

# Cross Country rail franchise: consultation response

September 2018



## Contents

1	Transport Focus.....	5
2	Introduction.....	5
3	Cross Country rail franchise – passenger research and implications for the franchise.....	7
3.1	The Transport Focus evidence base.....	7
3.2	Rail passengers’ priorities for improvement – findings from 2017.....	7
3.3	NRPS and drivers of satisfaction and dissatisfaction.....	14
3.3.1	Drivers of satisfaction.....	14
3.3.2	Drivers of dissatisfaction.....	17
3.3.3	Satisfaction with value for money and the overall journey.....	18
3.4	Qualitative research into passengers’ experiences and aspirations for the future.....	20
3.5	Recommendations - top level priorities for the franchise.....	21
4	Consultation response.....	23
4.1	Cross Country train services.....	23
4.1.1	Capacity and crowding.....	23
4.2	Service patterns and the extent of the Cross Country network.....	25
4.2.1	Potential service transfers or changes.....	25
4.3	Future train service and timetable development.....	28
4.4	Prioritising service frequency options.....	31
4.5	Fares and ticketing.....	32
4.5.1	The importance of fares and ticketing.....	32
4.5.2	Multi-modal ticket acceptance.....	34
4.5.3	Split ticketing.....	35
4.5.4	Retaining the flexibility of travel through flexible tickets, even if operators change.....	35
4.5.5	Advance Purchase on the Day.....	35
4.6	Ticketing in general.....	36
4.6.1	Smart ticketing.....	38
4.6.2	Ticketless travel.....	40
4.7	Access, information and making connections.....	41
4.7.1	Journey planning.....	41
4.7.2	Making connections.....	43
4.8	Complaints and compensation.....	43

4.8.1	Complaints handling .....	44
4.8.2	Complaints handling process issues .....	44
4.8.3	Complaints handling response quality .....	45
4.8.4	Dealing with legacy complaints.....	46
4.8.5	Compensation .....	46
4.9	Access and facilities for those with disabilities and additional needs .....	47
4.10	Staff.....	50
4.11	Overall passenger experience.....	52
4.11.1	Getting the basics right: punctuality and reliability .....	53
4.11.2	Unplanned service disruption .....	53
4.11.3	Resilience .....	54
4.11.4	Engineering works .....	54
4.11.5	Information, communication and dealing with disruption .....	56
4.11.6	Stations and Interchange.....	57
4.11.7	Transport interchange .....	58
4.11.8	Rolling stock and on board train environment.....	59
4.11.9	Train design.....	61
4.12	Engagement and communication.....	63
4.12.1	Lost property.....	66
4.13	Working with Network Rail .....	67
4.14	Passenger trust in the rail industry .....	68
4.15	Culture, customer service, reward and recognition .....	68
4.16	Performance targets.....	69
4.16.1	Punctuality .....	69
4.16.2	Crowding .....	70
4.16.3	National Rail Passenger Survey .....	71
4.16.4	Key Performance Indicators .....	71
4.16.5	Transparency and monitoring service quality .....	72
5	Further information .....	73
6	Appendices.....	74
	Appendix 1 NRPS building block definitions .....	74
	A1.1 Cross Country NRPS building blocks .....	74
	A1.2 NRPS typology groups and comparator services .....	74
	Appendix 2 NRPS satisfaction scores.....	74

A2.1 NRPS Spring 2018: percentage satisfied, Cross Country compared to Long Distance.....	75
A2.2 NRPS Spring 2018: percentage satisfied, Manchester Routes, Scotland and North East, compared with Long Distance average and the Best in Class.	76
A2.3 NRPS Spring 2018 - percentage satisfied, Cross Country East-West compared to Interurban typology and Best in Class .....	77
A2.4 Passenger satisfaction for Cross Country, split by journey type by journey type.....	78
Appendix 3 Passenger priorities for station improvements .....	79

## 1 Transport Focus

Transport 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. Since March 2015 we have also represented the interests of users of the strategic road network in England. We are an independent body funded by the Department for Transport (DfT).

Our mission for rail is to get the best deal for passengers. With a strong emphasis on evidence based campaigning and research, we ensure 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, governments and devolved transport authorities to secure journey improvements.

## 2 Introduction

Transport Focus welcomes the opportunity to provide a rail passengers' perspective as the specification for the new Cross Country franchise is developed. When the requirements of the franchise are established, it is vital that the needs of passengers using and paying for rail services are placed squarely at the heart of the next contract.

The Cross Country network is extensive: the route stretches from Aberdeen to Penzance and crosses seven of the eight Network Rail geographical routes. It provides intercity and long distance services but also has a role in both local and regional connectivity. There can be conflicts between these functions, especially when it is providing for different needs at the same time on individual services. The well-documented capacity constraints exacerbate these problems. The responses to this consultation and development of the next specification should be used as an opportunity to develop greater clarity about the role of Cross Country.

Passengers' top priorities for the franchise are:

- value for money – encompassing the important service elements which drive this as well as the ticket price
- capacity – considering service frequencies and train layouts, optimising the availability of carriages and classification (as first or standard) appropriate to demand, as well as how fares incentives might make a contribution to alleviating pressures
- punctuality and reliability – at all stages of the train journey, not simply the timing of the train at its destination
- minimise and effectively manage disruptions – with planning and contingency arrangements placing passenger interests to the fore

- information – for all stages of the journey but especially during delays and disruption
- free (and reliable) Wi-Fi on the train is an important factor, along with well-maintained, clean train interiors and toilets.

The Cross Country operator also needs to ensure an embedded, genuinely customer-service focused culture at all levels and provide a personalised, rewarding passenger experience.

We are pleased to have engaged with the DfT from an early stage in the consideration of the future for the Cross Country franchise. We have used discussions to highlight key passenger issues and the findings of our research on a range of subjects.

This formal consultation response draws on three rich seams of franchise specific data. It combines knowledge and understanding drawn from passenger reports of their current journeys on Cross Country services with information on passenger priorities for improvement. Read together these two complementary studies provide a unique perspective on passenger needs from the franchise and provide hard evidence to inform the decisions to be made for the future.

In addition, we also reference the findings of qualitative research into the views of Cross Country passengers undertaken in 2015, with a further study in 2018. More generally, we cite findings from our wider research into a range of issues that are important to passengers. This work, which will be detailed in further sections of this response, highlights the central importance to passengers of value for money, capacity, punctuality and an appropriate train environment. These core needs must be the top requirements in the specification for the next franchise.

Our research into passenger understanding of, and desire for involvement in, the franchise process led to our emphasis on *Passenger Power!* and a call for more recognition of the passenger within the franchising system. Recent announcements of franchise policy have made welcome commitments to a greater emphasis on the quality of the passenger experience and enhanced arrangements for engagement and communication with customers. It is important these promises are brought to life in the specification for the next franchise and that passengers can see these ideals manifest in the services they receive.

It is vital that, throughout its duration, the franchise remains responsive to changing passenger needs. This means not only that there must be a clear understanding of passenger requirements at the outset but that there is an ongoing emphasis on consultation and engagement with stakeholders and a set of output measures that reflect passenger satisfaction.

There is an important role for the National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) in providing direct feedback from passengers using the services.

Transport Focus is committed to the promotion of passenger interests in the future decisions on the Cross Country franchise. We will continue to work closely with DfT,

the current operator and, in time, potential bidders to ensure that services address both current and evolving needs throughout the term of each and any contract.

### **3 Cross Country rail franchise - passenger research and implications for the franchise**

#### **3.1 The Transport Focus evidence base**

Transport Focus is committed to underpinning our work to get the best deal for passengers with a solid evidence base: we have a considerable body of research on the issues passengers tell us matter to them. Much of this is directly relevant to the specification for the next Cross Country franchise.

In this section we highlight the findings of our examination into passengers' priorities for improvement and trust in the rail industry. We also draw on NRPS data for information about the current experience on the franchise. Read together these complementary studies provide a unique perspective on passenger needs from the franchise and provide hard evidence to inform the decisions to be made for the future.

A summary of our qualitative research with Cross Country passengers, conducted in 2015 and 2018, is also included<sup>1</sup>. Other research will be cited as applicable within following sections as we respond to the consultation.

#### **3.2 Rail passengers' priorities for improvement - findings from 2017<sup>2</sup>**

This 2017 study of passenger priorities allows us to compare the priorities of Cross Country passengers against the national sample (Figure 1). It also allows us to examine the operator's results in more detail, such as by journey purpose (Figure 2), or route (Figure 3).

The priorities are shown as an index averaged on 100. An index of 300 is three times as important as the average and an index score of 50 is half as important as the average. This information can also be shown graphically to illustrate just how much the relative importance varies between the factors (Figure 4).

We can see there are two stand-out priorities for Cross Country passengers. The top priority of 'price of train tickets offers better value for money' is more than five times the average importance for Cross Country passengers, and well over the national average of 477 for this factor. 'Passengers able to get a seat on the train' is the second highest priority for Cross Country passengers, at over three and a half times the average importance.

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<sup>1</sup> [CrossCountry passenger research](#), January 2016 (published October 2017), June 2018

<sup>2</sup> [Rail passengers' priorities for improvement](#), 2017.

Passengers also want to see improvements in punctuality and reliability, frequency, fewer disruptions or cancellations and good information about their services, particularly during disruption.

'Free Wi-Fi available on the train' is a key priority for Cross Country passengers, especially compared to the national picture. This reflects that currently Cross Country does not offer free Wi-Fi, and average journey time is relatively long.

