

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru / National Assembly for Wales

Pwyllgor yr Economi, Seilwaith a Sgiliau/ Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee

Masnachfrait Rheilffyrdd a chyflwyno Metro / Rail Franchise and the Metro

Ymateb gan Defnyddwyr gwasanaeth rheilffordd Maesteg i Gaerdydd / Evidence from Users of the Maesteg to Cardiff rail service

**The effectiveness of the Welsh Government's approach to the development, procurement and delivery of the rail franchise and South Wales Metro, including key risks and how they can be mitigated**

1 There has not been a clear definition of the South Wales Metro and what it will achieve made available to the public for prior consultation. Most interpretations of Metro is a turn up and go service with a minimum waiting time of 15 minutes, However this could be a stated aim but there are also references at half hourly rail services in some parts which is not to true Metro status. There has been no mention of services at weekends and bank holidays. It is not known what specifications have been given to the bidders.

2 There has been no prior consultation on the replacement of heavy rail by light rail or where this will take place .If this takes place there will be considerable disruption for the routes concerned. However using light rail could have its place serving the suburbs of the large towns and cities in Wales.

3 The setting up of Transport for Wales has created an additional body from Welsh Government. This could result in Transport for Wales not being in touch with local communities or in fact the Assembly itself.

4 Although many functions are now devolved to Welsh Government there is still not control over the services provided by other operators in Wales. This has in the past lead to disjointed service patterns and the inability to provide an integrated service with good connections. These operators have in the past withdrawn and altered services which the Wales and Borders franchise has had to replace. There must be closer links with the Dft controlled franchises.

5. There is uncertainty about the present route extensions to Cheltenham, Birmingham International and Manchester Airport and the ability to provide services to Liverpool and Bristol. These are essential for rail travellers to and from Wales.

6 Some services in the new franchise will be cross border services and consequentially the will need to be excellent cooperation between Dft and Welsh Government and also the communities served by Cross Border services.

7 Infrastructure maintenance is by Network Rail which is controlled by Westminster Government. Recent research has shown the Wales does not get the same proportion of Network Rail expenditure as other parts of Britain. This is evidenced by the failure to electrify any lines in Wales at the present time. The Welsh Government has no direct control over Network rail schemes and in fact has used its own and European money for many of its infrastructure improvement schemes. The relationship with Network Rail is a risk especially with regards to funding and also the priority given to improvement schemes.

8 The delay in delivering an urgently required half hourly service from Cardiff to Maesteg including the main line stations of Pontyclun, Llanharan and Pencoed indicates a delivery difficulty between Welsh Government and Network Rail although Network Rail in its latest planning document indicates such an enhancement is possible. This has been further facilitated by the re signalling of Cardiff Central station.

9 The proposal for the moving maintenance of some lines from Network Rail to the franchise operator creates the risk of inadequate funding from Network Rail/Dft, the availability of specialised equipment and infrastructure risks such as bridge replacement and landslides.

These risks have been managed promptly in the past by Network Rail and there are a number of recent examples eg on the Maesteg branch there has been a river bridge and repairs after a landslide.

10 There have been no prior plans for the provision of more and new rolling stock in advance of the new franchise stating. It can take at least three years to acquire new rolling stock. Thus there is a risk in the first years of the franchise that there will be little improvement in services. This is in contrast to the purchase by Mid Glamorgan council of rolling stock to operate the reintroduced service to Maesteg.

11 The Welsh Government has throughout its existence sought integrated transport but only achieved it to a very limited extent eg Traws Cambria services and a few bus interchanges. There is the risk that Welsh Government will not achieve this again with the fragmented provision of rail and bus services in Wales. The Bridgend Transport scheme has not been delivered although European funding was available.

12 The Government's aspiration for light rail, which is appropriate for short distance travel, could lead to consideration of its introduction elsewhere including links from Bridgend to Porthcawl , Blaengarw and, Nantymoel

**Priorities for the franchise specification and Metro delivery to ensure rail services meet the needs of current and future travellers throughout the franchise area, and deliver value for money for both passengers and the taxpayer.**

This section relates to the provision of rail services serving the stations in Bridgend County Maesteg to Bridgend and the stations between Pyle ,Bridgend and Cardiff ie Pencoed, Llanharan and Pontyclun .

1 There is an urgent need for at least a half hourly service from Maesteg to Cardiff (and beyond- to reduce platform capacity at Cardiff).

Passenger services from Maesteg to Cardiff were reintroduced in 1992 using rolling stock purchased by the local authorities and at present used by ATW as part of its fleet.

There are many reasons for the enhanced service for all stations in Bridgend and those at Llanharan and Pontyclun.

Employment opportunities in Maesteg have decreased and there is a high volume of outward travel to Bridgend, Cardiff and other South Wales locations. Peak hours see a continuous stream of traffic on the roads to/from Maesteg with long waits at roundabouts and traffic lights.

The Bridgend to Maesteg road A4063 has not been upgraded in recent years. Overtaking is not possible and there are slow journey times. The road continues north to serve communities in the Upper Llynfi and Afan valleys.

There is no through bus service from Maesteg to Cardiff and unlike many other valleys an express service between Bridgend and Maesteg is impossible because of road conditions.

