network Rail is unable to prioritise its funding for enhancements at that level in the station, so our strategy has been to create a nice welcoming interchange at street level, with all the facilities that people need when they arrive at the station, such as shops, cafes and travel information. Passengers will then travel by escalator or elevator to the platform, so they will be able to remain in a pleasant environment until they have to travel on the train.

We are encouraging Abellio, Virgin—the new east coast operator—and the new sleeper operator to make an element of their stations improvement investment in Dundee. We have asked Network Rail to consider doing that, but it is unable to at the moment. It points out that the station was refurbished 10 years ago, with roof reglazing, painting and closed-circuit television. The platform areas will not receive the full-gloss effect that the street level, where the main station buildings will be, will have.

Alex Johnstone: Basically, although there are limitations to what will be available at platform level, there will be significant improvements to what is available at the upper level.

Neil Gellatly: Yes. As opposed to what has been described for Edinburgh, the interface will be a nice, street-level facility, with a fairly ordinary track-side level. The track-side level will be usable, safe and operationally sound, but it may not have the same impact that upstairs will have. Upstairs will be of a very high standard. It has been designed with the rail industry on board, but at our cost.

Alex Johnstone: It is certainly different from the previous arrangements, when the station just seemed to have a kiosk on the surface.

Neil Gellatly: Absolutely. The passenger expectation is a bit higher than just a single kiosk.

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP): On the redevelopment of Queen Street station, Bruce Kiloh’s written evidence says that the station is

“a challenging environment in which to work with stakeholders”.

You touched on that, Mr Kiloh. Why is that the case? What can be done to make the situation easier?

Bruce Kiloh: As I mentioned, a lot of renovation work is taking place involving the Buchanan Galleries shopping centre, Glasgow Queen Street station, Buchanan Street subway station and the travelator between Queen Street station and Buchanan Street. There are also all the other works that we are doing with Glasgow City Council on fastlink and what is happening with buses in the city centre. Among all of that, it has proved particularly challenging to ensure a co-ordinated and integrated approach.

I mentioned the Glasgow Queen Street passenger forum, which was created at SPT’s behest and which we have used to try to ensure that people are co-ordinated from a programme and end-product delivery point of view.

We have had different experiences of the planning process. At Queen Street station, Network Rail took the developments through the transport and works process. At the same time, it was engaged in the car park on North Hanover Street, which involved land disposal and required contact with the Office of Rail Regulation. Consulting in two different processes was complicated. I empathise with Network Rail, because it was dealing with two separate things cheek by jowl, which is not easy for organisations such as ours.

The transport and works process was good. Network Rail was willing to engage and had a lot of engagement with passengers. However, we felt that the information that was provided in the leaflets that were issued and the consultation exercise was fairly poor. We sought more information, as we did not think that there was enough information for people to make an informed response.

We had good dialogue with Network Rail and have worked reasonably well in trying to get improvements in the station. We have talked at nauseam this morning about the red line and, in this case, that has proved a challenge. The approach of Network Rail was very much that what happens outside the red line is the responsibility of Glasgow City Council, SPT or someone else.

That has created a challenge for us in looking after the buses. Outside Queen Street station is one of the main bus hubs, with three stops. One is the stop for the Glasgow airport bus, at the corner of West George Street and Dundas Street, which means that people arrive in Glasgow and get out there. There are also the main bus stops for the east end of Glasgow. Those are very popular bus stops, with more than 100 buses an hour at peak times. We want to ensure that there is integration. Obviously, that leads to further costs, perhaps for us and perhaps for the council. It is a very constrained space, but we have always taken the

view that the redevelopment is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to get it right and maximise the integration between the rail station, the subway, the bus network and the cycle network. There is a huge opportunity there.

We want to ensure that we get the station itself correct, and that the work on Buchanan Galleries is done in the right manner to maximise the benefit for Glasgow and the wider region. Queen Street is one of the main national rail stations. It has been challenging and at times confusing, and we have had to put a lot of resource into it, but we have managed to get there with some benefits for the passenger.

There are still a few things to be sorted out, particularly on cycling, but the engagement process that we have with Network Rail and others who are involved in the variety of projects is good at the moment and we are taking a positive approach to that to try to maximise the benefits for all of us.

