

GLASGOW AIRPORT RAIL LINK BILL COMMITTEE

Monday 15 May 2006

Session 2

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GLASGOW AIRPORT RAIL LINK BILL COMMITTEE

5th Meeting 2006, Session 2

CONVENER

*Margaret Jamieson (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Mr Andrew Arbuckle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)

*Michael Matheson (Central Scotland) (SNP)

*Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Ind)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:

Neil Amner (Biggart Baillie)

Bob Darracott (Renfrew shire Council)

Douglas Ferguson (Strathclyde Partnership for Transport)

Johnny Gwynne (Strathclyde Police)

John Halliday (Strathclyde Partnership for Transport)

Jim Harkins (Light Rail (UK) Ltd)

Charles Hoskins (Strathclyde Partnership for Transport)

Ian Johnson (South Ayrshire Council)

David Keddie (Roger Tym and Partners)

Bill Lynas (Network Rail)

Gerard Malone (Inverclyde Council)

Ron McAulay (Network Rail)

David McCall (British Transport Police)

John McGlynn (Scottish Independent Airport Park and Ride Association)

David Reid (Reid Rail Ltd)

Andrew Shuttleworth (Strathclyde Fire and Rescue)

Simon Temple (Faber Maunsell)

Simon Wallwork

Stewart Whitehill (Fairline Coaches Ltd)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Terry Shevlin

LOCATION

Committee Room 1

Scottish Parliament

Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill Committee

Monday 15 May 2006

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 10:14*]

Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill: Preliminary Stage

The Convener (Margaret Jamieson): Good morning and welcome to the fifth meeting of the Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill Committee. This is the third meeting at which we will take oral evidence on the general principles of the bill. Michael Matheson MSP has submitted his apologies. I remind members and others who are attending the meeting to ensure that mobile phones and pagers have been switched off.

We will take evidence from five panels of witnesses today. As usual, witnesses for the promoter will be on the final panel. I advise them that we will be seeking their comments on the evidence that we hear from today's other witnesses. I also advise members that, for various reasons, the Paisley and Glasgow Airport Taxi Owners Association, AA Scotland, VisitScotland and First ScotRail have not been able to provide witnesses to give evidence today.

We will be taking a break around 11 am for 15 to 20 minutes, to allow a technical run-through for the witnesses on panel 3, who will be making a presentation. The break will also give me an opportunity to meet visitors from New Farm Primary School, who arranged their visit long before I was press-ganged into sitting on the committee.

I now welcome the witnesses on panel 1: Bob Darracott, director of planning and transport at Renfrewshire Council; Gerard Malone, deputy chief executive of Inverclyde Council; and Ian Johnson, manager of the Ayrshire joint structure plan and transportation committee at South Ayrshire Council. Andrew Arbuckle has the first question for the panel.

Mr Andrew Arbuckle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD): I would like to deal with some of the objections from Renfrewshire Council, the first of which concerns the controversial issue of the impact on St James park. Do you now accept that the rail link has to go through the park?

Bob Darracott (Renfrewshire Council): The council agreed to the principle of the proposal

back in December, but we have always had a concern about the impact that the rail link would have on the 22 football pitches at St James park. As far as we are concerned, the principle is absolutely sound, and we are trying to achieve a formal legal agreement with the promoter, Strathclyde Partnership for Transport, to ensure that we can maintain the level of provision that is currently provided by the 22 football pitches continuously throughout the construction process and thereafter.

It is clear to us that there is an opportunity to achieve agreement. During the construction period, the council will have to co-operate with the promoter to provide a number of off-site football pitches—possibly up to 14—for a temporary period, so that SPT can construct the viaduct through the park. It also requires about half of the park area as a compound and construction yard for the bridge that will go across the motorway at that point. We accept that and we are happy to work with SPT on that front. During the construction period, nine or 10 pitches will continue to be used on the far side of the proposed viaduct.

We need to come to a legal agreement to ensure that we can maintain continuity of provision across Renfrewshire. The 22 pitches are significant not only for Renfrewshire but for the whole of west central Scotland as thousands of amateur footballers use them on a regular basis. There are not many places left in the west of Scotland where so many football pitches are available, so it is important to us and to those who use them that the provision continues. We think that we have a way of achieving temporary off-site provision for the construction period.

We hope that we can reach a hard and fast legal agreement. The difficult debate at the moment, as you can see in our formal objection, concerns ensuring that any legal agreement that we reach with SPT is binding and can be included in the bill so that, during construction, the council can enforce the provision of the off-site pitches.

That has been a long-winded answer, but we absolutely agree with the principle behind the rail link and we accept the sound arguments in support of it. The airport is the biggest economic driver in Renfrewshire and it has good growth potential. We do not want to interfere with that in any way. However, we have a sizeable local difficulty in the provision of football pitches at St James park.

Mr Arbuckle: St James park busy at the weekend is really a most impressive sight. It seems as if you are brokering a deal, and you have not mentioned the improved changing facilities that you hope to get out of that deal. There is councillor representation on the SPT and

I am sure that the legal agreement that you have spoken about is coming along. Will that lead to your withdrawing your objection?

Bob Darracott: Absolutely. As I say, the council agreed formally on 15 December to accept the principle of the rail link. Later, in March, the council agreed to continue that support but to make it subject to the reaching of a legal agreement on the provision of football pitches and the upgrading of changing facilities, as you say, and parking facilities. If such an agreement can be reached, the council will withdraw its objection.

Mr Arbuckle: You have commented on the present state of Paisley Gilmour Street station. Unless money is invested in upgrading it, could the condition of the station dissuade people from using GARL?

Bob Darracott: I am sure that our colleagues in SPT will be able to give you chapter and verse on this, but the station is one of the busiest in the country and is much in demand. Our practical concern is that the station is the only stop along the rail link. An attraction for the council, because of the wider social and economic benefits of the rail link, is that Paisley Gilmour Street station would become more of a hub. There would be additional trains into Glasgow every hour, and there would be a direct link to the airport, which is a big local employer.

The environment in and around Gilmour Street station is not the best. The two stations at either end of the line—the airport station and Glasgow Central station—will be well equipped. The airport station will obviously be brand new and fit for purpose. Gilmour Street is a bit down at heel just now and, even if nothing was being developed or expanded, we would be arguing that Gilmour Street station required investment to help with circulation patterns, signage, lighting, the provision of information, and so on. If Gilmour Street station is to be a hub in the centre of Paisley, and if that is part of the reason for our support, we would be looking for the station to be brought up to a modern standard so that it stood comparison with the two stations at either end of the line. As the station is just now, it will not stand comparison with them.

To be fair to SPT, it is carrying out a consultancy study on the capacity, layout, design and circulation patterns of the station. We are happy that that is under way. However, as I am sure many of you will be aware, it is one thing to commission a consultancy study but another to find the longer-term capital investment to put plans into action. We would be looking for a commitment from SPT that, through its capital programme in the longer term, it makes strides in improving Gilmour Street station.

Mr Arbuckle: You have moved us on to the consideration of finances. In your reports to Renfrewshire Council in December and March, you say that the project will have no financial implications for the council. Glasgow City Council has indicated that it will consider an approach from SPT to help with GARL revenue costs. Given that Renfrewshire Council will benefit if the project goes ahead, do you not think that you, too, should contribute to it?

Bob Darracott: To be honest, no. We were never asked to make such a contribution and have never considered the prospect of doing so. Speaking on the council's behalf, I have to say that the council has no intention of making a formal contribution to the project.

Because there are many voices on the council, it took some time to agree the proposal in principle. Indeed, as you have already noted, our formal decision was taken in December, even though we had been aware of and had consulted on the project a year beforehand. That was because of the considerable concern about and major debate over the project's disruptive impact particularly on St James park and, to a lesser extent, on local businesses. Reaching the decision to proceed with a legal agreement to the bill was the length and breadth of the council's consideration in December.

Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Ind): If the council has not been asked to make a contribution, it cannot debate the question whether it would do so. If it were so asked, would its support in principle change?

Bob Darracott: No. I just do not think that the council is able to provide financial support to the project.

Mr Arbuckle: Renfrewshire Council is one of the mandatory consultees on the bill. We have already identified what I consider to be a gap in the process, which is that you have not been asked to make a financial contribution to the project. Are you happy with the overall consultation? Do you have any specific concerns about the promoter's environmental statement?

Bob Darracott: The council has been happy with the consultation. We feel that we were consulted regularly and that sufficient information flowed regularly between the two parties. Over the past 12 months or so, I have sat in on a number of consultations, particularly with groups that had an interest in the playing fields, user groups and so on, and I—and the council—feel that there was a considerable amount of public consultation.

That said, the issue of consultation will always be subject to wider debate, and many people will have been concerned at and will have objected to the fact that a range of different route options was

not presented for consideration and discussion during the consultation. Nevertheless, as the council reports show, many route options had already been considered and eliminated and we were being consulted on the fine detail of a preferred route. As I have said, we are generally happy with the consultation.

Mr Monteith: Do you agree with the promoter that

“Staff and passenger journeys by rail will reduce the volume of road traffic on the Ayrshire and Paisley to Glasgow corridors”?

If so, what evidence do you have to support that statement?

Bob Darracott: We stand advised by the promoter’s technical evidence, which suggests that there will be a longer-term modal shift and a corresponding reduction in road traffic volume. I am not avoiding your question but, on a more general point, the council has been concerned for some time that, to the west of Glasgow, the M8 between junctions 26 and 29 from Hillington to the St James interchange is running at capacity. We do not feel that GARL alone would substantially reduce the continuing congestion problems along that stretch of the motorway. The council wants to work with SPT and the Scottish Executive, which is currently looking at congestion through the Glasgow corridor along the M8. Despite the investment in GARL, we will continue to argue for improvements to the motorway in order to accommodate the expected continued traffic growth.

10:30

Mr Monteith: Do you support the promoter’s claim that GARL will lead to the creation of at least 65 jobs a year for 20 years in Glasgow and Renfrewshire?

Bob Darracott: Yes. We participated in the Roger Tym and Partners study and David Keddie, the lead consultant, spoke to us on a few occasions. Much of what he detailed in that study was information that we held already. The figures in the study are reasonably conservative and we agree with them.

The study indicated other economic development benefits such as potential office developments and physical improvements in and around the centre of Paisley. The council and the private sector have sought to develop some of those schemes for some years. The committee will appreciate how the development industry works—in the fullness of time, I am sure that investment would be made in those areas anyway; whether it is directly related to GARL is another matter.

We believe that investment in GARL will improve matters and have a minor impact on attracting additional investment in and around the centre of Paisley, particularly around Gilmour Street station. My gut feeling—quite often these things come down to gut feelings—is that any investment, additional capacity on the line or direct links to the airport are bound to make some of the vacant sites in and around the north end of Paisley more attractive to the development industry. However, that is not to say that the development industry is not looking at those sites routinely anyway.

Mr Monteith: I was coming to that very point. Like the promoter, I will be specific. The promoter says that GARL will enable

“the development of a new opportunity for up to 135,000 square feet office market accommodation and up to 675-700 gross new jobs and 315-328 net additional new jobs over 3-4 year period.”

Where could such office accommodation be sited and what jobs would it support? Given planning considerations, how long would it take for that office accommodation to come on stream?

Bob Darracott: If we were in Paisley, I could show you the two sites in question—they are both town-centre car parks in council ownership to the north of Gilmour Street station.

Mr Monteith: I have parked in them.

Bob Darracott: A neighbouring owner to one of those sites has shown an interest in a joint development. In fact, we are currently in discussions with him.

The council’s ambition to attract office investment on those two sites to the level that those figures demonstrate has been a work in progress for a few years. I will not go into all the details of why we cannot release the car park at this point, but we will do so in the near future and thereby allow the council to market it. As I said, we have had ambitions to develop those schemes for some time. The investment in GARL can only help but, to be honest, we were seeking to promote the projects anyway.

Mr Monteith: The promoter also claims that GARL would generate

“additional Gross Added Value of at least £2.1 million per annum in Glasgow and Renfrewshire”.

Do you also agree with that?

Bob Darracott: On the basis that the consultancy studies are professionally done, we would probably support the notion that GARL is bound to attract wider investment. Consultancy studies often come up with precise figures because of the way in which their analysis is done. I work on the economic development side of things in and around the centre of Paisley on a daily

basis. Over and above the specific schemes on the two sites that I have identified, the council is working through a regeneration programme—a joint venture with the Royal Bank of Scotland—to improve the Cart corridor, which runs north from the centre of Paisley direct to the airport. We are working with Communities Scotland and other bodies on a whole range of urban renewal initiatives. We are talking about a mixed-use environment with housing, industry and the like. If we can achieve a sizeable investment through the project and if we can also improve Paisley Gilmour Street station to make it a hub on this important line, wider investment will be made across the economy. I will not put my hat on the figure being £2.1 million per annum, but I cannot help but think that we will see wider economic improvements.

Mr Monteith: In that case—please tell me if I am wrong—is it not fair to say that your council finds favour with the scheme? In general, the improvement in access to Paisley from Glasgow, Ayrshire and Glasgow airport will benefit the initiatives that you are supporting at the moment or that you would like to see happen. Although that is the case, the council has commissioned no studies; it has done nothing other than to contribute—essentially free of cost—to the studies that have been undertaken. The council has not done anything to come in behind the scheme other than to say that the airport link goes with the grain of what it wants to do.

Bob Darracott: By and large, I agree with the statement. The scheme goes with the grain of what the council is trying to achieve in terms of accessibility. To be honest, the information that the Roger Tym and Partners study provided on investment in the centre of Paisley comes directly from information that we had commissioned previously as part of our work to attract partner and investor interest in two sites.

As I said, Renfrewshire Council agrees in principle to the scheme, but the committee cannot ignore the fact that a major caveat is attached to our in-principle agreement, which is the significant effect that the scheme will have on the management of the St James park playing fields. That said, surely it is not beyond the ability of both parties to come to an agreement on how to maintain the current level of football pitch provision. As yet, we do not have a formal legal agreement with which the council is happy. We have heads of terms, but they are being bandied between the parties and are still subject to adjustment. In effect, until the legal agreement is in place, the council will maintain a holding objection.

Mr Monteith: Do you have any other comments on the bill?

Bob Darracott: No. The council's view was expressed clearly in what we said in March. We appreciate that the airport is one of the key economic drivers for Renfrewshire. It has a master plan, which is being worked on at the moment and which shows considerable year-on-year growth. About 5,000 or 6,000 people are employed at the airport, many of whom are local people. The scheme will improve their access to work.

The council views the scheme as a means of support for a key economic driver in Renfrewshire and as something that will help the regeneration of the area. However, as I said, local people are very emotionally tied to the St James park playing fields, which are part of the town's history. Many people, not only those who live in Paisley or Renfrewshire, have an association with the pitches. The responsible approach for the council to take is one in which we ensure that continued provision of pitches is made through the construction phase and thereafter.

The Convener: I will ask about an issue that has been raised with us—the graves of cholera victims. Are those graves marked somewhere? Some people say that they are on one site and other people say that they are on another. Some even say that they are under the M8. Does the council have records that identify where the graves are?

Bob Darracott: I am not entirely sure about the detail of that, but I can respond to the question in due course.

The Convener: That would be good.

Bob Darracott: I understand that the council does not have much information on the subject, but I recollect that the general belief is that graves were disturbed in the construction of the motorway a good number of years ago and that the project would not directly affect the graves to which people refer. I can say in due course whether we have precise mapping of the graves.

The Convener: If the graves were disturbed in the construction of the M8, a record would have been made of that.

Bob Darracott: I expect so. However, as I said, I have not seen any records and I am not sure whether we hold details.

The Convener: You can provide us with further information.

Bob Darracott: Will do.

The Convener: I apologise to Michael Matheson. I said that he would be absent for the whole meeting, but it is nice to see that he is here.

Michael Matheson (Central Scotland) (SNP): The traffic got the better of me; I do not know where the suggestion came from that I would not be here today.

Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab): My questions are on a similar theme but are for the other two panel members. Do you agree with the promoter's claimed economic benefits for Ayrshire and Inverclyde? In Ayrshire and Inverclyde, the promoter suggests that five jobs will be created per annum, which is 100 jobs over 20 years, and that additional gross added value of £160,000 per annum will be generated.

Gerard Malone (Inverclyde Council): Inverclyde Council broadly supports an assessment that improved opportunities for economic development and regeneration in Inverclyde will be created. The council has not commissioned independent data on or an economic appraisal of GARL, but it has of course noted the documentation that the promoter has provided and to which Mr Darracott referred—the economic appraisal by Roger Tym and Partners.

The council sees clearly the link in Inverclyde between economic development and improved transport opportunities: the accessibility of jobs. One key issue for Inverclyde is the riverside Inverclyde corridor, which encompasses some 40 hectares—some 100 acres—of brownfield land for regeneration. That is actively being pursued through the Scottish Executive's announcement of pathfinder status for the urban regeneration company in Inverclyde.

Our local transport strategy, which is being reviewed, has commented on poor links between Inverclyde and the airport. We have a net outward migration of people from Inverclyde who seek jobs outwith Inverclyde. We have noted the opportunities that will be created for our residents and our business visitors by improving direct rail access to the Ayrshire corridor and through the link from Paisley Gilmour Street station to the airport. GARL offers positive possibilities.

