

Report to Partnership Meeting 2 February 2018

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

Train2Ride

Study Completed

This study is now complete and available on the HITRANS website.

Conclusions

This study has aimed to take an evidence-based view of demand for carriage of bikes on West Highland Line trains. Both ScotRail train services from Glasgow to Oban / Fort William / Mallaig, and Caledonian Sleeper services to Inverness and Fort William, have been considered in this study.

Key findings from the study are as follows:

- The ScotRail booking data analysed for this study suggests there is spare capacity for bikes on trains when the network is taken as a whole. However, scrutiny of individual services suggests there are particularly busy services, and services to Oban and Crianlarich are more regularly fully booked with bikes than other journey legs.
- Demand is highly seasonal, and surveys for this study (undertaken in July 2017) suggest people carrying bikes on the ScotRail and Sleeper services at this time are largely cycle tourists. The survey work appears to suggest rail+bike passengers are more likely to be male with relatively expensive bikes, and touring bikes as opposed to everyday bikes. The median stay for ScotRail passengers interviewed was between seven and ten nights, and it can therefore be assumed there is a reasonable economic contribution occurring from these trips (in terms of food and accommodation). It does suggest these lines have a particular and unique role in terms of tourism and the economy, and solutions for bike carriage therefore need to reflect this.
- Notwithstanding the spare capacity suggested by the ScotRail cycle booking data, survey work with passengers suggests there is a substantial amount of informal cycle carriage happening. It is possible the booking data may understate actual demand.
- Should cycle spaces reduce by up to two-thirds on ScotRail services on the WHL, as has been advertised with the change to rolling stock on this line, the proportion of journey legs on one of the busiest journey legs for cycle bookings, Crianlarich to Oban, where demand would exceed supply based on current booking figures could be 15% of legs (as context, some 4% of journey legs on this section are currently fully booked).
- New Caledonian Sleeper rolling stock will see an increase from six to ten cycle spaces on-board. This may reduce the use of the road courier service to an extent,

although there may still be regular instances of surplus bikes on the Highland Sleeper between Euston and Inverness during the summer peak, and to a lesser extent, on the Euston – Fort William route.

- There seems to be a reasonable appetite to pay for cycle carriage by rail passengers. This appears to be in proportion to the fare they have paid for their ticket, but some have made the point they would expect good quality in return and a guaranteed space.

A number of possible options have been considered to deal with excess demand, which are infrastructural and operational in nature. It is recommended that these are explored in further detail to assess feasibility and deliverability:

- The re-design of proposed Class 158 rolling stock to accommodate more cycle spaces or the retention of existing Class 156 rolling stock; and the potential for dedicated cycle carriages.
- Further work to promote bikes on buses, and even potentially dedicated “bike buses”.
- More formal partnerships between rail operators and local bike hire operators to give discounted bike hire for rail passengers.
- A review of cycle reservation systems to allow passengers to see how many bike spaces are available on-board their requested service. Such information could also be part of a wider Mobility as a Service approach in the future in the West Highlands.
- Improved communications and training of staff to ensure consistency and clarity of information on bikes on trains. Despite reservations being required on most WHL services, there is clearly flexibility already being shown by ScotRail and Caledonian Sleeper staff in terms of passengers bringing bikes without a reservation, and this may be currently working in the interests of passengers which is positive. That said, this flexibility may raise expectations of future passengers and may be unmanageable in the long-term if demand increases. It does suggest however there is potentially more space for bikes being found on trains than is formally advertised.

RISK REGISTER

RTS Delivery

Impact – Positive- Mode shift/active travel

Policy

Impact – Positive

Financial

Impact – Nil- project funded and completed

Equality

Impact – Access benefits

Recommendations

1. Members are asked to note the report.

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