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Edward Mountain MSP
Convener, Net Zero Committee.
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

17th December 2024

Dear Edward,

**Scotrail High Speed Train (HST) Fleet Replacement,
Rail Services Decarbonisation Action Plan Refresh**

I write to advise of the commencement of a procurement exercise to replace ScotRail's High Speed Train (HST) fleet of trains which serve Scotland's InterCity network. I recently approved an Outline Business Case for the replacement of ScotRail's fleet of HSTs and the recommendation to replace that fleet with a cleaner, greener and more modern fleet.

By way of background, ScotRail's HSTs are the oldest trains in the ScotRail fleet and are deployed on the InterCity routes from Glasgow and Edinburgh to Inverness and Aberdeen. The 25 trains are increasingly expensive to operate and will become difficult to maintain unless replaced before too long.

These routes are strategically important for Scotland: 35% of Scotland's population are served by the rail corridor to Aberdeen. Inverness provides long distance connectivity to the rest of the UK for approximately 250,000 people: it is the gateway to the Highlands and Islands and the Far North.

These InterCity services are essential for effective sustainable connectivity within Scotland. They comprise some 19% of ScotRail's business and contribute to reduced transport emissions through modal shift.

InterCity services not only connect the Highlands and North-East of Scotland with the Central Belt, but also to the rest of Scotland and the rest of the UK in the most environmentally-friendly manner, with a much lower carbon footprint than other modes, such as private car and aviation¹.

This planned investment will secure the reliability of our Intercity routes for the long-term and will continue to deliver sustainable connectivity helping the people, economy and environment along the routes they serve. The replacement trains will be more modern,

¹ [Which form of transport has the smallest carbon footprint? - Our World in Data](#)

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cleaner and greener, with more accessible and family-friendly facilities for ScotRail's passengers.

The replacement of the InterCity fleet will contribute to the development of the refreshed Rail Services Decarbonisation Action Plan (DAP). The original DAP, published in 2020, contained an ambitious commitment of decarbonising the traction elements of Scotland's rail network by 2035. The DAP also gave a commitment to review the plan and reassess in a post-covid landscape.

The technological and financial landscape has changed significantly since the DAP was first published. The Scottish Government currently faces significant, continuing financial and budgetary pressures. As a consequence of these challenges, it is clear that the 2020 DAP commitment to decarbonise rail services by 2035 can no longer be met.

Undertaking too much disruptive engineering work across the rail network at the same time would have significant farebox revenue impacts and would significantly diminish the attractiveness of rail travel for the public.

Delivering electrification over a longer period of time reduces passenger disruption from engineering works. It also allows for other associated works, such as bridge replacements, to be undertaken in a more phased manner, reducing road traffic impacts.

The refreshed DAP, due for publication in Spring 2025 will set out a credible plan to deliver decarbonisation in a proportionate way that achieves best value. It will contain a commitment to achieve decarbonisation by 2045 in line with the legal commitments in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.

Yours sincerely,

FIONA HYSLOP
Cabinet Secretary for Transport

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