

South Eastern rail franchise: what passengers want

Qualitative research

April 2017

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1. INTRODUCTION

Research objectives

- Overall, this project aimed to understand what passengers want from a new franchise in the South East
- Specifically, the project sought to understand how a range of passengers using the service feel about all aspects of service delivery, as well as their needs and expectations of the future franchise and their priorities across the following areas:
 1. General service parameters (timetable/frequency)
 2. Ticketing and pricing
 3. Journey experience
 4. Passenger/toc 'contract' and performance levels
 5. General information and communication needs
 6. Service disruption
 7. Specific needs
- An asterisk in the text denotes further information included as a note to the slide.

2. Key findings

Key findings (1) – Passenger needs

- South Eastern passengers' needs from their train service were broadly split as follows in terms of their importance.

Basic requirements

- Punctuality and dealing with disruption
- On-board capacity
- General service parameters (timetable/frequency).

Good experience

- Comfort
- Staff
- Fair deal (cost)
- Productive time
- Station provision
- Information & communication.

Key findings (2) – Priorities for improvement

- **However, what passengers will see as priorities for improvement for their South Eastern service, depends in large part on their experience of the extent to which these needs are met, so therefore:**
 - **Punctuality and how disruption is dealt with, as well as on-board capacity, are important across different types of passengers but they are mainly key priorities for Commuters (particularly on Metro and Mainline services) as they feel that their service doesn't meet these basic needs sufficiently**
 - **As Leisure and Business passengers choose to travel off-peak wherever possible they experience less of the problems Commuters face and so their focus shifts to other priorities which are important for good experience of the service, such as comfort or facilities that would enable productive time on-board**
 - **Additionally, while most passengers see general service parameters as very important, they are very rarely picked as key priorities largely because most passengers feel these are broadly meeting their needs.**

Key findings (3) – different perspectives

You have to have a low expectation. You put up with whatever because you have no choice. You can't turn around and wait for the next train. [Female, 55, Commuter, Hayes]

It's important that carriages are pleasant smelling and clean. [Female, 17, Leisure, Maidstone East]

I think as people who use the train for work WiFi is getting into the essential actually. That's a couple of hours extra a day you can be getting work done without eating into your own time. [Male, 30, Business, High Speed]

→ The more their basic needs are met, the more passengers' priorities shift towards having a good experience too. Conversely, where basic needs are not met, passengers tend to focus on meeting those requirements and other needs for good experience get relegated as secondary (despite also being important).

Key findings (4) – journey influences

- **Passengers' priorities for their SE service further depend on the RELEVANCE to their travel behaviour:**
 - **JOURNEY PURPOSE** is the biggest factor in this regard as it's associated with differences in frequency of travel, time of travel, familiarity with the service, need for help, amount of time spent on stations and trains etc., all of which impact on what passengers see as relevant and important
 - For example, on-board experience is more of a priority for Commuters than station experience for a number of reasons (amount of time spent on train, familiarity with the service, time pressured at stations etc)
 - Conversely, station experience is more important for Leisure and Business passengers who travel less regularly so may need more help. Leisure passengers also have more time to spend at stations
 - **LENGTH OF JOURNEY** is another factor informing passengers' priorities, with focus shifting from seating to standing space depending on how long the journey takes.

Key findings (5) – scope for change

- **Finally, passengers' priorities sometimes also depend on the perceived potential for change:**
 - **For example, most passengers find fares too expensive and Commuters often find them extortionate but most also don't believe that they can change much about the cost of travel so their priorities for improvement shift towards getting a good service for their money rather than hoping for fare reductions**
 - **Similarly, where passengers depart from small and remote stations, they may wish for having 2 trains per hour rather than 1, but they often recognise that the footfall at their station is too low to realistically warrant that.**

3. Detailed findings

Punctuality and disruption experience (1)

- Punctuality and how disruption is dealt with are highly important across different passenger types but particularly a key priority for Commuters most of whom feel their basic needs aren't met in this area.



Metro



Mainline



High Speed

- High Speed (HS) is seen as more punctual, whereas Metro and Mainline services are seen as more frequently delayed – particularly in rush hour
- The length and frequency of delays varies between individual services, but Mainline services are more often reported to be frequently delayed, with delays ranging from 5mins to 10mins+
- With regard to Metro services, Bexleyheath and Hayes passengers complained of more frequent and longer delays whereas passengers on other Metro services reported delays of up to 5mins.

These last two weeks have been quite bad. I've been delayed every other day by about 10 minutes or more.
[Female, 30, Commuter, Sole Street]

Two or three times a week without fail the train will be delayed a few minutes. [Female, 42, Commuter, Bromley South]

→ There is a widespread view among Metro and Mainline Commuters that delays are too frequent and in case of some commuters also too long.

Punctuality and disruption experience (2)

- Commuters find delays have substantial impact on them whereas Leisure and Business users who aim to travel off-peak feel less affected.



Commuters

Issues for commuters:
Late for work, missing connections, in physical discomfort due to increased crowding on trains and at stations*, wasting time by taking earlier trains to mitigate against delays

General perspectives on delays:

- **Up to 5 mins** – tolerated unless frequent where it becomes frustrating
- **5-10 mins** – frustrating but some can also miss connections
- **10-15 mins+** – major impact

- Many Leisure and Business users find delays less frequent in off-peak hours and also less likely to experience the knock-on crowding
- Leisure passengers' journeys often less time-sensitive, so they feel less frustrated by delays if not major

More than 10 minutes delay makes me late for work but because I have one train an hour I can't get to work over an hour early every day just in case there is a delay, so it has more of an impact for me [Female, 27, Commuter, Sole Street]

I can only think of one very bad delay when it was snowing...but that's one occasion so I can't really complain about that. [Female, 53, Leisure, Maidstone East]

Punctuality and disruption experience (3)

- There is also a widespread agreement across passenger types that delays are not dealt with well in terms of information provided and measures taken.



