

## **Mid Wales rail users welcome rail improvements in South Wales but question process**

*A press release by Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth Rail Passenger Association*

Today's (2nd June 2008) announcement of a £52 Million package of rail improvements in South Wales was welcomed by Mid Wales rail user group SARPA as a boost to Wales but the announcement raised questions regarding the processes employed by WAG in giving the green light to much needed rail projects.

SARPA met with Deputy First Minister Ieuan Wyn Jones in April to lobby for the long overdue hourly service on the Aberystwyth line. Senior Officials in Transport Wales made it clear that all rail projects had to go through the regional transport consortia and their regional transport plans. SARPA approaches to the Mid Wales consortia TraCC have been inconclusive as TraCC, complain that they need help from WAG as they do not have the resource or power to drive forward schemes like the hourly service and have yet to approve their regional transport plan.

Mid Walians have been left bemused as this bureaucratic merry go round seems not have been the case in South Wales as this scheme has apparently bypassed the SEWTA regional transport plan and gone straight through from WAG which SARPA was told was not the process. Perhaps WAG could clarify.

SARPA Chairman Gareth Marston said "No one begrudges this scheme as many our members will benefit from improvements in South Wales including myself but there's a strong feeling amongst our membership that different rules have been applied. I've been contacted this evening by a County Councillor understandably irate that the same growth rates in passenger numbers as seen in South Wales are taking place on the Aberystwyth line yet we're stuck with a train every two hours whilst some parts of South Wales now have a turn up and go service on offer. He reminded me that then Assembly Minister Sue Essex promised an hourly service back in 2001. Mid Wales is still waiting and petrol prices increases are also driving demand for rail higher here in Mid Wales too."

Ends

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