Compared to the priorities for Great Britain as a whole, Cross Country passenger priorities have a greater focus on improving on-board facilities, with 'inside of the train is maintained and cleaned to a high standard' and 'well-maintained, clean toilet facilities on every train' both featuring in the top ten priorities.

'Journey time is reduced' ranks eleventh, with an index score of 94 making this of just under average importance.

Comparison by journey purpose highlights the differing priorities of passengers. For example, whilst the key priorities for all journey types are 'the price of train tickets offers better value for money' and 'passengers able to get a seat on the train', 'free Wi-Fi available on the train' is third priority for commuters and business travellers on Cross Country, but only eighth for leisure passengers.

Over 60 per cent of current Cross Country passengers are travelling for leisure purposes. Leisure passengers' key priorities are more focused on how the train is presented, and the facilities available and there is a wish for clean train interiors and toilets. They are notably less concerned about the journey time, which ranks 19<sup>th</sup> with an index of just 67.

Summarising the findings, the top priorities for improvement largely focus on the basic elements of the rail service – value for money, getting a seat, frequency, punctuality and reliability, managing delays and provision of information, along with the comfort factors on the train. Additionally, free Wi-Fi is important. This is not to say the remaining priorities are not important to the passenger experience, it is just that they are not as important to improve as the top ranking.

We would like to see improvements to the delivery of these 'core' elements of the service, but also now a real focus on improving the quality of experience overall. The new franchise should regard things formerly seen as aspirations, like power sockets and free Wi-Fi, as things passengers now expect as standard. More and longer trains, which will provide more seats and greater comfort for passengers, would help to alleviate crowding. However, trains in themselves are not enough- there will have to be a focus on reliable and punctual services, coupled with good information using many channels.

The priorities research database (simulator) contains a wealth of information which can be analysed in many different ways to explore how priorities vary by NRPS building block, demographic and journey purpose, amongst other things. We



recommend its use to the DfT, the current operator and potential future bidders to enable a detailed understanding of the aspirations of passengers on the Cross Country network.

	<b>Cross Country</b>		<b>Great Britain</b>	
Price of train tickets offers better value for money	532	1	477	1
Passengers able to get a seat on the train	354	2	318	2
Free Wi-Fi available on the train	138	3	108	9
More trains arrive on time than happens now	132	4	178	3
Trains sufficiently frequent at the times I wish to travel	132	5	156	6
Inside of train is maintained and cleaned to a high standard	123	6	99	10
Less frequent major unplanned disruptions to your journey	119	7	166	4
Fewer trains cancelled than happens now	112	8	161	5
Well-maintained, clean toilet facilities on every train	111	9	85	13
Train company keeps passengers informed about delays	104	10	115	8
Journey time is reduced	94	11	98	11
Less disruption due to engineering works	86	12	116	7
Accurate and timely information available at stations	86	13	95	12
Easier to buy the right ticket	81	14	65	18
Seating area on train is more comfortable	79	15	62	20
Improved personal security on the train	75	16	78	15
Accurate and timely information provided on trains	75	17	83	14
Connections with other train services are always good	74	18	72	16
Good connections with other public transport at stations	72	19	69	17
Improved personal security at the station	60	20	64	19
Sufficient space on train for passengers' luggage	55	21	42	26
Stations maintained and cleaned to a high standard	52	22	46	21
Free Wi-Fi available at the station	48	23	42	25
Train staff have a positive, helpful attitude	48	24	45	23
Station staff have a positive, helpful attitude	46	25	44	24
More staff available on trains to help passengers	41	26	41	28
More staff available at stations to help passengers	41	27	41	27
More room to stand comfortably on busy trains	41	28	46	22
Access from station entrance to boarding train is step-free	34	29	34	29
Better mobile phone signal on trains	29	30	26	31
Easier to claim compensation when delayed	25	31	28	30

Sample Size:

603

12,803

Figure 1- Passenger Priorities for improvement, Cross Country and Great Britain

	Cross Country		Commuter		Business		Leisure	
Price of train tickets offers better value for money	532	1	430	1	626	1	557	1
Passengers able to get a seat on the train	354	2	277	2	317	2	424	2
Free Wi-Fi available on the train	138	3	167	3	165	3	107	8
More trains arrive on time than happens now	132	4	145	4	141	4	119	6
Trains sufficiently frequent at the times I wish to travel	132	5	142	5	135	5	123	5
Inside of train is maintained and cleaned to a high standard	123	6	107	9	116	7	137	3
Less frequent major unplanned disruptions to your journey	119	7	130	7	121	6	111	7
Fewer trains cancelled than happens now	112	8	126	8	116	8	100	10
Well-maintained, clean toilet facilities on every train	111	9	93	13	106	10	126	4
Train company keeps passengers informed about delays	104	10	103	10	106	9	102	9
Journey time is reduced	94	11	135	6	96	11	67	19
Less disruption due to engineering works	86	12	98	11	89	13	77	14
Accurate and timely information available at stations	86	13	86	14	88	14	85	13
Easier to buy the right ticket	81	14	61	21	90	12	90	11
Seating area on train is more comfortable	79	15	74	19	65	17	88	12
Improved personal security on the train	75	16	96	12	48	21	74	15
Accurate and timely information provided on trains	75	17	78	17	77	15	72	17
Connections with other train services are always good	74	18	79	16	70	16	74	16
Good connections with other public transport at stations	72	19	84	15	65	18	67	18
Improved personal security at the station	60	20	77	18	43	23	57	21
Sufficient space on train for passengers' luggage	55	21	46	28	49	20	63	20
Stations maintained and cleaned to a high standard	52	22	53	22	47	22	53	22
Free Wi-Fi available at the station	48	23	65	20	56	19	34	29
Train staff have a positive, helpful attitude	48	24	50	23	42	24	49	23
Station staff have a positive, helpful attitude	46	25	49	25	40	25	47	24
More staff available on trains to help passengers	41	26	48	26	31	29	42	25
More staff available at stations to help passengers	41	27	48	27	32	28	41	26
More room to stand comfortably on busy trains	41	28	49	24	38	26	37	28
Access from station entrance to boarding train is step-free	34	29	36	30	23	31	38	27
Better mobile phone signal on trains	29	30	38	29	33	27	21	30
Easier to claim compensation when delayed	25	31	33	31	28	30	18	31
Sample Size:	603		107		63		433	

Figure 2- Passenger Priorities for improvement- Journey Purpose

	East-West Routes		Manchester Routes		Scotland Routes	
Price of train tickets offers better value for money	522	1	683	1	687	1
Passengers able to get a seat on the train	357	2	352	2	347	2
Free Wi-Fi available on the train	113	8	138	3	148	3
More trains arrive on time than happens now	138	3	137	4	129	5
Trains sufficiently frequent at the times I wish to travel	125	5	137	5	130	4
Inside of train is maintained and cleaned to a high standard	113	7	113	7	116	6
Less frequent major unplanned disruptions to your journey	125	4	117	6	112	7
Fewer trains cancelled than happens now	120	6	112	8	106	8
Well-maintained, clean toilet facilities on every train	104	10	103	10	103	9
Train company keeps passengers informed about delays	109	9	105	9	102	10
Journey time is reduced	73	17	87	12	82	13
Less disruption due to engineering works	92	12	81	14	79	14
Accurate and timely information available at stations	92	11	87	13	84	12
Easier to buy the right ticket	82	14	95	11	101	11
Seating area on train is more comfortable	74	16	72	16	70	16
Improved personal security on the train	84	13	52	20	65	18
Accurate and timely information provided on trains	79	15	75	15	72	15
Connections with other train services are always good	72	19	69	17	66	17
Good connections with other public transport at stations	72	18	62	18	59	19
Improved personal security at the station	67	20	43	23	51	20
Sufficient space on train for passengers' luggage	54	21	53	19	48	21
Stations maintained and cleaned to a high standard	49	23	44	21	46	23
Free Wi-Fi available at the station	47	27	43	22	46	22
Train staff have a positive, helpful attitude	49	25	40	24	42	24
Station staff have a positive, helpful attitude	48	26	38	25	40	25
More staff available on trains to help passengers	50	22	29	28	33	27
More staff available at stations to help passengers	49	24	30	27	32	28
More room to stand comfortably on busy trains	43	29	38	26	35	26
Access from station entrance to boarding train is step-free	46	28	22	30	25	29
Better mobile phone signal on trains	26	30	24	29	24	30
Easier to claim compensation when delayed	26	31	19	31	19	31

Sample Size- journeys starting and finishing within the route:

