



Scottish Council for  
Development and Industry

## POLICY SUBMISSION

### SCDI RESPONSE TO THE TRANSPORT SELECT COMMITTEE'S INQUIRY INTO THE STRATEGIC CASE FOR HIGH SPEED RAIL

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SCDI is an independent and inclusive economic development network which seeks to influence and inspire government and key stakeholders with our ambitious vision to create shared sustainable economic prosperity for Scotland.

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## **SCDI response to the transport select committee's inquiry into the strategic case for high speed rail**

1. The Scottish Council for Development and Industry is pleased to participate in the Transport Select Committee's inquiry into the strategic case for high speed rail. SCDI is an independent membership network that strengthens Scotland's competitiveness by influencing Government policies to encourage sustainable economic prosperity. SCDI's membership includes businesses, trade unions, local authorities, educational institutions, the voluntary sector and faith groups.
2. SCDI strongly supports the introduction of a high speed rail network connecting Glasgow and Edinburgh to London and welcome the all-party vision to build a high speed rail network linking large areas of the UK to the high speed rail network in continental Europe. Whilst SCDI welcomes the speed with which detailed plans for HS2 are progressing and the assurance that Birmingham will not be the end of the line, we remain concerned by the lack of a firm commitment to continue the HSR network to Scotland and the lack of any timetable for this.
3. Inter-city rail travel has seen substantial increases in passenger numbers over recent years. As fuel prices increase and consumers are increasingly aware of their carbon footprint, this modal shift is likely to continue. Significant improvements in passenger satisfaction levels, investment in rolling stock and reduction in journey times on major routes have also been instrumental in increasing passenger numbers. Parts of the existing inter-city rail infrastructure, such as the West Coast Main Line are approaching maximum capacity.
4. As with any high-speed transportation system, the greatest benefits are seen over longer distances. Network Rail's August 2009 Strategic Business case for high speed rail<sup>1</sup> concluded that a strong business case exists for the construction of HSR to Scotland – stronger than a route terminating in the West Midlands, Greater Manchester or Yorkshire. Greengauge 21's Fast Forward: A High Speed Rail Strategy for Britain<sup>2</sup> calculated the economic and wider benefits of HSR. Scotland's benefit figure of £19.8bn is the highest of any region in the UK outside of London [Annex 1].
5. Including Glasgow and Edinburgh in HS2 from the outset significantly improves the business case and provides increased value for money to the taxpayer. Over 60 years, it pays for itself 1.8 times over. Network Rail's report showed that new HSR lines to Glasgow and Edinburgh are major demand generators, adding some 10-11 million trips to the network. However, using the classic network north of Preston severely reduces the advantage of new lines and reduces the demand

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<sup>1</sup> Strategic Business Case for High Speed Rail, Network Rail,  
<http://www.networkrailmediacentre.co.uk/Publications/Strategic-business-case-a44.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> Fast Forward: A High Speed Rail Strategy for Britain, Greengauge 21,  
<http://www.greengauge21.net/wp-content/uploads/fast-forward1.pdf>

by 62% to just 4.1 million. The benefits of the investment can only be maximised over the longer London-Scotland distance.

6. High Speed Rail has the potential to create a more balanced society where opportunities are more evenly shared between regions. This is a policy priority which SCDI shares with Government. Including Glasgow and Edinburgh in the network will deliver significant economic benefits to Scotland; improving connectivity with London, the South East and North of England and with Europe. However, the failure to bring HS2 to Scotland will comparatively disadvantage the Scottish economy, particularly in relation to tourism.
7. Overseas evidence indicates that when a journey can be made in less than three hours, railways capture 50% of the market. HSR to Scotland would deliver the journey times required at two and three quarter hours between Glasgow and Edinburgh and London. Running High Speed trains on existing lines north of Manchester and Leeds would not. Indeed, journey times would, at best, be 3 hours 37 minutes and High Speed trains using classic tracks north of Manchester and Leeds could even be slower than at present.
8. Cross-border connectivity is a significant issue for the development of Scotland's economy. SCDI was disappointed that the third runway at the UK's hub airport, Heathrow, is not to go ahead, raising concerns that lower-value domestic slots, carrying traffic to and from Scottish cities will be lost in favour of higher-value long haul slots into Heathrow. This makes High Speed Rail connections between Scotland and London all the more important.
9. SCDI recognise that high speed rail is unlikely to be competitive on routes to the north of Scotland's central belt. However, modal shift on journeys between the central belt and London will present opportunities for increased regional air services between Aberdeen, Inverness and Heathrow. We would also like to see coordinated interconnecting services between the high speed rail line and services on the classic rail network to and from the north of Scotland.
10. High Speed Rail will also have a positive impact on carbon emissions. As High Speed 1 and European routes have demonstrated, in addition to the economic benefits of shorter journey times, improved connectivity would promote modal shift towards rail and away from aviation.
11. If rail is to become the mode of choice for most inter-city journeys between the population and economic centres of Scotland and the largest cities of the rest of the UK, building new lines to Scotland is the only option. It would significantly reduce air demand, capacity pressures at South East airports, and carbon emissions.
12. SCDI is aware of and concerned by proposals which would slow down high-speed rail in England. Any lengthening to journey times will further erode the more marginal overall benefits of journey time reductions to Scotland of the

existing high-speed rail proposals, the potential economic benefits and likely environmental benefits of modal shift between air and rail.

13. SCDI would like to see construction of the new high speed line started at both ends as part of a firm commitment to cross-border high speed rail. The Scottish Government, working closely with northern English cities, should immediately begin to prepare the way through the planning process. In addition, the existing East and West Coast Main Lines linking Edinburgh and Glasgow to London have the opportunity to undertake incremental and comparatively inexpensive improvements which would act as stepping stones on the way to a full high-speed rail link. Once High Speed 2 is built, these lines would provide fast inter-regional travel where there is large scale demand, and open up more track space for low-carbon freight transportation.

14. With the new lines comes additional capacity for freight transit. The UK and Scottish Governments should explore the opportunities for freight, either from high speed freight or greater access to existing main lines.

#### **More information**

15. For more information on this response, please contact James Alexander, SCDI Policy and Communications Manager on 0141 352 8553 or [james.alexander@scdi.org.uk](mailto:james.alexander@scdi.org.uk).

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## Annex 1

### Regional economic benefits of High Speed Rail

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