- Staff seen as often unable to provide critical information
- Distrust of information on how long delay will take
- Widespread cynicism about, and lack of understanding of, reasons given for delays
- SE not seen to take responsibility for delays
- Perceived lack of measures that would help reduce frequency and impact of delays.

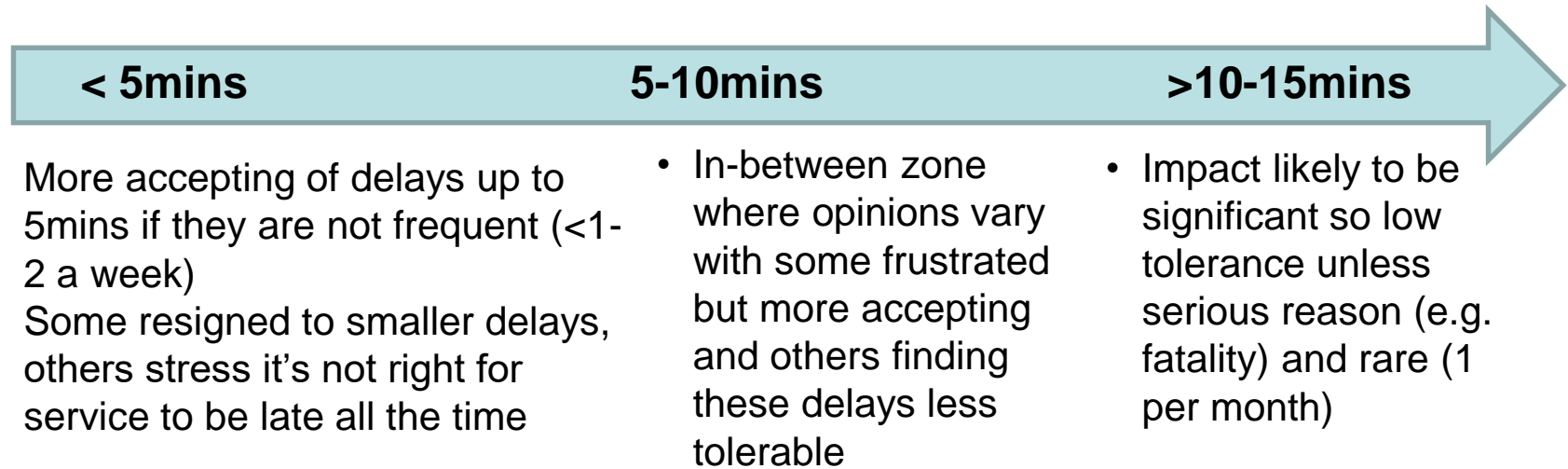
They don't really take much ownership to be honest... [Female, 53, Leisure, Maidstone East]

9 times out of 10 we don't know what the problem is, so no we don't see any efforts being made to resolve it. [Female, 47, Commuter, Sole Street]

→ Information provided during disruption and measures taken to reduce frequency and impact of delays are seen as a major area for improvement.

Passenger requirements in terms of punctuality and dealing with disruption (1)

- Many across passenger types and different lines therefore want to see punctuality improved as it's seen as 'basic terms of the deal' with TOC.



If it's a 5 minute delay then it's worth continuing to wait. If it's an undetermined amount of time – if it's "delay, delay... oh look, it's cancelled" – that's really annoying 'cause you [...] could have left the station and got the bus 10 minutes ago. [Female, 39, Commuter/Disability - visual, Bexleyheath]

→ Passengers would see the service as *good* if delays of up to 5mins did not happen more than 1-2 a week and delays of 10mins and over did not happen more than once a month and only when there is a serious reason for it.

Passenger requirements in terms of punctuality and dealing with disruption (2)

- Dealing with disruption is seen as another major area for improvement in terms of information provided and measures taken.

Information

If you can track the train on the app, why can't the staff do that and then they'll know what to tell people. [Male, 26, Commuter, Bromley South]

Critical information to provide:

- How long the delay will last
- When the next trains will run
- Alternative routes / impact on travel connections (where possible)

How should information be provided?

- GPS trackers/apps/boards to show delayed train progress
- Visual and audio updates every 5mins
- Staff taking ownership – apology
- Honest if information unavailable.

They need to tell you honestly how long the issue is going to take to resolve. [Male, 36, Disabled, Metro]

Check live trains

See up-to-the-minute train running times and any delays or cancellations to your journey.

Departures Arrivals

Rochester ↕
London Victoria

Show live departures

Passenger requirements in terms of punctuality and dealing with disruption (3)

- Dealing with disruption is seen as another major area for improvement in terms of information provided and measures taken.

Measures

Expectations:

- Trains should run with maximum number of carriages
- Investing in the network so it can deal better with causes of delays outside its control (weather)
- Eliminating causes of delays within their control (staff shortages)
- Giving compensation for delays of 15mins+, simplifying procedure (e.g. automatic, QR codes), publicising compensation terms
- Allowing tickets to be used on HS (and other) trains when others delayed 15mins+.

I'm more forgiving over a networking problem than an operating issue like we haven't got a driver. I feel the blame lies with South Eastern.

[Male, 61,
Commuter, Medway
Valley]

They shouldn't be delayed because of weather, especially rain. It always rains, why can't they deal with it?

[Female, 42,
Commuter,
Metro]

→ Passengers expect TOC should have systems in place to deal with the factors known to cause delays.

On-board capacity - seating

- Train capacity in terms of seating and standing is a second key priority area for Commuters, while for those travelling off peak it is less of an issue.



- Mainline and HS commuters mainly get a seat in morning rush hour if **further away from London**, but find this more difficult on the way back
- Metro commuters rarely have a seat but also have lower expectations as overall crowding a bigger concern.