117

124

190

Figure 3- Passenger Priorities for Improvements, Building Blocks

CrossCountry Passenger Priorities for Improvement 2017- Relative Importance

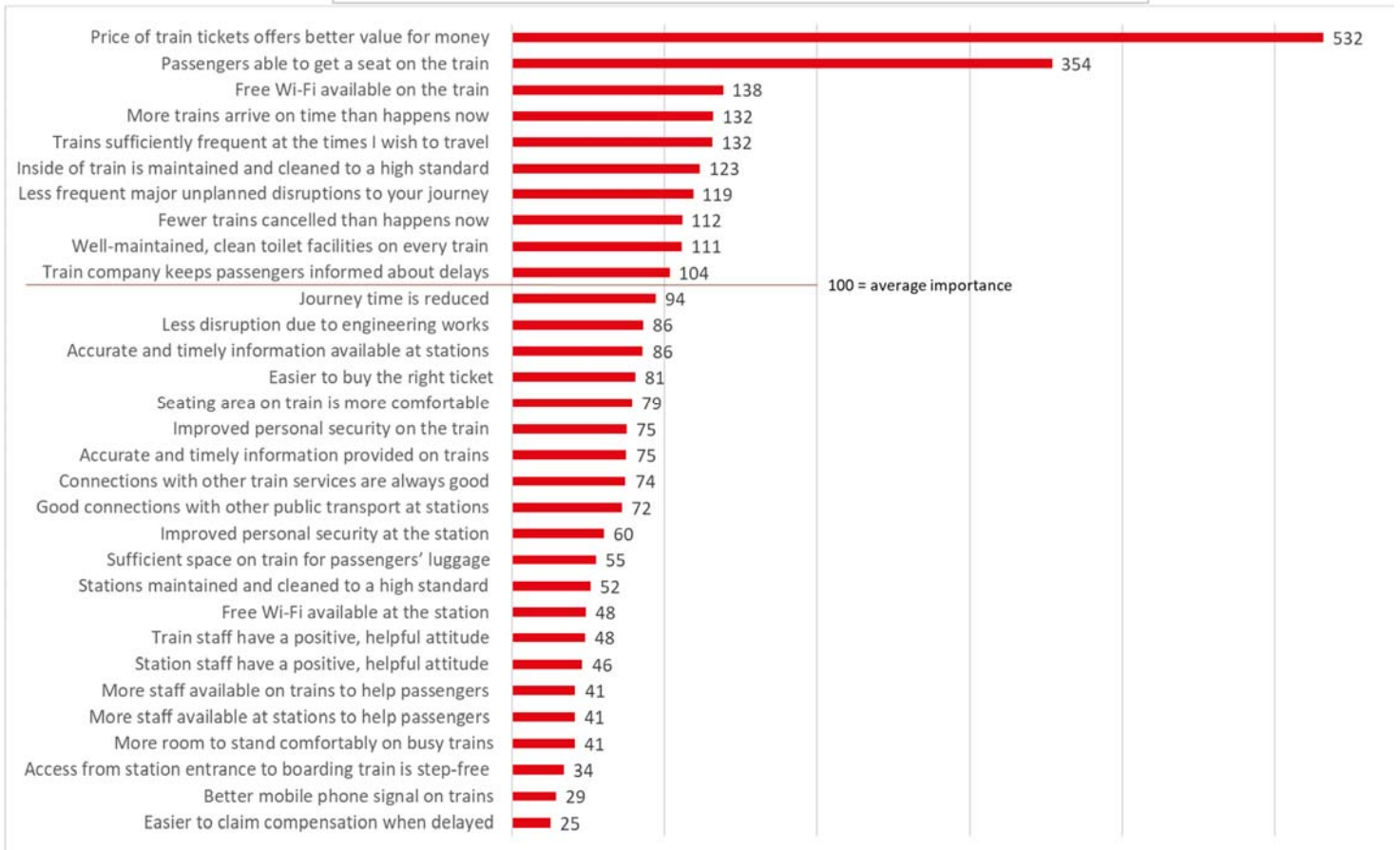


Figure 4- Cross Country, Passenger Priorities for Improvement

### **3.3 NRPS and drivers of satisfaction and dissatisfaction**

The National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS), together with an analysis of the drivers of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, is a comprehensive source of information about passenger perceptions of the current franchise. It can also be broken down to show variations across the three 'building block' groupings of rail services on Cross Country<sup>3</sup>.

Tables detailing the NRPS headline factor scores for Cross Country, passenger journey purpose and the three component building blocks are provided in Appendix 2. These include a comparison of scores with the sector or typology average and the typology best in class. A 'data pack' with further granular breakdown is available on request.

Evidence from the NRPS reinforces the message from our focus group research among Cross Country passengers that the franchise is currently delivering a reasonable, although unremarkable, service. Overall satisfaction is broadly in line with other long distance operators in terms of the levels of passenger satisfaction it achieves. The Spring 2018 NRPS results show that overall satisfaction with Cross Country is at 86 per cent, which is just below the average of 87 per cent for long distance operators.

Drilling down into the detail in the NRPS scores does throw up plenty of room for improvement across the network. The top two priorities for improvement of value for money and getting a seat are reflected in low satisfaction scores, the latter particularly on certain parts of the network and at certain times.

Satisfaction with value for money, at 50 per cent, is below the average for long distance operators of 55 per cent. It's significantly lower among commuters, at 25 per cent against 43 and 60 per cent for business and leisure passengers respectively.

Looking at passengers' experiences of crowding shows that 67 per cent of Cross Country passengers are satisfied, against an average of 73 per cent for long distance operators. It's predictably lower for commuters (52 per cent) than business (64 per cent) or leisure passengers (73 per cent). But, given the long distance nature of most Cross Country services, it's likely that almost any given service will serve a key urban centre at a peak commuter time, so commuters' concerns should be heard in relation to most services.

#### **3.3.1 Drivers of satisfaction**

Figure 5 shows the importance of punctuality and reliability as a driver of satisfaction for Cross Country passengers overall at 27 per cent. The cleanliness of the inside of

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<sup>3</sup> Appendix 1 provides definitions of the NRPS building blocks.

the train is the second biggest driver of satisfaction overall on Cross Country, at 18 per cent, followed by measures covering frequency, comfort of the seats and level of crowding. Figure 6 shows how these factors play out, alongside others, on individual routes.

CrossCountry Drivers of Passenger Satisfaction  
NRPS Autumn 2017/Spring 2018

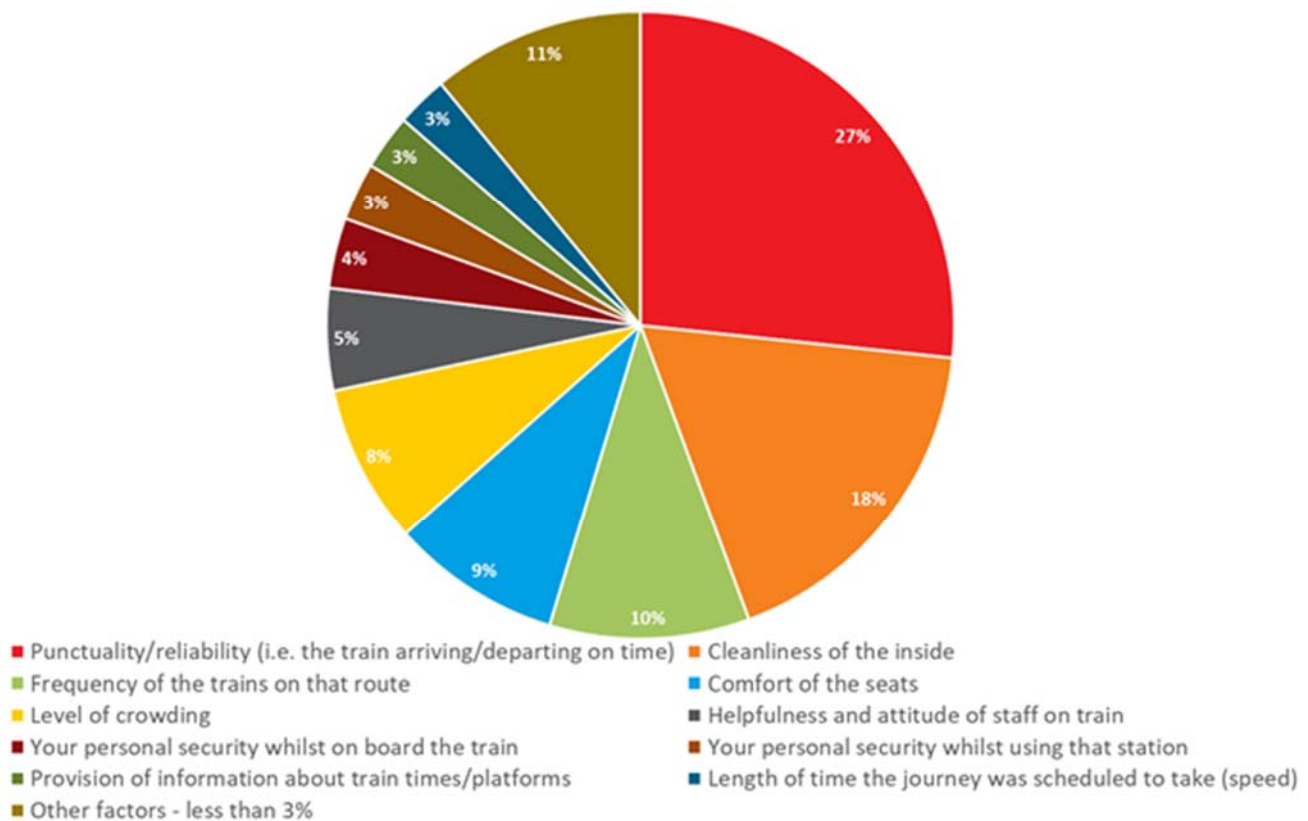


Figure 5- Drivers of satisfaction, NRPS Autumn 2017 /Spring 2018: Cross Country overall