Ian Johnson (South Ayrshire Council): I support that statement. The Ayrshire authorities have long thought that improving capacity between Paisley and Glasgow Central station is a key component of developing a broader look at how the west of Scotland's economy functions. We are experiencing something of a rundown in jobs in Ayrshire and an increase in people travelling further to access the labour market.

The Ayrshire line, which is running at its capacity for passenger numbers and trains, clearly requires investment to release some of the potential. That potential could be people seeking jobs in the greater Paisley or Glasgow area. In that regard, we would support the principle behind what Roger Tym says. The figure of five jobs was specific to his study. We say that there is a general advantage in improving accessibility along the whole line between Ayr and Glasgow Central.

10:45

Marlyn Glen: Can you be specific about the lines that you are talking about? We are dealing with the line between Glasgow and Paisley.

Ian Johnson: Clearly, the Glasgow airport rail link is one of the key building blocks for the improvement of services to the whole of the south-west corridor. We believe that the capacity between Glasgow and Paisley is currently constraining the operation of broader services in the area. An increase in capacity would allow a good deal more flexibility to travel in the south-west corridor.

Marlyn Glen: So you think that increased capacity on the line would make a difference in South Ayrshire as well as North Ayrshire.

Ian Johnson: It would certainly make a difference, particularly as we are about to submit the next joint structure plan, which looks at a range of regeneration and urban expansion areas that are specifically linked to the rail lines throughout North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire. A good deal of capacity is needed for freight movement as well as passenger movement. There are potential capacity constraints on the movement of coal from Hunterston. There are longer-term options for a deepwater transshipment hub at Hunterston, which would almost certainly require additional capacity on the rail lines in the area. With Prestwick airport located in the area, there will be a need for increased capacity. The Glasgow airport rail link is one of the key components in getting additional capacity in the corridor.

Marlyn Glen: You specifically mentioned Hunterston. I asked about the wider economic benefits to the area and the jobs that will be created. Do you have a specific idea of where extra jobs may be created?

Ian Johnson: The initial analysis that we have done suggests that it is likely that additional job capacity will be created within the central Glasgow area, as people orientate towards the leisure, business or service sectors. The conclusion of the studies that have been done seems to be that people in Ayrshire will be drawn increasingly to that labour market, in which there is currently a shortage of staff. We see that as a natural draw for people in the area.

We must be careful about suggesting specific numbers. Over the past 10 years or so, there has been a fairly rapid increase in the number of people who travel to Glasgow from Ayrshire for work. In some parts of North Ayrshire, in particular, 25 to 30 per cent of people have gone to Glasgow to find jobs.

Gerard Malone: I have three brief points to add. First, Inverclyde can be associated with the positive comments that have been made on the potential for developing rail capacity through GARL and the track extensions that will be provided. We often hear that peak services from Inverclyde to the important city region to which Mr Johnson referred are under pressure, so there is potential—I emphasise the word “potential”—for additional services in the future.

Secondly, I mentioned the riverside Inverclyde proposal. There will be a major housing-led regeneration with some 2,700 homes in the area, which can only benefit from good public transport systems. The enhanced links to the Glasgow city region will particularly assist the riverside Inverclyde proposal.

Thirdly, Inverclyde Council's position is clearly in favour of choice. At present, travel options to Glasgow airport for residents and businesses in Inverclyde are somewhat limited. We believe that GARL will encourage a shift to rail, thus reducing the number of car journeys in the heavily trafficked area between junction 26 and junction 29 on the M8. That, in itself, is important to Inverclyde. In Inverclyde, we depend considerably on the electronics industry and on some major retailers who have just-in-time deliveries and inventory system management. We hear that directly from our economic development contacts. Anything that can be done to reduce traffic volumes and speed up access to Glasgow city centre and places to the east can only benefit Inverclyde Council and its regeneration plans.

Marlyn Glen: One objective of GARL is to provide the extra services that you mentioned, but it is also envisaged that it will integrate with the existing transport network. How will the bill enable GARL to do that? You said that the link will reduce the volume of traffic on the Ayrshire and Paisley to Glasgow corridors, but it is interesting that we are getting contradictory answers on that point. Do you have any evidence to support your view?

Gerard Malone: We do not have any independent evidence other than that which has been provided by the promoter. We are considering the instruction of further economic appraisals, but at present we do not have any quantifiable evidence that I can lead in front of the committee on either the economic benefits or the potential impediments.

Ian Johnson: We are in the same position. We have not commissioned a further study of the economic aspects. There is a general perception that there are considerable capacity problems on the M8. That is supported by the work that has been done on the joint transport strategy, of which we are a part. Anything that can be done to alleviate those problems will benefit travel within

the area. That is why we are saying that the improved capacity that GARL will create for services to both Ayrshire and Inverclyde will considerably improve the current position on the A737 and the M77 through Glasgow, where there are substantial delays.

Marlyn Glen: Do you agree that GARL will

“contribute to a sustainable basis for the future growth of Prestwick Airport”?

Ian Johnson: The answer is that we hope so. At the moment, between 400,000 and 500,000 people a year travel by rail from Prestwick airport to the centre of town. Anyone who travels on that line regularly will know that there are often capacity issues at certain times of day, particularly in the peak hours.

The ability to increase the number of services that go to Prestwick airport would be of considerable benefit, especially given the aspiration to achieve a volume of about 4 million passengers a year at Prestwick airport by 2010. If we extrapolate the relevant figure—the estimated 25 to 30 per cent of people who travel to Glasgow Prestwick by rail—we can see that a considerable number of potential passengers will need to be accommodated on that line. The additional capacity on the line that will be provided by GARL is clearly required.

More than that would probably be required, however. We are aware of the capacity issues on the line from Paisley southwards, which would require additional resources. We are aware of the capacity issues at Glasgow Central station, which would almost certainly bring crossrail into the frame. As I said, we view the Glasgow airport rail link as the first step in a range of opportunities that we hope will gradually improve services to Prestwick airport and Ayrshire.

The Convener: I ask you to put this on the record. You have spoken about the benefits for Ayrshire, but those are predominantly for the residents of North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire.

Ian Johnson: They are predominantly so, but if there were capacity upgrades on the line, there would hopefully be improvement to the line between Kilmarnock and Glasgow, which is currently partly hampered by capacity constraints on the other lines.

The Convener: But GARL, as proposed, would have no direct benefit for the residents of East Ayrshire.

Ian Johnson: It would have no direct benefit.

The Convener: Do you believe, Mr Malone, that GARL can provide extra trains for the Inverclyde area? Do you think that that would be at the expense of delivering more trains for North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire?

Gerard Malone: I would not seek to make that statement. In future, it might be possible to deal with the pressure point on peak-hours services from Gourock and Greenock and from Wemyss Bay into Glasgow Central. The potential for complementing or adding to the rail capacity through track extension, thus relieving the pressure between Glasgow and Paisley Glimour Street, could be of some assistance for peak-hours travel in Inverclyde in the future. I say that bearing in mind the proposals for about 2,700 new homes in Inverclyde over the next five years. Proximity to the Glasgow city region and to Glasgow airport would be a major selling point for Inverclyde.

The Convener: Would GARL also aid the regeneration of Gourock station?

Gerard Malone: I believe that it would. Gourock station is a proposed transport interchange. Inverclyde Council is extremely supportive of the integration of transport modes there. It is a bit of a dream ticket, given all the transport modes that operate in the area and the potential new link to Glasgow airport in particular. There are the ferry links, the bus links and the taxis, and there is even a proposed cycleway and walkway for the area, with an extension of the N75 cycleway. Those links, together with the potential link through a hub to Glasgow airport with GARL, make a very strong argument for supporting the Gourock transport interchange. That would serve the existing rail-travelling public as well as enhancing the links with Argyll and Bute and the Cowal peninsula in particular, and could perhaps connect with any future proposals for the marine national park. There are good and strong links that could be developed through the proposal.

The Convener: Do you think that GARL could reduce the number of car journeys through Inverclyde?

Gerard Malone: I think that there is a strong possibility that that will occur. The volume of traffic might reduce, lowering the pressures on the M8 in the area. That could reduce travel times, and it could well reduce pollution levels. However, the council has not made any direct independent economic appraisal to support my statement.

Mr Monteith: Is the belief that traffic might be reduced really a belief that the increase in traffic on the M8 might be delayed for a number of years? Are you able to comment on that?

Gerard Malone: I believe that a whole range of measures could be involved. A number of factors could in future reduce the effect of the growing number of car journeys or of increased travel times caused by congestion. There is a potential package in the form of M77 completion and the local M8 solutions that can be offered in the

congested area between junctions 26 and 29, together with any other transport initiatives that might be proposed to reduce traffic volumes. However, as I said, I do not have any direct evidence to support that.

The Convener: Do you have anything else to add that you think we might have missed and which should be on the record?

Gerard Malone: No.

The Convener: Thank you very much for your evidence. I now suspend the meeting for approximately 15 minutes.

11:00

Meeting suspended.

11:20

On resuming—

The Deputy Convener (Marlyn Glen): In the absence of Margaret Jamieson, who will rejoin us soon, I reconvene the meeting and welcome our second panel of witnesses: Stewart Whitehill, transport manager for Fairline Coaches Ltd; Ron McAulay and Bill Lynas, respectively director and commercial schemes sponsor for Network Rail in Scotland; and John McGlynn, chairman of the Scottish Independent Airport Park and Ride Association.

Michael Matheson will start our questions.

Michael Matheson: Hi. My questions are primarily directed at Network Rail. The promoter has highlighted the fact that the proposed service will operate during a limited number of hours rather than on a 24-hour basis because

"there would, if trains were to run into Glasgow Central station all night, be significant infrastructure maintenance issues for Network Rail."—[*Official Report, Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill Committee*, 24 April 2006; c 45.]

What might those significant infrastructure maintenance issues be? What would be the likely running costs of additional services if the service were to run through the night?

Ron McAulay (Network Rail): I am happy to answer that in so far as I can. I do not have with me details of what the additional costs might be, but I can take the question away and find the answer if that would help.

The issue relates to when we can maintain the infrastructure. Obviously, while trains are running, it is not safe for our people to do whatever needs to be done to the track, signalling or other equipment. Much of our work is done when no trains are running, which in effect means during the night. If we had 24-hour running on the proposed line, the lack of access to carry out

maintenance could have an adverse impact on the condition of the infrastructure, as the assets would start to deteriorate. [*Interruption.*] Therefore, we would need to find times when we could shut down the railway to allow us to carry out that maintenance work.

The Deputy Convener: I point out to all present that mobile phones interfere with our sound system. Please ensure that any mobile phones are switched off.

Michael Matheson: Does that mean that, if GARL was to go ahead, the service could never run on a 24-hour basis because of the problems that Network Rail would encounter in carrying out maintenance?

Ron McAulay: I would never rule it out completely, but accommodating 24-hour running would cause us a lot of difficulty. We would need to consider how we could include within the timetable periods in which we could do maintenance work.

Michael Matheson: Would 24-hour running be feasible, then?

Ron McAulay: It depends what one means by feasible. We would need to consider the implications. We might find that the costs outweighed the benefits.

Michael Matheson: If expansion at Glasgow airport meant that flights started to run throughout the night, as happens at the likes of Manchester airport, the operators of Glasgow airport might suggest that it would be beneficial to have rail services running throughout the night. Would Network Rail say that that would not be possible because it would be too costly for Network Rail?

Ron McAulay: Frankly, if we are to maintain the railway so that trains can run over it, we need time in which we can carry out maintenance. If the trains run 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in theory we have no time in which to carry out such work. In that situation, we would need to find a pattern that would allow us periods of time in which we could carry out maintenance work.

If opportunities to do so were very limited, we would probably have to use blockades on the line, which would put the rail link out of service for several days. We must strike the right balance between maintenance and being able to run the railway.

Michael Matheson: Does Network Rail operate lines to other airports in the United Kingdom that are open on a 24-hour basis?

Bill Lynas (Network Rail): I think that the Gatwick link has 24-hour frequency, albeit that the service is reduced during the night. The issue is partly related to the availability of alternative

routes between the airport and the city centre—there are alternative routes to Gatwick. It might be possible partly to reroute the GARL services, which would give us opportunities for maintenance, but we would have to assess the costs and benefits of doing that, taking account of the additional cost of operating such services and the number of passengers who would use them.

Michael Matheson: The bill's promoter intends there to be a reliable, punctual, 15-minute service from Glasgow Central station to the airport. Are you confident that such a service can be delivered?

Ron McAulay: The modelling that has been carried out so far suggests that such a service is possible and that performance on the line should improve. The modelling is based on performance in 2004, but the rail link would not be in place until—I think—2010 at the earliest. As you would expect, we expect improvements in the overall running of the railway between 2004 and 2010. At this stage and given the current position, we do not think that there would be a detrimental effect on performance.

Michael Matheson: There will be no detrimental effect.

Ron McAulay: Modelling that has been carried out and the baseline that has been used suggest that there will be an improvement in performance.

Mr Monteith: Michael Matheson asked about 24-hour operation. Leaving aside the engineering implications, what would be the implications for you if Glasgow Central station were to close between 1 am and 5 am, rather than 12 am and 6 am, which would give an extra hour on either side? Such a marginal change might not be sufficient to enable you to improve the service for people who needed to use GARL, but are there costs involved in keeping the station open that mean that it would not be worth while to do so?

Ron McAulay: I would not say that it would not be worth while, but the costs would have to be assessed. There would be security and staffing costs, given the additional hours of work that would be involved, and there would be a cost in relation to the reduction in hours in which maintenance crews could work. Imagine that crews have a seven-hour window in which to work: if the window is reduced to five hours, the amount of work that can be carried out is limited.

Mr Monteith: Are you saying that there would be not only engineering costs but costs in the station itself, which have not yet been assessed?

Bill Lynas: The costs have not yet been assessed. Another matter to take into consideration is that the other services that operate out of Glasgow Central station run

between about 6 am and midnight. If GARL operated on a 24-hour basis, people could get to Glasgow Central during the night, but there would be no services to take them to other parts of the city, which might have an effect on the number of people who would be interested in using GARL at night.

Michael Matheson: If services were to run until 1 am, who would pick up the additional costs?

Ron McAulay: The costs would come back to Network Rail, but we would seek some kind of recompense.

Michael Matheson: Who from?

Ron McAulay: In effect from the train operators, who would be benefiting from the additional train journeys.

Michael Matheson: That is helpful, thank you.

You might have heard witnesses telling us that they are pleased about the GARL proposal, because it will lead to line improvements between Glasgow Central station and Paisley Gilmour Street station. Following the line improvements that the promoter plans in those areas, what scope would there be for extra services, particularly to Inverclyde, Ayrshire and Prestwick airport?

11:30

Ron McAulay: Sorry, but are you asking about improvements to the infrastructure or improvements to train services?

Michael Matheson: I am asking what scope there would be for additional services to the three areas I mentioned through infrastructure improvements.

Bill Lynas: The GARL infrastructure will be provided primarily to meet GARL's needs. Performance modelling has focused on the balance of GARL's needs and the relevant infrastructure. There has been no performance modelling to ascertain whether additional services to Ayrshire or Inverclyde could be accommodated. We would need to undertake work on that, but we believe that GARL would provide only a limited amount of additional capacity and that that capacity would relate—sensibly—just to GARL's needs.

Michael Matheson: That is helpful. You might be aware that the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland has stated that if the GARL proposal goes ahead, there will be an urgent need for an access audit of Glasgow Central station. Can you inform the committee whether that audit has been undertaken?

Bill Lynas: I am not aware of the project undertaking an access audit, although one could have taken place—I cannot say for sure.

Michael Matheson: Right. I presume that if the GARL proposal gets consent, Network Rail would undertake such an audit as a matter of urgency.

Bill Lynas: Yes, we would think it appropriate to do that. Glasgow Central generally complies with the access requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Currently, there are issues around the removal of car parking facilities, but the promoter is actively working on replicating such facilities in other ways. However, it would probably be appropriate to undertake a full access audit to ensure that all reasonable steps have been taken.

Michael Matheson: You will know that the promoter plans an extension to platform 11a at Glasgow Central to accommodate the airport train. Prior to the GARL plans, did Network Rail have plans to extend that platform?

Bill Lynas: No, we had no specific plans to do so, although we undertook a study with SPT back in 1999—I think—to assess the engineering feasibility of such an extension. However, that was not taken further.

The Deputy Convener: Before Brian Monteith asks his questions, I invite one of the witnesses to say a few words, because I understand that Network Rail's objection has been withdrawn. Can one of you give us a quick update?

Ron McAulay: Yes. I am pleased to say that we have now withdrawn our objection, which was submitted mainly to protect Network Rail's position as a statutory undertaker. Obviously, in a heavily regulated industry, we have legal obligations to maintain ownership of and access to all our operational railways and adjoining land. Some of the bill's conditions or terms put that position in jeopardy. However, we have negotiated protective provisions with SPT that have allowed us to withdraw our objection. The letter of withdrawal should be with the committee.

The Deputy Convener: Yes, it certainly is. I understand that there was a generic problem with which the promoter has now dealt.

Mr Monteith: Does Network Rail agree with Renfrewshire Council that an upgrade of Paisley Gilmour Street station is required?

