



**The Great Western Franchise:
A consultation response from
Passenger Focus**

April 2012

Passenger Focus

Passenger Focus is the independent public body set up by the Government to protect the interests of Britain's rail passengers, England's bus and tram passengers outside London and coach passengers in England on scheduled domestic services. We are funded by the Department for Transport (DfT) but operate independently.

Our mission is to get the best deal for passengers. With a strong emphasis on evidence-based campaigning and research, we ensure that we know what is happening on the ground. We use our knowledge to influence decisions on behalf of passengers and we work with the industry, passenger groups and government to secure journey improvements.

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1. Introduction

Passenger Focus welcomes the opportunity to provide a rail passengers' perspective as the specification for the Great Western franchise is developed.

Passenger Focus is pleased to have engaged with the Department from an early stage in the franchise replacement process. We have used discussions to highlight key passenger issues and the findings of our research on a range of subjects. In December 2011 we built on this by submitting an initial analysis and our high-level recommendations for the franchise¹.

In recent months we conducted a large scale research study involving over 4000 passengers on First Great Western (FGW) to develop a more detailed understanding of their views, needs and aspirations. For this project we selected five routes² reflecting some of the very different characteristics of this large and diverse franchise. We also examined National Passenger Survey (NPS) results based on 2908 responses from passengers using these services. NPS can be broken down into three building blocks³ and we looked particularly at the Thames Valley, which we combined with other data drawn from research on London and South East commuter routes to provide a perspective for this part of the network.

The Great Western research combined with outputs from our wide ranging studies of passenger needs and perceptions on many issues informs this independent submission to the franchise consultation.

The recently published Command Paper⁴ marks a further evolution of the rail agenda and the context in which the Great Western franchise will be let. We note the significant themes addressed, particularly of capacity, performance, information and disruption and anticipate that these will be reflected in the approach to the final specification. The accompanying documents on fares and ticketing and devolution/decentralisation require further consideration and Passenger Focus will make formal responses on these issues during the applicable consultation periods.

1.1 Franchise consultation response

This document develops and adds to the analysis and recommendations made in our December 2011 submission. In this response we address consultation questions for which we have relevant information and appropriate evidence of passenger needs and aspirations. We also provide a commentary on other significant issues we have researched and which we believe should be considered within the Great Western franchise specification and final contract. Feedback received from passenger and stakeholder groups has provided information about local issues and challenges and has aided our understanding of the context in which the franchise will operate.

¹ The Great Western franchise 2013 onwards: an initial submission from Passenger Focus, December 2011

² See Appendix 1

³ London Thames Valley, Long Distance and West

⁴ Reforming our Railways: Putting the Customer First, Department for Transport, March 2012

2. Summary of key points and main recommendations

This section provides a summary of the key points and our main recommendations for the Great Western franchise. Full details of the research and analysis that Passenger Focus has undertaken to inform this consultation response are set out in the following pages.

2.1 Evidence base and passenger priorities for the franchise

The Passenger Focus response to the Great Western franchise consultation draws on bespoke research with 4042 passengers using current services, National Passenger Survey findings and other themed research. It builds on ongoing discussions with the Department of Transport regarding the new franchise and an initial submission made in December 2011.

The top passenger priorities for improvement in the franchise are:

- Punctuality/reliability
- Being able to get a seat on the train
- Value for money for price of ticket
- The frequency of trains on the route

2.2 Objectives

The proposed objectives for the franchise are recognised as valid. However, the following points should also be addressed:

Passenger interests should be placed at the heart of planning and delivery of change and the impact of disruption managed and minimised. The successful bidder will need to have demonstrated that they intend to provide sufficient planning and project management to handle this.

Caveats about provision of appropriate capacity are cause for concern. Future population increases and economic developments will inevitably lead to further pressures and there must be mechanisms in place to respond effectively to this during the life of a fifteen year franchise.

There is an important role for NPS in ensuring the overall passenger experience improves.

Transparency requirements should focus on the factors important to passengers and clear expectations set for disaggregation to the lowest level possible to enable passengers to access data relating to the services relevant to them.

Passengers rank punctuality and reliability as the top priority for improvement. This requires a strong operational focus on right time performance and the measurement of punctuality at key intermediate stations as well as destination.

Drives for cost efficiency should not overlook the important role of staff in delivering many aspects of service valued by passengers, particularly relating to information and engendering a sense of security.

2.3 Schemes, stakeholders and other initiatives

Investment plans should focus on identified passenger priorities and prioritise for investment schemes which improve punctuality/reliability and capacity.

Franchise agreements should have clauses that enable changes to be quickly agreed between parties when new or amended major schemes require to be implemented.

Experience shows that those who lose services can encounter a number of difficulties unless there are well-planned and effective mitigations put in place from the outset. This must be a requirement should any proposed decrements be given consideration.

Passengers want a clear sense of strategic direction and the assurance that 'somebody' has a strategic vision for the railway. Passengers also want a sense that there is 'someone' in charge when it comes to delivery of services to the passengers.

2.4 The service specification

The Great Western franchise needs a strong and sufficiently detailed specification to protect both Government and passenger interests. This should allow intervention when required to ensure improvement and, as a final sanction, the removal of an operator who consistently fails to deliver the necessary levels of service.

There must be sufficient detail in the specification to protect key journey opportunities. The provision of sufficient capacity must also be addressed.

The specification for the future franchise should provide a framework to ensure that service provision is based on passenger needs and priorities and is linked to key measures of passenger satisfaction. Consultation with passengers must be a mandated requirement for all timetable proposals.

Where there is potential for any significant change to train service provision at any time during the franchise there must be a requirement for transparent, meaningful and robust consultation processes that allow all stakeholders' views to be listened to and responded to, prior to changes being finalised or implemented.

This is a mixed use franchise, both between and within different service groups, and this must be reflected in the way that it is specified at the outset and managed throughout the duration.

2.4.1 Engineering scenarios

Great Western route research found passengers have a very strong preference for engineering options that allow them to remain on a train rather than have services transferred to bus.

Passenger Focus recommends that improved management of service disruption, whether planned or unplanned, is incorporated into the key objectives for the Great Western franchise. A number of specific requirements to support this are suggested.

2.4.2 Capacity

Provision of sufficient capacity is a key concern for passengers. To effectively manage crowding a train company needs high quality loadings data, with the ability to analyse individual trains, different days of the week, and seasonal impacts. The public reporting of crowding levels needs to be more transparent and data should be disaggregated by route to make it more representative of an individual passenger's experience.

The future operator must be required to adopt and publish appropriate crowding measures across the range of services and use this information to improve capacity where it is inadequate.

Passenger Focus believes that the franchise contract should require the operator to take all possible steps to provide sufficient capacity across all services throughout the life of the franchise. The prevailing standard that no passengers should have to stand, other than by choice, for over 20 minutes on a journey, should remain the benchmark.

Targets for provision of capacity should be set and monitored throughout the length of the franchise, with the expectation they will be achieved at the earliest possible opportunity. Capacity should not be managed by 'pricing-off' passengers from the rail network nor perverse adjustment to timetables that nominally improve crowding but cause other difficulties for passengers.

2.4.3 Reliability and performance

The importance of delivering on reliability and performance cannot be overstated. It is the top priority for improvement amongst passengers surveyed on the Great Western research.

Britain's railway must in future ensure operational focus on 'right time' arrival at all stops. The franchise specification should require punctuality to be measured and reported at a significant number of important intermediate stops, especially those where connections to other services are frequently made.

On the large and complex Great Western operation crowding, punctuality and performance should be disaggregated to the maximum extent possible to be meaningful to passengers.

2.4.4 Rail value for money

Passenger Focus recognises the importance of delivering value for money for tax-payers and passengers and the need to increase the efficiency of the rail industry. However, we are concerned at some of the proposals surrounding demand management. Many commuters have little (or limited) ability to change travel patterns in response to rising fares.

There are some legitimate anxieties expressed by passengers surrounding cost-cutting. These are particularly around the availability of staff and ensuring that station facilities are available whilst trains are in service. Reducing costs through genuine improvements to efficiency will largely be welcomed but there will be negative impacts if this simply results in wholesale cutbacks that impact on reasonable passenger expectations and a quality of experience that makes the railway a viable and safe environment in which to travel.

2.5 Delivering improvements for passengers

Passengers will undoubtedly expect that a fifteen year franchise will include proposals to improve the overall quality of service delivered to passengers. Passenger Focus recommends that the specification sets out clear requirements for delivering improved passenger satisfaction across a range of areas.

2.5.1 Stations

Bidders should commit to a strategy to ensure that at least minimum standards are met at all stations within the franchise within a specified time from commencement. Further cycles of investment should also be committed to maintain and progressively improve upon the station environment and facilities.

Bidders should be encouraged to commit to station travel plans schemes, with rollout dispersed across the network and throughout the life of the franchise.

2.5.2 Information

The way the industry manages delays is the biggest single driver of rail passenger dissatisfaction; they key to improving this is through the provision of real-time information on delays. Real time information provision at all stations should be a core requirement of the franchise.

The franchise specification should require bidders to meet high standards of information provision for all stages of the journey: This should include requirements to meet passenger needs for initial planning, at the station of departure, during the journey, at the arrival station and, particularly, when there is disruption.

The franchise specification should make specific provision for passenger information requirements relating to planned disruption.

2.5.3 Staff and security

Passenger Focus is concerned that bidders for the franchise do not overlook the very significant roles that staff play and the value that passengers attach to a visible staff presence, especially at stations.

Passengers with assistance needs are particularly dependent on staff to deliver the help they require and to fulfil requests made through Passenger Assist.

Many station facilities and services are only available whilst staff are present. Feedback indicates significant concern about the lack of access to toilets and waiting rooms if staff are withdrawn from stations or hours are significantly reduced.

Passengers cite the lack of staff as a major reason for their feelings of concern over personal security.

To improve security and safety Passenger Focus recommends that the franchise specification should include CCTV and linked help-point provision at all stations that do not currently have these facilities.

2.6 Fares, ticketing and revenue protection

Our research indicates three main themes relating to passenger concerns about fares and ticketing: value for money, complexity and lack of trust and transparency. A number of recommendations are made for the new franchise to address these problems.

An effective strategy for revenue protection is important for the new franchise. However, the revenue protection strategy must provide safeguards for those who make an innocent mistake and whose intention was never to defraud the system.

2.7 Service quality and other targets

Passenger Focus strongly supports the principle of monitoring and improving service quality through a combination of NPS results and periodic reviews of TOC Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Disaggregated targets for both measures should be set and performance against them published widely.

A financial penalty regime should apply with resources ring-fenced for additional investment into service quality measures that are most likely to improve passenger satisfaction.

Given the very high significance of these factors to passengers the specification must include traditional 'hard' performance targets covering punctuality, reliability and crowding. However, we believe that there is a need for much more transparency surrounding these targets.

Overall, the franchise should require an appropriate level of disaggregation on current measures and require the operator to comply as reporting requirements evolve.

Passenger Focus recognises the value of both input and output measures provided that they are based on passengers' priorities and needs. Passenger responses to the consultation should be used to further inform the targets and measures that go into the franchise specification.

2.8 Accessibility, the Equality Act and minor works fund

Passenger Focus supports the expectation for a minor works fund and advocates that consultation with relevant groups should include inviting suggestions about how this money might best be spent to meet identified needs.

A number of other requirements beyond the provisions of DPPP guidance are also suggested, including a scooter policy and priority card and seating measures.

3. Research, evidence and publications relevant to this refranchising process (Question 9)

3.1 The Passenger Focus evidence base

Passenger Focus is committed to evidence-based influencing and has produced research and reports on a wide range of topics relevant to this refranchising process and to future operations under the new contract. We have provided to DfT and prospective bidders a copy of our research library index containing links to virtually all our publications. We have also directly provided these organisations with particularly important reports and discussed with them in some detail our research into subjects most salient to this refranchise.

3.2 Route based passenger priorities for improvement

Great Western route based research, conducted with 4042 passengers specifically for this refranchise, confirms that the top passenger priorities for improvement are:

- Punctuality/reliability
- Being able to get a seat on the train
- Value for money for price of ticket
- The frequency of trains on the route

These factors are in common with findings from previous research on London and South East commuter routes⁵ which we suggest would also confirm a correlation with the priorities for Thames Valley passengers.

The Passenger Focus December 2011 submission provided a commentary on important aspects of these priority issues that should be considered for the franchise and this section is attached for ease of reference as Appendix 2.

The ranking of second order factors varied slightly across the Great Western routes and by passenger type but were still broadly consistent. They include:

- Length of time the journey was scheduled to take
- Upkeep/repair and cleanliness of train
- Connections with other train services

Further analysis of the priorities identified by the research, together with detailed rankings for each of the five routes and by commuter, business and leisure passenger sectors are shown in Appendix 3.

