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Edinburgh Airport Rail Link

A Response from British Air Transport Association (BATA)

1. BATA welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence in respect of the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill. BATA represents UK-registered airlines, in the scheduled, charter and cargo sectors. Our members produce more than 80% of UK airline output and many of them operate at Edinburgh.

General Principles of the Bill

2. BATA has long supported the principle of improving public transport access to airports provided such improvements are fit for purpose and economically viable. We therefore support the general principles of the Bill.

Adequacy of Accompanying Documents

3. We are disappointed that there is very little information in the accompanying documents about the costs, economics and funding of the project. The Promoter's Memorandum states that the chosen option has the highest cost of all the options considered but does not actually give the cost. It also states that the chosen option has the best Net Present Value of £250M over 30 years and that incremental operating costs should be equalled by revenues within a decade of operation. However there is no detailed analysis to back up these statements. There is no information about how the project is to be funded.
4. We would urge the Scottish Parliament to obtain more information about the costs, economic case for the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link (EARL) and proposed funding arrangements. Without such information it is difficult to see how there can be proper scrutiny of the Bill.

Funding

5. EARL is an ambitious project – far more than just an airport rail link. It will improve the rail network over a wide area and increase the range of connections and services available to rail passengers. It will also create a new integrated transport hub at Edinburgh airport.

6. The claimed economic, social and environmental benefits of EARL are considerable and far-ranging. Although EARL will expand the airport's catchment area, it is unlikely that that it will, in itself, add to the total number of air passengers. Nobody flies just because there is a rail link. Increases in passenger numbers at Edinburgh from the larger catchment area will be offset by reductions at other airports such as Glasgow. There will be no net benefit for airlines. The benefits of EARL will accrue to the community at large. We therefore believe that it should be funded from the public purse. The aeronautical charges at Edinburgh should not include any contribution to the costs of EARL.

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