Bill Lynas: Renfrewshire Council has raised certain issues about that station and it probably has a point in some respects. As most people will know, Gilmour Street station is a relatively old building that has constraints on it, largely because of its age and the fact that it is a listed building. I believe that part of the GARL project is to consider making improvements to Gilmour Street, which would do no harm.

Mr Monteith: Are you convinced that the promoter will take all appropriate precautions on station and line safety and security?

Bill Lynas: We have been working with the promoter on all aspects of the project, including safety and security. The agreement that we have reached with the promoter is that the project will be developed in accordance with our safety and engineering standards, so we have no issues with what the promoter has done to date on that.

Mr Monteith: Has Network Rail provided estimates for items such as signalling or overhead line electrification, or for works on existing structures? If not, have you endorsed the estimates prepared by the promoter?

Ron McAulay: We have reviewed the costs provided by the promoter and we are of the view that they are in the right ball park, if you like.

Mr Monteith: The term “ball park” is wide, and rail investment has a history—both in Scotland and in the United Kingdom—of price inflation. Can you be more specific than “ball park”?

Ron McAulay: Our review is not complete; it is an interim review. I am loth to put a number on things at this stage, because the review has yet to be completed, but the interim review suggests that the figures quoted by the promoter give quite a good degree of comfort.

Mr Monteith: When might your review be complete?

Ron McAulay: Probably in a couple of months.

Mr Monteith: Would you like to make any other comments on the bill?

Ron McAulay: Now that we have reached agreement with the promoter on protective provisions, we are reasonably comfortable. Generally, we support the bill. We welcome investment in the railway; we welcome bringing people on to the railway; and we welcome the better integration of transport.

Marlyn Glen: I want to go back to the questions we were asking about disabled passengers. What is the approximate distance between platform 11a and the entrance to Glasgow Central station? I am thinking about elderly passengers, disabled passengers and passengers with heavy luggage.

Ron McAulay: I am guessing, but it must be about 100m, or perhaps more.

Marlyn Glen: Will you come back to us on that?

Ron McAulay: Yes, we can certainly find out.

Mr Monteith: I address my next questions to John McGlynn. Will you give us more detail on your proposed park-and-ride scheme and how it would integrate with GARL?

John McGlynn (Scottish Independent Airport Park and Ride Association): Yes—but first I must declare an interest to the committee, to avoid

any doubt. I am here today as the chairman of the Scottish Independent Airport Park and Ride Association. As a private individual, I have a significant interest in one of the pieces of land that may be affected if this bill is passed, but my comments today are based exclusively on my role as the chairman of SIAPRA.

In 2004, we met the person who I think is the chairman of SPT—Councillor Watson—and his army of colleagues. We felt that the bill had failings, which I hope to come on to. It is not our job to decide that but the job of this committee and the Parliament, but we felt that, if it was the will of the committee and the Parliament that the bill should proceed, it was the job of the private sector to comment to help to make the project work. However, I am very disappointed that SIAPRA has not been consulted by SPT at all. There has been no communication whatsoever, despite the fact that—and this may sound arrogant—if one considers passenger numbers, we could make or break the financial viability of the project.

Without crossrail, it is fair to say that the project could be doomed to fail. A committee member made a point about carrying luggage in Glasgow Central station, but imagine someone in Edinburgh, Aberdeen or anywhere else carrying luggage from their house to the nearest station and then having to go between Glasgow Queen Street station and Glasgow Central station. It would be difficult.

One positive way of making the project work is to consider the commuter traffic between the west of Scotland and Glasgow Central station. Those who argue otherwise simply do not understand the travelling public. People want to drive their car to a secure place and travel in the most convenient way to the closest point to their destination. Given that there is gridlock on the M8 between junctions 26 and 29, as the director of Renfrewshire Council pointed out, the ideal solution is to get traffic off the road before junction 29.

That is the basis of our proposal. A large volume of commuter traffic comes up the M8 from Inverclyde, Greenock and other areas, and drivers want to park at a secure point as close as possible to Glasgow city centre and to take a convenient form of travel into town. Glasgow airport is potentially one such point for drivers, but at £10 a day for parking the cost is prohibitive and bars many people from getting off the roads and on to rail. The average price of our car parks is about £3 a day, which is considerably cheaper than the price of parking in Glasgow city centre, and we also have multisite parking around the airport hub.

I believe that other proposals have been made, including one for a new park-and-ride scheme, but why can we not use existing assets to get more people on to the proposed rail link? According to

the figures, there will be eight passengers per train, I think. We have capacity for 8,000 vehicles and if we were able to get round the table and agree a joined-up approach, we could put many more people on those trains. That would give everyone a lot more revenue, make the project financially attractive to the committee and save it from becoming a potential 30-year black hole.

Mr Monteith: You have partly answered my second question, so I will roll it into my third. Has the promoter fully considered your proposals and has it properly assessed GARL's impact on car park operators?

John McGlynn: No. I have no firm evidence to support that view but, given that I have not been spoken to or even had the courtesy of a reply to my request in 2004 for a meeting, I think that it is fair to assume that the promoter is not interested in considering such matters.

Mr Monteith: You state that GARL's operating times are "inadequate" because in future many flights from Glasgow airport will use off-peak time slots. What evidence do you have of that? Could such passengers be transported from the airport by bus?

John McGlynn: I know from 12 years' experience of the parking industry that with the best of intentions people book to fly out at 8 in the morning and to return at 6 at night but, as anyone who has ever travelled abroad will tell you, some matters are simply outwith people's control—or, indeed, the airline's control—and delays can happen. As many MSPs from different parties have pointed out, we still do not have a joined-up public transport system in this country. This morning, I took the train to Edinburgh, because the service from Glasgow to Edinburgh is great and so convenient. However, until there is similar connectivity in the rest of Scotland, the project will not work.

I am disappointed and saddened by the response to our proposals. After all, allowing the private sector to use its spare capacity to provide a good service that is more attractive to the public is a very innovative step. It is in no one's interests, particularly the Parliament's, to have a black hole. I understand that, in 2002, the cost of the project was £140 million; in 2004, the cost was said to be £160 million; and I have now heard that the cost will be between £170 million and £210 million. Someone has to ask why these increases are happening and why no one is considering viable alternatives that would increase the level of utilisation without—and I stress the point—costing the public purse or the Parliament anything. Perhaps it is just me, but I think that our proposals make perfect sense, and I cannot understand why the promoter does not want to discuss them. I find it very strange.

Mr Monteith: One of the promoter's policy objectives is

"To provide public transport services to Glasgow Airport ... that integrate with the existing transport network".

That brings us back to your earlier point. How will the bill, rather than your proposals, do that for park-and-ride car park operators?

11:45

John McGlynn: I do not believe that the bill will do that at all. People park near Glasgow airport either because they are going on holiday or because they want to park and ride. A desire to park and ride accounts for a significant element of the parking in that area. One of our members has a car park that is located right beside Paisley St James station and it gets considerable park-and-ride traffic because it provides a secure facility that costs circa £3 a day to use, which is a third of the price of parking in Glasgow city centre. The car park is highly convenient and people know that their cars are safe there. I would contrast that with the situation at the Johnstone car park, where the promoter operates a park-and-ride scheme. I do not wish to talk that facility down, but it is simply not big enough or secure enough. According to the police, a great deal of vandalism and damage are caused at the car park at Johnstone station because it is not permanently manned and has not been built as a proper, secure park and ride.

We and our members are experts in the provision of such facilities and we are more than willing to engage with the committee, the Parliament and the promoter on that, but for a conversation to take place, more than one person must speak. If such a dialogue took place, we could add a great deal to the project, particularly if the committee was minded to consider enshrining in the bill some of the things that the promoter wishes to achieve. There are willing participants on my side. We would love to try to make the bill better and to improve the financial viability of the proposals.

The Convener: You make an interesting comment about the provision of park-and-ride facilities, but why do you need to wait until GARL comes on stream before you deliver them? Could you not deliver such a service just now?

John McGlynn: We deliver such a service at one of our sites, which is right beside Paisley St James railway station. A great number of people park there and walk round to the station. That site shares a boundary fence with the station. In 2004, we proposed to SPT the idea of making provision at that facility more joined up by installing a turnstile and a tunnel through to the station. We would have been more than happy to have it branded as an official park-and-ride station so that the travelling public knew that it was there.

That site is just one of the sites of our members. People open up car parks in strategic positions around the major interchange junctions. We have coverage north, south, east and west of the airport. If the airport became a major hub, that could have a significant impact on encouraging park and ride. I did a brief survey with existing customers who come from the Inverclyde area. They said that there is no secure park-and-ride facility with sufficient capacity where they live. Our advice to those people is that they should leave their homes in the comfort of their cars, drive on the road for the non-congested part of their journeys and park in an official, secure park-and-ride station. That would achieve the desired shift.

The promoter has overlooked people's habits. Numerous studies can be conducted that say that people might behave in a particular way but, as with opinion polls, people who take part in studies say things that they do not always mean. In their daily lives, people take the most convenient option. That is a fact of life. We have brought to the table a proposal that would offer the most convenient travel option, give the public choice and add a great deal to the scheme's financial viability.

Mr Arbuckle: I will move on to another form of transport. I have some questions for Stewart Whitehill about the service that his company provides. In your submission, you say that there is "ample provision" for additional patronage of buses. Would a better bus service remove the need for GARL?

Stewart Whitehill (Fairline Coaches Ltd): What do you mean by a better bus service?

Mr Arbuckle: A more frequent service.

Stewart Whitehill: At the moment, the frequency is every 10 minutes, which is probably adequate. If the number of passengers increased, we might be able to provide a more frequent service, but it would probably be better to provide duplicate buses at peak times, when the service is at its busiest.

Mr Arbuckle: In your submission, you admit that there is a congestion problem on the M8. Would not more buses add to the congestion?

Stewart Whitehill: At the moment, we run six buses an hour. I hardly think that an extra bus or two an hour would greatly increase congestion on the M8.

Mr Arbuckle: You make the point that you do not receive any subsidy for running your service, whereas the GARL project will require a lot of public money. Are you concerned about the legality of that?

Stewart Whitehill: No, not at all.

Mr Arbuckle: Your concern is a moral one.

Stewart Whitehill: No. It is just that we can offer a subsidy-free service, whereas the railways patently cannot.

Mr Arbuckle: In your submission, you state that bus use will recover after the introduction of GARL only

"if a balanced approach is adopted".

What do you mean by "a balanced approach"?

Stewart Whitehill: I think we will find that, at the airport, SPT will promote the rail service and not the bus service. Because a large sum of money will be spent, all SPT's advertising will be geared towards the railway.

Mr Arbuckle: Do you think that the existing bus services are well advertised at the airport? If there was an interchange at the airport, would bus services be well advertised there?

Stewart Whitehill: They are not advertised enough at the moment. There is certainly room for improvement.

Mr Arbuckle: Is that up to you or is it the airport's responsibility?

Stewart Whitehill: Hopefully, it will be up to the airport. It takes money from us in stance charges and part of that money is to provide information to passengers.

Mr Arbuckle: If the GARL project goes ahead, how could interchange opportunities be created that would benefit bus operators?

Stewart Whitehill: We only run from Glasgow city centre to Glasgow airport and it would certainly not help us in any way.

Mr Arbuckle: In your submission, you state that you offer concessions to Glasgow airport staff. Are they a major part of your business? Is there a considerable concession?

Stewart Whitehill: On individual tickets, I think that it works out at about 20 per cent, but there are frequent-user tickets that offer a considerable concession. However, concession tickets for staff do not represent a huge input of money into the bus service.

Mr Arbuckle: My next question perhaps links to one of the issues that John McGlynn raised. Do you think that your bus option was given sufficient attention by the promoter?

Stewart Whitehill: Certainly not. The promoter dismissed it far too readily. MVA did the original report for the promoter but it was never in contact with any bus operator. Nevertheless, SPT seems to have gone along with what MVA said, which was:

"there would be little purpose to analyse this option further."

At the moment we carry more passengers than the rail link will carry in its early years, so it is strange that MVA and the promoter dismissed us so readily.

Mr Arbuckle: Are there any other comments that you want to make on the bill?

Stewart Whitehill: Everyone seems to be saying that congestion on the M8 is the biggest constraint, but neither Glasgow City Council nor the Scottish Executive has done enough to relieve that congestion.

Mr Arbuckle: Would that be through a dedicated bus lane or something like that?

Stewart Whitehill: Well, if it was in Glasgow, it would end up with parked cars on it. No, I do not think that that is a practical suggestion at all.

Mr Arbuckle: What would be, may I ask?

Stewart Whitehill: Getting people out of their cars and on to public transport, and being more proactive. Glasgow City Council is good at banging its own drum, but the practicalities of what it does do not help bus services greatly.

The Convener: Brian, do you have a question?

Mr Monteith: I did, but Andrew Arbuckle covered it.

Michael Matheson: I have a question for Network Rail, given its expertise on the railways. Given what the promoter proposes to do, what scope will there be for direct connectivity for trains from other destinations, so that people are not always required to change at Glasgow Central? For example, will it be possible for a train to come from somewhere on the south side of Glasgow, go into Glasgow Central and then go out to the airport?

Bill Lynas: There is certainly technical scope for that to happen. There are examples elsewhere around Scotland of trains going into a major terminal station and then going back out. We would need to assess whether there would be material benefit in our doing that. However, most of the suburban services that operate into Glasgow Central would be technically capable of going out to the airport, as the infrastructure would be compatible with that.

Ron McAulay: Although it would be technically possible, much careful study of the impact that it would have on timetabling and diagramming of different trains would be needed. We would need to examine the issue very carefully.

Michael Matheson: Will there be scope for trains that come from other areas in the south-west of Scotland and do not go to Glasgow

Central to get on to the line, through Gilmour Street, so that they can go to the airport?

Ron McAulay: It is probably technically feasible, but at this stage I question whether it would be practical in timetabling and train diagramming. The issue would need to be looked at very carefully.

The Convener: Recently we visited Manchester airport. We were encouraged by the level of interest among the general public in the wider area that the airport serves in having connectivity from their home town to the airport. We spoke to officials from Network Rail, who indicated that although at the beginning it was difficult to establish the basics of how that would work, the number of people using the line rose significantly as a result. Would Network Rail consider such an approach in Glasgow?

Ron McAulay: That would be a matter for the train operator rather than Network Rail. The issue would be available capacity on the infrastructure in the area. Some of the corridor will be heavily utilised. Changing the train pattern and having trains come up from Ayrshire, into Glasgow Central and back out to the airport would involve a lot of careful planning. To be honest, I am not sure that it would be practical or feasible. It could be looked at, but I would not want to give false hope.

The Convener: I accept that it would be a matter for the train operator, but we need to know that there is capacity and a willingness for it to happen. Initially, only particular lines could access Manchester airport. Now it can be accessed from as far away as Barrow-in-Furness. I would want to be sure that Scotland was able to match or exceed what is being done elsewhere.

Michael Matheson: It may be helpful for you to know that the individual from Network Rail advised that people can access Manchester airport from more than 20 different stations without changing trains. A large part of the infrastructure has been designed to accommodate that to some extent. I am wondering whether the scheme that the promoter is proposing has been designed with scope for something similar in mind for the future.

Ron McAulay: The current proposal is for a four-trains-per-hour service in each direction to and from Glasgow Central station. The infrastructure capacity that is being provided will serve that. If we want to start to play lots of different tunes and to have many additional stopping patterns, which would increase journey times, we may need to consider providing additional infrastructure.

Mr Monteith: Were the same sort of service that is provided at Manchester airport to be provided at Glasgow airport, would not the difficulty with capacity—irrespective of track—be at Glasgow Central station? The dedicated GARL service that

we are discussing would have a dedicated platform, but there would be difficulties with platform capacity at Glasgow Central station if additional services from hither and yon to the station and out to the airport were provided.

12:00

Ron McAulay: I imagine that there are a number of areas that could be bottlenecks for that additional capacity. The one that springs to mind is the main corridor between Wallneuk junction and Shields junction. Problems with such bottlenecks would have to be addressed to accommodate different stopping patterns and trains coming from different locations and going in different ways to the airport. It is not as simple as sitting here and saying, "Yes, it can be done." I imagine that, technically, it could be done, but it might require a different solution.

Mr Arbuckle: I would like to ask John McGlynn about the capacity of the park-and-ride facilities. Any park-and-ride facility that I see near an airport is normally chock-a-block. Is there spare capacity or can additional capacity be provided?

John McGlynn: Yes, there is actually lots of spare capacity. Our members have been planning for growth for quite some time, particularly in Glasgow. Because of the shortage of land, Renfrewshire Council took a pretty proactive approach to the matter a number of years ago, recognising that, in an ideal world, there would be park-and-ride facilities at specific points but that there were historical ones. The council wanted to focus on those existing sites, where the traffic flow and the infrastructure could cope with growth, and it did not want to see a non-planned, sporadic popping up of park-and-ride facilities on every spare bit of land that happened to be available around the airport. There is current capacity of some magnitude and there are also plans for growth at two or three of the major sites. I cannot speak for Renfrewshire Council, but I understand that it is the council's policy to encourage growth. Multistorey facilities could be provided with six to nine months' lead time, and even one level would double the capacity of those sites.

The Convener: I thank the witnesses for their evidence. We will take a short break to allow the witnesses on panel 3 to set up their equipment.