3.3 Route based research data

Excel tables showing the responses to all questions covered by the research on an individual route basis and overall are available on the Passenger Focus website.⁶

⁵ Route based passenger research for Kent Route Utilisation Strategy and Essex Thameside franchise replacement

⁶ Results table for the five FGW routes surveyed <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/news-and-publications/document-search/document.asp?dsid=5432>

4. Objectives for the franchise (Question 1)

Passenger Focus recognises the validity of the proposed franchise objectives but would emphasise the following points:

The objective to effectively manage change through working in partnership is vital. The extent of the transformation that will occur on the Great Western franchise cannot be underestimated and this will require skill and resource to deliver. There will inevitably be disruption to passengers and their interests should be placed at the heart of planning and delivery. The objective should reference the need to ensure the impact on passengers is managed and minimised and the successful bidder will need to have demonstrated that they intend to provide sufficient planning and project management to handle this.

The caveats about provision of appropriate capacity are cause for concern. The substantial passenger growth on this franchise has been well documented. The 'top ten' list of most overcrowded train services in London and the South East for Autumn 2010 shows all 10 being trains, to or from London Paddington⁷. The industry measure of crowding 'Passengers in Excess of Capacity' (PIXC) at peak times is at 18.5% in morning and 14.4% in afternoon, against 4% and 1.9% respectively nationally⁸. Notwithstanding the new trains that will be entering service, future population increases and economic developments will inevitably lead to further capacity pressures. There must be mechanisms in place to respond effectively to this during the life of a fifteen year franchise.

The emphasis on ensuring the overall passenger experience improves is welcome and appropriate. Passenger Focus believes that there is an important role for NPS in assessing this, as a genuine measure of passenger views.

The focus on transparency of information chimes with the Open Data agenda and increasing passenger interest in this topic. Requirements should focus on information that research has identified is important to passengers⁹. Clear expectations should be set for disaggregation to the lowest level possible to enable passengers to access data relating to the services relevant to them.

Passengers rank punctuality and reliability as the top priority for improvement and it drives overall satisfaction so this is a vital objective for the franchise. The standards should require a strong operational focus on right time performance and the measurement of punctuality at key intermediate stations as well as destination.

Passenger Focus recognises the importance of cost efficiency and its relevance to fare-paying passengers. However, the role of staff in delivering many aspects of service valued by passengers, particularly relating to information and engendering a sense of security, should not be overlooked.

⁷ Department for Transport, 11 August 2011, <http://www.dft.gov.uk/publications/overcrowded-train-services>

⁸ Great Western Franchise Replacement Consultation, DfT, December 2011

⁹ Putting rail information in the public domain, Passenger Focus and Office of Rail Regulation, May 2011

5. Schemes, stakeholders and other initiatives (Questions 2 - 5)

The Welsh Government, transport authorities/consortia, local groups and other agencies, including Travelwatch Southwest, community rail and enterprise partnerships, are best placed to detail specific local factors that might influence future levels of passenger demand and issues arising from planned schemes. The themes of passenger demand, the need for increased capacity and the infrastructure to deliver this, have been a striking feature of much of the feedback that we have received.

Passenger Focus firmly believes that investment plans should focus on identified passenger priorities and prioritise for investment schemes which improve punctuality/reliability and capacity. In view of the levels of disruption likely to be experienced as infrastructure schemes are underway, investment in initiatives that will assist service-recovery should also be promoted.

Control Period 4 (CP4) will end within a year of the new franchise commencing. Given the well documented capacity pressures and infrastructure needs it is important that all HLOS and RUS schemes identified for the Great Western are implemented in an orderly fashion as soon as funding becomes available. Any outstanding schemes should be rolled forward into CP5 proposals and assessed alongside emerging new requirements.

Looking to CP6 and beyond, and in view of the ongoing capacity imperatives, Passenger Focus supports further development of the proposals in the London and South East Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) relating to Reading/outer Thames Valley, Heathrow and Crossrail¹⁰. A new Great Western Main Line peak service structure, improved access to Heathrow Airport and maximising the benefits of Crossrail will all be fundamental to meeting passenger needs.

We suggest that the calls for additional electrification, including those relating to Wales, should be given further consideration, particularly where there are strong local economic arguments and/or identifiable disbenefits for passengers where there are relatively short stretches 'marooned' from predominantly electric routes in the future.

Bidders should anticipate that there will be additions and changes to the schemes planned for Great Western and ensure that they have the resources to assist in planning and delivering further changes. Franchise agreements (particularly of fifteen years length) should have clauses that enable changes to be quickly agreed between parties when new or amended major schemes require to be implemented.

Sir Roy McNulty and, more recently, the Command Paper have set out the key issues to be addressed in reforming the rail industry by increasing efficiencies and reducing costs, as well as generating increased revenues through attracting more passengers. There are many sensible approaches that can be improved or developed, particularly in establishing new working practices or Alliancing between Network Rail and operators but also in looking beyond the rail industry to other potential partners and the scope to link with wider schemes. However, we believe it is essential that the 'post-McNulty' debate does not get lost in too narrow an assessment of cost. Efficiency and cost are important - they clearly have a direct impact on the range of service offered to passengers and the fares charged - but cost savings must also be set alongside the value of rail to the economy and the country as a whole. Demand for rail has soared in the last 15 years – with passenger numbers now being at levels last seen during the

¹⁰ Passenger Focus response to London and South East Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) draft for Consultation (25/03/2011): <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/news-and-publications/document-search/document.asp?dsid=5034>

1920s. If this growth is to be sustained then it will be essential that the benefits of rail are taken into account in any debate as well as the cost of provision.

All opportunities to create synergy between rail and other development projects and any potential to seek partnership funding and aligned delivery mechanisms should be seized. With the generally acknowledged importance of integrated transport, a wide commitment to promoting economic development and an increased emphasis on 'place' within local communities the future franchise operator, along with the Department and Network Rail, should ensure channels of communication are fostered with all significant stakeholder organisations.

5.1 Remapping, increments/decrements and decentralisation (Questions 6, 7 and 8)

Passenger Focus has not researched passenger views into the remapping of Great Western and our remit does not extend to proposing either increments or decrements for the franchise. However, experience shows that those who lose services can encounter a number of difficulties unless there are well-planned and effective mitigations put in place from the outset. This must be a requirement should any proposed decrements be given consideration.

The recently published consultation on Rail Decentralisation¹¹ provides the opportunity to consider devolution issues within the wider context and Passenger Focus will make a response to this document within the timeframe set out. We note the interest in the possibilities for devolved decision-making for some services within the Great Western franchise and consider this might have merit in some circumstances provided sufficient safeguards for passenger interests are put in place.

Previous research¹² suggests passenger concerns are less about who runs their services but more about reassurance that key factors are addressed. Passengers want a clear sense of strategic direction and the assurance that 'somebody' has a strategic vision for the railway. Passengers also want a sense that there is 'someone' in charge when it comes to delivery of services to the passengers.

¹¹ Rail Decentralisation - Devolving decision-making on passenger rail services in England, DfT March 2012

¹² Putting passengers at the heart of rail services, Rail Passengers Council, March 2004

6. The service specification (Questions 10 - 25)

Passenger Focus believes that the specification is the key to the entire franchising process. We note the Department's intention to provide greater flexibility for operators to respond to demographic and market changes and commercial opportunities. However, it is only against a sufficiently detailed specification that a TOC's performance can be effectively monitored. And, in the worst case, it would be the standards set out in the specification that would provide the framework for determining if a TOC should be removed for poor performance. For the Government to ensure it gets what it pays for with taxpayers' money there must be specification to set out what is required of the new operator.

Passenger Focus considers there is a need, therefore, for the Great Western franchise to have a strong and sufficiently detailed specification to protect both Government and passenger interests. This should allow intervention when required to ensure improvement and, as a final sanction, the removal of an operator who consistently fails to deliver the necessary levels of service.

6.1 Train service requirements (Question 10)

Passenger Focus welcomes confirmation that the current level of Great Western services rather than the contracted minimum will be the starting point for the new franchise. Whilst acknowledging the need for some flexibility to adapt the train service to changing demands over a fifteen year period, Passenger Focus is clear that there must be sufficient detail in the specification to protect key journey opportunities. These must include journeys to/from school and work and maintenance of established and well-used connections.

As a minimum Passenger Focus would expect the specification to give a broad outline of the core service to be provided: frequency, first and last trains, basic service patterns, and key journey times. The provision of sufficient capacity must also be addressed.

Where there is potential for any significant change to train service provision at any time during the franchise there must be a requirement for transparent, meaningful and robust consultation processes that allow all stakeholders views to be listened to and responded to, prior to changes being finalised or implemented.

6.2 The service pattern

The specification for the future franchise should provide a framework to ensure that service provision is based on passenger needs and priorities and is linked to key measures of passenger satisfaction. This should require the operator to plan, resource and deliver a passenger focused, optimised service pattern within the overall industry processes for track access and timetabling. These considerations should be applied to all service groups and also evidenced in bidder efforts to seek improvements to the modelled intercity service pattern as set out in **Consultation question 12**.

Consultation with passengers must be a mandated requirement for all timetable proposals.

6.3 The service pattern – evidence from passenger research

Key findings from Great Western route based research and NPS that should be taken into account when services are planned are set out in the following sections. Bidders' proposals should be assessed for

ability to deliver on the factors that passengers identify as priorities for improvement and to increase passenger satisfaction.

6.3.1 Passenger satisfaction

Current levels of passenger satisfaction by route are shown in Table 1¹³. Green highlights identify the top three factors for each route and yellow the lowest three factors.

Table 1: Passenger Satisfaction by Route
(% rating attribute as very or fairly good)

	Long Distance	Regional Commuter	Regional Mixed Use	Branch Lines	Inter-Regional	Thames Valley
<i>Ease of buying a ticket</i>	90	73	85	78	84	71
<i>Ease of getting to and from the station</i>	81	78	76	80	79	n/a
<i>Being able to get a seat on the train</i>	84	74	87	73	73	65 [^]
<i>Punctuality / reliability of the train</i>	83	72	79	87	77	76
<i>Length of time the journey was scheduled to take</i>	85	78	65	82	79	85
<i>Frequency of trains for this route</i>	90	65	66	81	80	74
<i>Connections with other train services</i>	82	68	71	73	73	73
<i>Upkeep / repair and cleanliness of the train</i>	78	56	81	54	66	78 [^]
<i>Quality of facilities and services at the station</i>	78	52	67	52	67	52
<i>Provision of information during the journey</i>	76	53	73	54	59	67
<i>Facilities and services on board the train</i>	69	31	72	32	57	n/a
<i>Value for money for price of ticket</i>	54	49	50	66	51	47
<i>Provision of information during times of disruption</i>	63	40	50	56	55	36 [^]

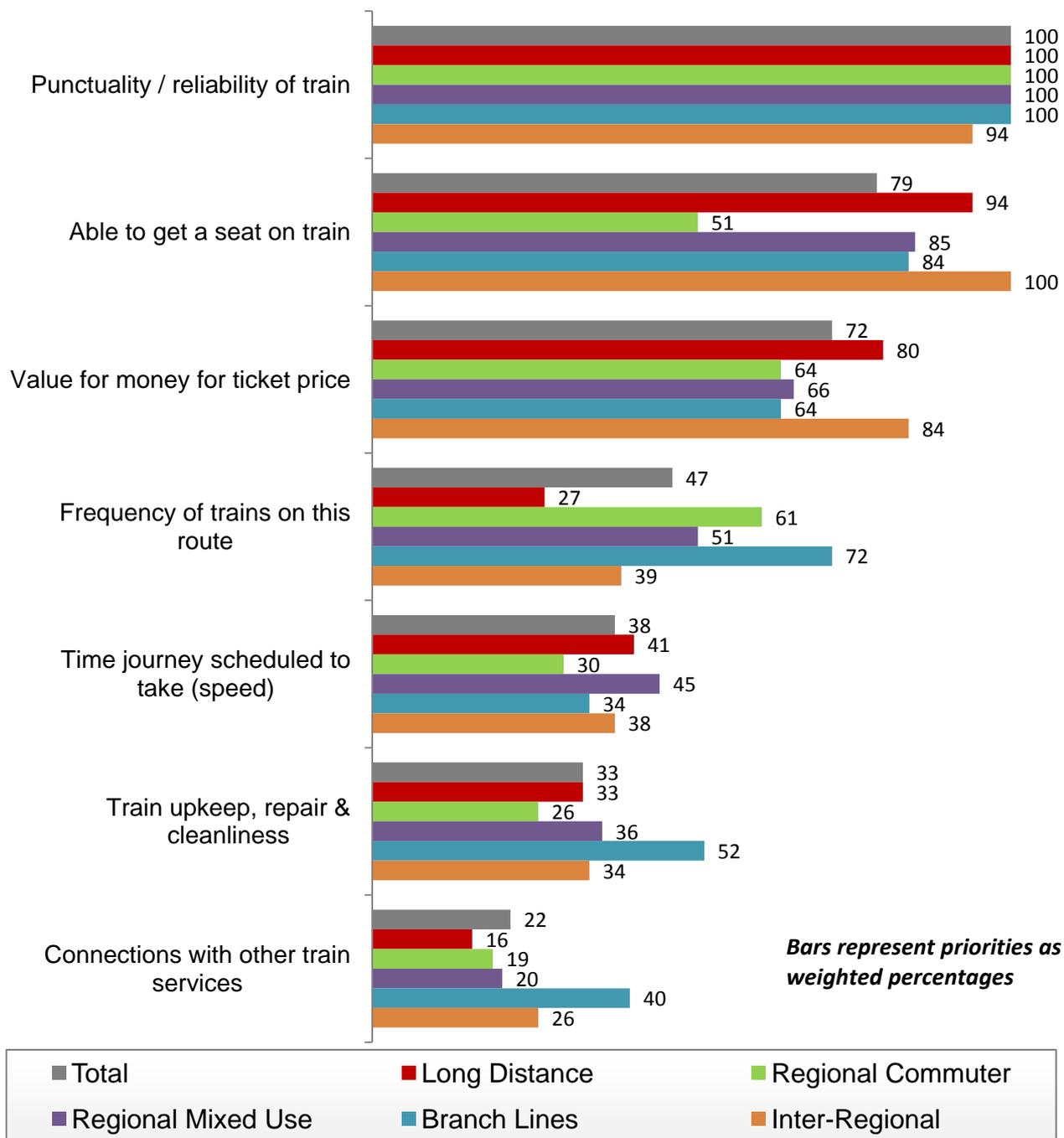
[^] Scores for similar factors rather than exactly comparable wording

¹³ All data from Great Western route based research with exception of Thames Valley which is drawn from the building block scores from NPS Autumn 2011

6.3.2 Passenger Priorities

Figure 1 shows the top passenger priorities for improvement by route, indexed with top factor ranked as 100.