James Dornan: My colleague Mary Fee will ask some questions about integration.

Even though Network Rail was not willing to cross that imaginary electric red line, did your discussions with it at least allow you to take into consideration early enough in the process what had to be done by the council, SPT and other partners? How did the discussions with the Buchanan Galleries go?

Bruce Kiloh: I will treat the two questions separately. With Network Rail, we always like to get as early notification as possible. The earlier a council, SPT or another regional transport partnership knows about something, the more that we can plan ahead. That is just the way that these things go. The information about Queen Street station redevelopment was not as detailed as we would have liked. Passengers would have expected an integrated approach, but Network Rail's consultation was very much focused on how the station would look and it talked only very vaguely about the wider integration. That was part of the problem. We now have a good process—it probably could have been in place earlier, but that is perhaps always the case, depending on the project.

Buchanan Galleries is a commercial organisation and we have been aware of the organisation's aspirations to extend Buchanan Galleries for some time. We have had good dialogue with the organisation in the past few years on its plans for expansion. It has gone through the planning process and it appears to have been willing to change its plans as necessary. There was a specific issue in relation to the travelator, but that was sorted out eventually, once all parties had agreed on the

most appropriate governance arrangements. As I said, early dialogue with any developer is always welcome for an organisation such as ours—or, indeed, the council.

James Dornan: Your written evidence also states:

"SPT took the unprecedented step of corresponding with the Office of Rail Regulation"

to maintain access to a section of the redeveloped Queen Street station. Can you explain why that action was necessary and what impact the correspondence with the ORR had?

Bruce Kiloh: That goes back to the question of roles and responsibilities in regard to the different processes. The issue was to do with the disposal of the North Hanover Street car park by Network Rail, which had to get permission from the ORR. Network Rail contacted us and consulted us. We had a number of concerns around pick-up, drop-off, blue badge parking, taxis and so on. We responded to Network Rail, which then represented our view to the ORR. Our view was not put as strongly as we would have liked, so we wrote to the ORR to make our points again. Basically, we repeated what we had said to Network Rail.

The ORR got back to Network Rail and said that we had valid points. As far as I am aware, the issues are being resolved in relation to the same-level access between the car park and the concourse at the new station. There will be facilities for pick-up, drop-off and taxis, which we view as a win for us. The process that we had to go through to get there was perhaps not ideal, but we got a good result in the end.

We have already heard about Network Rail, ScotRail and so on, and the ORR is another organisation that is involved in the transport industry, which is complicated. Clarification is needed on roles and responsibilities.

James Dornan: Is it a possible shortcut to contact the ORR if you have concerns, as opposed to going through Network Rail, which dilutes the message that you want to send and then you have to go through the process again?

Bruce Kiloh: We certainly support anything that could speed up the process and make it more transparent and helpful.

The ORR and Network Rail have specific responsibilities. We have talked about the security aspects. In running any transport system, the number 1 thing is obviously safety and security, and that can often lead to challenges, as we have heard. If it was possible to try to improve that process, we would most certainly support that. The process that we had to go through to get that

result was probably not ideal, but we got the result in the end, which is the most important thing.

It comes back to the point that I made earlier that each of the projects is different. If there had been one process in place for the redevelopment of Queen Street station and the disposal of land at North Hanover Street, those perhaps could have been looked at together. However, they were separate processes with separate consultations, which perhaps was not ideal when we are looking at a once-in-a-generation change to one of Scotland's main rail stations.

James Dornan: I will just touch on integration. You highlight that

"there is further scope to improve integration between transport modes"

at the redeveloped Queen Street station. What needs to be done to realise those improvements and who will you have to work with to achieve them?

Bruce Kiloh: We are looking at improving integration through the Queen Street passenger forum and we will be relying on the council to co-ordinate that. In regard to the transport modes, there could be improvements in how the cycle network and cycle parking are integrated with the new station.

There are still some issues to be bottomed out, including the details around taxis and the pick-up and drop-off points. We have always wanted to maximise the integration between the subway and Queen Street station via the travelator. Project managers at SPT and Network Rail are discussing how we can do that. It is very much in passengers' interests, because that is one of the most popular entrances to Buchanan Street subway station.