I'm quite lucky because my stop is early on the line so I'll get a seat but it gets very busy as the train goes on.
[Female, 27, Commuter, Sole Street]

The trains are normally overcrowded; you cannot get on [at rush hour]. [Male, 35, Commuter, Hayes]

It's really difficult to get a seat after Ashford.
[Female, 31, Commuter, High Speed Ashford]

On-board capacity - standing

- There is also generally a sense that there is insufficient standing space on SE trains due to seat layout and number of carriages.



Reports that many SE Mainline and Metro services:

- Have very little space to stand between seats
- Lack provision for holding on
- Lack designated space for prams/bikes
- Have seat layout that wastes space
- Don't always pick trains best suited for rush hour (in terms of seat layout, carriage number)
- First class not always used even if train is full.

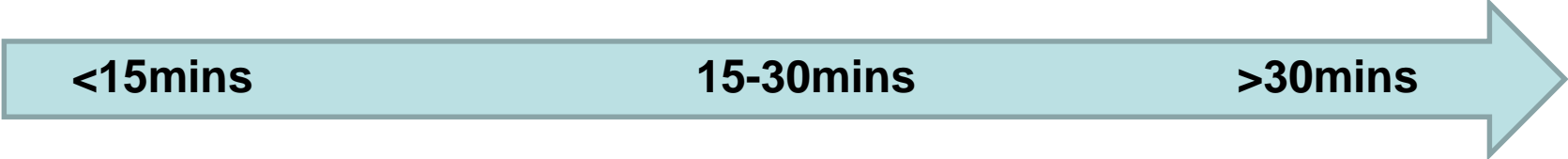
I've waited for the next train to avoid getting squashed before.
[Male, 53, Commuter, Bromley South]

The layout of the seats is such that you can end up in a position when it's crowded where it's too far to reach to hold on to anything. [Female, 39, Commuter/ Disability (Visual), Bexleyheath]

→ Lack of sufficient standing space is experienced as physical discomfort and in some cases even a health and safety issue, with some Metro commuters particularly concerned about overcrowding.

Passenger requirements in terms of on-board capacity (1)

- While all affected want to see crowding eliminated and want better provision for standing, passengers differ in terms of how much having a seat is important depending on their journey length.



- While most would prefer to have a seat, many feel fine to stand for journeys up to 15mins long provided sufficient standing space, something to hold onto, and no physical problems
- In-between zone where opinions vary with some happy to stand and others for whom having a seat is important
- Most want to have a seat for these journeys, find this important and see it as part of what they pay for

My journey is only about 15 minutes so that's nothing really. [Male, 53, Commuter, Bromley South]

[If the journey is] over half an hour I'd like a seat [Female, 35, Business, High Speed]

→ Most Mainline and HS passengers therefore find having a seat very important whereas Metro ones are split depending on length of journey.

Passenger requirements in terms of on-board capacity (2)

- Passengers generally see the following solutions to the present issues with on-board capacity and crowding.



Metro



Mainline



High Speed

- Using trains with the maximum number of carriages in peak times consistently
- Where available, using trains with a seat layout that maximises use of space in peak hours
- When updating train stock, getting trains that maximise seating and standing space (e.g. fold down seats), as well as have designated space for prams/bikes/wheelchairs
- Increasing frequency if passenger volume is over capacity of available services

They do silly things like put a four carriage train on at peak, it's just madness. [Male, 65, Commuter, Maidstone East]

More space needs to come in more carriages or the layout of the seats. [Female, 38, Commuter, Hayes]

→ Mainline and HS passengers prioritise increasing seating space (while having better provision for standing too), whereas Metro passengers are split in this regard depending on the length of their journey

Passenger requirements in terms of on-board capacity (3)

- Passengers generally see the following solutions to the present issues with on-board capacity and crowding.

Number of carriages

The trains are packed in peak. They don't always seem to run the 12 carriage trains in peak which I think is just crazy. [Female, 35, Business, High Speed Mix]

I find it annoying that they don't open up first class, even if the train is full. [Male, 26, Leisure, High Speed]

Layout

There's a train that has blue seats and grey poles and another South Eastern train that has yellow poles and blue seats and the layout of the ones with yellow poles are much better [...] During rush hour the blue and grey one comes. [Female, 22, Commuter, Hayes/Greenwich]

Maybe they could have more seats that fold down, or standing only carriages. [Female, 52, Commuter, Woolwich]

Designated spaces

I don't know if there's designated places for buggies? You tend to find them all around the doors which isn't ideal there could be a place where you could put folded buggies securely and it's not going to pester anybody or get in the way. [Female, 55, Leisure, Medway Valley]

I'd change the layout so there are more seats [...] and for those that have to stand, they've got breathing space to stand. [Female, 54, Commuter, Grove Park]

Comfort – on-board

- Particular needs related to comfort on trains were highlighted by many across passenger types, however, Leisure and Business users tended to see these more often as priorities (as they were less affected by other issues).



- Cleanliness of trains in general, and toilets in particular across Metro and Mainline services often seen as not good enough
- HS trains seen as cleaner
- Other aspects important for comfort generally seen as fine (windows, lighting, temperature*)
- Low or no interest in catering on these trains

The smell of the toilets permeates the whole train. It's like festival toilets in there. [Female, 63, Leisure, Sevenoaks]

We're lucky I think because they're quite new and clean, unlike some other trains. [Female, 31, Commuter, High Speed Ashford]

→ Passenger experience would be improved by addressing perceived issues around cleanliness

Passenger requirements in terms of on-board comfort

- Passengers generally see the following solutions to the present issues with cleanliness and toilet availability.