12:02

Meeting suspended.

12:10

On resuming—

The Convener: Panel 3 consists of Simon Wallwork, Jim Harkins, who is managing director of Light Rail (UK) Ltd, and David Reid, who is director of Reid Rail Ltd.

We have provided the appropriate technology for the presentations, although we do not know whether it will work. Simon Wallwork and Jim Harkins will each have five minutes for their presentations, after which we will ask both of them questions rather than deal with one of them and then the other. I will time them: they will be given their full five minutes and no more. Okay? Go.

Simon Wallwork: Thank you for inviting me to the meeting.

The Glasgow airport rail link proposals have many shortcomings, all of which are addressed by my little proposal. I will present my ideas as quickly as I can in the five minutes that I have been given.

The key problem with GARL is that there is insufficient demand for the service, and the cost of meeting that small demand would be far too great. It has been apparent throughout the consultation process and the studies that have been carried out that only a small number of people would use the line. Something is needed that will create extra demand.

It has been said that the main transport problem in the area is road congestion. I am only a private guy, but I have come up with a lightweight and simple scheme that would do two completely different things: it would save around £150 million, as it would cost around £40 million, and it would use waste ground.

I will quickly run through the proposals. SPT is completely unable to grasp the concept, but it is not complicated. A new interchange station would be provided on waste ground just to the west of the St James interchange, from which a light rail link would run directly into the airport terminal building. The link would be around a mile long and the journey time would be around three minutes. The light rail/heavy rail interchange would be arranged in such a way that all the heavy rail trains that already run past the end of the airport runway would be met by light rail trains, so there would be a seamless interchange. A person would take one of the trains that already run from Greenock in the west or Glasgow in the east to the light rail train, which would take them inside the airport terminal. The scheme would be better than the SPT scheme, which would take people to a point 130m from the terminal. There would be a straightforward light rail/heavy rail interchange. That is the rail part of the scheme.

The other part of the scheme consists of a congestion relief scheme to relieve morning road congestion on Glasgow's western approaches and relieve evening congestion for people who are leaving Glasgow. A great deal of heat would also be taken out of the car parking and environmental problems in the centre of Glasgow that are caused by cars entering and leaving Glasgow every day.

Somebody said earlier that park and ride is a great idea. The trouble is that park-and-ride facilities must be near roads for people to use them. People must be able to see such facilities and to get to them easily. The site of the old council waste dump, to which the new station would be adjacent, is perfect for park-and-ride facilities. With the A737 from Ayr and the M8 from Greenock, which a chap mentioned earlier, the roads up to the park and ride would always be clear. The congestion starts up near Helen Street.

There is insufficient demand for GARL, which would be too expensive to build. However, there would be extra demand for a line that takes people off the roads and gives them an opportunity to leave their car at an interchange in the morning and take existing trains on existing tracks to Glasgow Central station. They could work in the town during the day, take a train back out in the evening, jump in their car and drive back to wherever they had come from that morning. The park and ride would easily have room for 5,000 or 6,000 parking spaces.

12:15

An advantage of my proposal is that it is a proportionate response to the demand for rail access to Glasgow airport. We do not need to spend £210 million-plus to provide 500,000 people a year with rail access. That is far too expensive. A further advantage is that my proposed light rail scheme would use waste ground to the side of the runway and my proposed park and ride would use an old council dump, so there would be no loss of land.

The Convener: You have one minute remaining.

Simon Wallwork: Thank you.

Under my proposal, the playing fields would be saved. There would be no need to build a double-track railway across the playing fields, which is controversial because they are used by youth football teams. That problem is avoidable.

My proposal would provide at least £150 million of cost savings. We would not need to upgrade the track and re-electrify the railway between Glasgow Central and Paisley and we would not need to redo platform 11a. We could use the existing trains. My proposal would not require the £3 million or £4 million annual subsidy that SPT wants for running the GARL trains. The light rail trains would be able to run driverless. A big problem with the GARL proposal is that the trains would need to run every 15 minutes regardless of whether any planes were landing. That means that trains would need to run to the airport even when no aircraft services were arriving for them to meet.

We would have empty trains. I doubt that anyone fancies paying £210 million for empty trains.

I think that the convener is cutting me off.

The Convener: Your five minutes are up. Does Mr Harkins want to get his technology ready?

Jim Harkins (Light Rail (UK) Ltd): I will start as soon as the man has set it up for me.

The Convener: Once we are up and running, I will start the clock.

Jim Harkins: Do not start it yet.

The Convener: I will wait until things are ready. Okay, Mr Harkins, on you go.

Jim Harkins: Thank you, ma'am. We were asked to consider GARL by a client from the car park fraternity, but the client withdrew at the last minute. However, we decided to carry on, because the more we looked at the GARL proposal the more sense our proposal made and the less sense GARL made.

We are light rail consultants and we are based—despite my accent—in Warrington. We can call on off-the-shelf light rail consultants, transport engineers, politicians, academics, environmentalists and commercial people, so we have quite a range of skills.

Our proposal is for a tram solution. We know that trams reduce congestion and are an attractive alternative to other modes of transport. Trams stimulate pedestrian footfall, as I will explain later. Elsewhere in the United Kingdom—in Manchester, for example—trams have resulted in a modal switch of 27 per cent-plus as people have got out of their cars. In 2004-05, despite being a new mode, trams in the UK carried 158 million passengers. Light rail carried 3 per cent of all public transport compared with Network Rail's share of 17 per cent.

Why should the airport link be a tramway? We need the option of a low-cost starter line. The tram could be the basis of an integrated commuter system. Trams are pedestrian friendly. Worldwide, we know that they work. The public like them. They result in a good modal switch. They are also a political statement, because they involve putting steel in the ground. In other words, politicians say to the people, "We mean what we say. The steel is in the grun. We are no putting doon a tin of paint the morra that can be taken away the day after."

House values would certainly rise as a result of a tramway, but a further benefit is that trams and pedestrians mix. That is an important point to consider for the other end of my scheme, which is Argyle Street. The trams would run at street level and would have access to the stops.

We could also track share with tram-trains. Tram-trains are in general service elsewhere in the Common Market, but they are little used here in the UK. The slide shows some examples. On the left is Kassel, where the latest tram-train has come into service in the past two months. As members can see, the tram-train can run on heavy rail and then go into the street. At Nordhausen—a wee town about the same size as Paisley—the tram-train runs on the railway and then through the streets. The approach in Kassel goes further: the top right-hand picture on my slide shows the tram-train running on the equivalent of Sauchiehall Street in tram mode and under it is a picture of the vehicle running on heavy rail in the suburbs.

Park and ride is a big factor. The GARL business case cannot substantiate the numbers.

I will quickly take members through the proposal. The line would start in the airport and run for about 130m, then it would come on to the street—we have a choice to provide a new park-and-ride facility—and under the motorway. We carried out a survey, and tramway technology is such that there would be sufficient space to allow the line to run under the M8, so there would be no need to mess about with expensive bridge building. To the south of the motorway there is sufficient grass verge to allow us to bring the line alongside the feeder road and then along the top end of the football fields—again, there is enough space there for an alignment. After that, we would bring the line up to and under the Greenock Road, where it would turn left and come up at grade to the heavy rail line to Glasgow. We would bring the line into Paisley St James station, which would have to be renamed Glasgow international airport station. There are options to extend the tramway to Paisley Gilmour Street station and in Glasgow.

My slide shows a possible framework. There is a low-cost option. The slide shows an example from Belgium—

The Convener: You are in your final minute.

Jim Harkins: Okay. The costs of street running are less than those of a guided busway. Cascaded vehicles would be used; high-quality, low-cost vehicles are available. The system would use known technology. We would need to be robust in dealing with the utilities. The initial capital cost of my scheme is less than that of the promoter's scheme and my scheme would require no on-going operating subsidy. We should consider the political costs of the Edinburgh tram scheme, because poor appreciation of it and poor preparation for the bill process have made the scheme expensive.

Will urban transport in the near future be a sunrise or a sunset for mankind? Doing nothing is not an option, but seriously getting it wrong would

be unforgivable to future generations. Thank you—it is your world.

The Convener: Thanks. You had three seconds to spare. Please bear with us as we ask questions. Simon Wallwork, what discussions did you have with the owners of Glasgow airport to ensure that your proposal would meet the airport's future expansion needs? Would your proposed scheme impinge on future expansion?

Simon Wallwork: I have not had such discussions, but I will meet BAA soon to discuss the matter.

Light rail links like the one I propose are found all over the world. The scheme would work in Glasgow; it is not rocket science. Airports all over the world have light rail links to nearby heavy railways. Light rail links are a proven concept.

The Convener: Why are you only now starting a conversation with Glasgow Airport Ltd?

Simon Wallwork: I have been talking to the company for a while, but I will have another meeting this month. You will have to ask the company's representatives why they chose not to meet me earlier. They might not have been aware of the study of my proposals that the Executive commissioned in 2002. Were you aware of the study?

The Convener: Yes. We received information about it in written evidence.

Simon Wallwork: When the Executive agreed to study my scheme, it expressly excluded any study of the park-and-ride and congestion relief elements; it considered only the light rail/heavy rail interchange elements. The rail strategy and investment branch of the Executive, which commissioned the study, said that it was unable to commission work into congestion relief because it was restricted to consideration of rail operations. The officials did not say that they did not want to consider congestion relief; they said that they could not consider it.

If we are to have integrated public transport, we must have integrated planning and integrated evaluation of projects such as mine. My proposal is an integrated proposal, not just for an airport rail link but for a congestion relief scheme. I was disappointed that despite my pressing officials, they refused to consider the demand for the park-and-ride site or the likely impact on Glasgow as a whole, because they were restricted to considering rail only. How can we have integrated transport without integrated planning?

The Convener: We cannot answer those questions, but we will hear from the minister next week. If you provide the clerks with the reference at the end of the meeting, we will ensure that we ask him and the promoter questions on the matter.

You identified waste ground that was an old dump.

Simon Wallwork: It was a landfill site.

The Convener: Where does that sit in Renfrewshire Council's structure plan?

Simon Wallwork: I do not think that the council has a plan for it, because councils are not allowed to do much with landfill sites, even when they are old. The site has been covered for 20-odd years. Not much can be done with landfill sites—for example, they cannot be built on—and their use is restricted. However, an old landfill site could be used as a car park, which is all that I plan for the site.

The Convener: Did you build anything into your costing for compulsory purchase or for the council giving up its option on the land?

Simon Wallwork: It is the council's landfill site, so I guess that the council would still own it. The rest of the site is just low-value waste ground. The huge benefit of the proposal is that it would avoid building on playing fields. If you want to talk about the use of land, a proposal could hardly be more controversial than building a double-track rail line across the St James park playing fields.

The Convener: I am trying to go underneath your bland statement that your proposal could save money. I am asking you to show what costs you built into the proposal, because the council ain't going to give you the land free. How much did you build in for the land?

Simon Wallwork: I did not plan to build the car park myself; I hoped that you guys would do that. I do not know the value of the land.

The Convener: If you do not have that detail, how can you say that the proposal is costed?

Simon Wallwork: The proposal is not as thoroughly costed as it should be, because the full study has not been done. I would like the committee to complete the study. After all, £150 million of public money could be saved, so it is worth spending a little money on an evaluation before the scheme is ruled out.

I am only a private guy—I do not represent a company and I do not have the facilities to undertake a full study. I have a full-time job and I produced the proposal in my spare time. I have not received a penny for it and I would be lucky to do so. However, the work that I have done is firm. When Sinclair Knight Merz examined the scheme for the Scottish Executive, it said that the scheme was feasible in principle, and it considered only the rail part, not the road part of the scheme.

Even my road proposals could benefit Scotland hugely. The only reason for the traffic jams every day is that people have no chance to interchange.

No railway station is in a suitable position to provide a good park-and-ride site—all the stations are in rotten positions. We need a new station with park and ride that can be linked into Glasgow airport, to provide the Glasgow airport rail link at much-reduced cost and the many other benefits that I touched on in my five minutes. However, it takes a bit more than five minutes to explain the proposal.

Mr Monteith: I see some potential attractions of and difficulties with the scheme. I will ask first about where your scheme comes into the airport. You said that you have not had the opportunity to discuss the proposal with BAA. We understand from our discussions that the location of GARL has been under negotiation with BAA, because it is concerned about how the approach of the rail line will affect the western side of the airport. Your diagram shows that your line would cut across any possible development on the western side of the airport.

Simon Wallwork: That is toffee. Light rail can be run anywhere that heavy rail can be.

Mr Monteith: Let me decide whether it is toffee. Could the line that you propose be relocated to run closer to the M8 rather than further into the airport?

Simon Wallwork: Yes, but running the line closer to the terminal would be more useful. If I had had a chance to discuss the scheme with BAA, perhaps we could have finalised a route. The line is almost totally flexible. It would be elevated and would run on little concrete supports. My proposed line could take the route of GARL but, to be frank, it would be much better off going right into the terminal. Unlike heavy rail, a light rail service can terminate adjacent to or within a terminal building with ease.

Mr Monteith: How would you intend the line to link up with your park-and-ride facility? Would it tunnel under the M8?

Simon Wallwork: It would link up with the interchange station and go across the motorway, but at a nice, narrow part of the motorway, unlike GARL, which would cross the widest part of the M8.

Mr Monteith: So it would go under the M8.

Simon Wallwork: Negative. It would go above the M8.

Mr Monteith: So it would rise up.

Simon Wallwork: It would rise to about the height of one of the overhead signposts that cross the M8. In fact, there is one near the point at which it would cross.

Mr Monteith: Would there be overhead power or a third rail?

12:30

Simon Wallwork: It would be light rail, so there would be a flat platform with driverless trains without any overhead wires—just an ordinary flat bed with a train running on it.

Mr Monteith: Would it be diesel powered?

Simon Wallwork: It would be electric powered.

Mr Monteith: So would there be a third rail or battery?

Simon Wallwork: You could use either method, or it could be hauled, as happens in Birmingham, where the system is driven by some sort of rubber band mechanism. There is a variety of ways of providing a light rail link. We could discuss the technology. We could even borrow a system from Disney. There are loads of light rail systems.

Mr Monteith: I appreciate that, but the point is that this committee has to go beyond concepts and look at detailed proposals, because it is in the detail that we often find obstacles. We have heard people talking about the graves of cholera victims, and we have to consider how any alternatives can deal with obstacles such as junction 29 of the M8. Are you confident that such obstacles could be overcome?

Simon Wallwork: Absolutely, and I welcome any investigation into the proposals. The paper that we have been discussing is only a brief paper—not a thorough study, although it is 40 or 50 pages long—on only half the scheme. Why cannot we complete the study of park-and-ride provision? Frankly, that would be much more useful to people who live in this part of the world than the Glasgow airport rail link would be. If you could drive into Glasgow without spending the morning sitting for an hour in traffic and then being unable to leave the city until 6 o'clock in the evening, that would be a benefit and it would offer people a chance to get out of their cars.

The Glasgow airport rail link is a nice idea, but I was talking to a taxi driver who told me that he can pick somebody up at the airport terminal, take them to the Albany hotel and be back in the taxi rank in 24 minutes. Such a fast journey could not be achieved by GARL. It is just too short a distance to spend £210 million on the link. We need something that is proportionate. My scheme ought to cost £40 million or maybe £50 million—a quarter of the price of GARL—and the congestion relief scheme effectively would be flung in free of charge. It would also save the playing fields at St James park from being built over. Surely those are all laudable aims.

Michael Matheson: One of the key issues that has arisen in the course of our evidence taking is connectivity—being able to go from one point to another without having to change trains. You are proposing that people go to a field to the west of the airport, get on to the light railway system and go into the airport. There is an issue—

Simon Wallwork: I must stop you there. That is expressly not what I am advocating.

Michael Matheson: The field is to the west of the airport, is it not?

Simon Wallwork: Are we talking about the park-and-ride bit now?

Michael Matheson: Yes, where the station is going to be.

Simon Wallwork: Yes, but let me make it clear that I am not planning for people to use that car park to go to the airport. That car park is for a completely separate group of people—those who are forced to clog up the M8 twice a day and to park in Glasgow all day. They have nothing to do with the airport. Under my proposal, people who go to the airport to catch a plane would travel on the existing trains, which run to Greenock anyway, thus connecting 30-odd stations and all the ferries with the airport. They would use the light rail interchange station to get off the heavy rail train for the waiting light rail service to the airport.

The other bit of the proposal is a congestion relief scheme, which would serve a completely separate client group of car-bound people who go into Glasgow to work every day. Those guys would have the chance to come to the same location, park their car, get on the train, go to work and return in the evening to pick up their car and drive back out to somewhere in the west where they came from.

Those two completely separate schemes could be built out of one piece of infrastructure. I make it clear that the car park is not for people who go to the airport.

Michael Matheson: It would clearly be difficult to guard against that.

Simon Wallwork: Well, yes, but that detail can be worked out.

Michael Matheson: That clarification is helpful. You mentioned several times the need for a proportionate response to the issue of a rail line to the airport. I see from your written evidence that you have experience in the air industry. Have you drawn on experience in other airports that are similar to Glasgow airport in forming your view that the GARL proposal is out of proportion?

