

Competition Commission,
Victoria House,
Southampton Row,
London,
WC1B 4AD.

February 4th 2007

Scottish Citylink Joint Venture Forced Sale

The recent confirmation on January 31st 2007 that the Competition Commission is insistent on destroying what has developed into a most stable and committed long distance coach service network within Scotland is alarming. We seem yet again to have resorted to this most dim and perverse practice of forcing suppliers to compete with each other, with no real thought or knowledge of the needs of the customer. As has been seen in the past in the bus industry, the end product of *forced* competition is a drop in service quality combined with perceived short term financial gains for the customer.

In this scenario, divestment of any part of what is referred to as the "Saltire Cross" network may result in a poorer range of connecting services and fares. This can only be to the customer's detriment. In other words, a loss of co-ordination, and the likelihood of mis-matched connections, fares, ticket ranges and service types. Currently, the hub and spoke arrangements in place in various locations work well from my experience and offer a choice of service times we could never have dreamed of in previous years.

I am also well aware that the Stagecoach Group have announced a substantial order for new coaches intended for the current network, boosting employment in a UK industry sector which has lost much to overseas competition in recent years. A divestment would see opportunities for these new coaches to be delivered for services outside Scotland.

Bottom line, I fear, is that this decision is borne of a self justifying and self perpetuating organisation with a need to stamp its authority where it believes it will meet with least resistance. The decision shows little understanding of the true needs and desires of the Scottish traveling public. Given that the Stagecoach Group have offered up behavioral undertakings to your organisation, I would ask that the Competition Commission consider these undertakings as a solution which will serve the travelling public of Scotland far more satisfactorily than any divestment.

I urge you with utmost gravity to reconsider the decision. After all, I use the network - how many individuals within the Competition Commission involved in reaching this decision actually do ?

Yours sincerely

Donald MacRae

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