Figure 1: Great Western Passenger Priorities - By Route



It should be noted that punctuality/reliability and (with exception of Thames Valley) getting a seat are both factors where satisfaction is comparatively high. Nevertheless, across the total sample these feature as the two top priorities for improvement. The significance of delivering on these for passengers must not be overlooked and we comment further on these issues in our response to consultation questions 23 and 23.

6.3.3 Balance between journey times and provision of stops at intermediate stations

Consultation questions 11, 16 and 19 seek views on the balance between speed of journeys and the provision of stops at intermediate stations for various service groups. This is not an issue we posed to passengers directly but we can draw inferences from relevant factors explored in our research.

The references below are to the views of existing passengers and cannot be taken to be representative of non-users whose journey choices may be influenced in different ways.

Research with Great Western passengers shows that a fairly high percentage express satisfaction with the length of time the journey was scheduled to take. This ranges from 78 – 85% on all routes except the regional mixed use where satisfaction drops to 65%.

There is greater variation in satisfaction with the frequency of trains for the route; with long-distance, inter-regional and branch line passengers expressing 90, 80 and 81% satisfaction respectively. Regional commuter and mixed use passengers score frequency at 65 and 66% respectively, whilst 74% of Thames Valley passengers are satisfied.

For long distance passengers, length of time of journey is a higher priority for improvement than frequency of trains – 4th compared to 6th.

Passengers on all other routes rank frequency as a higher priority for improvement than journey time.

6.3.3.1 Comparison of NPS scores on journey time, frequency and other key factors

Table 2 below shows NPS scores for the First Great Western building blocks on a number of key factors. It illustrates that there are relatively high levels of satisfaction with the length of time of journey and that this factor ranks above a number of others. The scores in the shaded columns are those of the comparable sectors to each of the FGW building blocks¹⁴.

Table 2: Comparison of First Great Western priority issue satisfaction levels¹⁵

Factor (Toc to sector index)	FGW Thames Valley	NPS LSE Sector	FGW Long Distance	NPS Long Distance Sector	FGW West	NPS Regional Sector
Length of time of journey	85	83	88	88	86	90
Punctuality and reliability	76	80	81	83	79	86
Sufficient room to sit/stand	65	67	69	70	69	72
Value for money	47	42	55	56	60	61
Frequency of trains on route	74	77	86	84	74	81
Connections with other train services	73	75	79	79	77	80

¹⁴See Appendix 4 for definitions of NPS sectors and FGW building blocks

¹⁵ NPS Autumn 2011

6.3.3.2 Passenger attitudes to changing trains

Great Western route research indicates that many passengers are reluctant to change trains¹⁶. With the exception of the Inter-regional passengers, where 31% of passengers were on journey involving a change of train, between 78 and 87% of passengers on all other routes were on direct services.

When passengers on direct services were asked about the likelihood of continuing to make their journey if it did require a change, 40% of the overall sample and 46% of commuters said this would be unlikely. This indicates a substantial number of passengers would change their travel choices if changes were introduced on the services they use.

Passenger concerns about changing trains on their routes were largely focused on making the connection on time and having to wait and adding to much time to their journey. It is notable that 72% of passengers across all routes responded that they would make the journey by car if they were not using the train.

The responses of passengers who travel from stations other than that closest to their home provide further perspectives on the factors that influence journey choices. Half of these passengers make this choice to access a direct train, whilst 38% seek a better frequency and 17% a shorter journey¹⁷.

6.3.3.3 Key service pattern considerations

Passenger Focus would urge very careful consideration of passenger needs and preferences before any decisions to change service patterns to improve journey times at the expense of intermediate stations. The passenger evidence above indicates that this will be unpopular with those who lose out. This caution would also extend to consideration of changes to the medium distance regional services posed in **Question 20** where the needs of local and further distance passengers may differ.

This is a mixed use franchise, both between and within different service groups, and this must be reflected in the way that it is specified at the outset and managed throughout the duration. There may be many factors to balance in determining future service provision but it is imperative that the needs of different passengers must be reflected in decisions.

All timetable changes create winners and losers and, inevitably, those who stand to gain will support proposals and those who are disadvantaged by them will disagree. It is possible that speeding up some services will generate new customers but there is clearly a risk that other passengers will be deterred. Full, meaningful and timely consultation on any proposals must be a pre-requisite.

A number of factors have an important bearing on the impact of service changes. Firstly, access to rail services plays a significant role in location decisions of families, workers and businesses. School and travel to work requirements at smaller stations should be protected.

The impact of changing trains can be significantly worse when passengers must join services that are already busy, a feature of many Great Western trains, particularly in the peak. Train loading data must be considered in any service change plans. Journeys may become untenable if passengers are unable to get a seat on joining at the interchange station or, worse still, unable to board over-crowded trains at all. These scenarios are likely to have a disproportionate impact on disabled or vulnerable passengers and those laden with luggage or who have other access needs.

¹⁶ See Appendix 5 for figures by route and passenger type

¹⁷ See Appendix 6 for full details

6.4 Potential changes to specific diesel services (Questions 17 and 18)

Notwithstanding the important points above about passengers' journey priorities and a general preference to avoid changes of train, the challenges of making effective use of limited timetable slots to deliver maximum capacity and the deployment of scarce diesel stock to best effect need to be addressed.

The consultation highlights the capacity issues that will face the Thames Valley, particularly during Crossrail construction works. This will exacerbate existing problems. NPS scores indicate just 41% of peak passengers on Thames Valley services are satisfied with sufficient room to sit/stand, against 74% of off-peak passengers.

The need to deliver the maximum possible capacity must be the imperative. However, the likely interchanges for passengers on Bourne End and Henley routes suggest that the loss of through services would present major difficulties. On such short stretches of line the case for electrification should be considered, particularly if this would also release valuable diesel stock to increase capacity on other parts of the network.

Likewise, there is the question of how can the need for capacity at the western end of the Cardiff to Portsmouth route best be balanced with the needs of through passengers on the diesel services that extend on electrified track from Portsmouth to Brighton? Feedback indicates concern about the potential loss of through services between Cardiff and Brighton. A suggestion emerging from some stakeholders is the retention of one rather than both daily services and retiming this to the off-peak to provide capacity enhancement when and where it is most required and a through journey when a path is available. This potential compromise merits further consideration.

If opportunities to release diesel stock are to be further explored then the potential for a high quality interchange for passengers would need to be established at a point on the route where electric trains might provide a viable and convenient continuation of the journey. This would require careful consideration of the requirements of passengers who would need to change trains and include plans to minimise the difficulties of transfer; whether in terms of timing, distance between platforms, information, passenger assistance, or other needs.

The implications for overall capacity and the wider service patterns on the eastern end of this route would also need to be addressed. It would not be appropriate to simply remove important services without ensuring an alternative to replace it, albeit within another franchise.

6.5 Passenger evidence relevant to potential service changes (Question 21)

Consultation question 21 invites suggestions for possible train service changes that will be affordable, deliver value for money and provide a strong commercial, social or economic case. Responses from passengers on Great Western routes to questions about satisfaction with frequency of service and interest in earlier or later trains provides some context in which these possibilities can be reviewed. There has also been considerable feedback about local issues which demonstrates the potential to deliver more for passengers if their proposals can meet the criteria set out.

The detailed findings of Passenger Focus research across the five Great Western routes are provided in Excel tables on our website. They show a range in satisfaction with frequency of service at different

times, with passengers on the regional commuter and regional mixed use routes substantially less satisfied with frequencies across the board.

Generally, there were not high numbers of passengers with an interest in earlier trains than currently scheduled. Regional branch line passengers showed the greatest interest, with 20% interested in earlier trains for Monday – Thursday and 24% interested on Sundays. There were also 21% of regional commuter route and inter-regional route passengers interested in earlier Monday – Thursday services.

There were higher levels of interest in later evening services than currently, with the greatest interest in services on a Friday and Saturday night.

Passenger Focus suggests that, in line with changing lifestyle patterns, the provision of Boxing Day services should also be explored.

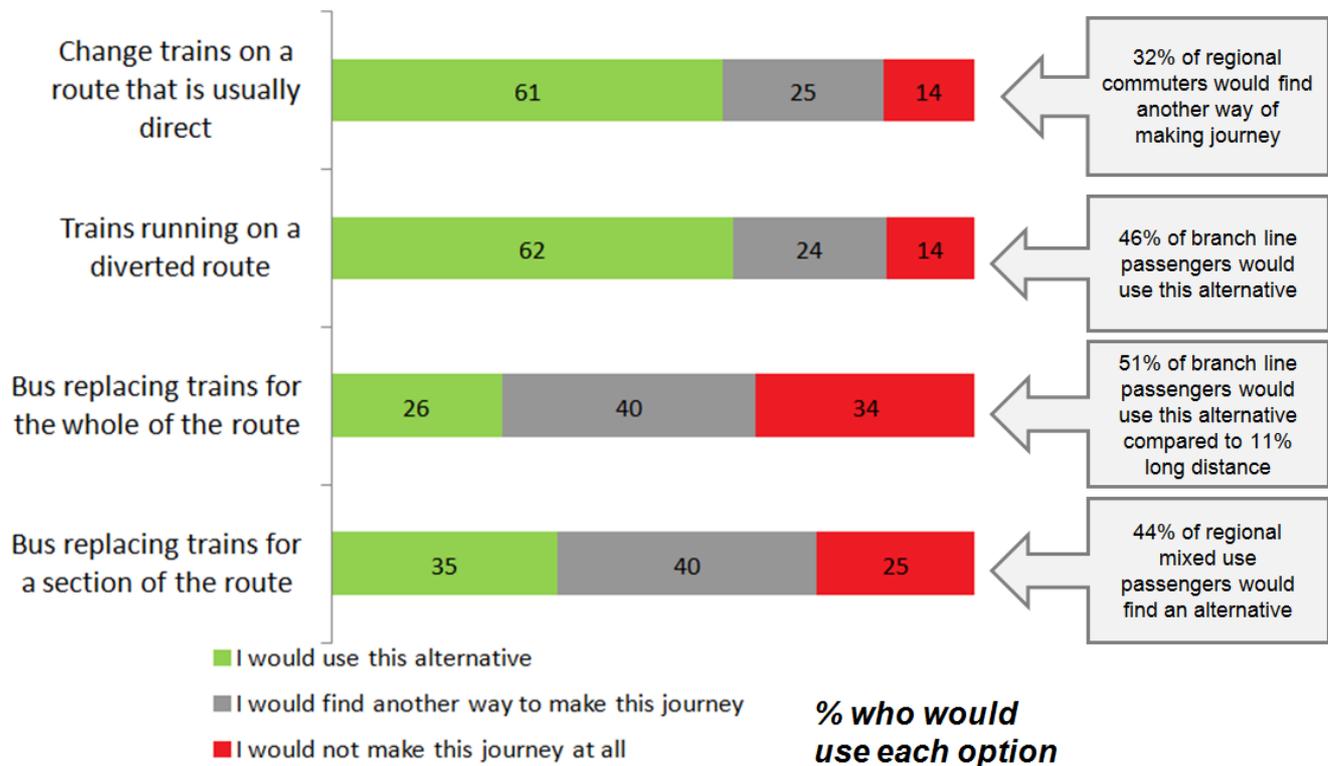
6.6 Managing disruption (Question 22)

Passenger Focus posed a number of questions about engineering works to passengers on Great Western routes and recommends that the passenger preferences demonstrated are incorporated into requirements for the next franchise.

6.6.1 Preferred engineering service scenarios

Great Western route research found passengers have a very strong preference for engineering options that allow them to remain on a train rather than have services transferred to bus. This is consistent with other research¹⁸ and the strength of views is such that this passenger preference should be accommodated wherever and whenever possible as work is undertaken on the Great Western franchise.