Simon Wallwork: I am a captain with BA Connect. I fly all round Europe and I have seen a lot of airports. As far as I can tell, although people

want to use an airport rail link, most people travel round by car. Right now, 100 per cent of people who use Glasgow airport get there by road. SKM identified that not more than 5 or 6 per cent of air travellers would use GARL—it did not say “not less than”. I do not suppose that there would be any more users of my scheme than of GARL, and there might even be slightly fewer.

Road links to Glasgow airport could scarcely be better. The airport is right beside the M8, with access from both sides, and the A737 feeds in from southern Renfrewshire. People will continue to travel to Glasgow airport predominantly by road. However, it would be nice to provide access by railway, which my scheme would do. My scheme would also deal with the main problem of road congestion.

I ask the committee to please allow the study into my scheme to be completed, so that the value of the congestion relief scheme to the Scottish taxpayer can be assessed.

The Convener: We now move to questions to Jim Harkins and David Reid.

Mr Arbuckle: My question might be for Simon Wallwork eventually. He said that the light rail would go over the motorway. One of the areas on which the GARL project has attracted comments is the gradient on rail lines. Are gradients important in the projects in your presentation?

Jim Harkins: That is a technical question, which I will ask my colleague Mr David Reid to answer, as he supplies technical support.

David Reid (Reid Rail Ltd): The short answer is that light rail and tram schemes can negotiate far steeper gradients than heavy rail trains can. Heavy rail trains can generally negotiate fairly steep gradients of 1 in 40, whereas light rail trains can probably negotiate gradients of down to 1 in 10.

If the proposed light rail route was taken, the train could travel through the playing fields at ground level, rise up over the motorway and come back down to ground level in the car park. The heavy rail scheme could not do that because there is insufficient distance between the proposed junction at Paisley St James, the motorway and the airport terminus to allow the train to go down, up and over and down again. That is why a very expensive viaduct is proposed all the way from Paisley St James through the playing fields, across the motorway and into the terminus station, with an expensive walkway or travelator to get people the 130m from the station into the terminal building.

Mr Arbuckle: Have you checked the gradients in your scheme?

David Reid: There is no concern about gradients affecting the scheme proposed by Light Rail (UK) Ltd, which would be compatible with the scheme as proposed.

Mr Arbuckle: I refer Jim Harkins to one of the slides on costs that he showed us. I looked at the bottom corner of the slide to see what the bottom line on cost was, but there was no figure. Is there a figure?

Jim Harkins: Not at this stage, because we were called in rather late. Suffice it to say that, in our experience, light rail schemes outside the UK—I stress that I am referring to schemes outside the UK—tend to be far cheaper than heavy rail schemes, hence the reason why the continentals go for light rail.

Mr Monteith: You explained how your light rail scheme would pass under the M8 on leaving the airport. I have a copy of the map from your presentation. Will you explain how the route would navigate past the on-off ramp from the M8, which is coloured in yellow on your map? It seems to go over the ramp. The route then continues along the side of the football fields, as you explained. After that, it has to cross Greenock Road. How would it navigate that crossing?

Jim Harkins: We start off at the terminal. You will see the wee triangle on the map where I have indicated that there could be a car park. There are two route options there, where we would hope to put a multistorey car park. There is sufficient grass verge at that point. One of the benefits of light rail—which we can call a tram, or a tramcar in old money—is that it can run on the street, just like the trams do in Manchester, Croydon and Sheffield. It is technically perfectly feasible to bring the line along at street level. It would go underneath the motorway, which is marked in blue on the map. There are one or two places where the tram would have to be given priority on the street, meaning that public transport would be favoured over the motor car.

The line would go underneath the motorway to the round yellow bit that you can see on the map, which is like a big grass roundabout. The line can cross through the centre of that in a gentle curve—I am sorry that I could not get the line to curve round that corner on my diagram, but we can get the trams to go round corners. On the south side of the motorway, there is sufficient verge of 25ft to 30ft, which is not doing anything. There are no services there as far as I am aware, although we would have to do a full survey. We would be able to bring the line along there. There is a new housing development next to that, so there could be a catchment of middle-Scotland people commuting from there.

Mr Monteith: The line crosses the roundabout that you described—I follow that. Where the line crosses the road, the trams would have to be given priority.

Jim Harkins: That is correct.

Mr Monteith: The line might cross over at lights, for example.

Jim Harkins: A decision would have to be taken whether to give priority to passenger vehicles carrying a lot of people or to people in their cars. The answer is fairly obvious.

Mr Monteith: I see that. The thought that immediately occurs to me is that, while any lights there are at red, there is a possibility of traffic backing up on to the M8.

David Reid: There is flexibility in that part of the proposal, in that the line could come round either side of the roundabout. It would not need to have priority over traffic exiting from the motorway. I agree that there might otherwise be a block-back on to the motorway during the minute or two when the lights were at red. The line could be brought across the road that comes on to the roundabout from the other side, too. The details of that would need to be assessed.

We have taken an overview. As Jim Harkins said, we were called in to consider the proposals fairly late in the day by a client who has subsequently decided not to present evidence. That is why Light Rail (UK) is giving this presentation, which we think might be of benefit to the committee. There is some flexibility, but you are quite right to point out the possible need for a crossing of the other road that comes on to the roundabout.

Mr Monteith: Given that trams can take corners more sharply than heavy rail trains can, there is no reason why they could not go round the roundabout and come off it without crossing the line of the traffic.

David Reid: The trams could go round that roundabout, yes.

Mr Monteith: Could we move on to how the line would navigate Greenock Road?

Jim Harkins: Certainly. It would come along the outside of the fence by the football fields. We would seek to tunnel the line through at the green bit on the diagram. That would not take much engineering. The line would swing south, as you can see from the diagram, and would come up a ramp, which would be similar to the ramp that is in service on the Manchester metrolink, by the side of the G-Mex centre, or to one where the tramlink leaves Croydon. The line would then go up at grade to the railway. We have identified that there is sufficient room to put a single track alongside

the railway, so we would not be interfering with the heavy rail at all.

We also have the option of track sharing. There is an example of that in the UK with the Sunderland extension, where the Nexus light rail vehicles share a track with heavy rail. That is common practice in Karlsruhe, Saarbrücken and various other places on the continent.

Mr Monteith: I wish to clarify something about the gradient that the tram would come up to track share with the heavy rail line. If there was to be track sharing, it would be on the west side of St James station, as the gradient would allow that. Is that correct?

Jim Harkins: That is correct. [*Interruption.*]

12:45

The Convener: Someone has a mobile on. I ask them to switch it off, as it is interfering with the sound system.

I have a final question for both witnesses. Have your plans gone through the full Scottish transport appraisal guidance process?

Jim Harkins: Two years ago, in conjunction with Mr Reid, I approached Nicol Stephen, when he was the Minister for Transport. At the time, we also sounded out the issue with the Strathclyde Passenger Transport Executive. In Scotland—and south of Hadrian's wall, too—if someone is not an established consultant, they do not get in the door. I wrote to the minister to ask why no expertise in light rail was part of the establishment of Transport Scotland—it did not have that name at the time; the Executive was not sure what it was going to call it. For a small country such as Scotland, light rail is often more appropriate than other, more expensive schemes.

Mr Reid and I have looked at whether the line can be taken through to the Glasgow end. We are happy with some of GARL's trackage plans, but we think that it should use a light rail vehicle—that way, the costs would be lower. The numbers that the promoter has put forward are very suspect. Another panel member mentioned a figure of about eight passengers per vehicle—that is a lot of air to carry about the countryside.

A light rail option should be used to build up the scheme. My proposal is that, when the track got to the north end of the scheme, it could leave the heavy rail alignment. We have identified three alignments: one would take the left-hand side of the alignment that goes into Glasgow Central station and would run on the street; another would go down the right-hand side; and the third would use the City Union Railway bridge, which is a bit further down the Clyde, come down the Briggate and on into Argyle Street and then turn left. That would increase the footfall into the city of Glasgow.

My proposal is that the line out of the city would take a perfectly feasible route through George Square, Queen Street, along the side of the station and on to Buchanan Street bus station. That sort of option can be seen elsewhere on the continent. It would also act as a starter system for Paisley to Glasgow. For the kind of money that we are talking about, my option would be more beneficial for the west of Scotland.

The Convener: So the short answer to the question is that your proposal has not had a STAG appraisal.

Jim Harkins: No, it has not.

The Convener: What about Simon Wallwork's proposal?

Simon Wallwork: No, but I would like it done. I would like the road part of it to be done, too. The reason why it has not been done is that the Scottish Executive would not do it. There is no point in asking me whether it has been done, convener. It should have been done.

The Convener: I am required to ask the question. If the committee is to raise the issue with the minister, we need to ensure that that is on the record.

Simon Wallwork: Please do so.

The Convener: I bring this part of our evidence-taking session to a close.

12:48

Meeting suspended.

13:40

On resuming—

The Convener: Welcome back. We will now take evidence from panel 4, which comprises Andrew Shuttleworth, assistant chief officer at Strathclyde fire and rescue; David McCall, assistant chief constable at the British transport police; Neil Amner, who is a partner at Biggart Baillie and is representing the British transport police; and Chief Superintendent Johnny Gwynne and Chief Inspector Calum Murray of Strathclyde police.

We have some questions for you, especially for Strathclyde police. The promoter has indicated that GARL would have an impact on road usage. I assume that the reference is to the M8 and the Ayrshire corridor, but not the M77. Would GARL reduce the impact on your force of policing the M8 and associated areas?

Johnny Gwynne (Strathclyde Police): At this stage, it is unclear exactly what the impact would be. Clearly, a rail link would change the pattern of

passenger arrival and departure. For example, it would change the volume of cars that leave the M8 slip roads to go to Glasgow airport. However, in the absence of more detailed information and environmental scoping, it would be ill advised of me to say that it would have a good or a bad impact. Suffice it to say that it would change the pattern of passenger behaviour and that, as you would expect, some passengers would come by rail and not by road.

The Convener: Should Strathclyde police's road policing unit have been involved in discussions with the promoter? As a taxpayer in that part of Scotland, I would be interested if police could be diverted from the road policing unit to working in our communities. Would it have been of benefit to committee members if that had been discussed up front?

Johnny Gwynne: It would be useful if we could have more discussion from here on in. The road policing department would be one part of that discussion. The British transport police would also have a role. There are a number of issues that concern both the British transport police and Strathclyde police. We need to consider what crime prevention measures will be incorporated into the design of the project when it goes ahead. We may want to consider architectural liaison to build out crime and the risk from terrorism, which is an issue that we must think about in this century. The road policing and traffic management plans are only one part of the discussion.

The Convener: You have led us on nicely to the issue of terrorism. Strathclyde police is responsible for policing at Glasgow airport, but your colleagues in the British transport police are responsible for rail. How does that arrangement work? Do you have good relationships? Do you work well together? Are you involved in their planning, or do the two organisations just meet at some point in the middle?

Johnny Gwynne: Are you asking about our general response to the risk of terrorism?

The Convener: Yes.

Johnny Gwynne: There is a very good relationship between Strathclyde police and the BTP, both at strategic level and at operational level. I do not say that just for the purposes of the committee; I am sure that Mr McCall will speak on the issue. Mr McCall represents the interests of his organisation on the chief officers group of the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland. There is an integrated response strategically and in operational service delivery. To my knowledge, there has never been an issue at either level.

The Convener: Mr McCall, would you like to add anything?

David McCall (British Transport Police): I reinforce what Chief Superintendent Gwynne said. I am a member of the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland and of the ACPOS counter-terrorist sub-group. I regularly meet my colleagues—not just in Strathclyde police but in the rest of the Scottish police service—at the strategic level. I have officers below me who operate at the tactical and operational levels with colleagues in the service.

13:45

The Convener: If GARL goes ahead, chief superintendent, will it have an impact on your manpower and on the cost of operating your division?

Johnny Gwynne: It is difficult to be specific about that. It might have an impact on manpower, but not because of the new rail link. The impact might occur as the airport's business grows and there are more passengers. Whether they come by road or by rail is not an issue for us. As business grows, the airport will become a more favourable place to be. You know the figures better than I do, but at the moment there are some 8.6 million passenger movements per year and that is projected to increase to about 15 million by 2030. As the airport grows, there will be extra policing considerations, but it is difficult to nail down exactly what those will be.

The Convener: I am concerned about the cost of policing. I represent part of Ayrshire and I am aware of the difficulties that the previous divisional commander in Ayrshire faced with ensuring that the public purse was recompensed for the policing of Prestwick airport. Do you have similar difficulties or is Glasgow Airport Ltd a good payer?

Johnny Gwynne: There is a slightly different relationship and charging regime. We have an excellent relationship with BAA at Glasgow airport. In fact, the MD would say the same about the relationship. We get good support from the operator in terms of having the resilience that we need in the police numbers to police appropriately. If the airport grows exponentially we will need to review and revise staffing levels, but that is a separate issue. At present there is an excellent working relationship between BAA—and the MD in particular—and police staff throughout the division.

The Convener: I have a question about the safety aspects for Strathclyde fire and rescue. The GARL proposal involves resiting the fuel farm at the airport. Given the pictures of the Buncefield disaster that we all saw on our televisions, what aspects does Strathclyde fire and rescue wish to discuss with the promoter at the current stage, before we get into the detail?

Andrew Shuttleworth (Strathclyde Fire and Rescue): The principle of moving the fuel farm is not the problem. Indeed, we welcome that because the existing fuel farm is fairly old. Naturally, we expect any new fuel farm that is developed to have fixed installations and the appropriate detection and safety systems. It is not possible to retrofit those. We regard it as a new-for-old proposal.

The main things that we are keen to know are the exact location of the new fuel farm, how that will affect our access, and what water and foam supplies will be available on site. If necessary, we will have to look for additional foam supplies. There are other issues that concern both us and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency. Where will the run-off go if there is a major incident? What will be the effect on the environment of any smoke plume that ensues from an incident? All those things need to be set out clearly so that we can determine what our response will be. However, we do not have a problem with the principle.

The Convener: So there is an opportunity to provide a more modern and suitable fuel farm and the knock-on effect will be a safer environment for those in the proximity?

Andrew Shuttleworth: Yes. The one concern that we have, along with the Health and Safety Executive, is the decommissioning of the existing fuel farm. Decommissioning is always fraught with problems when there are flammable, explosive atmospheres building up in tanks and so on.

We would be looking for clear processes—clear and safe systems of working—both for the construction of the new fuel farm and for the decommissioning of the old one. We would want to ensure that, whatever was happening, there was no increase in risk to users of the airport, to the local public or to our firefighters.

Mr Arbuckle: I want to ask the witness from the British transport police a number of questions. I understand that an issue arises to do with facilities at the station in Glasgow airport and that you would like to have a unit there.

David McCall: You are quite right, sir. We hope to have a presence at the station in Glasgow airport—just as we have a presence at some other airports around the country, such as Heathrow and Manchester.

We have not yet worked out in any great detail what the presence in Glasgow airport would look like. It certainly would not be a full-blown and operational police station with holding facilities and so on; it would merely be an area where officers could refresh themselves and a room where we could take witnesses or suspects away from members of the public and speak to them in private.

Mr Arbuckle: In your written evidence, you make a point about the protection of your current operational capacity. Surely this particular project will not add a great deal to the overall rail network or to the number of stations that you, as the transport police, have to cover. How significant a project is it, from your point of view?

David McCall: I do not envisage the project having huge resource implications for British transport police, but it is one of a number of projects in the growing rail system in Scotland. There will come a point at which we cannot adequately fulfil our duties to police the entire rail network in Scotland if some form of additional resourcing is not available to cover particular lines.

We expect an increase in passenger numbers and that Paisley will become a more important hub than it is at present. When members of the public are travelling on public transport systems, no matter where they are in Scotland, the potential for them to become victims of crime increases. We are not talking about a huge number of officers for the Glasgow airport rail link, but we will have to sit down with the promoter and work out a sensible way of proceeding.

Mr Arbuckle: You hope that the promoter will pick up all legal and professional fees and expenses arising from the project. What sort of sums would be involved?

David McCall: Would you mind if I referred that question to Mr Amner?

Mr Arbuckle: Not at all—I was looking in Mr Amner's direction anyway.

Neil Amner (Biggart Baillie): The level of fees and the level of time commitment—not only for external professional support but for internal staff time in the force and in the police authority—will depend on how far through the bill process we are forced to go. I can contrast the Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill with the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill. In Edinburgh, even before the expiry of the objection period, we reached agreement in principle on an approach to resolve a number of concerns. That obviously avoids the time and expense of giving evidence before a committee, and it avoids taking up the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill committee's time as well. I hope that, here, we can meet the promoter in fairly short order and agree an approach. That would obviously contain the costs.

Mr Arbuckle: Do you envisage that the promoter will have to pay capital costs for the new facility in Glasgow airport and revenue costs arising from the additional workload of the British transport police?

Neil Amner: There will be capital costs. Our view is that it would be appropriate to provide for

the effective and efficient policing of the scheme. The scheme will include a number of features—not just a police station at the airport, or any other facilities at Paisley Gilmour Street station or Glasgow Central station. For example, it will also include the provision of a communications system known as Airwave, which David McCall can explain more fully if need be—it is the radio communications system that the transport police use. It will have to be built in with the scheme. An operational issue that has arisen elsewhere in the country is the problem of trying to retrofit new systems into existing infrastructure. Most of the infrastructure is Victorian and the new systems are expensive to put in.