There is quite a lot to be done there. That will require us to work with the council, Network Rail, probably Transport Scotland, all the parties who are involved in the Queen Street passenger forum group and various other delivery bodies. We are in constant dialogue with bus operators. As you will be aware, there are more than 70 bus operators in the west of Scotland. We used to have around 130, but the figure has gone down over the past few years. They provide around 93 per cent of services in the Strathclyde area, and we support around 7 per cent of services. We will need to work with the operators to determine the best arrangements for bus services outside the station. We will work with the operators and the council.

There is still a lot to be done, and we need to work with many organisations. Now that we are moving into the delivery phase, we will certainly put resource into that and get on with it.

11:15

Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab): I want to follow up on the questions that James Dornan asked; I will concentrate specifically on the integration of bus and rail services.

In the survey that the committee carried out, we received more than 450 responses about Glasgow Central station. A number of respondents expressed concern about the lack of integration between bus and rail services at Glasgow Central. They raised concerns about a lack of real-time bus information and a lack of signage directing people where to get buses and how to connect with other railway stations.

Do you have any plans to tackle that? When people get off a train at Glasgow Central, there is nothing to tell them where to go to get a bus or where the bus will take them. As people walk out of the station, if my memory serves me correctly—James Dornan might know this better than I do—there is only a very small sign to tell them the walking route to Glasgow Queen Street station. There is very little in the way of signage or bus information at Glasgow Central.

Bruce Kiloh: If you will permit me, I will talk about other stations, just to give examples, before I talk about Central station.

With the Queen Street station redevelopment, through the TAWS process we very much feel that we got a win on ensuring that adequate signage for the subway and the bus network will be provided. When the project has been completed, you will notice a big improvement in directions for cyclists. A point that we made in our consultation response was that, although many people who use Queen Street station—or any other station—are regular users of that station, a lot of tourists come into it. As they are not familiar with the station, it is necessary to have signage in place.

I will move on to the project at Partick station, which we took forward. It is the only one in Scotland that integrates rail, subway and bus. We made sure that there is good signage at the station not only to other modes but to places such as the Riverside museum. There is also now signage on how to get to the new south Glasgow hospital, so we can do things in a live environment.

As far as Central station is concerned, it has long been an aspiration of SPT to improve the integration with the bus network. On Union Street, right next to Central station, there is a de facto bus station. Hundreds of buses an hour go through the three stops there. It is not an ideal situation, and we continue to work with Glasgow City Council to see what we can do about that.

We would like there to be better integration at Central, which is a Network Rail-managed station. We are working with Network Rail. Glasgow City Council recently produced its city centre transport strategy. As part of that, we have been working on fastlink. A key element of that is access round the city centre and rationalising how the bus services go through the city centre and where they can stop. We are making improvements on Union Street.

Ensuring that there is integration at the biggest station in Scotland is a key priority for us. That will involve us working with the council on Union Street and with Network Rail. I agree that, at the moment, Glasgow Central is not ideal from that point of view.

Mary Fee: So Network Rail is responsible for all the signage in the station.

Bruce Kiloh: Yes.

Mary Fee: What dialogue have you had to try to persuade it? Is it not open to including additional signage or information in the station?

Bruce Kiloh: I am not able to comment on that, but I will find out what dialogue we have had and get back to the committee. The priority for us has been working with the council to get agreement on what we can do on Union Street for the bus network. We will certainly consider what we can do on integration with Central station. I will respond to the committee clerk to clarify what we have done about contacting Network Rail about that.

Mary Fee: It would be useful for us to know the background of what you have tried to do so that we can put those questions to Network Rail when it comes to the committee, because there is certainly plenty of scope for additional signage in Central station. Whether on the main concourse or in the large ticket office that is on the way out of Central station, there is ample room.

Many respondents also raised concerns about the pedestrian environment around Glasgow Central station—the clutter, the congestion, the time that it takes to cross roads and the difficulty in accessing other modes of transport. What is being done to alleviate those problems?