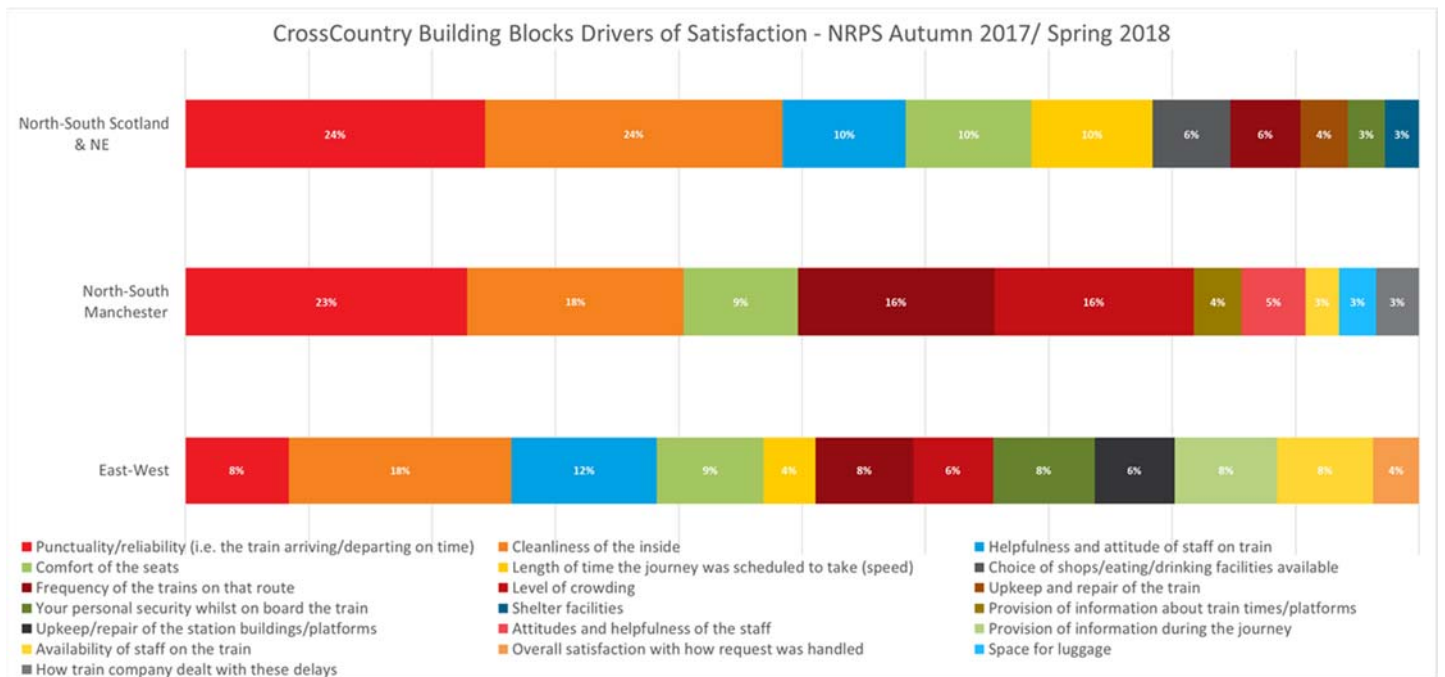


Figure 6- Cross Country, Drivers of Satisfaction by building blocks - NRPS Autumn 2017/Spring 2018



### 3.3.2 Drivers of dissatisfaction

An analysis of the factors that drive passenger dissatisfaction also emphasises the importance of getting the core product right (Figure 7). How the train company deals with delays and crowding are the main drivers of dissatisfaction (21 per cent and 15 per cent respectively). Punctuality and reliability is in third place, at 13 per cent, followed by availability of staff on the train and frequency of trains, both at eight per cent.

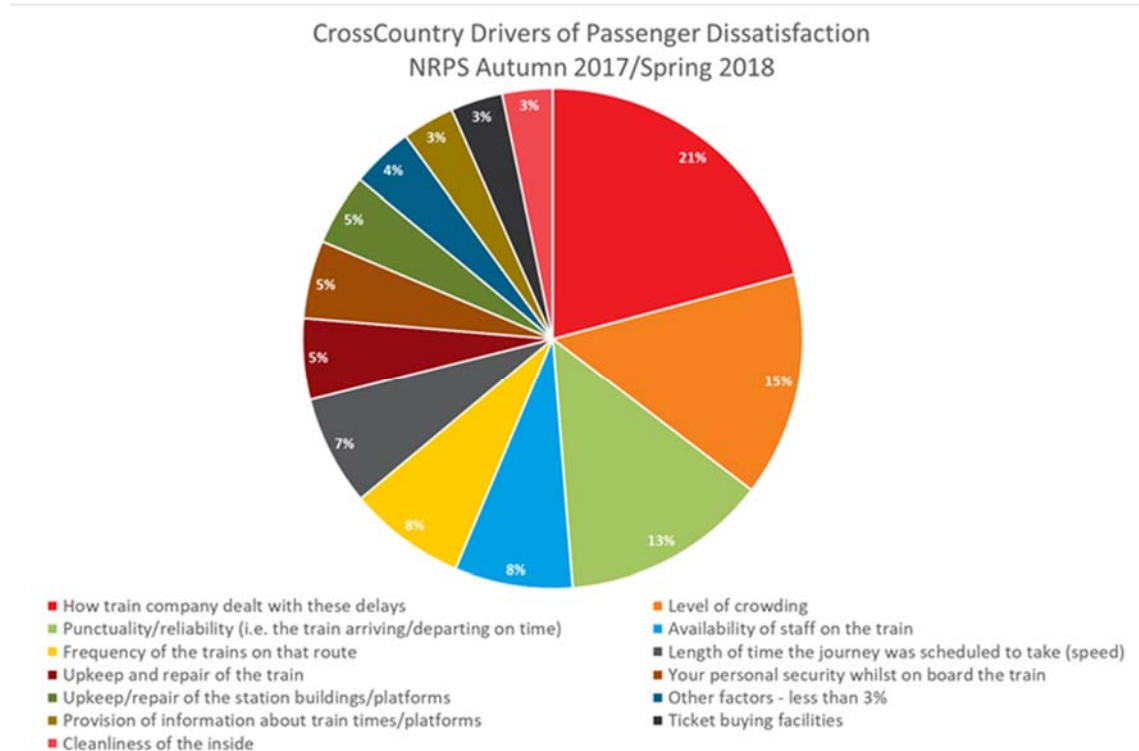


Figure 7- Cross Country, Drivers of Passenger Dissatisfaction, NRPS Autumn 2017/Spring 2018

### 3.3.3 Satisfaction with value for money and the overall journey

A comparison between Cross Country and long distance operators nationally shows Cross Country to have had levels of overall journey satisfaction close to the sector over several years (Figure 8), tending in recent years to be one or two points behind. The most recent results from the Spring 2018 NRPS show Cross Country achieving 86 per cent, one point below the long distance average.

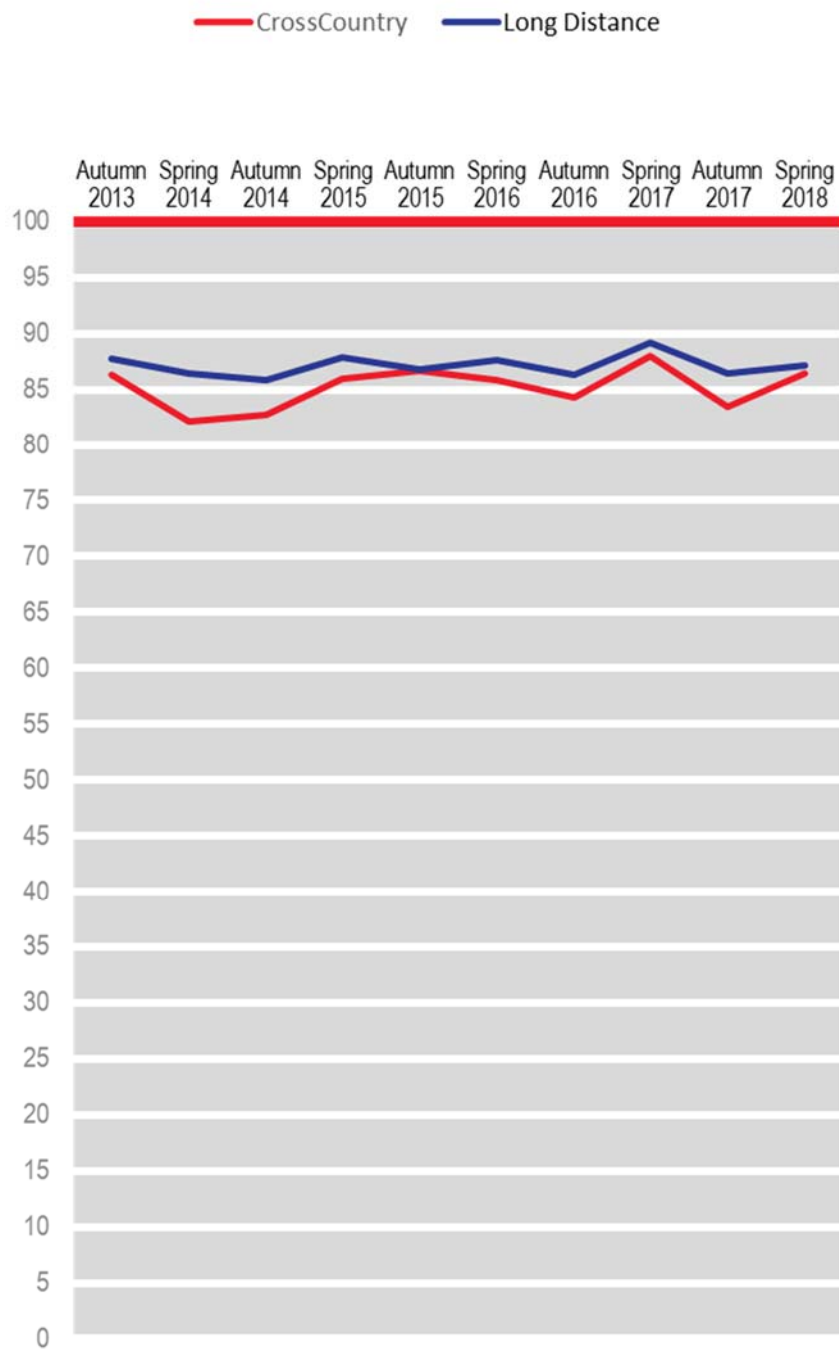


Figure 8- Cross Country and Long Distance sector trends for satisfaction with overall journey, NRPS

Scores for satisfaction with value for money are considerably lower for both Cross Country and the sector (Figure 9). In general, Cross Country scores a little below the average for long distance operators, with Spring 2018 NRPS scores of 50 and 55 per cent respectively.