The point of our objecting at this point is to say that the force should be talked to now, to agree a specification that takes our advice into account. That will be cheaper all round. A number of other services share the view that, if there is adequate engagement at this stage, necessary design features can be put in up front, which will be more effective for the emergency services and the scheme as a whole.

This issue of the revenue cost would be for the operator of the route, once it is fully operational.

The Convener: Did you say that there should be a station for the British transport police at the airport?

Neil Amner: There should be a police office at the airport railway station.

The Convener: I wondered whether you wanted to extend your jurisdiction into the airport.

David McCall: Our jurisdiction would be within the railway station, not the airport. We would like to have a police post at the station. We use the phrase "police post" because the phrase "police station" conjures up ideas of cells and the whole criminal investigation department infrastructure. I am merely talking about somewhere for officers to refresh and a private room into which we can take members of the public who have been witnesses or victims of a crime.

The Convener: Can you not share space with Strathclyde police?

David McCall: Its facility is some way off the airport.

The Convener: The force has a room to refresh in the airport. It might not be the kind of mess room that you are talking about, but it has facilities. That could be negotiated with the airport rather than with SPT.

David McCall: I was not aware of the facility.

The Convener: I am not saying it is anything great, but it exists.

David McCall: The point that you raise shows that it would be useful to sit down with the promoters and go through some of these issues with them.

The Convener: Strathclyde police has Airwave. Does the Strathclyde fire and rescue service have it yet?

Andrew Shuttleworth: Apparently, it is about to.

The Convener: And the British transport police?

David McCall: The British transport police is Airwave compliant across the UK. We operate exactly the same Airwave radio system as every other force in the country. However, the Government-funded Airwave project is for core services—in other words, it is a basic system. If a particular police force requires special consideration for a particular site—a special coverage solution, as it is called—it has to pick up the cost. For example, if Strathclyde wanted an Airwave system in Hampden park or Braehead, it would have to fund a special coverage solution.

As we are talking about new build that is outwith the area that we currently cover with Airwave, British transport police would have to approach the issue and fund a special coverage solution.

There has been a bit of talk about retrofitting. I am responsible for implementing Airwave for the British transport police across the UK. Two of my major projects at the moment are to do with getting Airwave into the London underground and the channel tunnel. The channel tunnel rail link is being built just now, so the Airwave system can be built along with it, which makes it easy. However, trying to retrofit Airwave into the Victorian London underground system is a nightmare. You have probably read in the press about the difficulties that were encountered with radio communication during the terrorist bombings in London in July 2005.

We urge the promoters to consider police processes and procedures at this stage. We must work together to provide a solution that will avoid the need for us to retrofit new systems in years to come.

14:00

Mr Monteith: I have a question about the jurisdiction of the British transport police. In your written submission, you mention “the specialist nature of” BTP’s

“policing activities, being limited to railways and railway facilities (including those of London Underground) and certain tram schemes”.

Would you be involved in a light rail alternative, or would you be involved in a light rail alternative only if it entered the heavy rail network? Would a light

rail alternative have the same security implications for you?

I will understand if you do not have an answer for the latter question.

David McCall: On the first question, we would normally police a light rail system. For example, we police the Docklands light railway, which was built as an extension to the London underground, and the Croydon tramlink. We also have expertise of policing other tram systems throughout the UK. If the scheme became a light rail proposal—similar to that proposed in the Edinburgh Tram (Line One) Bill and the Edinburgh Tram (Line Two) Bill—we would expect to police it. The British transport police’s expertise is writ large throughout the UK. We hope that we can bring that experience to bear in any rail system, whether it is heavy rail, light rail or a mixture of the two.

I think that the reference in the second question was to terrorism. Whether we are talking about light or heavy rail, the implications are the same. In either situation, our response to the threat of terrorism would be exactly the same.

Neil Amner: Convener, may I ask a supplementary question on the light rail proposal?

The Convener: Yes.

Neil Amner: The Edinburgh Tram (Line One) Act 2006 and the Edinburgh Tram (Line Two) Act 2006 allow the BTP to police the two schemes. There is a slight difference between those acts and this bill, which relates to the split between reserved and non-reserved matters. Although the BTP has the capacity to police tram schemes in England, it lacks the authority to do so in Scotland. At the BTP’s request, both Edinburgh tram bills were amended to that effect.

If I may, convener, I will return to the point about the police facility at the airport railway station. The existing Strathclyde police office at the airport—

The Convener: I would not call it an office.

Neil Amner: It is on the airway and not on the landward side of airport security—obviously, this scheme comes in on the landward side.

I should mention the need for compatibility in the railway and airport networks’ closed-circuit television systems. If we are to have a coherent policing operation, the two networks’ systems need to be married up.

Mr Monteith: I have a further question for David McCall; it has only just occurred to me. It concerns the interface between rail and airport with regard to the threat from terrorism. Earlier this morning, we heard about a light rail proposal under which a link would be made more or less directly into the airport. Does the degree of separation between air and rail in the bill give more security benefits to

your policing operation than those that are set out in the light rail option?

David McCall: I am sorry, but until today I was unaware of the proposal for a light rail system. I have not had time to get my head around it; I have been concentrating on the bill proposal.

The location of the station does not make a lot of difference to us. What is important is the interface between the British transport police and our colleagues in Strathclyde police. I was a Strathclyde police officer for 26 years. Having policed Glasgow airport for a number of those years, I am well aware of the importance of working with colleagues in other forces. I am very comfortable with the way in which Strathclyde police operates and with the interface between our two forces.

Regardless of where the station is located, we would have to work out some sensible protocols on where Strathclyde police's jurisdiction ends and ours begins.

Mr Monteith: That was helpful; it answers my point.

The Convener: The issue is of concern, given the Home Office proposal to screen individuals at railway stations, particularly those who use airport rail links. Obviously, the two authorities will be required to work together. Other important areas of the scheme also require the authorities to work together. How will the BTP and Strathclyde police work together to police the viaduct? You will police the viaduct and Strathclyde police will police the surrounding area. I imagine that the viaduct will be attractive to young people. Have you given any thought to that?

David McCall: There are a number of railway viaducts throughout the UK. We are used to working with our partners in the rail industry in particular to cut down the opportunity for young people or others to make incursions on to the railway network. Again, we would like the promoter to engage fully with us on designing out the opportunity for that sort of thing to happen. We are experienced at looking at the design of rail infrastructure and anticipating where the pinchpoints—the real danger points—are likely to be. If we have to improve security somewhere, we are well placed to advise the promoter of the steps that it would need to take to minimise the opportunities for incursions.

The Convener: Has Strathclyde fire and rescue service had discussions with the promoter at the design stage on how proper design would be a benefit if there were an incident that the service had to attend?

Andrew Shuttleworth: We have had no detailed discussions at all with the promoter, but

we are keen to ensure that few opportunities exist for difficulties to arise or for people to get injured when the system is up and running. There will also be significant risks for workers on the site, surrounding communities and young people during the construction phase. We would like to engage closely with the promoter to ensure that those risks are designed out.

Michael Matheson: I would like to clarify something Mr McCall said. British transport police is currently having discussions with the promoter on various aspects of the scheme that it would like to be designed with greater safety in mind.

David McCall: Actually, we are not.

Michael Matheson: You are not. Why not?

David McCall: We hope that we will enter into negotiations or consultations with the promoter, but we have not so far had any meaningful consultation on the system with it. Members have in front of them a letter from SPT dated 18 April that outlines the consultation that it has had with British transport police. I would like to elaborate on the consultation that has occurred, if I may.

The promoter has said that it had a meeting with British transport police at its offices in Glasgow Central station on 10 January 2005. I think that that simply consisted of a walk around parts of the station with a constable. I understand that the promoter was interested in moving parking spaces and that the discussion was more about tenancy rights than policing operations.

The promoter has referred to a telecon on 24 February 2005. That telephone call was made to my superintendent to advise of the existence of the bill. My superintendent offered to give the promoter every assistance with crime prevention and counter-terrorist security advice and target hardening right down to advice on the design of trains and stations. We left the promoter to take up that offer and come back to us. In the letter of 18 April, the promoter states that it discussed the offer with its consultants, but because it was working on a preliminary design, it did not think that there was a requirement to liaise with British transport police at that stage. Our constable who spoke to the promoter's agents in January was under the impression that negotiations and consultations were taking place at a fairly high level rather than only at the constable level. My superintendent, whom I have spoken to about the matter, was surprised that our offer of assistance had not been taken up.

The Convener: I clarify for Michael Matheson that the promoter provided the letter to which Assistant Chief Constable McCall is referring to us on Thursday last week. It arrived too late to be circulated to members for today's meeting—it has only just arrived in our hands.

Michael Matheson: So despite British transport police's detailed objection—it has talked about the heightened risk of terrorism when airports and train stations are interfaced—the promoter has not been in touch with it to discuss at a high level its serious concerns.

David McCall: No, not to date, but we hope that we will be able to engage with it. I am confident that we can resolve all the issues, but we had no option but to lodge the objection so that the committee could hear our concerns about the situation.

The Convener: There is an issue for the committee. Obviously, you have had to engage the services of an external agency for which the public purse has had to bear the cost. The public purse would have gained if consultation had commenced prior to the bill.

Has there been any consultation with Strathclyde fire and rescue service?

Andrew Shuttleworth: It was limited. We were notified in January that the bill was coming out and there was a meeting between our local officers, the local area manager, the senior fire officer at Glasgow airport and his colleague from Heathrow. However, that meeting was specifically about the fuel farm. There was no detailed consultation at a high level on the proposals for the airport or the work at Glasgow Central station and none of our area headquarters in Glasgow was consulted.

I reiterate what Mr McCall said. We do not think that there is anything wrong with the proposal in principle, but we would expect detailed consultations on the process and the ultimate outcome of the development.

The Convener: Chief Superintendent Gwynne, has Strathclyde police been involved in detailed discussions?

Johnny Gwynne: No. We find ourselves in a similar position. For the avoidance of doubt, I point out that we were consulted in our role as a tenant. I do not have enough detail on that to give you an account of it, but that was the extent of the consultation. There was no consultation on the operational and business impacts of the proposal.

Our concerns are similar to those of the British transport police and the fire service. We are interested not just in the design but in the delivery of the design over a period of time, because the link will be months and maybe even years in the making and integrated emergency management is an issue. Is the design appropriate to enable first responders to respond effectively on behalf of the public in the locality, should there be a need to do so? There are also the issues of designing out crime of whatever type and the traffic management plan around the works. We need to

ensure that there is a safe system of working on the roads and access both to the continuing business of BAA and for first responders to arrive at the airport. We want to have detailed discussions on all those things.

The short answer to your question is that there was no consultation other than limited consultation in our specialised role as a tenant.

The Convener: Is there anything else that you want to put on the record today?

David McCall: We would expect detailed consultation with the promoter on all the issues. Chief Superintendent Gwynne outlined all the issues. I suggest that the best forum in which to discuss those is an organisation that you might be aware of—the Strathclyde emergencies co-ordination group, on which we are all represented. In that way, there will be no confusion about the roles of the British transport police, Strathclyde police, the fire service, the ambulance service and local authorities. We urge the promoter to get in touch with us through the Strathclyde emergencies co-ordination group to work through the difficulties, which are not insurmountable by any stretch of the imagination.

Mr Monteith: What would be the impact on Strathclyde police of Glasgow Central station being kept open until 1 o'clock or even 2 o'clock in the morning? Would it affect existing policing arrangements in the city centre, particularly on Friday and Saturday nights?

Johnny Gwynne: It is fair to say that it would have an impact, but I cannot say exactly what that impact would be because I am not the divisional commander for that area. I have a colleague who deals with that.

There is a city centre policing plan, particularly for weekend evenings, which are robustly policed. How would late opening affect the volume of traffic and the profile of the arrival and departure of trains? In some cases it might bring extra problems or challenges, but it might also alleviate problems because there would be extra services to take people away, usually to Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and Ayrshire via the Paisley side of the rail link. Late opening might have pros and cons, but without knowing more of the detail I would be ill advised to tell you that it would be a good thing or a bad thing.

David McCall: I might be able to help, as my last uniformed role in Strathclyde police was as deputy divisional commander in Glasgow city centre. I can assure you that, wearing that hat, I would have been more than grateful for a rail service that operated much later. However, wearing my current hat, I can see that there will be implications for us. Once again, the matter requires discussion between the promoter, us and our colleagues in Strathclyde.

The Convener: Thank you for your evidence.

We will take a short break so that the witnesses from the promoter can get their heads around some of the conversations that have just taken place.

14:14

Meeting suspended.

14:21

On resuming—

The Convener: I welcome panel 5, which comprises witnesses for the promoter. From Strathclyde Partnership for Transport we have Douglas Ferguson, who is the director of operations; John Halliday, who is the head of transport, planning and integration; and Charles Hoskins, who is the manager for projects. We also have Simon Temple, who is a director at Faber Maunsell, and David Keddie, who is a partner in Roger Tym and Partners. Good afternoon, gentlemen.

Given what we have just heard from the emergency services—the fire service, Strathclyde police and British transport police—will you tell us what level of consultation you had with them?

Douglas Ferguson (Strathclyde Partnership for Transport): First, the promoter has been conscious from the early stages that security and terrorism were important issues that we had to consider as part of producing the bill. We have had contact of some form with all the people who appeared before the committee. In addition, we have had contact with the transport security and contingencies directorate of the Department for Transport—the national security agency—and we have tried to develop the higher-level policy issues through that organisation.

Having said that, we accept that—for whatever reason—perhaps we have not fully understood the interactions between the public agencies that are involved in security. If we have not followed through the operational issues that Strathclyde police, BTP and the fire service face locally, we certainly intend to follow them up now for the rest of the bill process and in dealing with objections. Mr McCall's suggestion of using the Strathclyde emergencies co-ordination group as a forum for doing that is sensible. We intend to follow up issues through that group and individually with the services, if that is required.

The Convener: It is fair to say that members of the committee were all extremely concerned to find out from BTP that SPT's consultation consisted of a walk-through with a BTP constable. I have nothing against police constables, who

provide a valuable service, but I would not expect a BTP constable to be aware of the strategic implications of the scheme. Can you explain why that happened?

Douglas Ferguson: It might be better if we explained the totality of the consultation that we have had with the various services and with TRANSEC, which has allowed us to get to where we are now. Charles Hoskins can put that part of the process into context.

Charles Hoskins (Strathclyde Partnership for Transport): The process began with consultation with the Department for Transport, which has a specialist division called TRANSEC, which is responsible for transport security. There is an interface between its responsibility for rail and its responsibility for aviation, so we brought those two areas together. We followed that up by speaking to BAA's security manager, which was crucial to how we approached the airport elements, and Network Rail's security manager. That was the high-level consultation that we undertook.

At a working level, we had contacts in each of the services, which we followed up. We spoke not only to the BTP constable to whom Mr McCall referred, but to the supervisor. Indeed, we discussed with the supervisor some specific issues and we are grateful for the offer that BTP made to us, which we have said—more than once—that we would like to take up. The challenge for us is to ensure that we follow up on that work and, as Douglas Ferguson has said, we will do so. On the whole, we have been acutely conscious of security and safety, but in tackling those issues from the top and the bottom, we might not have succeeded somewhere in the middle, with the forces. We are clear that we need to rectify that immediately.

John Halliday (Strathclyde Partnership for Transport): The project design meant that it was important to understand and deal with the strategic issues. Our impression was that once we had talked matters through with TRANSEC, we would have dialogue on all the detailed issues as we progressed through the detailed design process. I guess that that is the position that we feel we were in. Perhaps we have failed in not embarking on that work early enough. As Douglas Ferguson said, our next step should be to talk to the Strathclyde emergencies co-ordination group.

The Convener: You have provided costs for the design of the project, but we have heard that Strathclyde police, British transport police and Strathclyde fire and rescue may well have issues to do with the construction and subsequent operation of the scheme. What will happen if those organisations tell you that what you propose does not meet their needs? Have you built anything into your costings to deal with that eventuality?

Charles Hoskins: At a global level, a detailed assessment was made of all the risks, which included those that relate to safety and security. For example, BTP has mentioned to us that a facility could be incorporated in the station at Glasgow airport. Interestingly, not all airport rail stations are manned; although the stations at Manchester and Heathrow are manned, stations at other airports are not. We have ensured that the design can accommodate such a facility. There will be a number of rooms at the airport rail station, but we have not got into the detail of how they will be fitted out. Allowance has been made for that in the capital element of the figures.

More globally, the cost estimate includes a detailed risk assessment, as part of which every risk is examined. The risk contingency fund covers a number of safety and security elements, so we are confident that, as far as we can see, we would be able to use the risk pot to deal with such an eventuality.

John Halliday: We identified that radio communication and CCTV would be important elements of the design of the project and our discussions with TRANSEC confirmed that. SPT is familiar with the provision of CCTV and other security measures at stations. Those costs are built into the estimate.

I am aware of the design issue. Much of the process of designing out crime can be cost neutral if consultation is engaged in early in the detailed design stage. I will give committee members an example of that. The viaduct over the St James playing fields could be designed in such a way that it would be virtually impossible for someone to climb the columns. However, if you were not aware of that potential problem, the viaduct could also be designed completely differently and in such a way that it would be entirely feasible for someone to climb the columns. When you consider cost neutrality, costs can be designed out of specific facilities while a safe and secure environment can still be achieved.