- Be more like HS trains
- Use seat fabric that can be wiped-clean
- Clean services throughout the day
- Have toilets with electric sliding doors
- Have toilets always available and clean

Cleanliness of toilets is really important. They could do something about the smell. [Male, 53, Commuter, Metro]

What would be great would be if seats could be covered in a waterproof or wipe down type material, it would help to keep them much cleaner [Female, 17, Leisure, Maidstone East]

I'd like to see [...] consistent provision of toilets. At the moment they don't often work. [Male, 36, Disabled, Metro]

→ Better cleanliness and toilet availability (at stations too) would also help passengers feel they are getting better service for their money.

Experience with staff (1) – customer service

- There were mixed reports in terms of passenger experiences with staff, with some finding them helpful and others not so much.

Customer service



- HS passengers generally satisfied with customer services, whereas experiences on Metro and Mainline lines more mixed
- In addition to issues with information on delays, some passengers complain about:
 - Staff seeming disinterested
 - Being ‘short’ with ‘misbehaving’ passengers
 - Not being easy to find
 - Some staff at London terminals seen as being combative, especially when there is crowding due to cancellations.
- Disabled passengers report mixed experiences with some getting help and others not always*.

They don't come across very friendly or interested in helping. [Female, 47, Commuter, Sole Street]

If the train's delayed you can speak to them about what's going on. [Male, 17, Commuter, Woolwich]

Experience with staff (2) - availability

- But the issue that many felt more strongly about concerned staff presence on trains and at stations

Staff presence



- Many raise an issue of staff absence later in the day on trains, and more generally on smaller stations
- Some – particularly women – feel unsafe because of this
- Others complain of situations where they needed assistance but there was no one there
- Yet others highlight that lack of staff also means station facilities are shut.

There should be one or two members of staff for security hanging around at night, as a deterrent more than anything. [Female, 41, Commuter, Sidcup]

I think at night you'd want staff—it would be good to know they're there just so you don't feel totally on your own should anything happen. Just a point of call. [Female, 53, Leisure, Bromley South]

→ There was a strong sense among passengers that all stations should have at least one member of staff while the trains are running.

Passenger requirements from staff

- Generally, staff role was seen in terms of providing information and assistance and ensuring safety, with some variation in needs depending on passenger type.



- Leisure and Business passengers less familiar with the service so more likely to want assistance
- Leisure passengers more likely to use station facilities or travel with children, also making staff assistance more important
- Commuters generally did not interact with staff often other than in times of disruption where their help becomes important.

It would be good if there was a specific place where you knew you would find someone.
[Female, 39, Commuter/Disability - visual, Bexleyheath]

Staff are especially important when you're less familiar with a journey or line, this network is very complicated.
[Female, 55, Leisure, Medway Valley]

→ Passengers wanted to know where to find staff, as well as better customer service training and training for assisting passengers with disabilities

Ticketing and pricing (1) - cost

*Don't take us for granted
[Male, 26, Commuter,
Grove Park]*

- **Cost** of rail travel is a big concern for many South Eastern passengers and while they don't expect prices will reduce they want to see it reflected in the service they get.



*I think with the amount of money you pay for a season ticket, you should be able to sit down.
[Female, 31, Commuter, High Speed]*

- Fares are generally seen as too expensive and not reflecting quality of service or distance covered either
- Other costs seen as too high – most notably car parking at train stations
- Season ticket holders feel they should be given something back (e.g. loyalty discount) and see money invested in service.

I'm so resentful every time I get on a South Eastern train because I know the service is not worth the amount I pay. [Female, 22, Commuter, Hayes]

*I think they're too expensive for peak times, considering you don't get a seat so you're standing up, you've got people's armpits in your face.
[Male, 53, Commuter, Metro]*

→ There is a sense that passengers (and commuters especially) should be getting a fairer deal in terms of the quality of service they get for their money

Ticketing and pricing (2) - options

Ticket options



I don't like that I go in 3 days, which is roughly the same price as buying a weekly ticket, but that would include days that I wouldn't use. [Female, 31, Commuter, High Speed]

- Generally seen as fairly standard and in line with experience elsewhere
- Certain types of passengers, however, lacking tickets more tailored to their needs:
 - Part time commuters
 - Young people aged 16 and over but still in education
 - Early train passengers not having a discount.
- Disabled passengers using Freedom Pass* also complained about the pass not being valid before 9.30am
- Many outside the Oyster zone wish for a pay-as-you-go way of paying (for convenience and since Oyster is seen as cheaper).

I'd definitely add something for students. When I was at college I wasn't a child anymore and it was really expensive. [Male, 19, Business, Mainline Mix]

→ Ticket range could be improved by providing more tailored tickets to specific groups of passengers

Ticketing and pricing (3) - purchase

- Passengers use a mix of purchasing methods depending on preference



They should show you how much you pay by Oyster to go here and here and how much you pay with a day card [Female, 34, Commuter, Grove Park]

- Commuters generally familiar with the ticketing options, although certain improvements suggested by some passengers
- There are instances where passengers want more help to choose the best fare (at ticket office and using ticket machines)
- Some also complain about stations with one or no ticket machines
- Some would want to be able to have proof of purchase on their phone

Perhaps the ticket machine could give you the best options, for when there's no one in the ticket office.
[Male, 63, Business, Mainline Mix]

→ Passengers are broadly satisfied with purchasing methods available with some suggestions for improvement around help to find cheapest fare

Productive time on-board

- On-board facilities such as WiFi, sockets and tables are often prioritised by those passengers whose other more basic needs are largely met



- As Commuters worry more about crowding, these facilities are seen as 'nice to have' or impossible to use in crowd
- These are also seen as less important for shorter journeys, especially for Metro users Leisure and Business users – and most users of HS – more often stress these would be beneficial particularly for journeys 30mins+
- Seen as beneficial for: working, ensuring phones charged when needed

In this day an age it's unrealistic not to have some of these things like WiFi, plugs, space to work.
[Female, 35, Business, High Speed]

They should have WiFi for people who are going to be on the train longer than 45 minutes [...] if you've only got 20 minutes it's not worth it. [Female, 34, Commuter , Grove Park]

→ Passengers do see the benefits of having WiFi and sockets on board, especially for longer journeys and where they have a seat/aren't crowded

Station experience (1) - facilities

- Station facilities can be more important to Leisure passengers than Commuters, but shelter provision important to both.