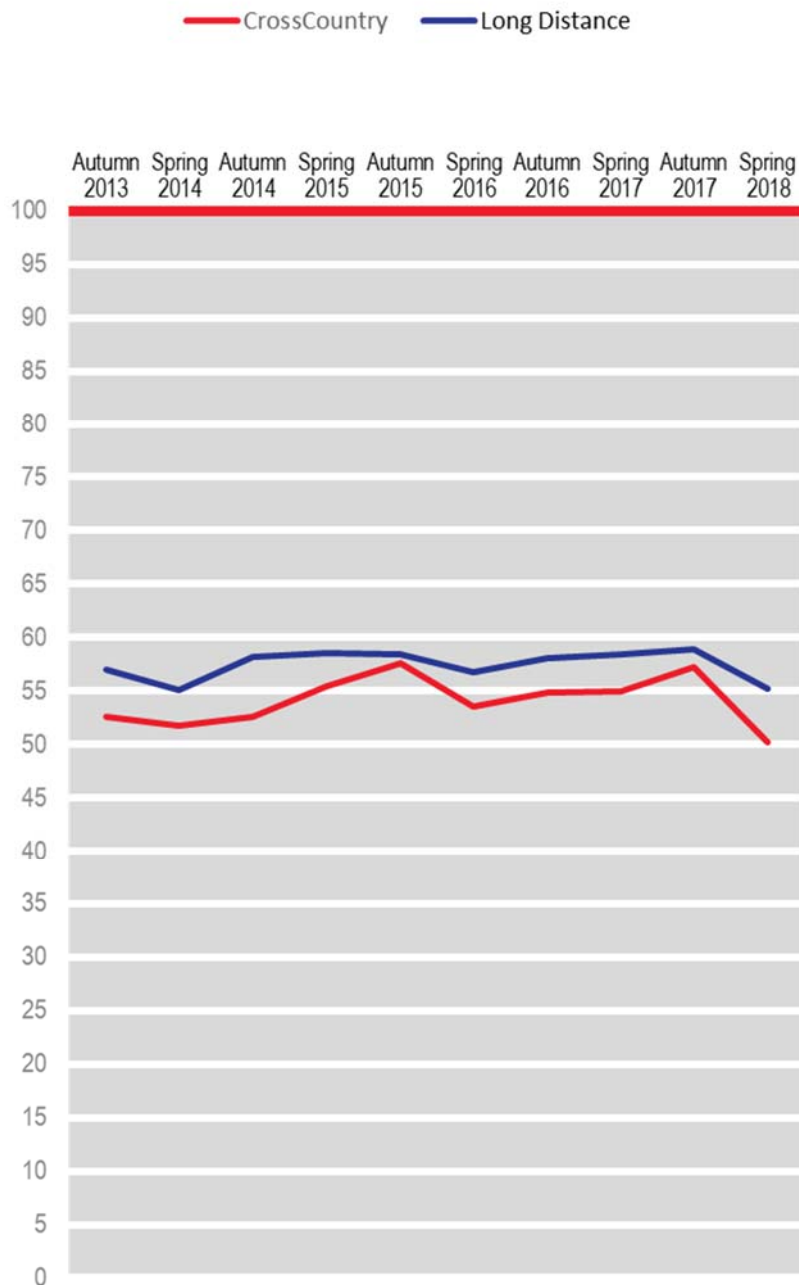


Figure 9- Cross Country and long distance sector trends for value for money, NRPS

### **3.4 Qualitative research into passengers' experiences and aspirations for the future**

We carried out focus group research towards the end of 2015, which revealed that passengers recognise a franchise that is largely delivering on their basic needs. They find Cross Country services to be reasonably punctual and reliable, with some journeys offering decent value for money. But they consider the quality of experience across most aspects of the journey to be below the level they expect from other long-distance operators. Passengers say that the brand lacks distinction, and that they would welcome a greater relationship with the operator.

In general, passengers praise staff on trains, finding them friendly, welcoming and helpful. But they would like to see more staff on-board, recalling that Cross Country services seem to have fewer members of staff than on other long-distance services. Passengers report that they would like to see a larger presence of Cross Country or other staff at stations, along with better information about their trains. This is especially true where Cross Country is the only operator, but another franchise is responsible for the station facility.

Crowding is an issue for many passengers, especially at certain times and in particular places. This is compounded by short trains and a lack of luggage space. There is a perceived lack of investment in additional capacity to alleviate these issues.

The on-board catering/retail offer is not highly regarded, seen as expensive and poor quality, with few healthy options. Many passengers choose not to purchase and in other instances the trolleys were not accessible due to overcrowding in the carriages. The First Class offer is seen to be 'ok' but not as good as it could be.

Overall, Cross Country is viewed fairly positively by many passengers. It lacks the 'Intercity Express' experience of other long distance operators, but at the same time, its low profile network is seen as 'solid' and 'reliable'. Trust in Cross Country is comparatively high. Most passengers would welcome an enhanced relationship with Cross Country, with rewards for loyalty. There is a desire among passengers to know who Cross Country is and what it can offer. Respondents in our research suggested the use of more visible branding, higher profile staff and more proactive communication.

Additional research carried out early in 2018 focused on interchanges and non-users. As might be expected, a key determinant of usage is whether the train serves the locations where people wish to travel. However, some people actively select alternative modes of transport, partly for reasons of cost and/or convenience.

For some, travelling by train is seen as a potentially risky business. There can be uncertainty about what the experience may be like and anxieties about delays or an uncomfortable environment. In some cases, a previous negative rail experience has

led to this view. There is low brand awareness of Cross Country, a lack of knowledge about routes and destinations and, consequently, little reassurance about the overall travel offer.

Passengers consider changing trains a stressful and often complicated process. Even people who interchange frequently can find the process difficult. Specific elements that cause uncertainty and stress to passengers are time pressures, wayfinding, difficulties or obstructions at stations, delays and unclear or incorrect information on trains or at stations.

Interchanging can be particularly demanding for passengers with disabilities and support was often needed over and above the general assistance available at stations. Passengers with disabilities will travel for longer to avoid interchanges as it is seen as such a potentially stressful and difficult process.

### **3.5 Recommendations - top level priorities for the franchise**

Analysis of the passenger priorities for improvement, drivers of satisfaction/dissatisfaction and the feedback from the passenger focus groups highlights the factors that should be top level priorities for the next Cross Country franchise. These can be summarised as ensuring the core service is delivered well, with a clear focus on the customer experience to improve satisfaction. This may be assisted by greater clarity about the purpose of the operation and the markets to be served.

Overall, and acknowledging a substantial capacity challenge that needs to be addressed, Cross Country is generally delivering the basics well, providing a solid foundation on which the new franchise can build. Passengers will expect to see this continuing, alongside increasing punctuality and reliability, clean and well-maintained train interiors and providing more quality-focused elements of the journey experience such as power sockets and free Wi-Fi.

This franchise is also an opportunity to deliver against higher-level passenger expectations. We would like to see the operator of the next franchise embrace this challenge and become a market-leader in providing an outstanding whole-journey experience. The new Cross Country franchise should be developed into a nationally recognised and trusted brand that represents all the communities it serves. It can do this by having a clear focus on the customer experience to ensure passenger satisfaction improves and building relationships and trust with passengers.

Our research clearly shows that delivering a punctual, reliable service is rail passengers' fundamental requirement of the operator, but it also identifies other key areas for improvement in the next Cross Country franchise:

- Capacity, crowding and service frequency – additional carriages are undoubtedly needed, alongside a consideration of suitable service frequencies and train layouts, with availability of carriages and classification

(as first or standard) optimised appropriate to demand. Fares incentives might also contribute to alleviating pressures on certain services. Services should be sufficiently frequent to allow passengers to use the train at the times they wish to travel.

- On-board experience – train layouts should facilitate luggage storage and passenger comfort. Seats should have fixed or fold-down tables, so people can use their travel time productively and safely manage snacks and refreshments. Passengers today expect power sockets and free Wi-Fi as standard, with high quality connectivity to facilitate access to information and enable a range of activities during the journey. High standards of cleanliness and maintenance of the train and toilets on board should also be ensured.
- Ticketing, retail and value for money – encompassing the important service elements which drive this as well as the ticket price. Passengers should be able to select and easily obtain the best and most appropriate fare for their journey delivered through the medium of their choice.
- Improvements to information and support - the new franchise will need to provide comprehensive, live information at stations and on trains, with helpful staff who are informed and empowered to help passengers. Any new trains, and upgrades to existing trains, must be able to receive the live Darwin feed to supply information screens.

The next franchise must embed a genuinely customer-service focused culture at all levels and provide a personalised, rewarding passenger experience. This will require a genuinely engaged and empowered workforce for effective delivery of high standards to passengers.

These points, and other elements that require consideration in the specification and bidders' proposals, will be developed further in our consultation response. Where relevant, we will provide enhanced details of key topics and our policy perspective on wider issues related to rail franchising process.

## 4 Consultation response

As the independent passenger watchdog, our overarching responsibility is to provide an evidence-based response to the consultation, drawing on our research representing the views of a wide cross-section of the passengers who use Cross Country. As such, Transport Focus is adopting a strategic approach to this response and will focus largely on higher level issues.

