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From: Gavin Booth [mailto:gavin.booth@btconnect.com]

Sent: 07 February 2007 09:54

To: Anne Jolly

Subject: Stagecoach/Citylink Joint Venture

Scottish Citylink Inquiry: notice of proposal to accept undertakings

I write on behalf of Bus Users UK to express our continuing concern about the Competition Commission's decision on the Stagecoach/Scottish Citylink Joint Venture. Divestment of any of the elements of the current structure would be of no benefit to passengers at all; in fact there would be significant disadvantages.

Passengers make their journey decisions based on a number of factors - departure time, arrival time, ease of interchange, price, length of journey, even the scenic attractions of the journey. For a journey between the Central Belt of Scotland and Inverness or Aberdeen (or points between) there is the choice of the private car, the rail services and the coach services. Passengers whose journey is time-constrained, but probably not cost-constrained, may well choose to drive or travel by train. We know that many passengers currently using the Citylink and/or Megabus services find the present arrangements very suitable, where regular departures allow them to choose when to travel and, given the different Citylink and Megabus products, at what cost. The ease of interchange with guaranteed connections brings peace of mind, particularly for older passengers, as does the ability to feed into and travel on to places that are not on the direct line of route. We are concerned that a new operator would not be prepared to maintain the service pattern that exists today, and could decide to concentrate on end-to-end journeys at the expense of passengers in significant communities like Aviemore, Cumbernauld, Dunfermline and Pitlochry. An important factor for passengers is the simplicity of the present arrangement, and we would regard the present combined timetable as a positive strength rather than a competitive threat of any kind. We would urge you to reconsider your decision and consider adopting the behavioural undertakings that I understand Stagecoach has put forward. Such undertakings appear to have worked successfully following the awarding of the ScotRail franchise to First, without any inconvenience to bus or rail passengers.

Gavin Booth
Chairman, Bus Users UK

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