Sometimes the toilets aren't accessible and often they're not very pleasant. [Female, 55, Leisure, Medway Valley]

- Station facilities such as toilets, waiting rooms, shelter often seen as not good enough
 - Most think there are no toilets or they're mostly shut or not clean
 - Some passengers object to paying to use toilets at London terminals, although others are more willing to pay if toilets are clean
 - Many find shelter provided does not protect them from wind, rain or cold.

A waiting area would be nice in the winter. [Male, 32, Commuter, Sole Street]

There are seats but none are sheltered, they're pretty freezing and uncomfortable. [Female, 17, Leisure, Maidstone East]

→ Toilets and shelter are the two key areas where passengers would want to see improvement

Station experience (2) - Facilities

- Retail/refreshments provision is seen as variable across stations, ranging from no provision at some smaller stations to a varied offer at London terminals.



- London terminals seen as having a particularly good range of shops, cafes and restaurants which is appreciated when passengers have to wait

There's not so much in the way of retail and shopping at Ashford but there's loads at the destination in London. [Female, 18, Disabled, High Speed]

- Commuters are once again less likely than other passengers to see this as important except when they have to spend time at stations due to delays.

Most of that is available at Dover but the station isn't somewhere I hang around so I don't use much of it. [Male, 32, Commuter, Sole Street]

The facilities at my station are minimal, which is fine but when you're delayed it can be a problem. It would be nice to get a coffee. [Female, 47, Commuter, Sole Street]

→ Retail/refreshments provision seen as important when passengers have any spare time at stations or need to be there due to delays, however, it is sometimes relegated as secondary because of more pressing concerns.

Station experience (2) – Information and signage

- Information and signage at stations is seen as fairly standard and meeting needs but some specific examples highlighted where improvement needed.



Information and signage is ok, it's there.
[Male, 65, Commuter, Maidstone East]

- Information about delays (as discussed)
- Signage at smaller stations as not always clear which platform is for which direction
- At some stations not clear where exits are leading to
- Departure boards not always placed conveniently (e.g. on bridges too rather than platforms only)
- Passengers prefer when they can see calling points too and not just destination stations
- No departure boards at eye level which would help some passengers with visual impairment.

More detailed signage...For example, sometimes I go to a station I don't know that well and there will be more than one exit and it's not clear which one I need, which one leads to the buses, which one to the taxis or the high street. [Female, 53, Leisure, Maidstone East]

→ Addressing these specific issues in terms of signage would make way-finding easier at those stations.

Station experience (3) – personal security

- Some passengers have expressed concerns over their personal security on trains and stations in the evening.



*Lighting at stations
– my station on a
night is horrific [...] I
don't feel safe.
[Female, 38,
Commuter, Hayes]*

*If you're a lone traveller at some of these quieter or more
remote stations it can be really quite daunting. You need to
feel visible and be able to see everyone else. [Female, 55,
Leisure, Medway Valley]*

- Passengers feel unsafe because of the lack of lighting in underpasses, stations and station car parks, as well as the absence of staff at stations in the evening
- Women in particular feel unsafe in these situations, although men have also reported having experienced situations where they felt unsafe
- Passengers at remote/smaller stations can also feel unsafe in these situations.

→ Passengers want a member of staff present, better lighting, help buttons and CCTV to address their safety concerns.

Station experience (4) - Travel to/from stations and access

- Most passengers don't experience problems with access to stations, but car parking provision and disabled access were highlighted as areas for improvement.



The stations themselves could be more accessible because they have the subway that goes underneath so at Canterbury West they have to let you cross over the tracks, maybe a safer gate nearer. [Male, 30, Disabled (Mobility), HS]

- Passengers use a variety of means of getting to and from stations – walking, cycling, public transport, driving – and were generally satisfied with their options for travel to and from stations
- However, car parking provision at/close to stations was seen as hugely variable with some having free and sufficient parking nearby and others expensive and insufficient or no parking facilities
- Disabled access was also seen as patchy and variable across the network and yet most passengers saw this as basic requirement
- Where disabled access was available, some respondents have found that proximity of ramps and lifts to platform could be improved.

Parking is important, because I leave plenty of time but if I can't get a space that might have an impact on my day. [Female, 18, Disabled, High Speed]

→ Passengers want to see improvements in terms of provision of access for passengers with disabilities.

Information and communication needs (1)

- Passenger needs for information are largely practical and related to their journey, choosing tickets or use of facilities.



I think email is best—things just drag out ridiculously on the phone. [Male, 20, Commuter, Bexleyheath]

- Passengers expect to be able to access this information through a variety of channels:
 - Face to face at stations
 - Digital boards / announcements at stations
 - Website and social media (FB, Twitter)
- The need for such help becomes even more acute when there is disruption
- Passengers with visual and hearing impairments also stressed the need to have both types of information available (visual and audio).

Online sometimes they have a live chat where people can help you which I think is a good idea. [Female, 63, Business, Hastings]

The staff should give you information, like the best routes to take. [Female, 30, Commuter, Sidcup]

→ Passengers have preferences depending on their attitude to technology and media habits, so having multiple channels important

Information and communication needs (2)

- Most regular passengers do not feel the need to plan their journeys as they are familiar with the customary routes they take.