Passengers and stakeholders across this very diverse network will have their own experiences and specific ambitions which they will want considered. Indeed, some questions posed in the consultation seek specific feedback on individual priorities. It is important that DfT and the operator/bidders listen carefully to the views expressed. However, we would observe that conclusions must ultimately reflect the needs of all passengers whose lives will be impacted by decisions about the future of the rail service, many of whom may live some way beyond the network and others who will not be directly engaged with this consultation process, despite outreach efforts.

Because various themes are inter-woven throughout the consultation we have grouped some questions together, to provide a holistic view of the issues that are being consulted on and provide a more streamlined response.

Our response generally follows the question numbers and text as written in the published consultation document. The pro-forma Word document provided online has different numbering and some of the wording also varies. It will be important that when DfT undertakes analysis these discrepancies are considered to ensure responses are attributed to the appropriate question.

### 4.1 Cross Country train services

#### 4.1.1 Capacity and crowding

- Q1 *What are the particular services, routes and times of day where you think crowding on Cross Country services needs to be addressed most urgently?*
- Q2 *Which of the following potential measures do you think could overcome crowding caused by short distance commuters using long distance Cross Country trains, assuming that suitable alternative services are available?*
- a- Removing calls from towns closest the conurbation centre either completely or just at peak times.*
  - b- Retaining calls at such stations but restricting them to pickup/set down only?*
  - d- other (please suggest)*
- [sub question 2c on multi-modal tickets is addressed within fares and ticketing comments below]*

	<b>Cross Country</b>	<b>East-West</b>	<b>Manchester Routes</b>	<b>Scotland &amp; NE Routes</b>	<b>Commuter</b>	<b>Business</b>	<b>Leisure</b>
Level of crowding	67	66	63	70	52	64	73
Frequency of the trains on that route	78	74	80	80	67	76	83
Punctuality/reliability (i.e. the train arriving/departing on time)	83	87	79	83	61	82	89
Length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed)	87	90	86	86	81	82	91
Connections with other train services	77	77	76	78	69	74	81

*Table 1- Crowding, frequency and other train service factors, NRPS Spring 2018, percentage satisfied*

The level of crowding on Cross Country is a vital issue for passengers. This is reflected in passengers' priorities for improvement, with getting a seat on the train a very significant priority, coming second only behind better value for money. Our research tells us that crowding is also one of the top two drivers of dissatisfaction. Satisfaction with crowding on Cross Country overall is relatively low at 67 per cent and is lower on East-West and Manchester routes than Scotland and North East. Only just over half of commuters are satisfied with the level of crowding, and just under two-thirds of business passengers. It is also notable that commuters are less satisfied with frequency of services, with 67 per cent satisfied against 78 per cent for the operator overall.

On this extensive network of long distance services short-distance commuting will undoubtedly exacerbate pressures and local stakeholders will be best placed to explain exactly where and when the crowding they experience occurs. TOC passenger count/loadings data should also be assessed by DfT and bidders to aid detailed analysis and action. The demand for increased frequencies and scope to respond to this through integrated timetable planning should also be considered.

Transport Focus believes that crowding must first and foremost be solved by introducing extra carriages and additional trains. This should be the starting point when dealing with crowding and explored as a priority option before station stops are removed from Cross Country services or routes are curtailed. Providing additional capacity is the only way to ensure the root cause of crowding on this franchise- too few and too short trains - is addressed.

Although there are costs associated with increasing rolling stock this should be balanced against the existing suppressed demand that DfT and others have identified and by the opportunity to grow the market and contribute to modal shift. Whilst Transport Focus understands that scope to increase the number of additional trains running through Birmingham New Street is limited, longer trains could serve



large sections of the network and this would vastly improve the current passenger experience.

Ostensibly simple choices can often prove to be a fallacy. We would agree that opportunities to review how commuter markets can best be served by provision from other operators should be part of the ongoing development of rail timetables. However, the interplay of passenger origin and destination, access to stations, train facilities and speed will be just some of the factors assessed in making journey choices. Passenger reactions to removal of certain stops may not be as predictable as the question appears to assume.

Transport Focus does not support the use of pick up/set down only as a strategy for managing crowding. It can be extremely difficult to enforce and leave passengers feeling aggrieved. It is likely to generate adverse reactions and inflict damage on the industry's reputation.

Removing stops, pushing passengers onto other operators' services and/or reducing the service to the extremities of the network should all be regarded as last-ditch measures for restricting passenger demand and limiting usage of Cross Country. Instead, crowding should be tackled by more carriages and, where possible, additional trains.

## **4.2 Service patterns and the extent of the Cross Country network**

### **4.2.1 Potential service transfers or changes**

*Q4 If it were possible would you agree with transferring these local routes to the West Midlands franchise?*

- *Birmingham to Nottingham*
- *Birmingham to Leicester*

*Would you like to see any other routes or stations transferred to or from the Cross Country franchise?*

*If so, which routes and stations and why?*

*Q5 If the network was unable to cope with all the service enhancement aspirations north of Northallerton on the East Coast mainline, would a:*

- *curtailment of one of the existing Cross Country services be acceptable (with the resources redeployed to enhance other existing or new routes)?*
- *[from web questionnaire] diversion of one of the existing Cross Country services be acceptable (with the resources redeployed to enhance other existing or new routes)?*

*If yes, what should happen to the Cross Country service?*

*If no, what should happen instead?*

- Q6 *Should bidders be given flexibility to make limited changes to the extremities to the network so that benefits such as reduced crowding in the centre of the network can be provided?*
- Q7
- *Do you agree that the current level of Cross Country services to the following routes are the minimum that must be specified [or] Do you agree that the changes to the following routes would be acceptable if a similar or improved service was provided by another operator for:*
  - *West of Plymouth to Penzance?*
  - *Exeter/Newton Abbot to Paignton?*
  - *North of Edinburgh to Aberdeen?*
  - *Southampton to Bournemouth?*
  - *Guildford?*
  - *Bath?*
  - *Cardiff to Bristol Temple Meads?*

Our research with passengers has demonstrated that their requirements focus more on the delivery of an effective service rather than who runs the rail operation<sup>4</sup>. Thus, the significant issue to be assessed in any consideration of remapping or transfer of services must be the outcomes this would deliver for passengers. A critical factor that must be assessed is what operator will be best placed to deliver and manage services and provide the best response to passenger needs.

There will be benefits and drawbacks associated with service transfers, and the overall balance of these for most passengers must be the key to any decision. As well as explaining the objectives or drivers for change, there should be a transparent evaluation of the costs of any re-organisation and clarity about how they will be met. Passengers should not have to bear the price of changes initiated principally for organisational reasons.

Before any Cross Country stops or services are curtailed or changed, it must be made clear to stakeholders and passengers how this will affect them. Passengers (and respondents to this consultation) are currently being asked to comment largely in the abstract. Whilst Transport Focus understands that this consultation is partly to debate ideas about the future of the Cross Country franchise, this is not in itself enough for the specification to change the service substantially.

Passengers need to fully understand:

- which stations are proposed to have reduced or no service by Cross Country
- how many people use these stations and services
- what the alternative service level will be, the capacity available and how this will integrate with other parts of the network.

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<sup>4</sup> [Giving passengers a voice in rail services](#), 2013

It is particularly important that passengers understand the level of alternative service to be provided. The capacity problem currently present on Cross Country must not just be pushed on to other train operators. The consultation states that services run by other operators will be 'the same or better' but this is still vague about what passengers can expect. Will other operators' services be substantially slower or stop at more places? How will train facilities compare? Will passengers be able to buy tickets to access both Cross Country and other operators' services, for the same price?

Passengers and local stakeholders cannot make informed decisions about the future of Cross Country services without these facts. Once this information is available then we would encourage a formal consultation on specific proposals. These should clearly set out the benefits and any negative consequences for potential winners and losers and the mitigations to be provided to reduce the impact on those people who would be adversely affected.

Additionally, it is essential that the 'extremities' of the network continue to receive sufficient levels of service. Cornwall, Devon and parts of Scotland must not be cut off. Changing where the Cross Country franchise serves should not be a catalyst for de facto reductions in the train service into these areas

Transport Focus has not expressly explored passenger views regarding any transfer of local routes to the West Midlands franchise, or the curtailment or diversion of services on the East Coast Mainline. Neither do we have evidence on which to base a considered response to Question 7. However, acknowledging the synergy between the networks served, we noted in our Great Western consultation response that there might be an opportunity to explore the interplay between these two franchises.

The best options for service provision at the furthest reaches of the network merit careful consideration, especially when there is an infrequent service at what may be regarded as inconvenient timing. These, and particularly the East Coast issues, will have to be addressed in the context of overall network capacity and the merits of propositions from different operators.

The significant issue for passengers will be that current travel opportunities continue to be available, even if these are provided by another operator. Adequate capacity and appropriate journey frequencies will need to be maintained. We would suggest some destinations will require some level of through service on Cross Country to be maintained, particularly to meet the needs of the leisure market. Where additional changes are introduced, or increased, other elements, including enhanced interchange facilities, will be required to support the overall passenger experience on the journey.

In terms of transferring local services to West Midlands, we note the distinct nature of the services identified, support for the proposal from the local transport body and the potential for integration with other rail services in the area. This suggests that this may be worthwhile exploring further. It may also provide the opportunity to help solve the issue of Cross Country not being a Station Facilities Operator, although providing all, or the majority of, trains through these stations.