Bruce Kiloh: That question is probably best answered by Glasgow City Council. Central station is a great station. In my view, it is one of the best in the United Kingdom because of its scale and the way it operates. Five or six years ago, some improvements were made to the way the station operates, and those have worked reasonably well. The situation outside the station is, perhaps, a victim of the red-line boundary that is coming up continually in our discussion. The council, in

partnership with others, will be considering how it improves that.

Over the years, we have worked with Abellio—or First, previously—and others on the interstation bus. We have always aspired to improve that connection between Queen Street, Central and Buchanan bus station and we think that it could be improved even further now.

The pedestrian environment is not ideal, but it is a cramped site and very constrained. There is Union Street on one side and there are many other buildings and busy streets on others. On Gordon Street, there is one of the most popular taxi ranks in Glasgow, so it is quite constrained round there. The situation when people come out of the station is not particularly welcoming. Glasgow City Council and others, including SPT, have an aspiration to improve that, but the question is probably best answered by the council.

Mary Fee: My final questions concern the connections between Glasgow Central and Queen Street. We will talk about the bus link first and then about the cycle connections and walking route.

I use Central station all the time and, on more than one occasion, I have seen pedestrians almost being knocked down by the connecting bus as it comes in, because strangers to the city do not know that it comes in there and the environment is very congested. Within the station, there is not a huge amount of signage to say that the connecting bus to Queen Street station leaves outside, although I take your point that that is Network Rail's responsibility. There is also nothing outside to say where the bus is and when it comes in.

What is being done to improve the link between the two stations, particularly by bus?

Bruce Kiloh: What was previously called the 398 service is specified by Transport Scotland in the franchise. Abellio has committed to continue it. We had some dialogue with Abellio about getting an electric bus put on that route because it is quite a visible bus in the city centre and, particularly if it is pumping out emissions, people notice it because of its profile. Abellio did not want to do that, but we are more than happy to engage in dialogue with it about that.

The way the bus operates currently is not ideal. You are absolutely right that the situation is not clear as people come out of the station. If there is any safety issue, you need to question Network Rail on that. Where the interstation bus leaves from Queen Street station at the moment is perhaps not ideal, but it is straight off the concourse. It is perhaps not as obvious as it could be. It is reasonably well used, but it is a vital service for people who have difficulty walking, and it very much could be improved. We would be

delighted to discuss with Transport Scotland, Network Rail and Abellio how best to do that. That is probably a question for Network Rail and others in the rail industry.

Mary Fee: The walking time between the two stations is about five minutes—I can do it in that, anyway. It is a fairly short route, but it is quite complicated, especially for someone who does not know the city. It is clear that improvements could be made to the walking route and to the cycling route. Who is responsible for that? Is it the city council?

Bruce Kiloh: It is the city council. We have been working closely with the council on improving the cycle network across the west of Scotland in the past few years, and we have invested millions of pounds in that.

On a day like today, it is a lovely walk but, if it is not a day like today—unfortunately, that is regularly the case in Glasgow—it is a bit of a pain and not ideal. People need to follow the Z-shaped route along Gordon Street, Buchanan Street and then on to West George Street. Members might be aware that, on West George Street, just as it comes up to Dundas Street, the council has widened the pavement, which makes things a wee bit easier, although it is still particularly busy.

We would be delighted to talk to the council about improving the cycle link between the two stations. I know that Abellio, in its new role as the franchise holder, is keen to lift the standard of cycling integration with rail. We can perhaps talk to Abellio about that. That could most certainly be improved. As you say, the two major stations are within five minutes' walk of each other, so it is only right that the signage and linkage for pedestrians and cyclists be improved.

Mary Fee: Particularly for the walking route, the improvements could be as simple as providing a basic map showing where people are and the route between the stations. If that was available in both stations, that would certainly make things much easier. Again, that would be for Network Rail to consider.

Bruce Kiloh: Absolutely. Signage and maps are available in Central station, although there is perhaps a need to improve their visibility—that is always the issue.

The Convener: As members have no further questions for the witnesses, I will bring the session to a close by asking each of you whether there is a take-home message that you want to leave with the committee. One of the themes in our evidence sessions has been about the need for what we might call the three Cs, which are collaboration, co-ordination and consultation. In different ways, all the witnesses in our sessions have highlighted

those. Do you have a take-home message for the committee?