14:30

Mr Arbuckle: I want to go back to basics. We have been given presentations today on other transport options. Did SPT seriously consider options such as light rail or tram?

Douglas Ferguson: The whole process that has led up to where we are today has involved considering a wide range of options. I do not believe that any of the options that we have heard about today has not been included in our considerations. I am not saying that we have considered the very specific issues relating to some of those options, but we have considered those types of options and concluded that the proposal in the bill is the best.

The committee has heard good ideas from other witnesses; each of the options will have good aspects. We have considered the good aspects and the not-so-good aspects, and we have considered the costs and the benefits. Inevitably, we do not always hear about some of the costs, or the downsides, of particular options. For example, journey time has not really been mentioned, but any option that involves an interchange and a longer route than the proposed route will have a longer journey time than the proposed route.

In addition, nothing much has been said about the impact of the other options on rail capacity between Paisley and Glasgow. It might seem okay to say that, if a railway station was built on the Inverclyde line, and if there was a people mover running from the airport to that line, money would not have to be spent on dealing with capacity issues further up on the line from Paisley to Glasgow. However, as we have heard, the trains on which people would go are already busy and, in some cases, overcrowded. If we simply bring more people to a new railway station, the capacity issues would still have to be dealt with.

If you considered the total costs of some of the options offered, you would have to consider many costs that we have not heard about. You would, I believe, end up back where you started in cost terms, and would not have all of the benefits of the proposal in the bill. The simple answer to your question is, yes, we have looked at all the options, and that is why we have reached the conclusion that the proposal in the bill is the best.

Mr Arbuckle: It may be that, because of your background in heavy rail, the present proposal is the easiest option for you. You do not have to think outside the box and consider a new type of transport such as those that we heard about this morning.

Douglas Ferguson: Our background should not lead to an assumption that we are looking for a rail solution. As an organisation, SPT promotes every mode of transport, including bus and rail. I was involved in promoting a tram scheme for SPT several years ago, via Westminster legislation that ultimately fell. At that point, SPT was promoting specific tram schemes—not to serve the airport, but to serve the Strathclyde area.

We believe that we have come at this project totally impartially. We believe that, as an organisation, we come at anything of this nature impartially and do not make any assumptions about preferred modes. I hope that we try to think outside the box when we identify the options to be considered. One of the strengths of the STAG process is that it encourages us to do that very thing and look outside the box. An initial part of the process is very much about being sure that we have considered all the options before we start to narrow them down.

Mr Arbuckle: One of the representatives from the Scottish Independent Airport Park and Ride Association said that the proposals have not taken into account sufficiently the personal habits of people who travel. He argues that it is easier for people to park the car and then get public transport such as a bus or taxi right to the airport.

Douglas Ferguson: The evaluation process is about taking account of people's personal habits and trying to quantify their preferences. I understand the point that if someone owns a car, their preference tends to be to use it to get to where they want to go. That has been built into the analysis and I suppose that that is why our modelling still assumes that the majority of people will come to the airport by car.

The first obvious point, however, is that not everyone has a car. Secondly, the park-and-ride concept is largely about people who are flying out from the airport. Inbound passengers do not have a car there in the first place, so a park-and-ride facility will not serve them.

Mr Arbuckle: Thank you.

Mr Monteith: I will pick you up on that point. The representatives of the car parks seemed to argue that they could provide a useful, if not crucial, source of income that would be separate from that which would be provided by those who would be using the airport. Has that been given any specific consideration?

John Halliday: We have developed the project around the people who use the airport as well as those who use the Paisley to Glasgow corridor. Understanding all that is the core issue.

However, we have not bolted on the other things that we could possibly do. There is a sound reason for that. The organisation is currently developing a park-and-ride strategy for the whole conurbation. Park and ride is an intrinsically good thing, but we adopt the principle that we should capture the people who travel by car as early in their journey as we can and not suck them in too close. In other words, if people have an opportunity to use a more efficient mode of transport, they will take it.

Promotion of the bill is part of the backdrop to the SPT's wider policy direction of developing solutions to the transport problems in the west of Scotland.

Mr Monteith: Given the anticipated large increase in air passenger numbers at Glasgow airport, and the estimate that GARL will result in what is described as a 0.5 per cent reduction in traffic from the M8, would not the money be better spent on improving the road access to Glasgow and Prestwick airports?

John Halliday: That is the policy conundrum that we face. We are at an ideal place in Scotland because although congestion is a real problem, it is not a breaker at the moment—I stress the words “at the moment”—and we have opportunities.

Evidence from elsewhere shows that it is well understood that if we continue to build road capacity, we will build road use. The decision to make is whether that will be the solution. Clearly, a lot of cities and other places are considering demand management as a means of encouraging people to use more efficient and sustainable modes of transport. Building up demand for car use is an issue for society at large. It is a big issue, which is, at times, painful. We must be conscious of being able to provide opportunities for people to use other modes of travel and persuading them to use those other modes rather than the car.

Mr Monteith: There may also be the opportunity to invest in roads that would allow, for instance, a dedicated bus lane. SPT might be interested in liaising on that. Has that opportunity been given consideration?

John Halliday: Yes, it was considered in the early work that we undertook. The issue about having additional lanes on the M8—perhaps that is what is in your mind—is that that would bring intrinsic problems. At the source end or the central city end, there would be the problem of multiple slip-roads and traffic convergences as well as the cost of building a lane. It may be possible to get cars along a certain route, but they would come to a slip-road or bridges. Within the city centre, there would also be a problem with demand being built up. The answer is that, yes, we have considered that idea. However, it was rejected on some of those grounds in favour of the airport rail link, which was seen as the solution to the problem.

Mr Monteith: Prestwick airport has said that it is “not aware of the basis on which the promoter makes the claim”

that GARL will

“contribute to a sustainable basis for the future growth of Glasgow and Prestwick Airports”.

What is your response to that view?

Douglas Ferguson: We believe that we have made clear where the benefits to Prestwick airport will come from. They will come from two main outcomes of the scheme. First, the additional track capacity between Paisley and Glasgow will improve the reliability of every service that uses that corridor. The rail services to Prestwick airport will benefit from that reliability. Secondly, the increased capacity means that there will be more trains and less overcrowding on the trains that serve Prestwick airport. Those are the immediate

benefits that Prestwick airport would get as soon as the scheme opened.

We have said separately that we would like to develop additional rail services in the Ayrshire corridor. If and when those services come along, there will be further benefits to Prestwick airport. As part of this scheme, we have made part of the longer-term proposal to provide more service to Ayrshire easier by building in some of the infrastructure that would be required for that.

There are two sets of benefits: those that are immediate and those that could come along earlier if and when we establish additional services to Ayrshire that would serve Prestwick airport.

Michael Matheson: You heard the evidence from the witnesses from Network Rail. I asked them specifically what scope there would be for extra services to Inverclyde, Ayrshire and Prestwick airport following the upgrading of the line between Glasgow central station and Paisley. Their response was that it would be marginal. You appear to be claiming that there could be more scope than that.

Simon Temple (Faber Maunsel): During the development of the scheme, we drew up a draft timetable for all services in the corridor, including the airport services. We found that, with the infrastructure solution that is proposed in the bill, we could accommodate the airport services on top of all the existing services. We did some performance modelling on that, which demonstrated that one would get improved reliability. We also considered the option of providing two additional services to Ayrshire—they need not have been to Ayrshire, but those were the specific services that we considered—and found that it was possible to include them in the timetable. Of course, as more trains are added, some of the performance benefits may be lost but there is clearly the capacity to timetable those trains.

14:45

Michael Matheson: Nevertheless, do you accept Network Rail's position that the scope for increasing the number of trains will be marginal? You have talked about modelling. Have you discussed the matter with Network Rail? Its interpretation is that the scope for extra services would be marginal, not substantial.

Simon Temple: That depends on your definition of marginal.

Michael Matheson: Two is marginal.

Simon Temple: Okay. If two is marginal and all that we have ever said is that there could be two extra trains to Ayrshire, that would still double the frequency of the service to Ayr and represent a 50

per cent increase in the total number of trains to the Ayrshire coast line. That is marginal in the context of the capacity of the rail network in Scotland, but for people in Ayr it may be a bit more than marginal. I guess we could debate that.

Michael Matheson: I suspect that we could.

John Halliday: On the timetabling issue, the critical thing is to get a train on the track: that must be done before anything else is started. However, capacity is not about just that; it is also about the length of trains. A service can be timetabled for which longer trains are used. Indeed, Transport Scotland is considering extending the length of trains to four cars and, probably, eight cars. I would therefore take issue with the comment about the scope being marginal. Increasing the frequency of a journey from half-hourly to every 15 minutes would have a significant impact. A service that runs at 15-minute intervals is very attractive to people.

Michael Matheson: With respect, increased capacity is different from extra services. I asked specifically about extra services.

John Halliday: Yes. I accept that.

Mr Monteith: I have a couple of other questions, one of which arises out of the evidence that we heard this morning. The criticism has been made that the SKM study has been dismissed too lightly. Why have you dismissed the findings of the SKM study?

Douglas Ferguson: We have not dismissed the findings of the study. As we have said previously, we were party to the project steering group for the SKM study and we accepted the findings of that study. However, we argued successfully that the remit was too narrow in considering only the airport and connections to airports as part of a wider study that was looking at connections to Glasgow and Edinburgh airports. We do not feel that we dismissed the study at all; we feel that we accepted it fully and took forward the outcome of the SKM work.

Mr Monteith: Thanks for that clarification. That is useful.

The committee has received several objections to the bill, including objections from people who are opposed to the route of the rail link—that will come as no surprise to you. We may hear more from them next week. In general terms, however, are you convinced that you cannot avoid going through St James's park, impacting on business premises in the area and moving the fuel depot at the airport?

John Halliday: The straight answer to your question is yes. We could do all that, but it would come at a cost. For example, one of the alignments that we considered involved tunnelling

under St James's park, but that would have added about £130 million to the project cost. That is possible. The route could, theoretically, go through the businesses and then dive down, but because of the gradient constraints of the heavy rail network, the track would have to remain at a low level, going under the motorway and staying underground until it reached the airport. That would be one solution, but it would add £130-odd million to the project cost.

Another alternative that we considered passed to the north-west of the St James interchange, but that, too, would have cost an awful lot of money—hundreds of millions of pounds in additional costs. We have considered alternatives, but we have had to balance costs with benefits. Frankly, what is proposed in the bill is the best scheme that we could arrive at.

Charles Hoskins: The point is relevant to the question that was asked about STAG. The options were tested against the Scottish transport appraisal guidance—John Halliday mentioned the features of a couple of options. STAG involves a wide set of criteria that must be applied that covers the Government's objectives; planning criteria are also set. Emanating from that was the SKM work, with which we concurred in principle on the choice of route.

Mr Monteith: Is overhead line electrification the most appropriate technology for the branch line or would other forms of power supply be more suitable?

Charles Hoskins: When the decision has been made to run heavy rail, the two basic options are running electric trains or running diesel trains. Overhead line equipment must be compatible with the existing equipment. Overhead line equipment is visible, but it has a noise benefit. It does not preclude the running of diesel trains—the option of running both types of train is available. If the choice were made not to have overhead lines and to run diesel trains, electric trains could not be run.

Simon Temple: That covers it.

John Halliday: I will clarify one point. You might have been thinking about what a previous witness said about a third rail, which is an electrified rail that is usually pretty close to the ground and from which a train picks up power. A third rail cannot be used with the heavy rail option—it is restricted to metros and trams.

Simon Temple: The committee might be aware that the old southern region of British Rail has third-rail electrification, but the Health and Safety Executive has said that it would not consider a third rail for new heavy rail schemes, unless they are extensions of the existing third-rail network. A third rail might be considered for a new metro, but not for a new main line railway, because it has

safety implications at level-crossings and the like. The proposed branch line has no level-crossings, but a third rail would not be compatible without very expensive dual-voltage rolling stock that can run on both systems.

Mr Monteith: You anticipated my next question, but that is fine.

Marlyn Glen: The committee is interested in the use of Manchester airport's rail link as a comparator for GARL. Do you accept that there is evidence from Manchester that a direct shuttle service between the airport and the city centre does not work in itself?

Douglas Ferguson: I do not believe that that is the case. Manchester's scheme uses similar infrastructure to that for Glasgow—it is a short spur from an existing railway line to a terminal station. It is correct to say that more services that are provided from Manchester airport station go beyond Manchester city centre than terminate there. I understand that when the Manchester project was originally proposed, the focus was much more on services to the city centre, although services that went beyond there were proposed even in the early days. Services to other places have subsequently been further developed.

In taking the Glasgow scheme as a comparator, we must bear in mind a couple of points. First, Glasgow airport's catchment area is different. Manchester airport has a much larger catchment area and is much more of a regional airport than Glasgow airport is. Secondly, the evidence that Network Rail presented this morning is that running some services out of Glasgow airport to serve other places would not be intrinsically impossible, if that emerged as a useful development.

Like Manchester, we have focused on the link to the city centre, but we accept that, as we build in the other blocks of our bigger picture, there will be opportunities to consider the provision of further connections through trains reversing at Glasgow airport or direct services as crossrail comes on stream.

Simon Temple: It is important to note that the patronage forecasts and the scheme's benefits are based solely on the shuttle service to the city centre. If the additional services to which Douglas Ferguson has referred are introduced, there may well be additional benefits, but those benefits have not been included in the benefits that we claim the scheme will produce.

Marlyn Glen: We are keen to test the robustness of the scheme and learn lessons from Manchester's experience. We seem to be comparing the scheme with Manchester's scheme at the beginning instead of its scheme now. We do not want to say "if only", which is what people in

Manchester have said—if only they knew what they know now, they would not have started with only a direct shuttle.

Douglas Ferguson: We accept that we should learn to develop the services that will operate on the line. If there are opportunities to develop a different service pattern from the beginning or from an early stage, we should consider them. However, as Simon Temple has said, the infrastructure that we have proposed will provide a service to Glasgow Central station. All the costs and benefits of that proposal have been put together in submitting the bill.

Marlyn Glen: I accept what you say about Manchester having a much larger airport and a much greater catchment area. However, there is concern about the patronage of GARL. Indeed, there is concern not only about the number of passengers who will use it, but about the cost of tickets. The cost that has been suggested for a GARL ticket is £5 return, whereas a return ticket from Manchester city centre to the airport is £2.75.

Douglas Ferguson: We used our models to estimate the patronage level and reached what we think is a conservative estimate of the number of people who will use the line. We think that it is better to err on the conservative side than to be overoptimistic.

We used the existing bus fare as a comparator. Choosing to use a different fare for the scheme would clearly affect the economics and the business case. A different fare might increase ridership or the required subsidy if there was not enough extra ridership to cover the lower fares that people were paying.

We have developed a business case and an economic case on the basis of a return fare of £5 and a single fare of £3.30. If Transport Scotland wished to set the fares at a different level, those fares would require to be negotiated through the franchise and might result in a different flow of payments. Nothing in the scheme precludes setting the fares at different levels—we have simply picked fares that seem to be sensible. The existing bus fare seems to be a sensible starting point to use. We have shown that there is an economic and business case for building the scheme with the fares in question.

Marlyn Glen: Obviously, we are concerned about social inclusion. The committee has received written evidence from a Mr George Baillie, who says that the likely cost of a rail ticket from Paisley to the airport will be 48p per mile travelled, which is expensive.

15:00

Simon Temple: Some explanation might be needed about how we arrived at the figure. The fare from Glasgow Central station to Paisley is £1.80. GARL trains will run alongside other trains, and clearly the fare on that section of the route must be the same as the normal existing fare. Therefore, to get to a fare of £3.30 to match the bus fare from Glasgow to the airport, the fare from Paisley to the airport has to be £1.50. That £1.50 added to the £1.80 gets us to £3.30. That is how we arrived at the figure and, on that basis, the fare is reasonable, although it looks expensive for such a short shuttle. However, I would not expect that many of the people who use the link between Paisley and the airport will come from Paisley. It will be more of an interchange for people travelling from Ayrshire, for example, and the £3.30 will be diluted in the overall fare.

Douglas Ferguson: There are many instances on the network where the fare between two adjacent stations is very high on a per mile basis. The fare from Glasgow Queen Street station to Charing Cross is around £1 and it is a journey of less than 2 miles, perhaps less than a mile. The nature of rail fares is that they are higher per mile for short distances than they are for longer distances.

Marlyn Glen: Thank you.

Mr Monteith: I want to go back to the possible additional routes that might build up the use of the Glasgow airport rail link. In the business case that you have proposed for the shuttle service, a significant operating subsidy is required for the service as is. Forgetting all the complications about platforms that you described to show why the scheme needs a dedicated platform, if additional services are to be run from Ayrshire or Lanarkshire would you expect them to be run on a commercial basis? If such additional services are possible, should they attract a subsidy? If they can be run on a commercial basis and thereby strengthen your business plan by bringing in additional passengers, why are they not already in the business case? That rather suggests that they would require to be subsidised.