Should any services transfer to or from Cross Country then existing arrangements for passenger access to discounted tickets for certain journeys (e.g. Groupsave, Advance and Weekend First) should be maintained or comparable products provided. Passengers should not suffer as a result of reorganisation. We should also expect the 'Advance on the day' purchase options to remain available regardless of any decisions about the seat reservation component.

Where services to any destinations do transfer, in whole or in part, there must be a requirement for effective liaison between operators, particularly in relation to information, service disruption and connections. There must also be a clear agreement over responsibilities for complaints handling and compensation claims during any transition periods.

### **4.3 Future train service and timetable development**

- Q8 *Do you think the department's minimum specification should preserve exactly the existing pattern of services and station calls rather than offer an opportunity to change?*
- Q9 *Should bidders have some flexibility to make fewer calls at some stations, for example if that enabled them to accelerate services?*
- Q10 *Should the minimum specification have the number of trains from each station to Birmingham but give bidders the flexibility to decide where the trains go after Birmingham?*
- Q11 *Are there stations beyond the geography of the Cross Country network that should receive calls that they currently do not receive?*
- Q12 *Are there stations within the geography of the Cross Country network that should receive calls that they currently do not receive?*

Transport Focus supports a specification which is flexible enough to allow the operator to review usage and how station calls are allocated to train paths to improve overall capacity and efficient use of resources. However, train service decisions can highlight the different interests of varying groups and locations, meaning timetabling presents some tough choices. We therefore believe that some fundamental principles should be established to inform the approach to train service development.

The specification for the next franchise should ensure that train service provision is based on passenger needs and priorities and is linked to measures of passenger satisfaction. Engagement with passengers and local communities should be regarded as a starting point for planning service developments.

The key issues are whether passengers at each station, and people who might use the train if there was a service to suit their needs, have the required level of service to and from the places they want or need to travel, at the times they wish to do so.

The starting point should be to optimise rail services based on passenger demand and any new opportunities that become available.

First and foremost, the provision of sufficient capacity must be addressed, both in terms of seats and appropriate frequencies, particularly for times of peak demand. The impact of seasonal pressures and of special events taking place across the network need particular consideration.

More generally, our view is that origin and destination data should be used as the basis for understanding existing travel requirements, where this can provide an accurate reflection of the journeys made. This data is available to the industry, but not generally to stakeholders, although the prevalence of split ticketing (which seems particularly widespread on Cross Country) may under-represent the extent of some through journeys on Cross Country and require further analysis. Combining tickets could easily result in the number of short journeys being overestimated. Without access to this key data and other relevant information, particularly about network capacity, timetabling options and comprehensive assessments of stakeholder views, it is not possible for others to derive a properly balanced judgement about service options.

It is therefore important that, when considering choices and bringing forward proposals, the decision makers, whether Government, Network Rail or the operator, should ensure that the rationale that underpins them is properly set out to all who have an interest.

While acknowledging the need for some flexibility to adapt the train service to respond to current and changing demands, Transport 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, at key locations, to retain or improve connection opportunities.

Whatever the plans for the train service it is essential that the timetable proposals are subject to proper consultation, including the initial proposals for the competition specification. There must be a requirement for timely, transparent and meaningful consultation that allows all stakeholder views to be listened to prior to changes being finalised. Feedback, irrespective of whether it has been possible to accommodate the recommendation or request, must be provided.

From the outset, and throughout the life of the franchise, there are some principles that should be embedded, to be followed whenever timetables are revised:

- early consultation with passengers, followed by honest feedback about why the ultimate decisions were made
- existing basic features such as first and last trains, if satisfactory, should remain
- aspirations for improvements should be met if possible
- capacity and resources should be matched as closely as possible.

Lessons learnt from the May 2018 crisis should also be applied: timetables should be planned in good time and checked as robust and deliverable prior to their introduction. Timetable changes should also be compliant with T-12 Informed Traveller timescales, so passengers are provided with accurate, reliable information on journey planners and can buy tickets with confidence.

In order to undertake the appropriate levels of engagement and consultation, and the associated timetable development and planning, the operator must properly resource the relevant functions and ensure effective communication with counterparts within Network Rail.

The service specification should take a holistic view of the needs of all passengers; commuter, business and leisure, from all parts of the network. Timetable opportunities must be optimised with passenger interests placed at the heart of planning and ahead of operational convenience. Within the acknowledged constraints, the distribution of train services should be appropriate to passenger demand. Where possible there should be clearly differentiated services for different markets.

In relation to question 9, we make the following observations.

NRPS results for journey time suggest that satisfaction levels amongst Cross Country passengers are broadly consistent and relatively high, particularly in comparison to frequency. (See Table 1).

Frequency of trains is a notable driver of passenger satisfaction, at 10 per cent on Cross Country overall, whereas journey time is only a minor driver at 3 per cent. Both are drivers of dissatisfaction, however, with speed just 1 per cent lower than frequency at 7 and 8 per cent respectively.

However, on the different routes, the length of time is a greater driver on North/South Scotland and North East route, at 10 per cent, compared to frequency at 6 per cent. On Manchester frequency is 16 per cent, the third equal factor driving satisfaction, along with level of crowding, whilst speed is not a driver at all. On East -West routes frequency accounts for 8 per cent whilst journey time is 4 per cent.

The priorities for improvement for Cross Country passengers show that frequency ranks 5<sup>th</sup> overall, and this has the same ranking for commuter, business and leisure passengers. Reduction in journey time ranks 11<sup>th</sup> overall and is a low priority for

leisure passengers, (rank 19<sup>th</sup> at an index of just 67), slightly under average importance for business passengers (rank 11<sup>th</sup>, index 96), whereas for commuters this is the sixth highest priority for improvement, with an index of 135.

Given the balance of usage on much of Cross Country, this suggests there is not a high level of demand for faster services amongst the core passenger group. Clearly this may assume higher importance among non-users.

In the first instance, there should be a detailed examination of the way in which the infrastructure and timetabling can be adapted/enhanced to deliver improvements in journey time or facilitate additional trains. It would be preferable, if possible, to provide additional services, nominated as fast from the outset, rather than reducing stops in the existing timetable. Any proposal to reduce stops at intermediate stations will have a negative effect on those passengers whose stations receive a reduced service.

With these points in mind we would argue that aspirations to speed up journeys for some must be balanced against the needs of passengers on other parts of the network. The importance of intermediate stations to network wide connectivity and as rail access hubs must be considered in any assessment of service structures. We would urge that any such assessment is undertaken wherever there is a proposal to reduce station stops and is done in a transparent way, with full consultation with those likely to be affected.

In response to questions 11 and 12 we agree there may be opportunities to review the scope to provide additional stops both within the geography as well as beyond it, although the impact on journey times will also need to be balanced with the enhanced connectivity this may provide. Previous franchise specifications removed sections of route that provided enhanced connectivity to places that are no longer served by Cross Country. Travel markets also evolve, as does the modal opportunity to reach them. Stakeholders are best placed to make specific suggestions.

#### **4.4 Prioritising service frequency options**

*Q3 Rank the following in order of priority for improvement for your future Cross Country services.*

- a- more frequent weekday services*
- b- more frequent weekend services*
- c- more additional summer only services*
- d- earlier times of first trains*
- e- later times of last trains*
- f- earlier Sunday morning services*

Frequency is critical to the attractiveness of the railway to passengers and ultimately its success. Through its ability to connect business to other businesses and customers, leisure passengers to tourist destinations and employees to workplace, the railway is increasingly recognised as a key factor in the generation of national,

regional and local economic growth. This can only happen effectively with a service specification that fits passenger requirements.

A key part of ensuring that the railway provides a service that passengers want to use is the expectation that the railway reflect the seven days a week requirement that passengers have. People travel for a range of purposes at weekends and on Bank Holidays. Indeed, for many Sunday is now a working day, whilst for others it presents an opportunity to shop, sightsee or participate in leisure, sporting or cultural activities.

Passengers also wish to take advantage of earlier and later trains, for some this will be about accessing employment that, for many, extends far beyond a 9-5 framework.<sup>5</sup> Others will wish to enjoy a full day trip or be able to appreciate an evening out and still get home by train.

As noted above, frequency is clearly an important factor for Cross Country passengers. However, the relative priority that passengers will place on the options presented will clearly be driven by their individual circumstances. Passengers and user groups on the ground will have specific insight that should inform understanding of where frequencies are not meeting current need or may indeed be suppressing demand.

#### **4.5 Fares and ticketing**

- Q2c *Removing the validity of multi-modal ticket acceptance on long distance trains as a potential measure to overcome crowding caused by short distance commuters using long distance Cross Country trains?*
- Q13 *What changes would you like to see to the way Cross Country currently sells and provides tickets?*
- Q14 *What changes would you like to see to the current Cross Country current fares structure?*
- Q15 *What changes would you like to see to the advanced purchase on the day (APOD) system?*

##### **4.5.1 The importance of fares and ticketing**

Buying a ticket is often one of the first interactions a passenger experiences when making a journey by train and as such it can play an important role in shaping passengers' attitudes to the railway. Initial judgements on the price of tickets can have an impact on whether and when a passenger travels; the ease of buying a ticket and the degree of confidence they have in it being the 'best' ticket which influence the level of trust between passengers and a train company' and both contribute to overall assessments of value for money.<sup>6</sup>

Our research into rail passenger priorities shows that value for money is the highest priority for improvement<sup>7</sup>. This is not all down to price - we know from previous

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<sup>5</sup> [Understanding rail passengers: the average commuter](#), 2013

<sup>6</sup> [Passengers' relationship with the rail industry](#), August 2014

<sup>7</sup> [Rail passengers' priorities for improvements](#), 2017



research<sup>8</sup> that judgements on value are influenced heavily by train punctuality and the ability to get a seat – but clearly the cost of fares matters as well.