Figure 2: Passenger Preferences for Engineering Service Scenarios



6.6.2 Passenger preferences for scheduling of engineering

The Great Western route based research also explored passenger preferences about when engineering work should be scheduled. Generally, passengers were most in favour of “no trains running after 21:00 until the next morning over a number of weeks” (33%), followed by “weekend closures over a number of weeks” (27%) and “weekend line diversions or amended timetables over a number of weeks” (24%).

Of all the options presented to passengers, the least popular were full line closures for a week or more (8%) or at Christmas/Easter/Bank Holidays (9%).

There were some differences in the preferences expressed by different passenger types, with commuters, in most instances, less likely to opt for works that would impact their regular journey, whilst

¹⁸ Reading Station Engineering Works – What Passengers Want (26/05/2011): <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/news-and-publications/document-search/document.asp?dsid=5162>

leisure passengers were less likely to opt for weekend line closures. Appendix 7 shows the responses to all the options presented to passengers and a breakdown of responses by passenger type and route to the main preferences.

Passenger Focus is calling on the rail industry to make a simple pledge to keep passengers on trains wherever possible and use buses only as a last resort. It is important that the new operator is incentivised to embrace this approach.

Passenger Focus recommends that improved management of service disruption, whether planned or unplanned, is incorporated into the key objectives for the Great Western franchise. The specification should include the following requirements:

- a requirement to reducing the impact on passengers of Network Rail maintenance, renewal and upgrade of the railway and, in particular, demonstrate efforts to minimise total blockades and the use of bus replacement where options exist to divert, operate single line working etc. The operator should be incentivised against the easy option of a Schedule 4 compensation payment.
- that the operator be required to allocate resource specifically to provide dedicated staff at key sites charged with managing the impact of major engineering activity on passengers and ensuring the highest possible quality of information
- that the operator develop, monitor and regularly review procedures for managing both planned and unplanned disruption and assess the adequacy of plans and actual delivery on the ground with reference to the issues identified in Passenger Focus research into passenger experiences and needs during disruption
- that the operator contribute to industry work to improve responses to service disruption and make a commitment to rapid adoption of further good practice as it emerges.

Additional comments relating to the provision of information during disruption are included in Section 7.2.

6.7 Capacity (Question 23)

Provision of sufficient capacity is a key concern for passengers. Being able to get a seat on the train ranks top priority for improvement on the Cardiff-Portsmouth inter-regional route and is second priority across all the Great Western passengers surveyed in our research for this franchise. Not only is this a vital priority in its own right but the ability to get a seat has an important influence on passenger perceptions of value for money.¹⁹

NPS Autumn 2011 satisfaction scores for sufficient room to sit and stand vary between 65 – 69% on the FGW building blocks but rates only 38% amongst Thames Valley peak passengers. The Great Western route research found only 31% of peak passengers stated they could always get a seat.

To effectively manage crowding a train company needs high quality loadings data, with the ability to analyse individual trains, different days of the week, and seasonal impacts. The public reporting of crowding levels needs to be more transparent and data should be disaggregated by route to make it more representative of an individual passenger's experience.

We welcome the Government's procurement of a rail passenger counts database which is intended to provide accurate data on train loadings and crowding levels. The future operator must be required to adopt and publish appropriate crowding measures across the range of services and use this information to improve capacity where it is inadequate. NPS satisfaction measures for relevant factors, including overall satisfaction and room to sit and stand, should be published alongside capacity data to demonstrate the impact this has on passengers.

Passenger Focus believes that the franchise contract should require the operator to take all possible steps to provide sufficient capacity across all services throughout the life of the franchise. We recognise this will present some significant challenges, especially whilst infrastructure works are underway. However, this is too important an issue for passengers to be excused or ignored.

The prevailing standard that no passengers should have to stand, other than by choice, for over 20 minutes on a journey, should remain the benchmark. At no point should stock available for use be sitting in sidings when there is evidence of need for additional capacity on services where it could be deployed. In addition, the franchise specification should require that the particular needs for additional capacity for special events must also be planned for and managed.

Targets for provision of capacity should be set and monitored throughout the length of the franchise, with the expectation they will be achieved at the earliest possible opportunity. Whilst seating capacity must be part of the metrics, the specification should also allow for sensible reconfigurations of interiors where this can be demonstrated to be appropriate for passenger interests. Capacity should not be managed by 'pricing-off' passengers from the rail network nor perverse adjustment to timetables that nominally improve crowding but cause other difficulties for passengers.

Where investment in additional rolling stock would provide the necessary capacity to meet identified requirements the onus should be on the operator to build a business case to enable this to happen. If there is a commercial case then there should be prompt action to deliver the necessary vehicles. Where additional subsidy may be required, Passenger Focus expects the operator and the Department to work together to seek an affordable solution. Where required, assessments should look beyond the immediate franchise into the longer term to create a viable mechanism to respond to identified demand.

¹⁹ Passenger Focus Fares and Ticketing Study 2009:
<http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/news-and-publications/document-search/document.asp?dsid=2526>

Over the lifetime of the franchise the operator must be required to work with Network Rail and within the wider industry processes to develop proposals to further increase capacity to meet demand that is expected to emerge and ensure this information is available to inform future HLOS plans and investment cycles.

Additional efforts should be made to respond to passengers who have physical difficulties in standing for any length of time. Initiatives such as priority seating and cards that the holder can show to identify a proven need should be part of the overall plan for improving accessibility within the franchise.

6.8 Reliability and performance (Question 24)

The importance of delivering on reliability and performance cannot be overstated. It is the top priority for improvement amongst passengers surveyed on the Great Western research.

The overwhelming driver of passenger satisfaction on FGW, as it is nationally, is the punctuality and reliability of trains. However, the level of importance attached to this attribute by FGW passengers is notably higher (along with those of First Capital Connect), at 52%, than the comparable scores for all other operators.²⁰

FGW passengers as a whole are slightly less satisfied than their peers, with 79% reporting that they are satisfied with Punctuality and Reliability in comparison to 83% travelling on London and South East operators. Across the three FGW building it is those travelling on London Thames Valley services that are the least satisfied of FGW's passengers.

Satisfaction with punctuality and reliability – NPS Autumn 2011:

- FGW Thames Valley 76%
- FGW West 79%
- FGW Long Distance 81%

Further examination of NPS demonstrates that commuters are least satisfied across each of the three building blocks. The lowest scores were given by commuters travelling on the 'West' building block, where just 62% said that they were satisfied with punctuality and reliability.

The Great Western research also showed some variation in satisfaction with punctuality and reliability, with lower scores from passengers on regional commuter routes.

Table 3: Rating of punctuality/reliability by route
(% saying very or fairly good)

Journey Attribute	TOTAL	Long distance	Regional commuter	Regional mixed use	Branch lines	Inter Regional
Punctuality / reliability of the train	78%	83%	72%	79%	87%	77%

²⁰ NPS Autumn 2011 Multivariate analysis national and sector level

We noted in our December 2011 submission that other research²¹ demonstrates that commuters appear to notice lateness from the first minute, not just after the five or ten minutes allowed by Public Performance Measure (PPM). It was also found that the average passenger lateness in the evening peak was worse than the average train lateness. This was because of the effect of cancellations and because many trains were late arriving at intermediate stations even if on time at their destination.

Passenger Focus's principal conclusion from the research is that Britain's railway must in future ensure operational focus on 'right time' arrival at all stops. The franchise specification should require punctuality to be measured and reported at a significant number of important intermediate stops, especially those where connections to other services are frequently made.

On the large, complex Great Western operation crowding, punctuality and performance should be disaggregated to the maximum extent possible to be meaningful to passengers. This should include reporting on all identifiable routes and service groups that also include breakdowns to show figures for morning and afternoon peaks, daytime, evening and weekend services.

6.8.1 Compensation for delays

The proposal for a 'delay-repay' compensation policy applicable to all passengers is welcome. However, there is a need for the specification to require meaningful measures to address the specific problems that can be experienced by season-ticket holders who may suffer regular delays of between 10-29 minutes that are not covered by the 30 minute threshold for 'delay-repay'.

A formal definition of sustained poor-performance to cover these circumstances and some firm proposals about how this will be reflected in additional compensation to regular travellers should be required.

6.9 Rolling stock options (Questions 13 and 14)

Passenger Focus considers that decisions about deployment of rolling stock on specific routes and issues of condition, refurbishment and replacement are predominantly for the industry, subject to due regard to passenger needs and preferences on the services for which the trains are used. The key questions to address are:

- what rolling stock is most suitable for passenger needs and travel comfort on the journeys made?
- is there an appropriate balance of seating types, standing room and sufficient capacity overall and is there ease of access within the train?
- can mobility scooters, wheelchairs, prams/buggies and other bulky items be loaded easily and positioned safely and are the needs of disabled passengers accommodated?
- are passenger needs for access to facilities such as toilets, catering, power-sockets, wi-fi, and luggage or cycle space addressed?
- are there adequate systems to provide information to passengers about their journey, particularly when there is disruption?
- is the condition and cleanliness of an appropriate level?

²¹ Towards a 'right time' East Anglian railway, March 2010

Great Western route based research shows passengers generally regard wi-fi internet connections and at seat power sockets to be important on board services, with power regarded as important by 65% of business passengers. Unsurprisingly, the importance of catering facilities varies by route and passenger type but features strongly for long distance passengers.

Table 4: Great Western Passenger preferences for on-board facilities

Service	Long distance	Regional commuter	Regional mixed use	Branch lines	Inter Regional	Commuter	Business	Leisure
Base size	635	696	866	235	639	1164	550	1316
Wi-Fi internet connection	51%	53%	56%	52%	54%	59%	59%	46%
At seat power sockets	56%	43%	58%	46%	44%	52%	65%	43%
Catering facilities	60%	26%	56%	33%	49%	32%	50%	59%
Cycle racks	7%	34%	7%	25%	12%	24%	8%	11%

Passenger Focus has also conducted specific research into passenger needs to inform rolling stock decisions and we recommend that these findings are taken into account as options for new or refurbished trains are developed²².

6.10 Future of overnight service between Paddington and Penzance (Question 15)

Passenger Focus explored the views of users of both FGW and ScotRail sleeper services in boosted sample sizes for NPS surveys for autumn 2009 and spring 2010.

The survey results²³ showed that there were very high levels of passenger satisfaction with the sleeper services, particularly for FGW passengers. Notable scores include:

Overall satisfaction	- 94%
Upkeep and repair of train	- 91%
Cleanliness of train	- 96%
Toilet facilities	- 96%
Value for money	- 80%

Given the long distances and travel time for the journey from the furthest parts of Cornwall there can be no doubt that these services fulfil a valuable function, making connectivity with the Capital easier than by many alternative journeys.

²² Designing the future: Passengers' preferences for new national intercity rolling stock from 2012 (06/05/2009): <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/news-and-publications/document-search/document.asp?dsid=2717>

²³ Full listing shown in Appendix 8

6.11 Rail value for money (Question 25)

Passenger Focus recognises the importance of delivering value for money for tax-payers and passengers and the need to increase the efficiency of the rail industry. We made a detailed response²⁴ to Sir Roy McNulty's rail value for money study, highlighting the important issues from a passenger perspective. This includes a number of relevant points on asset management, programme and project management and supply chain management.

We note the measures set out in the recent Command Paper²⁵ to implement rail reform and reduce the cost of the industry and are supportive of those strategies which enhance efficiency and create closer collaboration, reduce duplication and overlap and generate further income by increasing the attractiveness of rail. However, we are concerned at some of the proposals surrounding demand management. Many commuters have little (or limited) ability to change travel patterns in response to rising fares. Such decisions are often tied into longer-term choices on where to work or live. Some may be able to change modes of travel but others, especially when commuting into London, have little in the way of a viable alternative or the flexibility to change work patterns. In such instances increasing commuting fares will have little impact on demand and will not lead to changes in travelling behaviour.

There are also some legitimate anxieties expressed by passengers surrounding cost-cutting. These are particularly around the availability of staff and ensuring that station facilities are available whilst trains are in service. Reducing costs through genuine improvements to efficiency will largely be welcomed but there will be negative impacts if this simply results in wholesale cutbacks that impact on reasonable passenger expectations and a quality of experience that makes the railway a viable and safe environment in which to travel.

²⁴ The Rail Value for Money Study A Passenger Perspective: Comments by Passenger Focus

²⁵ Reforming our Railways: Putting the Customer First, Department for Transport, March 2012

7. Delivering improvements for passengers (Questions 26 - 34)

Passengers will undoubtedly expect that a fifteen year franchise will include proposals to improve the overall quality of service delivered to passengers. Passenger Focus recommends that the specification sets out clear requirements for delivering improved passenger satisfaction across a range of areas.

Passenger Focus has published research on many aspects of passenger experience, some of which are cited in the consultation document. The specification should require bidders to identify the passenger research they have considered and the steps they will take to ensure that the issues important to passengers will be addressed in their service proposals.