The early morning service to Cardiff is not fit for purpose for commuters with arrival times in Cardiff at 07.34 and 08.48. The return services are at 16.18 and 17.18. There are additional services from the main line stations which have been introduced by ATW to reduce overcrowding however the rapid rise in passenger numbers has resulted in the peak hour through services from Cardiff to Maesteg being standing room only to and from Pencoed or Llanharan.

Many connections require long waits at Cardiff with some up to 55 minutes. Changes made 10 years ago to the westbound service from Paddington service extended connectional times at Cardiff and Bridgend. West bound connections at Bridgend include waits of up to 30 minutes

There is a significant flow of passengers including school children and college students on the Maesteg branch to and from Bridgend and an increased service could more than double passenger numbers.

The Maesteg line has no Sunday service and no late evening service. It has some of the earliest last evening departures from Cardiff at 21.10 on Saturdays and 22.35 on weekdays.

2 The need for an half hourly service from Maesteg to Cardiff was first identified in 'The Transport Framework for Wales' in 2001 which also identified new stations at Brackla and Llanharan. The only developments since that have been- the opening of Llanharan station in December 2007, the extending of platforms between Bridgend and Maesteg for four car trains in 2008 and new car park facilities at Sarn and Pencoed.

3 The transport consortium SEWTA approved the introduction of a half hourly service to Maesteg in its initial plans and subsequently made a bid for funding the additional service. At the same time SEWTA made a bid for an additional service between Bargoed and Rhymney, in both cases including European funding. Both service enhancements were approved and funded and the Rhymney line now has the infrastructure for a half hourly service but for some unknown reason the Maesteg line enhancement did not take place although the funding was available. The Bridgend to Maesteg section also has higher passenger useage than Bargoed to Rhymney section even though the later line has a much better including Sunday service. Rolling stock for the new services was also acquired but was diverted to be used on West Wales lines.

4 The Bridgend County Transport Plan 2001-5 listed the following rail transport developments the reopening of Vale of Glamorgan line, a new station at Brackla Station with Park and Ride facilities Maesteg line service enhancement, Wildmill, Pencoed and Pyle to have Park and Ride facilities and a new Rail / Bus interchange at Bridgend Railway station. The plan was approved by Welsh Government. European funding was made available for the development of Bridgend Interchange but the development never took place and the money was reallocated elsewhere.

5 When the new franchise was awarded to Arriva Trains Wales in 2003 there still was no Government financial support for additional services including a Sunday service to Maesteg. However ATW as part of their bid added three weekday evening services and two Saturday evening services (the third was not allowed by Railtrack for a now defunct reason)

6 All subsequent Government and Network Rail plans have included an enhanced/half hourly service for the Maesteg line. The latest was the National Transport Finance Plan 2015 which stated work would be completed to GRIP4 by 2016 over 15 years since the initial approval.

7 It is now time that Welsh Government delivered the promised and much needed half hourly service enhancement including a Sunday service and ensure that it is included in the new franchise agreement and that the required infrastructure is in place for this to happen.

### **Other lines in Bridgend**

**Vale of Glamorgan** The reintroduction of a passenger service on the Vale of Glamorgan line was first identified in 'The Transport Framework for Wales' in 2001 and passenger services were reintroduced in 2005

There is a need for an half hourly service on the Vale of Glamorgan line especially to serve the growing community of Llantwit Major and the expanding Cardiff Airport for travellers especially from West Wales. The National Transport Plan March 2010 lists an additional half hourly service on Vale of Glamorgan line

**Main line** Bridgend should have a 15 minute interval service to Cardiff. This has been achieved for smaller valley communities such as Abercynnon and Bargoed Pyle serves the communities of Cornelly, Pyle and Kenfig Hill as well as being a rail head for Porthcawl. Pyle station reopened in June 1994 when the Swanline service Originally, the service was provided through a partnership between British Rail and local government, with the local authorities securing EU development funding and retaining ownership of the trains needed to operate the service. However at present the Swanline service itself as unattractive to users at its current low frequency, with extremely restricted journey to work options for Swansea commuters, but takes up valuable space on the busy section of line between Bridgend and Cardiff.

Signalling renewal work in 2007 introduced a new turnback facility at Port Talbot station and the service could be amended to an hourly all stations service from Swansea to Port Talbot with Pyle served by the hourly West Wales to Manchester trains. However Bridgend Country

Council has suggested a turn back at Bridgend which is also possible and would give Pyle an even more frequent service.

Another anomaly is the Pyle is excluded from the zonal ticketing for the Cardiff Valley and should be added to this arrangement

## Appendix

The Welsh Government's Moving People- Improving Rail Five Year Plan July 2005 approved the Maesteg enhancement with a new passing loop and associated track works and new station at Brackla. It also approved Interchange facilities at Wildmill where a large site owned by Railtrack was available for a bus interchange and large car park. Network Rails' Wales Rail Planning Assessment July 2007 was committed to platform lengthening between Bridgend to Maesteg to four car trains which was completed in 2008. It also provided short term options including to improve service capacity and frequency on Maesteg line to two trains per hour improvements and this was confirmed in Network Rails', Wales Route Utilisation Strategy which supported SEWTAS request half hourly service to Maesteg a similar sized town to Aberdare and Merthyr Tydfil and proceeded to design a passing loop north of Tondy at GRIP 3 stage. Welsh Government's National Transport Plan March 2010 states 'Extend the half hourly service from Maesteg to Brackla and Cardiff ; as if the half hourly service from Maesteg to Bridgend was already approved.