Planning journeys

Users plan and check their journeys using **National Rail, Trainline, TfL and Citymapper** apps and websites

- Passengers tend to plan their journeys when they are travelling at a different time, or on a different journey
- Leisure users tend to plan journeys in advance in order to take advantage of cheaper, advance fares and also to plan the best route (e.g. direct, faster)
- Where possible, leisure users aim to travel off-peak for cheaper fares and less crowded services.

On the way home I check it more because I leave work at different times—I look for the next one and I'd rather hang around at work than the station.
[Female, 42, Commuter, Grove Park]

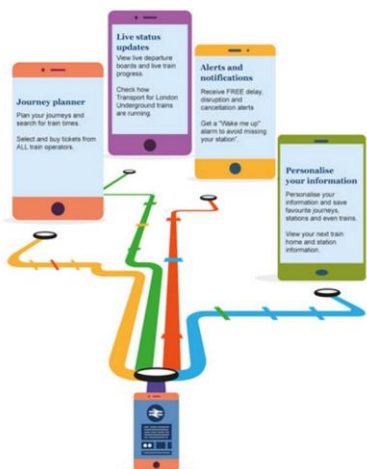
I look up the times, the prices, and how long it takes to get there, and how long to get back.
[Female, 18, Disabled, High Speed]

→ Passengers find digital journey planners an easy and convenient way to check for best routes and fares.

Information and communication needs (3)

- Commuters are far more likely to check specifically for disruption as their journeys are more time-sensitive and they experience delays more frequently.

Checking for disruption



- Many passengers report checking journeys before travelling for delays
- Commuters tend to check in the morning for disruption so they can allow extra time for journeys or plan an alternative route
- Some are less likely to check on their return journey as journey is less time-sensitive.

If the trains are delayed due to wind or rain then they don't run them through Stone so I end up driving to Dartford or Greenhithe. [Female, 36, Commuter, Woolwich]

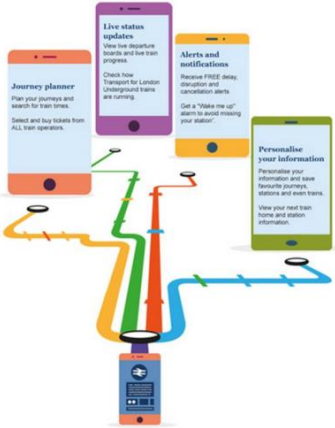
When I wake up in the morning I'll use the app to check for delays. [Male, 26, Commuter, Metro]

→ Availability of live travel updates creates expectation that TOC and station staff should have access to and be able to provide same information.

Information and communication needs (4)

- Passengers appreciate advance warnings about planned disruption given at stations and online, but some also liked the idea of text alerts for delays although not all.

Delay notifications



- Text alerts about delays seemed useful where passengers used a particular train service regularly and already checked apps/websites for delays
 - Benefits seen as saving time
 - Ensuring they are aware of delays in case they forget to check
- However, some felt that delays were often sudden so thought they would already be on their way by the time they got a text alert
- One passenger who used this service explained he cancelled it because he found the texts inconvenient when not working.

I think text alerts about delays would be a good idea, if you gave them your phone number.
[Female, 18, Disabled, High Speed Ashford]

I'd like to know about disruptions on my phone before I leave the house.
[Male, 53, Commuter, Bromley South]

→ Text alerts are seen as beneficial by some groups of passengers, most notably those using a particular train and already checking for delays

Information and communication needs (5)

- Passengers are generally not motivated to look for information about their TOC performance but still think it should be publicly available.



I think having that publicly available is good for accountability.
[Male, 53, Commuter, Bromley South]

- However, some would pay attention to this information if shown on posters at stations/in trains
- To be useful, information would need to concern their specific service rather than the network
- Some Commuters are interested in data on crowding at specific times to help avoid those services if possible.

Maybe just posters on trains or at stations, then I'd read it, but I won't go looking for it, something.
[Female, 47, Commuter, Sole Street]

→ For punctuality and crowding data to be useful, it needs to be desegregated by service and displayed at stations/trains.

General service parameters (1) – frequency

- While these are seen as very important, they are often not seen as priorities largely because passengers feel their needs are generally met in this regard.



- Most passengers across different types and services are happy with their service frequency
- Current frequency seen as an issue only when:
 - Trains are delayed or repeatedly excessively crowded*
 - Passengers aware of similar but more frequent services (e.g. Grove Park vs. Bromley South)
 - Passengers want more faster services at expense of slower ones.

The frequency is fine, it does the job, you just plan around it .[Female, 47, Commuter, Sole Street]

Sometimes you have to wait for the slow trains to go past, and there could be 3 or 4, before a fast train comes along. They could put on more fast trains during the day. [Female, 57, Leisure, High Speed Ashford]

→ If passengers want any changes in terms of frequency, they relate more to a few specific services rather than the network as a whole

General service parameters (2) – timetables

- While these are seen as very important, they are often not seen as priorities largely because passengers feel their needs are generally met in this regard.



- Timetable generally accepted as given except when:
 - Gaps between services are obviously uneven
 - Wait for connecting trains is too long (e.g. from HS to local trains)
 - Some Leisure passengers would want later trains back from London.

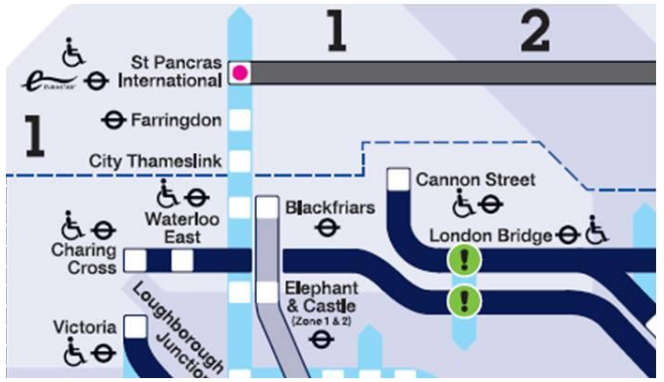
Timetables are fine, they haven't been changed in years so we all know where we stand, it means you don't need a lot of planning. [Female, 30, Business, High Speed Mix]

I would just want them to run on time, I wouldn't change (the timetable). [Female, 38, Commuter, Hayes]

→ Overall timetables are seen to work well except in a few cases where improvements are suggested

General service parameters (3) – network synergy

- Passengers are generally satisfied with the range of London terminals and how SE services link up with other services and modes of transport, but some have also highlighted certain potential improvements.