7.1 Better railway stations

7.1.1 Funding station improvements

The funding for major station enhancements may require input from a combination of sources but will undoubtedly involve the operator and, potentially, Network Rail. Significant infrastructure works to deliver enhanced capacity should be identified through industry processes (e.g. RUSs) and included in the requirements for the relevant Control Period or bids made to relevant funding streams such as National Stations Improvement Programme (NSIP) or Access for All (A4A).

The proposals to transfer greater responsibility for maintenance and upkeep of station facilities from Network Rail to the new franchisee should simplify and streamline relationships, improve efficiency and speed up delivery of station improvements. However, the specification must include appropriate measures/targets to ensure that standards are maintained and enhanced.

Bidders should commit to a strategy to ensure that at least minimum standards are met at all stations within the franchise within a specified time from commencement. Further cycles of investment should also be committed to maintain and progressively improve upon the station environment and facilities.

The operator should also look beyond the industry and work with stakeholders and other partners to seek opportunities to bring in funding for allied improvements where these address wider objectives such as promoting economic development, improving transport integration, increasing safe access or enhancing the public realm. Holistic improvements to investments in and around stations are likely to deliver better results and increase efficiency and value.

7.1.2 Station investment should focus on passenger needs

Whilst Passenger Focus is supportive of the principle of funding streams allocated to specific purposes, it is important passenger needs are central to the investments made and that resources are directed to the factors valued by the users of stations and the rail services from them. To this end, bidders should reference how their proposals address the findings of research into passenger requirements and perceptions of stations, including NPS satisfaction scores and the results of the route based research.

Appendix 9 shows NPS satisfaction scores for attributes at First Great Western stations and the ratings reported in the Great Western route-based research. These both demonstrate low levels of satisfaction with facilities and services. Whilst passengers are fairly pragmatic about what facilities should be provided at different category stations, low scores for facilities and services would suggest that in many instances stations fail to meet even basic expectations. The scores for station upkeep and repair also indicate room for improvement.

Passenger Focus research conducted at Clapham Junction, Barking and Luton stations following the Better Stations report²⁶ shows that at individual stations there are often specific areas of improvements that passengers want to see and that priorities can vary according to location and circumstance. Bidders should seek station feedback from local passengers and community rail partnerships to identify aspirations for specific locations and gather information about relevant accessibility issues.

7.2 The importance of staffing and information

Passenger Focus research on stations consistently demonstrates that, in addition to station facilities, there are two key factors that operators need to consider when thinking about how to improve passenger satisfaction with stations: Information and staff.

7.2.1 Passenger information

The way the industry manages delays is the biggest single driver of rail passenger dissatisfaction; they key to improving this is through the provision of real-time information on delays. By and large (87%)²⁷ passengers only tend to find out about disruption once they have arrived at the station; it is therefore crucial that operators look at how they can best pass on accurate information to the passenger once it is known to the industry. This is particularly important at unstaffed stations where the passengers' only source of information might be a CIS screen. Real time information provision at all stations should be a core requirement of the franchise.

Other types of information are also important to passengers. It is important that the franchise specification requires bidders to meet high standards of information provision for all stages of the journey: This should include requirements to meet passenger needs for initial planning, at the station of departure, during the journey, at the arrival station and, particularly, when there is disruption.

It is also important that, at all times when trains are running, passengers can have access to someone who can provide information and, if disruption means that journeys are curtailed, is also empowered to help stranded passengers by arranging/authorising alternative transport, accommodation or other appropriate responses.

Advance information about planned engineering

The franchise specification should make specific provision for passenger information requirements relating to planned disruption. These should be based on the passenger preferences identified by the Great Western route based research set out below.

²⁶ The Better Stations Report identified 10 of the worst category B stations in the country. Clapham Junction, Barking and Luton, all featured in that list.

²⁷ Passenger Priorities for Improvement in rail services, Passenger Focus, 2009

Table 5 shows the top five preferred methods to receive information about engineering work:

Table 5: Passenger preferences for receiving information on planned disruption

Method	% stating as a preference
Posters at the station in the weeks leading up to the disruption	57%
A timetable on the internet	42%
An email from the train company	34%
Announcements at the station in the weeks leading up to the disruption	32%
Announcements on trains in the weeks leading up to the disruption	28%

An additional means of information identified by passengers travelling on long distance, regional mixed use and inter-regional services was to receive a text message.

In 2010 Passenger Focus conducted research into communications with passengers about the impact on journeys from the closure of Reading station for a large re-signalling project, and other infrastructure improvements, to take place. On the basis of the findings, that a majority of the passengers surveyed were aware of the works in advance of travelling and were satisfied with how the situation was managed, we believe that the Reading Station project should be used as a best practice guide for handling future engineering works.

Recommendations for improving the management of service disruption and provision of information to passengers

Passenger Focus recommends the following requirements to improve the management of service disruption and provision of information to passengers are incorporated into the key objectives for the Great Western franchise:

- contractual targets to improve NPS satisfaction with the provision of information during the journey, and that a strategy be developed and implemented to improve NPS scores for “how well train company dealt with delay” and “usefulness of information during a delay”.
- a facility for passengers to receive email or SMS text alerts free of charge warning them if disruption will, or is likely to, affect their journey – with an associated requirement to achieve a strong level of uptake through marketing of the service.
- compliance with the Association of Train Operators (ATOC) Good Practice Guides on provision of passenger information, together with a programme of audit and mystery shopping.
- that active co-operation be required with the programme to feed station customer information systems directly from Darwin, the national real time train running database.

7.2.2 Staffing

The pressure on the industry to reduce costs inevitably places a focus on the overheads associated with staff. However, Passenger Focus is concerned that bidders for the franchise do not overlook the very significant roles that staff play and the value that passengers attach to a visible staff presence, especially at stations.

Staff are an important and trusted source of information for passengers. This role can encompass information about journey planning, cover wider issues relating to ticket retailing, where there remains considerable complexity about terms and conditions applicable to tickets, and, of course, sale of tickets that are unavailable from TVMs.

During disruption staff have a central role in providing information and advice to passengers, helping them with queries and to make further plans for their journey.

Passengers with assistance needs are particularly dependent on staff to deliver the help they require and to fulfil requests made through Passenger Assist.

Many station facilities and services are only available whilst staff are present. Feedback indicates significant concern about the lack of access to toilets and waiting rooms if staff are withdrawn from stations or hours are significantly reduced.

Passengers cite the lack of staff as a major reason for their feelings of concern over personal security. Passengers consistently identify staff presence as important to providing reassurance to those travelling on the railway. The industry therefore needs to give serious consideration to how it can best deploy staff. Our publication “Passenger perceptions of personal security on the railways” sets out passengers concerns in more detail. Bidders should set out how they intend to address these issues within the franchise.

7.2.3 Security and safety (Question 28)

The autumn 2011 NPS found, on average, just over one in ten passengers had cause to be concerned about their personal security. The main causes for that concern, both on the train and at the station, were attributed to the anti-social behaviour of others and a lack of staff.

On all five FGW routes, surveyed in December 2011, the number of passengers reporting that they had cause to be concerned about personal security was below that of the national average. This was 6% overall rising to 9%, on the Regional Commuter Routes.

To improve security and safety Passenger Focus recommends that the franchise specification should include CCTV and linked help-point provision at all stations that do not currently have these facilities. Where stations are currently unstaffed during any part of the day when trains operate, they should be priorities for such investment. We believe that virtually every station should have appropriate technology to enhance personal security, although we acknowledge that it may be appropriate to specifically exempt this requirement for a few particularly lightly used stations in order to ensure best use of limited resources.

Passenger Focus also supports accreditation of stations and car parks through the established industry schemes

7.3 Improving station access

When passengers decide what mode of transport to take they are swayed by three overwhelming factors: how convenient will the journey be, how much will it cost and how long will it take²⁸. This applies

²⁸ Door to door by public transport – improving integration between National Rail and other public transport services in Britain, June 2009 http://www.cpt-uk.org/_uploads/attachment/690.pdf

to the whole door to door journey. The way passengers access the station can affect both overall journey cost and time. If getting to the rail station becomes too inconvenient passengers will often choose to make their whole journey by car; adding congestion to the roads and to transport's carbon footprint.

The passenger growth forecasts for Great Western mean increased attention will need to be given to how passengers are going to access and pass through stations throughout the life of the franchise.

At some locations the solution to station access needs will be to improve public transport links and parking provision; but at others the solution will be more complex and could be more creative. With limited space for car parking at some stations, and the industry's desire to look at more sustainable options, Passenger Focus is supportive of the use of Station Travel Plans. Local groups and Community Rail Partnerships should be involved in developing proposals to improve station access.

Bidders should be encouraged to commit to station travel plans schemes, with rollout dispersed across the network and throughout the life of the franchise. The stations selected should not just be those with the highest footfall, as the 2011 Network RUS (Stations) demonstrated that congestion does not just occur at those stations with the highest number of passengers starting or ending their journeys.

The successful bidder should be able to demonstrate how they will work in partnership with local authorities and other agencies to improve accessibility to stations by all modes, including cycling. Where identifiably beneficial schemes for passengers can be delivered by other partners, they should be encouraged and their future assured. The franchise should accommodate commitments to the future operation of any facilities provided.

7.4 Fares, ticketing and revenue protection (Question 29)

Passenger Focus will make a separate response to the recently published consultation on fares and ticketing. The comments below focus on identified issues with current policy and practice, further detail of which can be found in our published research.

Our research indicates three main themes relating to passenger concerns about fares and ticketing: value for money, complexity and lack of trust and transparency. We recommend that the specification includes the following measures to help address these problems:

7.4.1 Fares

- **Single-leg pricing for the walk-up railway**

On many journeys passengers can commit to a firm outward travel time but are less able to fix the time of the return journey. Our research on business travel found this to be one of the main barriers for business passengers. Properly structured single-leg pricing allows passengers to use a mix-and-match approach to journey planning without being penalised by the disproportionately high cost of the off-peak single ticket (which may only be 10p or £1 less than the return fare). The existing franchise has introduced an element of single-leg pricing into the franchise. We believe this should continue in the next franchise.

- **Introduce an element of flexibility in Advance Fares**

Allow Advance tickets to be 'upgraded' if a booked train is missed. Passengers should be able to pay the difference between what they have already paid and the price of the ticket valid at the time, subject to a reasonable administration fee. This would address the sense of grievance that many passengers feel when they are confronted with paying the full cost of the most expensive walk-up fare when they miss their train. Such flexibility could indeed be offered as a premium to the basic ticket.

- **Improve access to Advance Fares**

Ideally, passengers should be able to purchase Advance tickets at any time before a service departs. However, we recognise that this is not achievable with the rail industry's current systems. So in the interim we would like to see the cut-off time for the purchase of Advance tickets moved from 1800 to no earlier than 2359 on the eve of travel. This would at least allow people to get home from work and plan their affairs for the following day without automatically paying higher prices. Efforts must also be made to increase Ticket on Departure (TOD) schemes and e-ticketing as there are parts of the country where access to Advance tickets is dependent on delivery by post or involves a lengthy round trip to a station with reservation facilities.

- **Improve value for money for commuters by:**

- Developing discounted travel for frequent commuters for whom a traditional season ticket is not cost effective (e.g. carnet books or wider availability of lower-rate season tickets valid only certain days of the week).
- Developing and promoting a facility to spread the cost of an annual season ticket – allowing more people to take advantage of the benefits offered by an annual ticket.

- **Protect the travel opportunities of off-peak passengers**

There should be no further dilution of periods of validity of off-peak tickets.

- **Provide greater transparency and reassurance**

Our research on integrated transport found that one of the principal reasons for not using rail was the cost of the ticket/perception of value for money. Research by DfT among non- and irregular users of rail identified cheaper travel as the most important improvement in encouraging them to use trains for short-distance trips more often. And yet, when asked the cost of fares, many passengers will over-estimate the true cost. This shows that the perception of cost and value is important – if passengers perceive the cost to be higher than it is, or the value to be lower, then the industry is losing potential customers and revenue. We believe that more can be done to provide the necessary reassurance and information:

- **Reassure passengers that they have received the best deal**

- Display at the station the cheapest 'buy on the day' price for a through ticket to key destinations. Off-peak fares can be considerably cheaper than peak fares - this will help inform perceptions.
- Similarly, we believe the flexibility of the off-peak ticket is often misunderstood. When booking a ticket it can be easy for some passengers to confuse the seat reservation as meaning that they can only travel on that train. The ticket itself does not indicate that it is a flexible ticket allowing

travel on a range of trains. This undersells the true value of the product, which in turn suppresses demand and revenue.

- There is also a need to address the perception that 'cheap tickets' are never available. Publishing details of the actual quotas and/or the percentage of discounted fares sold (e.g. 80% of fares between London and Bristol cost less than £25) will help address the perception.
- To ensure passengers have confidence in the fares structure, in the case of 'walk-up' interavailable flows controlled by Great Western, the official through fare must never exceed the sum of 'walk-up' interavailable fares for individual legs of the journey (except where a journey takes place partly at peak time and partly not).
- **Give passengers the information on which to make an informed purchase**

Ticket restrictions and validities must be supplied at the point of purchase. Passenger Focus's recent research on ticket-vending machines showed that some passengers struggle to buy a ticket from a machine as they were not provided with sufficiently precise or enough information to ensure they got the correct ticket at the right price. This potentially results in passengers buying the more expensive ticket, utilising a 'better safe than sorry' mentality, or taking a chance on the cheaper ticket and risking a penalty or excess fare. We believe that validities should also be printed on the ticket itself (or at least be supplied with the ticket) to provide continuing reassurance to passengers.