Bruce Kiloh: The number of organisations that have been mentioned perhaps sends its own message that integration and co-ordination are the most important thing. I have talked about the Glasgow Queen Street passenger forum, which has been a positive step.

I highlight to the committee that SPT, as the regional transport partnership, after identifying the issues with Glasgow Queen Street and other things that have gone on, has recently written to the various partners in the transport industry with the aim of establishing what we call the west of Scotland transport integration forum. The forum will specifically deal with high-level strategic issues and find out what other organisations are doing, when they are doing it and what stage of the process they are at. The aim is to facilitate better co-ordination. We rely on the good will of organisations to be involved in that, and we have had a positive response so far. Interestingly, the first response that we had was from the CPT, so the bus operators, which are commercial organisations, are keen to be involved. We welcome that.

That is the kind of step forward that we would like. The important point that I leave for the committee is that SPT, which is the regional transport partnership and which has statutory responsibilities and a multimodal remit, would be delighted to take a stronger role in organising, integrating and co-ordinating major transport projects, to provide a one-stop shop for that. We would be delighted to talk to the committee and Transport Scotland about how we can take that forward.

11:30

Councillor Hinds: I will summarise a number of points. First and foremost, passengers need to be at the heart of what we are trying to do. As has been said, the issue is not about people who know the layout of stations and how to get from one place to another; it is about people who do not know, and it is about people with disabilities and others who have difficulty with access. Passengers have to be at the heart of any decisions that we take.

Linked to that is the integration of all modes. We need to get far better at that. Edinburgh is not lucky enough to have a transport authority such as that for Glasgow and Strathclyde. I would like that and I hope that it might be considered in future. However, we have the Transport for Edinburgh board, which I chair and which brings together tram and bus services. Unlike Glasgow, the majority of the bus services that are provided in

the city are publicly owned, through Lothian Buses. Transport for Edinburgh could be the way to progress that integration.

In the past year, we have set up a rail forum that brings together all the rail operators and another forum that brings together all the bus operators. The operators have found that useful, as have we. The forums focus particularly on integration and how the operators can work better together and how the council can work better with them. There are conversations on that, and we are working together and sitting round the table.

It is key to have integration, so that transport is easy. We all go to European cities where, because of ticketing and other issues, it is so much easier to go from one mode of transport to another. That has to be the key, particularly in our rail stations.

My second point is about Network Rail. As has been discussed, its openness and accountability need to be looked at.

Thirdly, there is an issue about permitted development and whether that might be considered.

Another issue is about how the station fund works. How open and accountable is it and could it be used not just for rail-only projects? Indeed, who designates what that means? I am sure that we would all welcome some resources to help outwith the stations.

Another point that has come out is that information is key. That is not just to do with internal signage; it is also to do with external signage—local authorities need to get better at that. Also, although not everybody is online, we need better online maps. Another issue is the information that people get before they get to a station. It is all very well for there to be signposts when people get to a rail station but, before they get there, particularly if they are coming from abroad or from London or wherever, they need information about how they can get a taxi, bus or tram. We are not good enough at providing that kind of information. However, signage is also pretty important and it needs to be thought about.

Those are the points that I hope have been brought out this morning.

The Convener: Thank you—that is an extensive shopping list for us.

Mr Gellatly can have the final word.

Neil Gellatly: You have heard that there is a plethora of stakeholders. We must make them feel that they are actively involved when we are planning and strategising for the future—they must be engaged. We must remember why stations are there. It is a little too self-serving when we think only about the operational facts. The boundary is

not a glass roof or wall; it goes right back to our house or the bus when we have gone downtown. We must remember the joined-upness of our city lives.

As I said before, rail travel is a regional and national issue; it is not always local. A helping hand at feasibility stage would be a lot more helpful than too many stops when we are told that we cannot do something. We need a helping hand to break through with our concepts and ideas. People all over the country want to take things forward, and any help would be greatly appreciated.

The Convener: I thank our witnesses for their comprehensive evidence, which has been incredibly helpful to the committee in taking forward our important inquiry.

11:33

Meeting continued in private until 12:34.

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