- Some HS passengers appreciate how well connected St Pancras is but others would prefer a more central location
- Some Leisure and Business passengers wish they didn't always have to 'go in and out' of London in order to travel to most other places
- In Maidstone, passengers wish there was a shuttle bus that would enable easy switching between lines.

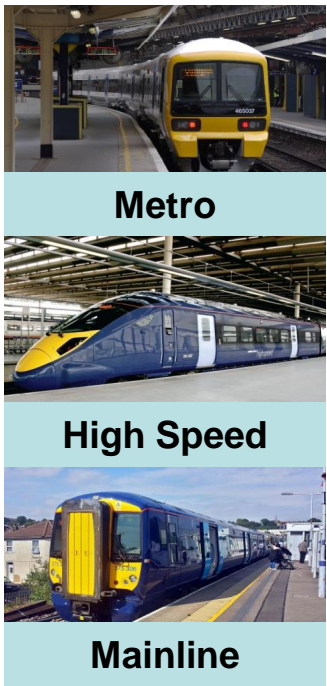
You can get to Victoria, Blackfriars, I think you can get to St Pancras and Kings Cross as well, Elephant and Castle, Farringdon, Canon Street, Waterloo East. We're quite blessed around here. [Female, 42, Commuter, Bromley South]

As long as I can get into London it's fine! Victoria has underground connections so you can get anywhere from there. [Female, 47, Commuter, Sole Street]

→ Variety of London terminals is appreciated and is taken as a given.

General service parameters (4) – journey length

- Journey length largely seen as appropriate on Metro and HS lines, whereas Mainline passengers' views are more mixed.



- Most Metro passengers find their journey lengths plausible, although some stress they can be prolonged in reality when affected by crowding
- HS passengers generally really pleased about the time it takes to make the journey
- The only ones less satisfied are those who first travel on slower stretches of the line before reaching HS part
- Some Mainline passengers see their journey as too long but this is still rarely a cause of irritation
- However, those with choice of fast and slow services critical of how slow is the slow service (e.g. Sole Street).

The journey speed is fantastic, the high speed halves your journey time. [Female, 31, Commuter, High Speed]

A 15 minute shorter journey would be so nice, just that bit of extra time to yourself each day, more work life balance. [Female, 47, Commuter, Sole Street]

→ While there are examples where journey length is seen as too long, this is not raised as a major issue.

Passengers with disabilities – accessibility needs (1)

- Passengers with disabilities highlighted a range of accessibility issues, most notably the accessibility of stations, platforms and trains.

Access – stations and on-board

I think it's really important to have disabled access at stations and it's appalling that some don't have it. [Female, 42, Commuter, Bromley South]

- Disabled access is seen as patchy and variable across the network and yet most passengers see it as a basic requirement
- Where disabled access is available, some disabled respondents have found that proximity of ramps and lifts to platform could be improved
- Gap between trains and platforms can be problematic for some visually impaired respondents, so they need staff assistance at unfamiliar stations/platforms
- Passengers have also stressed the need for designated spaces for wheelchairs on trains too.

I almost fall down that gap quite often [...] when it's crowded it's particularly tricky. [Female, 39, Disability (Visual), Bexleyheath]

Disabled access should absolutely be a minimum requirement. [Male, 63, Business/Leisure, Sevenoaks]

→ Passengers want to see improvements in terms of provision of access for passengers with disabilities.

Passengers with disabilities – accessibility needs (2)

- In addition, passengers with disabilities discussed the ways in which accessibility of the service was affected by information provision and customer service.

Information accessibility

It would be nice if there was an audio option – some people would benefit from that.
[Female, 39, Commuter/Disability (Visual), Bexleyheath]

Website/app accessibility

- Passengers with visual and hearing impairments stressed the need for information to be provided both visually and via audio announcements (both at stations and on board)
- Some passengers with lesser visual impairment explained they would be more able to read the departure boards if:
 - There were some that were at eye level
 - The screens were LCD (rather than yellow and black).
- A deaf-blind respondent reported they can only buy tickets or claim compensation at the ticket office, as none of the websites or apps are compatible with their software.

Talking (announcements) - can't hear it [...] coming up on the board would be better [Female, 17, Disability (Hearing), Bexleyheath]

Eye height departure boards would resolve a lot of issues I come across daily [...] I would need to trouble staff less so [...] staff interaction would be less relevant [Female, 39, Commuter/Disability (Visual), Bexleyheath]

Passengers with disabilities – accessibility needs (3)

Staff assistance

The trains don't stop long enough for me to get to a seat, so sometimes I've fallen over where the train has left before I've got my balance. [Female, 18, Disabled, High Speed Ashford]

The Canterbury stations are quite small, so less availability, normally only one person at those, which can be tricky. [Male, 30, Disabled (Mobility), High Speed Ashford]

- Disabled passengers reported mixed experiences in terms of staff assistance they received, with some getting help and others not always
 - Some respondents pointed out staff weren't always helpful when impairments weren't immediately obvious
 - One respondent with mobility problems complained there was no provision to wait for them to be seated before the train departs, causing them to fall sometimes
 - Some think that staff assistance is better at bigger London stations as they believe the staff there are more experienced in assisting disabled passengers and there is more staff available, whereas if there is one person at a smaller station it is more difficult for them to help
 - Others, however, find that staff at bigger London stations can be less organised than at smaller stations since they are dealing with more people.