7.4.2 Retailing

- **Improve usability of TVMs and ensure full range of tickets are available**

Effective retailing via TVMs requires additional safeguards to ensure passengers can purchase the appropriate ticket for their journey. The franchisee must commit to addressing the following points within a defined timescale:

- As an absolute minimum, TVMs at large stations should offer tickets to all major conurbations that are served by all operators from the station and should offer tickets to all stations served by through trains from that station.
- TVMs should state clearly the range of tickets available from them and if they do not offer a full range of tickets and destinations, then there should be clear information stating what a passenger should do if they are unable to purchase a ticket.
- Information about restrictions and routes needs to be provided in an easily-understandable format on TVMs.
- Card-only machines should clearly inform passengers without a card what to do. Ideally the machine should offer a ticket with the departure station date and time printed on it so that the passengers can purchase a ticket at the next opportunity but meanwhile travel without fear of penalty.
- **Improve confidence in internet retailing**

Some passengers are suspicious that train company websites favour their own services over those of other companies and that they do not necessarily offer the best value tickets for the journey being made.

It is important to take the opportunity through the new franchise to protect the unwary, potentially irregular traveller paying more than they need and to give all online purchasers confidence that they have obtained the best price available. This can be achieved by:

- Formally extending impartial retailing rules to cover internet ticket sales through the new operator's website.
 - In order to prevent overcharging and ensure passengers can have confidence that they are getting the best price, that it be made impossible to buy an Advance ticket at a higher price than the 'walk-up' fare available on the same train and that it be made impossible to buy out and back Standard Class Advance tickets at a higher price than the 'walk-up' return fare available on the same trains.
- **Deliver agreed standards at ticket offices**
 - There should be a commitment to ensure agreed ticket-office opening hours be maintained and delivered consistently at all stations, with a formal requirement to report adherence levels to DfT station by station, period by period
 - That Ticketing and Settlement Agreement standards for queuing times be met at all stations, with a formal requirement to report adherence levels to DfT station by station every six months and to publish standards and the adherence to them so as to give passengers confidence that these are met. At stations where 'tickets for today' and 'tickets in advance' have separate queues, they should be reported separately, recognising that the complexities of some advance travel queries can be time consuming.
 - **Make it easier to actually buy a ticket**

The success of Oyster PAYG in London shows that passengers will embrace new technology. The continuing development of smartcards and ticketing via mobile phones and 'print at home' technology can help to increase access to fares and reduce the overall cost of retailing.

Passenger interest in retailing developments was demonstrated in the Great Western route research. Table 6 shows that mobile telephone ticket options and printing out from computer are the two methods passengers indicated they would be most likely to use to receive their tickets in future.

Table 6: Percentage of surveyed passengers saying likely to use alternative ticketing methods

Ticketing method	Total	Long dist.	Regional Com'r	Regional mixed use	Branch lines	Inter Regional	Com'r	Business	Leisure	Peak	Off-peak
Base size	3523	682	958	876	312	695	1417	546	1516	1923	1600
By post	32%	48%	24%	29%	31%	31%	23%	37%	39%	30%	34%
Printing out from a computer	63%	73%	57%	70%	49%	61%	57%	80%	63%	63%	64%
Sent to your mobile (show message as proof of purchase)	55%	55%	55%	57%	50%	57%	57%	59%	51%	57%	53%
Sent to your mobile (scan barcode at ticket gate)	47%	47%	45%	50%	43%	48%	49%	53%	43%	49%	46%
Smartcard	27%	24%	31%	24%	28%	26%	34%	25%	20%	29%	23%

- **Ensure new ticketing developments benefit passengers**

Over the lifetime of the new franchise some significant changes and developments in retailing can be expected. It is important that these initiatives provide tangible benefits to passengers. The following safeguards should be put into place:

- Bidders should commit to adopting and implementing nationally-agreed retailing processes and standards
- The needs of all passengers need to be considered
- The functionality arising from new technology should be capable of being utilised to provide additional passenger benefits:
 - electronic reimbursement of 'delay repay' compensation.
 - keeping a record/database of railcard holders so that their entitlement to a reduction can be verified if they do not have their Railcard to hand, thereby avoiding a penalty fare/unpaid fare notice if they fail to carry it.

7.4.3 Revenue Protection, Penalty Fares and Unpaid Fare Notices

An effective strategy for revenue protection is important for the new franchise. Passenger Focus believes ticketless travel is an important issue - and one that needs addressing. Passengers who avoid paying for their ticket are in effect being subsidised by the vast majority of fare-paying passengers. It is right that the franchisee will take steps to deter, to catch and to punish those who deliberately set out to avoid payment. However, the revenue protection strategy must provide safeguards for those who make an innocent mistake and whose intention was never to defraud the system.

Passenger Focus has raised with the industry a number of significant concerns around application of penalty fares and unpaid fare notices that have arisen as a result of disturbing passenger experiences brought to our Appeals team. A new franchise provides an opportunity to take a fresh look at how the system operates.

Bidders should be mindful of passenger intent in developing and applying a revenue protection strategy. The DfT should ensure that the following safeguards are written into the franchise agreement:

- The operator should provide clear consistent guidelines explaining when staff should show discretion in the application of penalties. For example when:
 - passengers do not have their railcard with them
 - the required tickets are not available from a ticket machine
 - they are told by a member of staff that they can board a train without a valid ticket
 - ticket restrictions are not clear or available at the point of purchase
- The operator must clearly state that they will not go straight to any form of criminal prosecution unless they suspect (or have proof) that there was an intent to defraud.
- Penalties should be proportionate to the actual loss suffered by the operator.
- The operator must monitor the number of unpaid fare notices / penalty fare notices being issued and the numbers being overturned on appeal.
- Train companies need to retain overall accountability even when they have outsourced revenue protection to a third party. In the longer-term this should be governed by a national code of practice (covering such things as discretion and process for appeals).

7.5 Service quality and other targets (Question 31)

Passenger Focus strongly supports the principle of monitoring and improving service quality through a combination of NPS results and periodic reviews of TOC Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Disaggregated targets for both measures should be set and performance against them published widely. A financial penalty regime should apply with resources ring-fenced for additional investment into service quality measures that are most likely to improve passenger satisfaction.

7.5.1 NPS

We have long advocated more use of qualitative targets within a franchise. Our strong preference is for targets based on what passengers think – the best judge of quality being those who have used the services in question. NPS provides this measure and Great Western has an existing sample size of 2960 which enables robust measures across three building blocks: London Thames Valley, Long Distance and West.

We suggest bespoke targets should be established on each of the building blocks to measure service quality for station, train and customer-service attributes. Existing levels of satisfaction should be the starting point for establishing targets which should generally become more stretching as the franchise progresses. An annual assessment of the combined spring and autumn results would provide a fair measure of the overall passenger satisfaction within each given year.

Passenger Focus would be happy to further discuss the application of NPS targets for the franchise with the Department as required.

7.5.2 KPIs

The KPI assessments should be conducted across the entire franchise and include all stations and representative samples of the major train service groups. Standards of satisfaction with the customer services function, complaints handling and the level of appeals to Passenger Focus should also be measured. All assessments should be conducted regularly to provide ongoing management information as well as a basis for a periodic review based on collated information.

7.5.3 Performance targets

Given the very high significance of these factors to passengers the specification must include traditional 'hard' performance targets covering punctuality, reliability and crowding. However, we believe that there is a need for much more transparency surrounding these targets.

Transparency generates greater accountability. Giving rail passengers access to performance figures will help them to hold the train company to account and to ask what is being done to improve services in return for the fares they pay. Good management should not feel threatened by this. Indeed the availability of accurate data may actually help them – a particularly bad journey can linger in the memory and distort passengers' perceptions. Accurate, relevant data can help challenge these negative perceptions.

Punctuality data only provided at the overall TOC level can easily mask significant differences between routes and times of day. Providing disaggregated performance data at a route/service group level would help prevent this and focus attention on areas that need improving. It is important to stress that this information already exists – it would not involve any new costs in terms of data gathering.

Equally, there is currently next to nothing in the public domain about crowding. This is another fundamental aspect of a passenger's journey and an area where greater transparency can again generate improvements for passengers.

In the longer term we also see value in looking more closely at the choice of performance measurement used. The existing measure (PPM) allows a five or 10 minute leeway on late arrivals – a train is not late

until it exceeds these allowances. However, we know from our research²⁹ mapping passenger satisfaction against train performance that a delay begins to have an effect on passengers well before that. This might mean addressing the suitability of the current thresholds or even of introducing a secondary measure based on right-time arrival. We are discussing these issues as part of the debate surrounding the metrics to be used for the next High Level Output Statement (HLOS2).

Network Rail's performance clearly has a huge bearing on a TOC's punctuality and yet a franchise agreement typically only creates an obligation on factors within the train company's control. Clearly there are limits to how far one organisation is willing to be held accountable for another's performance but, from a passenger's perspective, it is overall punctuality that matters not just how well the train company did. There are obvious benefits in aligning TOC and Network Rail incentives and there is much work going on to address this - not least in terms of joint improvement performance plans and potential Alliancing. We would like to see the franchising specification encourage and cement this joint working approach. To this end we would ask DfT to consider the scope for introducing joint targets within this franchise.

Overall, the franchise should require an appropriate level of disaggregation on current measures and require the operator to comply as reporting requirements evolve.

7.5.4 Input vs output measures

The balance between input and output measures is a fine one. For instance, the franchise could specify that the bidder purchases 50 new ticket vending machines (an input target) or that it increase passenger satisfaction with retailing (an output target). The latter follows the pattern set in the South Central franchise with the bidders setting targets for passenger satisfaction and these becoming contractual targets with fines for non compliance.

Passenger Focus recognises the value of both input and output measures provided that they are based on passengers' priorities and needs. Passenger responses to the consultation should be used to further inform the targets and measures that go into the franchise specification.

7.6 Accessibility, the Equality Act 2010 and minor works fund (Question 33)

We note the requirements to comply with equalities and discrimination legislation and to produce a Disabled People's Protection Policy (DPPP). Passenger Focus also supports the expectation for a minor works fund and advocates that consultation with relevant groups should include inviting suggestions about how this money might best be spent to meet identified needs.

In addition to the provisions set out in DPPP guidance, Passenger Focus believes the franchise specification should also require the following provisions:

- Scooter policy – ensure that a suitable scooter acceptance scheme is in place for smaller, lighter and more manoeuvrable machines – e.g. Scootercards. Blanket bans are no longer acceptable – always understanding that some models will be too wide/heavy ever to be accepted on to trains.
- Provide a priority seat card scheme (as initiated by Southern and now adopted as good practice by a number of operators) to help passengers demonstrate a specific need for a seat, backed up by publicity on stations and greater prominence made of which seats are priority seats so that they are

²⁹ Towards a 'right time' East Anglian railway. Passenger Focus. March 2010

easily located and recognised. This is especially important in the case of trains where no reservation facility is available.

- Clarify the priority of use of priority seating and the groups considered eligible for it.
- Clearly clarify priority of usage in 'shared' spaces – i.e. wheelchairs have absolute priority over prams.
- Provide assistance cards which disabled passengers can show to staff to explain their disability – hearing-impaired, speech-impaired, learning difficulties, so that staff can react and provide the necessary additional assistance.
- Comprehensive Passenger Assist monitoring – proper management, e.g. perhaps the number of assistance requests delivered, rather than satisfaction, which can be deceptive. This could be included in the Passenger's Charter and the DPPP.
 - Best use should be made of the management information gained from Passenger Assist – e.g. enabling TOCs to plan assistance provision better.
- Training of staff – especially front-line staff in immediate customer contact, whether face-to face or by telephone.
- Examine all possibilities to improve station accessibility: e.g. induction loops; help points; adjustable-height counters; automatic doors etc.

7.7 On-train catering (Question 32)

Passenger requirements for on-train catering will vary according to the journey being made (e.g. length, time of day, purpose etc) and also reflect individual preferences. The provision of catering will also need to be balanced with other factors, particularly the availability of space on the train and the levels of crowding on services.

Passenger satisfaction with catering facilities on Great Western routes ranged from 13 and 18% on regional commuter and regional branches to 55 and 63% on long distance and inter-regional services.

Table 4 in section 6.9 shows the importance passengers place on catering facilities alongside provision of other on board services. It indicates that catering is more important to business and leisure passengers than commuters and also suggests this is, unsurprisingly, more relevant to passengers on longer distance journeys.

7.8 Improving the environmental performance of the railway (Question 34)

The environmental impact of the railway is of lower importance to most passengers than many factors that influence the immediate quality of their journeys such as punctuality and getting a seat.

Looking more widely, the key candidates for improvement should be those factors which can reduce costs, regenerative braking, for example. Developments that improve comfort would also be welcomed by passengers. Electrification may play a role in both these areas, after the initial costs of introduction have been met.