Douglas Ferguson: I believe that such additional services would require a subsidy. If they did not, First ScotRail would probably be best placed to make that judgment. If it wished to operate those additional services without a subsidy, it could easily come to Transport Scotland and say, "We think that we can do this clever thing that would provide more services and you would not have to pay any more money in subsidy." I think that Transport Scotland would listen to that proposal carefully. However, the starting point is that those additional services would probably require some subsidy to cover their costs.

Mr Monteith: Without naming particular points of departure, people would be getting trains from, say, Ayrshire to Glasgow Central station or indeed, to Paisley Gilmour Street, and then going on to the airport, but they would not be using your rolling stock; they would be using only your track. Would SPT charge for that once trains started travelling on your track? That would give the scheme a commercial aspect, even if you wanted to encourage it by keeping the charges low.

Douglas Ferguson: It will not be our track. It will be part of the infrastructure that is maintained by Network Rail. Network Rail will set the charges, which will then be transferred back to the train operating companies. In a sense, we would not make those decisions. The premise that you start from—that the costs would be marginal because the trains would be running in any case—would help the business case for running such services either through to the airport or by reversing to the airport. Although that would assist, it would be wrong to assume that no costs will be associated with doing that. The additional number of passengers that will be generated is likely to be low against what may be relatively low costs.

Mr Monteith: I am just trying to identify whether we can find an income stream that would strengthen your business case.

John Halliday: Theoretically, there is no reason why track cannot be used on a completely commercial basis—for example, freight is carried in that way. In this case, it is Transport Scotland that will have to assess the commercial opportunities. At the moment, we are going through some detailed work on our financial business case. I am sure that, in setting the new fare structure for the new franchise, Transport Scotland will look at the issue.

The current franchisee, First ScotRail, has recognised the growth potential in the Ayrshire market. Clearly, any proposition would need to be considered in the next round of franchise negotiations. Whether that happens or not, a clinical business case will need to be made to determine the issue of patronage versus fares. As ever, if a high fare is set for a route, fewer people will use it. It is all about volumes and the ability to achieve balance in terms of income versus cost.

Mr Monteith: That usefully brings me on to my next question. One of the promoter's policy objectives is

"To provide public transport services ... in the ... Ayrshire Corridors that integrate with the existing transport network".

Will that happen as a result of the bill, or could it happen as the result of greater capacity being put in place between Paisley and Glasgow?

Charles Hoskins: If I may, I will come in, both to answer the question and to add to the evidence that my colleagues have given.

My first point is one of clarification about the benefits that we have quantified for the north and south Ayrshire corridors. The increased capacity between Glasgow and Paisley will mean that all trains using that corridor will have improved reliability. We have quantified that the transport benefits to Ayrshire will be £20 million—that is for all the passengers from Ayrshire who will use the corridor. We have to remember that people who use the Ayrshire corridor have to go through Paisley and Glasgow. Obviously, any infrastructure improvements will be of direct benefit to them. The bill will deliver that.

Secondly—and perhaps this is a wee bit more difficult to think through—by providing more trains between Glasgow and Paisley, we will ease overcrowding in Ayrshire. Clearly, passengers who travel just between Glasgow and Paisley will have a greater number of trains to use.

My third point relates to the wider economic benefit of the scheme. We have quantified the direct benefit to Ayrshire that will arise from the increased reliability that the infrastructure improvements will bring. As we heard earlier, the result will be that additional jobs will come to Ayrshire. My colleague David Keddie may want to come in on that.

Those are the three direct benefits that the bill will deliver for Ayrshire. We have been very clear—certainly, the Ayrshire structure plan team made it clear this morning, too—that, above and beyond the benefits that the bill will deliver, there is a need to do something else for Ayrshire in terms of capacity. However, that can take place only with yet another level of investment. We do not want to muddle up what the bill will deliver and what might happen south of Paisley. We have ring fenced the bill proposals. An important distinction has to be drawn between what the bill will deliver and what it may deliver. Undoubtedly, what it may deliver will depend on something else happening south of Paisley—perhaps the introduction of longer trains rather than infrastructure improvements.

We cannot forget that, although we are putting in only one additional platform at Glasgow Central station, we are creating space for another platform. As committee members will no doubt have witnessed, Glasgow Central station has a problem of platform availability at particular times of the day. The bill brings not only the direct benefit of one extra platform but the possibility of additional usage of that platform. However, as I said, we do not propose in the bill that it is used in other ways.

Mr Monteith: I want to develop these points a little further, and I want to consider the economic benefits for the neighbouring local authorities. Those authorities have generally supported the claims made on the potential economic benefits. Has there been a study—either by you or by an independent body—into greater investment in the lines, in signalling, and possibly in platform provision? Without the proposed new branch line, could such investment still provide benefits for Ayrshire and Renfrewshire? Could there be a business case comparison between the cost of GARL and the cost of simply increasing investment to relieve the existing capacity problems?

John Halliday: You highlight an interesting strategic issue. Since the formation of Transport Scotland, the development of the Scottish rail network as a single entity has been at the forefront of its work. The Scottish planning assessment for rail has been considering all the requirements of the Scottish rail network. That work was a legacy to Transport Scotland from the days of the Strategic Rail Authority; Transport Scotland has been completing the work and has taken evidence from numerous stakeholders including Network Rail.

At the same time, Network Rail is developing the rail utilisation strategy. Again, that will consider the whole Scottish rail network in order to find the pinchpoints and to work out exactly what the problems are. As a regional transport partnership, we are feeding into all that work. It will all come together in the rail strategy for Scotland, which Transport Scotland intends to introduce in late summer of this year. That in turn will feed into the investment plan for transport for Scotland. So the answer to the question is that work is on-going.

The GARL proposal is one of the building blocks and is recognised as a key element. The Paisley to Glasgow corridor has long been identified as a pinchpoint on the network. There are others too.

Charles Hoskins: Mr Monteith asked about comparisons. The short answer is that we are not aware of a detailed business case having been prepared for a plan simply to increase capacity between Glasgow, Paisley and Ayrshire, so there is no plan that could be compared with the plan for GARL. We are not aware of any such business case being prepared in the past, but John Halliday has talked about what is going on at the moment.

Marlyn Glen: I want to go back to some of the evidence that we heard this morning. Will you update the committee on how close you are to reaching agreement with Renfrewshire Council so that its objection can be settled?

John Halliday: You heard Mr Darracott this morning. We have had very constructive

discussions with the council. On Friday, the council's legal department sent us its comments on a draft agreement that we had provided and which we had felt dealt with all the issues. It is too early to comment on the council's response—and I have not yet seen it myself.

I echo what Mr Darracott said about neither the council nor the promoter feeling that any issue is insurmountable. We have to achieve a legally binding agreement so that Renfrewshire Council can see that, if the bill is passed, the promoter will be legally bound to do everything that we said in that agreement. We are very confident that we will be able to reach an agreement fairly quickly. Indeed, the council's response to the draft agreement that we sent it may have settled everything, but we will have to see what it says.

Marlyn Glen: I do not want to pour cold water on that, but I need to ask a question. Why has Renfrewshire Council not been asked to make a financial contribution to the scheme?

15:15

Douglas Ferguson: I will say a bit about how we are funded. SPT is funded partly by all the councils in its area, so any contribution that SPT makes is partly funded by Renfrewshire Council. The same applies to all the councils, including Glasgow City Council.

It might have been suggested that Glasgow City Council would contribute directly to the scheme, but in fact the suggestion was that through the cities growth fund, which the council administers, a contribution might be made to the scheme. Glasgow City Council administers that fund, but it is for the city region, so any contribution would come equally from Renfrewshire Council or the Lanarkshire councils, which are part of the city region.

We have not asked for a contribution from Renfrewshire Council, because it is one of our parent bodies and funds us in any case. However, a contribution might come from the cities growth fund, which is a Scottish Executive fund, so I suppose that the Executive would make that contribution.

Marlyn Glen: That clarifies the situation.

Is it fair to say that some of the benefits that are claimed for Renfrewshire as a direct result of GARL, such as the provision of office accommodation, might be delivered anyway?

David Keddie (Roger Tym and Partners): It is true to a degree that opportunities are available to undertake that development. However, as Mr Darracott said, although the local council and the development industry are aware of those opportunities, nothing has been proposed for

some years. In the report on the benefits, we took great care to point out that the GARL scheme would be likely to act as a catalyst for increasing the confidence of the market and the industry. The difficulty is that the industry's confidence is susceptible. In our professional judgment, the GARL scheme is an excellent input to build confidence to use such opportunities.

I will correct the impression that Mr Darracott may have given that all such benefits as set out in our report already exist and will happen no matter what. That is only the case for the benefits that are occurring at Glasgow airport, such as the growth in employment there, which we did not claim as a specific benefit, although we admitted that GARL would almost certainly support such benefits. As I have said, we accept the Paisley town centre element. The council and the development industry are aware of the opportunities, so the issue is bringing them forward, enabling them and allowing them to happen.

I emphasise that the 650 jobs per year and other figures that have been quoted throughout the debate are unlikely to happen come what may. Our figures were established by taking available information, setting up a calculation—as we must—and modelling an effect. Many comments and questions to witnesses this morning were about the level of detail in the estimates. Any calculation delivers an output in that way—it has some accuracy, but it gives a ballpark figure. However, it must be understood that the figures were based on the inherent population projection without the GARL scheme. The GARL scheme is additional to any other projection. I would not want the committee to get the impression from Mr Darracott's evidence that everything that we have said would occur naturally. It would not; it would occur only under certain circumstances.

The Convener: Let us return to the information that was provided by the Network Rail representatives. They said that Network Rail had withdrawn its objection on the ground that its concern about statutory provisions had been resolved. Given the fact that broadly the same issue has been raised in other objections, do you believe that all those concerns will be resolved in the same way?

John Halliday: Not necessarily. At the airport, there are two statutory bodies with their own statutory requirements, and we need to balance the two. We need to be able to provide the railway to operate as a railway and, on airport land, the airport operator must be able to operate the airport. BAA, however, is looking for some security around the commercial aspects of operating the airport. It is seeking to hold control of the land, and I am not sure that that is entirely compatible.

We are seeking to reach an agreement with BAA whereby the land underneath the viaduct, for example, will be available. As the viaduct comes on to the airport land, it will remain at a height and there will be roads underneath it. In normal circumstances, all the land underneath the railway would be railway; however, to operate the airport, the airport needs to have access for its roads, otherwise it cannot get people in. On the one hand, we require the powers to capture that land, otherwise we cannot provide the GARL; however, we think that we will be able to reach an agreement with BAA that will satisfy its requirements. We think that we are very close to that, but we still have a bit of work to do. You heard evidence about that from BAA earlier. BAA believes that compulsory purchase order powers would be too much, whereas we believe that we need CPO powers.

The Convener: Have you set an end point for your negotiations? Will you be able to tell us next Monday that you have struck an agreement with BAA?

John Halliday: I would like to. I will come back to the committee and give you an update on that.

Charles Hoskins: I can give you an update on the situation regarding the other statutory bodies that you asked about. We are aware of the objections that have been received from other bodies such as the Royal Mail, National Air Traffic Services and some of the telecom companies. We have responded to every one of those objections and our legal advice is that there should be no major difficulty. The exception, among statutory bodies, is BAA.

The Convener: It would help the committee if you could give us an update by Thursday on where you are in terms of each of those bodies, so that we can pick that up next Monday at the final round-up.

Mr Monteith: I want to pursue the compulsory purchase issue. What is significantly different about having the CPO power to build GARL over the land and being amenable to the rights of access that BAA might require, compared to having, say, a long lease? I mean not just a rental, but a 99 or 200-year lease that has rights for both sides built into it concerning the recognition of access and the ability to construct. What is the difference between having that and having a CPO power?

John Halliday: The intrinsic issue is that if we tried to negotiate without CPO powers we would be in an even negotiation that it might not be possible to conclude: the opposing party would be seeking to resolve all its issues, we would be trying to build a railway and there would be no compulsion to reach an end point. That is why

CPO powers are required. Without them the bill could be and remain a source of frustration.

We are all seeking to achieve the end point of the process: the use of the land has to accommodate both parties. How do we get there? I believe that CPO powers are required as a backstop. Transport Scotland and the airport operator will have to settle that, and we are trying to provide as much information to Transport Scotland as we can. We might very well be talking about a long lease, which is 175 years, although that is not necessarily a long time for a railway.

There is a balance of interests to be struck, but my key point is how we arrive at a negotiating position where we have something to enforce the capability to build the railway. We believe that there needs to be compulsion through the CPO powers.

Charles Hoskins: I have a quick point to add. The point about using CPO at the airport and the suggestions about the effect of that on the airport's development is important. I hope that our evidence—and that of BAA—has helped the committee to be clear that we have taken full account of airport development in selecting the airport alignment and the station. The ownership of the land is clearly a matter of control for the immediate future and in the longer term. We are certainly not seriously jeopardising the long-term development of the airport. The rail link alignment fits into the airport's master plan and there was a lot of discussion about that location.

The Convener: I now take you back to the thorny question of consultation. We heard Fairline Coaches this morning indicate that it has not been consulted. SIAPRA also indicated that there had been no consultation. Do you have any explanation?

Douglas Ferguson: I will ask Charlie Hoskins to say something about the detail of the consultation.

We went into the project with the view that consultation was a key part of the process and we wanted to do it as well and as comprehensively as we could. We believe that we have generally done that. We feel that we have gone through every stage very methodically. We tried to identify all the people with whom we should have consulted and we have given them all a chance to be a part of the development of the scheme.

The reality will always be that no one can get it all absolutely correct. With hindsight, we accept that our consultation with the police and the associated emergency bodies did not quite come together.

As far as the other people and companies are concerned, we believe that we made every effort to consult them and their representative bodies adequately.

Charles Hoskins: I will talk about Fairline Coaches and bus operators in general. As the SPT, we have a clear role in buses—

The Convener: I would hope so.

15:30

Charles Hoskins: We consulted in detail all the bus operators that we believed were running along that route. That included Scottish Citylink, FirstGroup, Stagecoach, which came in later, Linn Park Buses, which—interestingly—developed a service when we were designing the rail link, and Fairline Coaches.

We sent a detailed letter to all those organisations, in which we outlined the project and invited them both to the public meetings and to one-to-one meetings, which we find are much more beneficial. Scottish Citylink and Linn Park Buses took us up on that offer and their position was clear—it was similar to the stance that Fairline Coaches adopted this morning. Fairline Coaches did not respond to our offer of further consultation. In hindsight, we probably could have followed up on that. We certainly engaged with Scottish Citylink and the new operator, Linn Park Buses.

The case of SIAPRA was slightly odd. I think that Mr McGlynn mentioned a meeting that he had with our chairman. None of the officers who are here could recollect that meeting, but I understand from our chairman that that was a general meeting on park and ride and that our chairman welcomed Mr McGlynn's input and asked him to send in the proposals that they had discussed. I was not aware that Mr McGlynn had had a meeting with our chairman specifically about the provision of park-and-ride facilities for the Glasgow airport rail link, but I can double-check that.

We listened to what Mr McGlynn said this morning and we have no doubt that there are opportunities in that area. John Halliday mentioned our park-and-ride strategy, through which we can certainly involve the private operators.

The Convener: It was abundantly clear that Mr McGlynn was speaking on behalf of the Scottish Independent Airport Park and Ride Association. From his body language, it would be fair to assume that, as an individual, he was satisfied with the amount of consultation in which he had been involved. However, he felt that there had been no consultation on the wider issues of park-and-ride facilities and airport parking. You say that he spoke to your chairman. Was SIAPRA consulted? Did you write to it or ask it to contribute to your consultation?

Charles Hoskins: I do not think that that was the case, but I would have to clarify that. One can

never cover all the associations—there will always be one or two that slip through the net.

The Convener: Yes, but I put it to you that SIAPRA is quite a significant parking association.

John Halliday: I want to reiterate the point that Douglas Ferguson made. We took great pains to get the consultation process right. We extended the consultation period to 17 weeks. We distributed leaflets and tried to identify all the relevant organisations. If we missed SIAPRA, that is an omission that we will have to examine. The association is new to me—we did not know of its existence. We would like to know who makes up the organisation. Mr McGlynn is one member, but I am not sure who the others are. I do not know whether he has given any evidence about that.

We are determined to capture all the people who will be affected by the project. If we have made an omission with SIAPRA, we will rectify that forthwith. We will come back to the committee quickly with the outcome of our investigations.

The Convener: Okay. There are no further questions. Is there anything else that the witnesses want to get on the record?

Douglas Ferguson: I do not think so. In your final question about consultation, you picked up on the very issue that we wanted to pick up on.

The Convener: I thank all the witnesses for their evidence.

The committee's final preliminary stage meeting will be held in Renfrewshire Council's Civic Suite next Monday, when we will take further oral evidence on the general principles of the bill from the promoter and the Minister for Transport and Telecommunications, Tavish Scott. Among the issues on which the committee will wish to receive assurance are that all the bill's policy objectives can be delivered and that the bill can be delivered within budget.

The committee will also take evidence on the bill's accompanying documents and from those objectors who have objected to the whole bill rather than to specific provisions in it. I have no doubt that the witnesses for the promoter will review carefully the objections and the written evidence that the committee has received so that they can identify the issues that we are likely to ask questions about.

Meeting closed at 15:35.

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