I think because my difficulties aren't that obvious, I've been told things like "it's on the board" [...] I don't know if there's perhaps some training that staff could have around not making assumptions. [Female, 39, Commuter/Disability (Visual), Bexleyheath]

→ Passengers wanted better customer service training and training for assisting passengers with disabilities

Passengers with disabilities – other issues

- Disabled passengers further highlighted a few issues related to concessions and cost of travel.

Concessions / Cost of travel

With my son, because he's disabled, it's brilliant I can use any of the car parks for free but the annoying bit is I have to drive to a station first to pick up a special permit. [Female, 35, Business, High Speed Mix]

- Some passengers stressed they can't always be flexible about the trains they use and as a result aren't able to use their concessions or choose a cheaper fare
 - Medical appointments sometimes require them to travel before 9.30am when their concessions are not valid (e.g. Freedom Pass* isn't valid before 9.30am)
 - A deaf-blind respondent requires assistance so he has to sit in a specific seat on a specific train, which does not allow him any flexibility so he often has to buy expensive fares
- Some appreciated having free parking, but found the process of getting the permit cumbersome as they first have to go to the station to get the permit, then park, and then go to the station again.

My Freedom Pass lets me get the train from 9.30am but that's not really early enough for me. [Male, 36, Disabled, Bexleyheath]

Being able to use my disabled railcard at peak times might help with the prices. [Female, 18, Disabled, High Speed Ashford]

I'd also like it not to be so expensive in the mornings because I didn't ask for this, I'm not going there for work [...] the hospital tells me a time and I go there. [Female, 18, Disabled, High Speed Ashford]

→ Disabled passengers don't always have the flexibility in terms of travel times so sometimes can't benefit from concessionary travel.

APPENDIX

Method: overview

- **Mixed methodology including informal observation on the network, 29 pre-tasked group discussions, 8 face to face depth interviews and 34 follow-up telephone interviews, split across user type and line used as follows:**
 - 14 group discussions with commuters and 1 group discussion with leisure users of Metro line services
 - 6 group discussions with commuters, 3 group discussions with leisure users and 1 group discussion with business users of Mainline services
 - 2 group discussions with commuters, 1 group discussion with leisure users and 1 group discussion with business users of High Speed services
 - 8 depth interviews with passengers with a disability using any service.
- **Pre-tasks:**
 - Respondents considered the full range of aspects outlined in the objectives and noted key thoughts with regards to each.

Qualitative fieldwork was completed between 8/11/16 and 2/12/16. Fieldwork took place across London and Kent.

Sample: overview - group discussions

Line usage*	Routeing	Passenger type		
		Commuter	Leisure	Business
Metro	Woolwich	2 x Commuter	1 x Leisure	-
	Bexleyheath	2 x Commuter		-
	Sidcup	2 x Commuter		-
	Hayes	2 x Commuter		-
	Grove Park**	3 x Commuter		-
	Bromley South	3 x Commuter		-
Mainline	Sole Street	2 x Commuter	2 x Leisure	1 x Business
	Maidstone East	1 x Commuter		
	Paddock Wood	1 x Commuter		
	Medway Valley	1 x Commuter		
	Hastings	1 x Commuter	1 x Leisure	
High Speed	HS via Ashford	1 x Commuter	1 x Leisure	1 x Business
	HS via Gravesend	1 x Commuter		
Total		22	5	2

Sample: overview - depth interviews

Criteria			
Passengers with disability	Disability	Mobility impairment	4
		Visual impairment	2
		Hearing impairment	2
	Age	Under 30	3
		31 +	5
	Reason for travel	Commuting (work / education)	2
		Leisure	6
	Gender	Male	4
		Female	4
	Total		

Sample: detail (1)

Additionally across both Commuters and Leisure passenger types:

- A good spread in terms of start stations respondents typically travel from
- A good spread of ticket types normally purchased
- To include: anytime, off-peak, advance, weekly/monthly/annual season tickets
- A good spread in terms of ways of paying for tickets
- To include: at the ticket office, using ticket machines, online, Oyster, contactless and Apple pay
- Even split between men and women – mixed groups
- A good spread in terms of age across the sample, thoroughly representing 16-30, 31-50 and 50+ within each passenger type

Additionally for Commuters

- All to travel to a destination station in London
- All to be using the network for a frequent journey *to and from work or education*
 - A good spread of those travelling 5 days a week and those travelling less often although at least 3 days a week
 - At least 3 per group of 4 to travel at peak times
 - Two groups of those using the Metro routes to be made up of those commuting at weekends / evening
- Some to use South Eastern Rail for leisure travel in addition, e.g. for shopping, socialising, holidays, culture, sport activities, medical appointments etc
- A spread of SEG/range of jobs to be represented
- For commuters on Maidstone / Medway Mainlines – ideally, some also to commute by bus occasionally.

Sample: detail (2)

Additionally for Leisure passengers

- A good spread in terms of destination station: including London and other
- A spread in terms of reasons for travel, e.g. for shopping, socialising, holidays, culture, sport activities, medical appointments etc
- None to be currently using South Eastern Rail for commuting – although can include lapsed commuters
- Spread in terms of times of travel – times of day and days of week – and lengths of journey
- Spread of SEG
- A spread in terms of frequency of use
- Frequent users to be using on at least a weekly basis
- Less frequent users to be using less than weekly but at least once a month

Additionally for Business users

- Spread of types of business represented
- Spread of frequency of use – all to have used within the last month and use at least 6 times a year
- Spread of time of day and day of week used
- Spread of age and gender

Additionally for passengers with a disability

- Spread of lines used – to cover mainline, metro and high speed
- Spread of ticket type and purchase mechanism if possible.

Define^{research & insight}