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- Department for Transport
- The Welsh Government
- Travelwatch SouthWest

We would also like to thank all the groups and individuals who submitted their consultation response comments and aspirations with us to help highlight regional passenger issues. At the time of printing, these responses include*:

- Severn Tunnel Action Group (STAG)
- TARKA Rail Association
- Railfuture & Railfuture Wessex
- Better Trains for Chepstow (BT4C)
- Ivybridge Rail User Group
- Avocet Line Rail User Group (ALRUG)
- Ashchurch, Tewkesbury & District Rail User Group
- Calne Area Transport
- East Surrey Transport Committee
- Cotswold Line Promotion Grp
- Salford Station Campaign Group
- South East Wales Transport Alliance (SEWTA)
- Atherstone & District RUG (ARUG)
- St Germans Rail User Group
- Herefordshire Council
- Travel Watch South West
- Friends of Tackley Station
- South Hampshire Rail User Group
- Marlow-Maidenhead Passengers' Association
- Heart of Wessex Rail Partnership
- Well House Consultants Ltd
- Salisbury to Exeter Lineside Consortium of Authorities
- South West Regional Green Party
- Twyford Village Partnership

Members of Parliament

- Duncan Hames - Chippenham
- Harriet Baldwin – West Worcestershire
- Oliver Colvile - Plymouth Sutton
- Peter Luff - Mid Worcestershire

* For data protection reasons, we have refrained from printing the names of individual contributors. Their responses however are very welcome and appreciated.

Appendix 1

Passenger Research – Routes and passenger sample

- **Long distance.** All passengers travelling between London Paddington and Cardiff, Bristol, Taunton, Exeter or further (752 passengers)
- **Regional commuters** All passengers travelling between Bristol Temple Meads and Bath Spa, or Cam & Dursley, or Severn Beach, or Weston Super Mare (1062 passengers)
- **Regional mixed users.** All passengers travelling between Hereford and Reading or Hereford and Oxford. (1023 passengers)
- **Branch lines.** All passengers travelling between Truro and Falmouth Docks, Exeter St David's and Barnstaple, Exeter St David's and Exmouth (355 passengers)
- **Inter Regional.** All passengers travelling between Cardiff Central and Portsmouth (805 passengers)
- Total sample = 4042 passengers. Fieldwork November/December 2011

Appendix 2

Extract from: **The Great Western franchise 2013 onwards: an initial submission from Passenger Focus (Dec '11)**

The Core Factors

a. Value for money

Passengers are paying an increasingly high proportion of the costs of the railway and this makes the delivery of value for money a significant challenge. The Passenger Focus fares and ticketing study³⁰ investigated the influences on passenger perceptions of value for money. It found that whilst intrinsically linked to the price of the ticket, value for money is also influenced by several other significant factors. These link directly to the findings of priorities research and NPS drivers and are:

- Punctuality and reliability
- Being able to get a seat
- Passenger information during service disruption.

Improving passenger satisfaction with these core elements of the train service must be a high priority for the Great Western franchise.

Another important factor to assist in delivering value for money is to ensure that fares and ticketing processes are fair, impartial and clear, enabling passengers to purchase the cheapest appropriate ticket for their journey. Other high-level recommendations relating to fares and ticketing are addressed in section 4.3.6.

b. Punctuality and reliability

Table 2 shows that around one quarter of passengers on Great Western services are less than satisfied with punctuality and reliability and each of the building blocks performs worse than the average for comparable operators in the applicable sector. Improving performance is a high passenger priority for improvement and the next franchise should address this significant issue.

Table i: NPS punctuality and reliability spring 2011

FGW Building Block score	Comparative Sector score	Building block index
FGW Long Distance 79	Long Distance Average 87	91%
FGW Thames Valley 76	London and SE Average 79	96%
FGW West 76	Regional Average 82	92%

Research by Passenger Focus³¹ found that commuters appear to notice lateness from the first minute, not just after the five or ten minutes allowed by Public Performance Measure (PPM). It was also found that the average passenger lateness in the evening peak was worse than the average train lateness. This was because of the effect of cancellations and because many trains were late arriving at intermediate stations even if on time at their destination.

Passenger Focus's principal conclusion from the research is that Britain's railway must in future focus on 'right time' arrival at all stops. We recommend that this is carried into the new Great Western franchise.

³⁰ Fares and Ticketing Study Final report, February 2009

³¹ Towards a 'right time' East Anglian railway, March 2010

c. Transparency

Another study³² found passengers felt that increased transparency of information about punctuality and reliability, as well as other aspects of rail services, would assist in the scrutiny and accountability of the rail industry. They were aware that overall averages masked highs and lows on different services and wanted information broken down into meaningful measures that would reflect the experiences of their own rail travel.

The measures that passengers felt captured their experience were punctuality and reliability, investment, comfort, fares, staff, station facilities and journey times.

Passenger Focus recommends that steps to increase the transparency of information about a range of service factors, particularly performance, should be a requirement of the new franchise. Information should be disaggregated as far as possible and efforts made to present data in a simple and easily understandable manner.

d. Capacity and frequency

The severe crowding on certain Great Western services is well-documented and, even with the planned interventions on infrastructure and enhancements to the train fleet, provision of sufficient capacity will remain an ongoing challenge. It is imperative that provision of an effective response to capacity needs throughout the term of the contract is made a core requirement of the new franchise.

Tables 3a and 3b show current passenger satisfaction levels with frequency of service and room for passengers to sit and stand. The low level of satisfaction recorded by peak passengers, especially in the Thames Valley, illustrates the scale of the capacity challenge.

Table ii: Peak and off-peak satisfaction with frequency and capacity spring 2011

Factor	FGW All	FGW Peak	Thames Valley Peak	FGW Off peak	Thames Valley Off peak
The frequency of the trains on that route	76	81	72	75	71
Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand	69	50	42	72	69

Table iii: Commuter/Business/Leisure satisfaction with frequency and capacity spring 2011

Factor	Commuter	Business	Leisure
The frequency of the trains on that route	68	80	79
Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand	59	69	76

It is important, however, that capacity is not seen as just a problem in the Thames Valley. Pressures on other services are also evident e.g. in and around Bristol and at pinch points on the route from Cardiff to Portsmouth. The franchise should require improvements to capacity to be delivered wherever possible in all parts of the network where need is demonstrated.

The franchise should also consider passenger aspirations in planning future service provision. There must be a requirement to consult fully and meaningfully with the range of stakeholder groups and

³² Putting rail information in the public domain, Passenger Focus and Office of Rail Regulation, May 2011

demonstrate that the needs of differing groups of passengers have been considered when timetable proposals are brought forward.

e. Dealing with disruption and provision of information

Effective management of disruption and keeping passengers informed must be a key requirement for the next franchise. Table 4 sets out First Great Western NPS scores for dealing with delays. Despite some improvement over the past four years, by spring 2011 only just over a third of passengers on Thames Valley and West services were satisfied, while just over half of passengers on Long Distance services were satisfied. There remains significant room for improvement.

Table iv: Satisfaction with how well the train company dealt with delay spring 2007 - 2011

NPS Wave	Thames Valley	Long Distance	West
Spring 2007	26	37	28
Spring 2008	22	44	38
Spring 2009	32	48	33
Spring 2010	44	55	42
Spring 2011	34	52	38

Passenger Focus supports efforts by the industry to tackle the challenge of improving the management of disruption and also to raise standards of information provision. Research into a number of aspects of disruption and passenger needs for information³³ has identified the problems to be addressed and shown how solutions may be found.

We recommend the next Great Western franchise includes a requirement to fully adopt all elements of the ATOC Approved Code of Practice on passenger information during disruption and information Good Practice Guides and sets challenging targets for year on year improvement in passenger satisfaction with management of disruption and the provision of information.

The next franchisee must also be required to show what practical steps they will take to improve how passengers are looked after during service disruption, particularly demonstrating their focus on people rather than simply processes.

f. Fares and ticket retailing

Passengers have experienced years of above-inflation fare increases and that is set to continue for the foreseeable future. Passenger Focus supports the concept of fares regulation as it provides some degree of protection to passengers, many of whom are captive consumers. For the next Great Western franchise, Passenger Focus recommends:

1 – The level of flexibility that can be applied to increases in individual fares should be restricted to a maximum of +/- 2% which will allow the train operator to correct any anomalies between fares and address market issues where appropriate but will limit the ability to drive large differences between fares relating to specific routes/stations.

2. Increases to unregulated fares should be capped at the same level applied to regulated fares.

³³ Delays and Disruption – Rail passenger have their say, Passenger Focus, December 2010
 Reading station engineering works – what passengers want, Passenger Focus, May 2011
 Information: Rail passengers' needs during unplanned disruption, Passenger Focus and Southern, August 2011

The next Great Western franchise must make ticket purchase easier for passengers, many of whom are confused by the complexity of the fares system. Clear information about the validity of tickets and any applicable restrictions must be readily available. Passengers should be able to buy the most appropriate ticket for their intended journey, regardless of whether this is purchased at a ticket office, on-line, at a ticket machine or through any other method. Research has identified a number of issues with both ticket vending machines (TVMs) and websites and these problems are set out, with recommendations about how to improve retailing through these channels, in:

- Ticket vending machine usability, Passenger Focus, June 2010
- Ticket retailing: website usability, Passenger Focus, June 2011

Passenger Focus recommends that the next Great Western franchise incorporates these recommendations on ticket retailing within the requirements.

The new franchise should provide a wider-range of tickets for passengers. Developments in ticketing such as smart-cards and mobile telephone products should be incorporated into the franchise. The franchise should also require the introduction of innovative new products such as carnet-style tickets that will enable passengers who cannot benefit from season ticket discounts to achieve some economies from repeat travel. Schemes to spread the cost of annual season tickets should also be available.

Appendix 3

Passenger priorities for the new franchise

As part of its route-based research Passenger Focus asked First Great Western passengers to consider a number of improvements that could be made on their route. Using stated preference techniques their answers were analysed and a list of priorities have been compiled.

Table 1 below (where a score of 100 means passengers consider the factor to be the most important improvement) shows that for the FGW passengers we surveyed, for all bar those on the Inter-Regional route (Cardiff to Portsmouth), punctuality and reliability was the top priority.

Similarly on three out of the five routes that we surveyed, and second overall when all the responses were taken into account, passengers considered being able to get a seat the second highest priority for improvement. For those on the Inter-Regional route this was actually the top priority indicating that capacity on this route might be an area that bidders for the new franchise would wish to address.

Interestingly both regional commuters, and commuters as a whole across the five routes, placed being able to get a seat as fourth priority; instead they consider getting value for money to be the second highest priority for improvement.

For the third priority, it was a similar picture. On three of the routes, and for all FGW passengers on the five routes combined, Value for Money was the third highest priority. However, for those on the branch lines, and for regional commuters, more importance was attached to the frequency of service.

Table 1	Total	Long Distance	Regional Commuter	Regional Mixed Use	Branch Lines	Inter-Regional	Commuter	Business	Leisure
Punctuality / reliability of the train	100	100	100	100	100	94	100	100	100
Being able to get a seat on the train	79	94	51	85	84	100	57	96	99
Value for money for price of ticket	72	80	64	66	64	84	63	59	88
Frequency of trains for this route	47	27	61	51	72	39	62	40	42
Length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed)	38	41	30	45	34	38	34	44	40
Upkeep/ repair and cleanliness of the train	33	33	26	36	52	34	26	33	44
Connections with other train services	22	16	19	20	40	26	15	21	30
Ease of buying a ticket	20	18	18	19	26	24	16	18	28
Provision of information during times of disruption	20	19	18	19	22	20	17	17	25
Facilities and services on board the train	15	17	10	19	17	17	10	17	22
Quality of facilities and services at the station	12	10	9	12	19	15	9	11	17
Provision of information during the journey	11	9	10	10	16	14	10	9	15
Ease of getting to and from the station	11	10	9	11	16	12	9	11	15

Appendix 4

NPS route and sector definitions

Sector	Definition
FGW Thames Valley	Journeys on relatively short distance services in and around the Thames Valley region.
FGW Long Distance	Journeys on Great Western Long Distance services. This includes passengers travelling between London and, or beyond, Bristol Temple Meads, Cardiff, Taunton and Exeter.
FGW West	Journeys on (generally) short distance rural rail lines in the West of England.

NPS LSE Sector	National Passenger Survey results for train operating companies operating in the London South East region. Includes: c2c, Chiltern Railways, First Capital Connect, First Great Western, London Midland, London Overground, National Express East Anglia, Southeastern, Southern, South West Trains.
NPS Long Distance	National Passenger Survey results for train operating companies operating long distance services. Includes: CrossCountry, East Coast, East Midlands Trains, First Transpennine Express, Virgin Trains.
NPS Regional Sector	National Passenger Survey results for train operating companies operating regional services. Includes: Arriva Trains Wales, Merseyrail, Northern Rail, Scotrail

Appendix 5

If no direct trains, how likely to still travel by train on this route?

	TOTAL	Long distance	Regional Com'r	Regional mixed	Branch lines	Inter Regional	Com'r	Business	Leisure	Peak	Off-peak
Base size (all not changing trains this journey)	2686	510	744	758	208	466	1158	407	1076	1501	1185
Likely to still use	0.56	0.57	0.5	0.56	0.55	0.66	0.49	0.61	0.62	0.53	0.6
Not likely	0.4	0.4	0.45	0.41	0.38	0.31	0.46	0.37	0.34	0.44	0.35

Com'r = Commuter

Appendix 6

Reason for not using nearest station for most train journeys

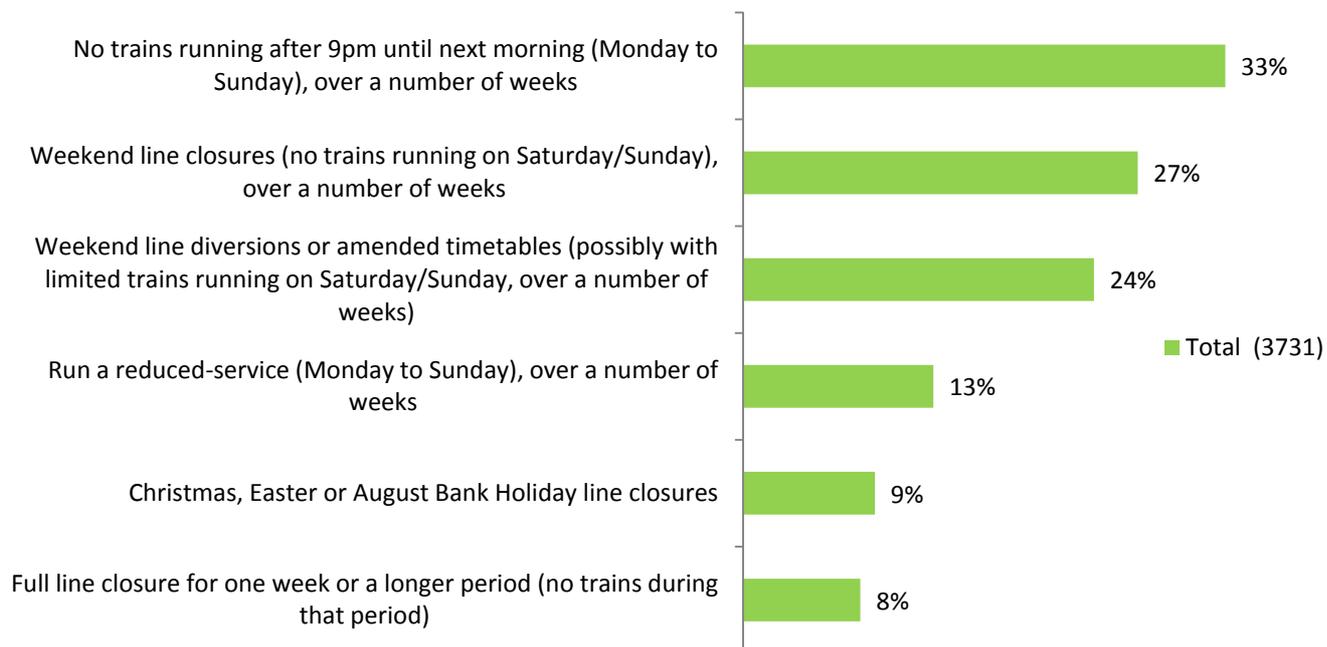
	TOTAL	Long distance	Regional Com'r	Regional mixed use	Branch lines	Inter Regional	Com'r	Business	Leisure	Peak	Off-peak
Base size (all not using nearest station to home)	755	194	170	198	34	159	259	160	334	399	356
I get a direct train to my destination from the alternative station	50%	59%	44%	52%	41%	45%	47%	51%	51%	49%	51%
Better frequency of trains at other stations	38%	34%	52%	32%	32%	36%	46%	39%	31%	41%	34%
Easy to get to alternative station(s)	28%	30%	22%	31%	21%	30%	25%	24%	32%	30%	26%
Length of journey too long from my nearest station	17%	16%	18%	20%	21%	15%	23%	18%	13%	20%	14%
Cheaper fares available from other stations	12%	6%	14%	18%	3%	13%	16%	8%	11%	13%	12%
No booking office at my nearest station	7%	9%	11%	5%	3%	5%	7%	7%	8%	9%	6%
There are usually no parking spaces at nearest station	7%	9%	4%	10%	3%	6%	11%	4%	6%	8%	6%
The car parking is too expensive	7%	6%	6%	9%	12%	6%	8%	6%	6%	9%	5%
Provision of train information better at alternative station	6%	7%	8%	3%	9%	4%	7%	5%	5%	7%	4%
Trains too overcrowded from my nearest station	5%	4%	5%	4%	18%	6%	5%	4%	5%	4%	6%
Personal security at my nearest station	3%	5%	4%	1%	3%	2%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Other reason	21%	25%	20%	16%	24%	23%	19%	22%	22%	19%	23%

Com'r = Commuter

Appendix 7

Passenger preferences for scheduling of engineering works

Overall Great Western passenger preferences for scheduling of engineering work



Great Western passenger preferences for scheduling of engineering work by route and passenger type

	Type of passenger	No trains running after 9pm until next morning	Weekend line closures	Weekend line diversions	Run a reduced service Monday to Sunday
Route 1 – Long Distance	Commuters	34	31	31	4
	Leisure passengers	40	27	11	19
Route 2 – Regional Commuters	Commuters	44	29	24	10
	Leisure passengers	20	34	19	13
Route 3 – Regional Mixed Users	Commuters	27	40	24	12
	Leisure passengers	36	14	20	14
Route 4 – Branch lines	Commuters	38	33	8	19
	Leisure passengers	42	17	24	10
Route 5 – Inter Regional	Commuters	30	23	33	12
	Leisure passengers	40	21	13	22

Appendix 8

National Passenger Survey – Sleeper survey results

Spring 2010 and Autumn 2009 combined

Percentage of passengers satisfied

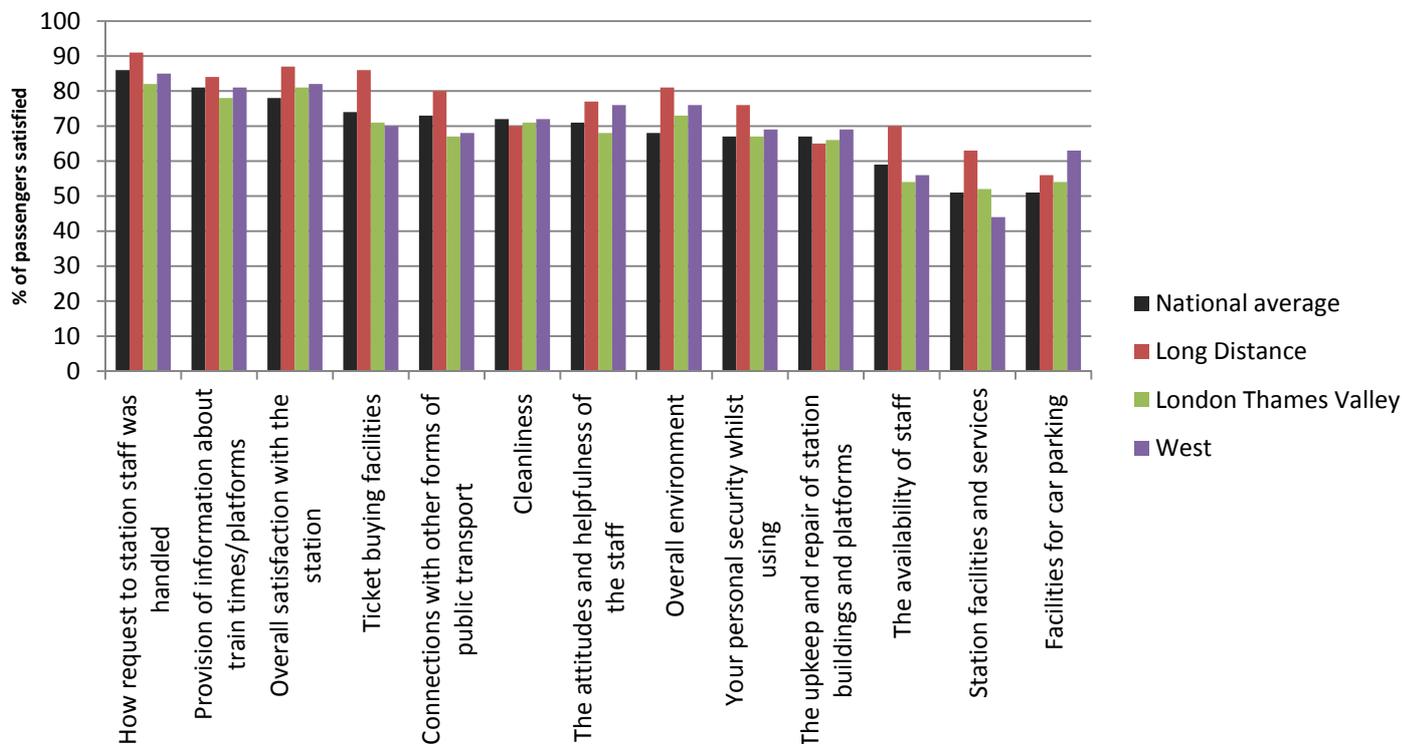
	FGW Sleeper	ScotRail Sleeper	Long Distance Sector
Sample size	308	232	7189
Overall Satisfaction	94	89	87
STATION - Ticket Buying Facilities	83	67	80
STATION - Provision Of Information About Train Times/Platforms	86	92	86
STATION - The Upkeep/Repair Of The Station Buildings/Platforms	76	76	72
STATION - Cleanliness	81	78	76
STATION - The Facilities And Services	61	64	64
STATION - The Attitudes And Helpfulness Of The Staff	83	81	76
STATION - Connections With Other Forms Of Public Transport	84	82	76
STATION - Facilities For Car Parking	73	51	55
STATION - The Overall Environment	69	70	73
STATION - Your Personal Security Whilst Using	69	73	72
STATION - The Availability Of Staff At The Station	56	64	65
STATION - How Request To Station Staff Was Handled	90	87	89
TRAIN - The Frequency Of The Trains On That Route	81	88	85
TRAIN - Punctuality/Reliability (i.e. The Train Arriving/Departing On Time)	88	96	87
TRAIN - The Length Of Time The Journey Was Scheduled To Take (Speed)	88	92	89
TRAIN - Connections With Other Train Services	80	87	79
TRAIN - The Value For Money For The Price Of Your Ticket	80	69	58
TRAIN - Cleanliness Of The Train	96	85	82
TRAIN - Upkeep And Repair Of The Train	91	69	84
TRAIN - The Provision Of Information During The Journey	89	72	77
TRAIN - The Helpfulness And Attitude Of Staff On Train	96	90	78
TRAIN - The Space For Luggage	75	58	52
TRAIN - The Toilet Facilities	96	90	51
TRAIN - Sufficient Room For All Passengers To Sit/Stand			70
TRAIN - The Comfort Of The Seating Area	86	86	77
TRAIN - The Ease Of Being Able To Get On And Off	86	90	83
TRAIN - Your Personal Security Whilst On Board	92	90	85
TRAIN - The Cleanliness Of The Inside			82
TRAIN - The Cleanliness Of The Outside	86	79	76
TRAIN - The Availability Of Staff	91	88	66
TRAIN - How Well Train Company Dealt With Delays	55	20	52
Cleanliness of the day carriage	93	87	
Cleanliness of the berth	98	92	
Bedding sheets, duvets and pillows	86	86	
Wash facilities	80	56	

Space for bicycles	66	57	
Comfort of the bed	80	77	
Sufficient room in your birth/compartment	80	61	
Waiting facilities	53	44	
Ease of being dropped off by car or taxi	93	82	

Appendix 9

Passenger satisfaction with station attributes

Passenger satisfaction with station attributes on FGW (NPS Autumn 2011)



The lowest NPS satisfaction scores are those for facilities and services at the station. A similar picture is painted on the five FGW routes surveyed by Passenger Focus in December 2011:

Rating of station where boarded this train (% saying good) Green highlights identify the highest scores and red the lowest	TOTAL	Route 1 - Long distance	Route 2 - Regional commuter	Route 3 - Regional mixed use	Route 4 - Branch lines	Route 5 - Inter Regional
Provision of information about train times/platforms	89%	95%	84%	91%	84%	91%
Cleanliness of the station	77%	84%	72%	80%	73%	72%
The upkeep and repair of station buildings/platforms	76%	83%	70%	79%	73%	74%
The attitude and helpfulness of the staff	74%	78%	69%	78%	70%	75%
Personal security at the station	71%	76%	64%	71%	67%	76%
Ticket buying facilities	67%	80%	54%	69%	63%	76%
Facilities for bicycle parking	65%	71%	59%	68%	61%	72%
Connections with other forms of public transport	64%	78%	57%	56%	62%	72%
The availability of staff at the station	60%	73%	48%	61%	54%	65%
The facilities and services at the station	58%	73%	49%	58%	42%	63%



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