We also know that many passengers see the fares structure as complicated and confusing<sup>9</sup>. Issues with how tickets are sold mean that the confidence passengers have in their ability to buy the cheapest or best ticket for the journey they are making can be mixed. This uncertainty means that passengers can end up buying a more expensive ticket than they need, or worse, landing themselves in trouble with the train company by buying a ticket that’s not valid for their journey. This issue was picked up in our *Ticket to ride*<sup>10</sup> reports, where we argued that passengers should not be penalised for making an innocent mistake.

Transparent and fair ticket retailing is not just a ‘nice to have’: there is a legal side to it too. Consumer law dictates that retailers should provide enough information for the consumer to make an informed decision on what to buy. They are not allowed to make any misleading statements or to omit key information.

	<b>Cross Country</b>	<b>East-West</b>	<b>Manchester Routes</b>	<b>Scotland &amp; NE Routes</b>	<b>Commuter</b>	<b>Business</b>	<b>Leisure</b>
Value for money of the price of your ticket	50	52	49	50	25	43	60
Ticket buying facilities	88	85	89	88	83	87	89

*Table 2- Spring 2018 NRPS satisfaction with ticketing, percentage satisfied*

The fares and ticketing issues identified apply equally to Cross Country. Our 2015 research found passengers wanted greater transparency in pricing, ‘rules’ to be simpler and clearer and a clearer indication of where and how to obtain the best value tickets.

NRPS shows the cost of rail travel is a concern for many Cross Country passengers with just 50 per cent of passengers satisfied with value for money. While passengers may be resigned to believing that prices won’t come down, they want to see the amount of money they pay reflected in the quality of service they get. Value for money is the stand-out, number one priority for improvement.

Therefore, for the next Cross Country franchise the key issues that Transport Focus has identified include:

<sup>8</sup> [Understanding drivers of passenger satisfaction with value for money](#), February 2009

<sup>9</sup> [Fares and Ticketing Study](#), February 2009; and [Passenger perceptions of fares and ticket options](#), May 2011

<sup>10</sup> [Ticket to ride](#), May 2012 and [Ticket to ride – an update](#), February 2015

- Value for Money, especially for peak time walk-up fares and when booking in advance is not possible.
- Addressing complexity and confusion through greater transparency on ticket pricing – with accurate and accessible information that allows consumers to make an informed purchase.
- Split ticketing is also a key issue for Cross Country. This undermines passengers' trust and confidence in buying tickets.

The solution to some of these issues is likely to be industry wide, and the Easier Fares Consultation<sup>11</sup> (initiated by the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) and Transport Focus) seeks to address some of these broader themes. However, there are some specific issues raised in relation to Cross Country in this consultation, which will be answered below. The questions have been grouped into the following sections and are followed by some further, more general, comments about the fares and ticketing system:

- multi-modal ticket acceptance
- split ticketing
- retaining the flexibility of travel through flexible tickets, even if operators change
- advance purchase on the day.

#### **4.5.2 Multi-modal ticket acceptance**

Transport Focus strongly believes that multi-modal ticket acceptance should not be curtailed on Cross Country routes. Whilst there is a recognised over-crowding problem on Cross Country trains, we firmly believe that the appropriate response to this challenge is the provision of extra carriages and trains. We discuss this in more detail in the section on capacity.

Removing the validity of multi-modal tickets is counterproductive for many reasons. Firstly, passengers could be penalised or turned away from Cross Country services with what they think is a valid ticket. This is confusing and could become an additional barrier to travel for many passengers. Passengers already view ticketing as complicated, with low confidence that they are buying the correct fare. It will also fragment service provision and impact on choice and availability of services.

Such an approach also goes against the grain of greater multi-modal connectivity and is counter to policy objectives with the aim of moving people away from cars. These multi-modal tickets are part of complex fares and ticketing and settlement agreements and may well be harder to unpick than the consultation acknowledges. There is a risk that local multi-modal ticket agreements collapse completely, which is detrimental for passengers, operators and the local region alike.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/EasierFaresConsultation>

### **4.5.3 Split ticketing**

In general, the next franchisee should do their utmost to make the ticket purchasing system easier for passengers, who remain confused by the complexity of the fares system. It should be possible for passengers to buy a good value ticket for their entire journey rather than resort to exploring how various combinations of tickets for different stages can save them money.

Split tickets are heavily used on Cross Country. Passengers who are aware of this option and have sufficient time and available resources can potentially save large amounts of money on their journey by splitting their tickets. However, this is always at the passenger's initiative, as train companies are not obliged to tell passengers about these split fares.

Split ticketing undermines trust in the system. It leaves passengers unclear about what tickets are the cheapest and creates uncertainty around compensation arrangements. Whilst this is an industry issue, there is an onus on the Cross Country operator to address this, as it is particularly prevalent on this franchise.

Transport Focus recognises that split ticketing needs an industry-wide solution. We are working with RDG on the current Easier Fares Consultation, the ultimate outcome of which we hope will offer some clarity about the future of ticketing across the UK rail network.

### **4.5.4 Retaining the flexibility of travel through flexible tickets, even if operators change.**

The definition of Cross Country suggests an extensive network, rather than one artificially curtailed as a sub-optimal approach to managing crowding. If, at the extremities of the network, Cross Country ceases to operate many services, or ceases to operate services at all, then the tickets sold should maintain the offer of maximum flexibility to passengers. For instance, if Cross Country services are reduced, the tickets on offer should allow passengers to travel on Cross Country or other operators which serve that route without incurring additional costs.

A lack of information shouldn't restrict passengers. If a passenger's flexibility is lost because of using an exclusively Cross Country ticket for an irregular service, then the reduced level of service should be made clear to passengers before they buy their tickets. Passengers need choice and good information when deciding what tickets to buy. The purchase must be an informed decision, and therefore good information must be provided to passengers before they buy their tickets.

### **4.5.5 Advance purchase on the day**

Transport Focus supports advance purchase on the day (APOD) as this gives passengers the welcome opportunity of buying cheaper tickets closer to the time of travel if they wish to retain some flexibility in their plans. Currently, on Cross Country passengers can book an APOD ticket through the app or website up to 15 minutes before departure from their station and this is accompanied by a seat reservation. There is also provision to make a seat reservation on the day, where an open ticket is held.

However, both APOD and Ten-Minute Reservations can mean that seats are reserved whilst the train is already in service. This has led to passengers being told that the seats they are occupying have been reserved mid-journey and therefore losing their seat. This has created some issues on Cross Country and can cause anxiety for passengers as they are worried that their seat may be reserved from underneath them.

Minimising the risk of losing a seat is key to giving passengers confidence in the system. Currently only certain seats are available for reservations during the journey, but it appears that the signage or warnings about this are not sufficiently pronounced for people to realise the risk of losing them. Or, if these are the only available seats on a crowded train, passengers may opt to occupy them and regard existing possession as the primary justification for remaining in them.

Increased capacity may help but there is certainly a case for more explicit and visible notifications in carriages where seats can be reserved during the journey. Passengers may also be alerted to the fact that they could themselves make a ten-minute reservation (even from the next station). Another solution may be changing how the reservation system works. Tickets which are valid on a particular train as opposed to booking a particular seat would perhaps solve the problem.

#### **4.6 Ticketing in general**

Whatever the circumstances, the next franchise operator must make ticket purchase easier for passengers, who can be 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 offered the most appropriate ticket for their intended journey, regardless of whether this is at a ticket office, online, at a ticket machine or through any other method.

Bidders should also look at how they would simplify the fare structure. We believe a single-leg fare structure is easy to understand, removes the confusion of a return being £1 more than a single and allows passengers to mix and match different tickets (for example an Advance ticket for the outward leg and a semi-flexible ticket for the return).

There is opportunity to provide tickets more tailored to individual needs. For example, part-time commuters feel they should get some benefit as regular passengers, albeit not at the same level of discount as a full season ticket. We advocate 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.

Young people aged 16 and over, but still in education, feel penalised by having to pay adult fares. With education now being compulsory until 18, it is important to find ways of making 'school' travel affordable. Some passengers would like to see an incentive for travelling on early morning trains, to reduce the strain on the busiest periods.

There is growing interest amongst passengers in 'smarter' alternatives to current paper ticketing. This chimes with other research we have carried out which indicates that passengers find the ticket purchasing experience complex and uncertain<sup>12</sup>. Across all groups of passengers there is a desire to make the ticketing process smoother, easier and more convenient. People want to see innovation that will deliver improvements to each stage: purchasing a ticket, ticket types (such as smart and e-tickets) and in providing relevant journey updates after the purchase has been made.

The new operator should provide a wider range of tickets for passengers, so they can choose the method which is simplest and most convenient for them. This includes using the ticket office, ticket vending machines (TVMs), website and taking advantage of developments in ticketing such as smartcards or contactless bank cards and mobile phone products.

There is inconsistency in the terms and conditions applicable to various purchase methods which should be addressed. For example, Cross Country m-tickets purchased through the app are not eligible for free amendments whilst TVM ticket delivery is charged which is unfair to passengers who wish to use this option.

Many passengers prefer to buy from a ticket office because it offers the full range of tickets and staff can provide advice and reassurance on the best ticket to buy. Whilst Cross Country is not the station facilities operator (SFO) at any locations, many passengers would like to see a greater Cross Country staff presence at stations. And, should Cross Country staff not be present or available, passengers need and expect any rail staff to be able to provide relevant information to support their purchase needs or offer assistance with any other aspect of their journey.

There also needs to be a mechanism for passengers who have been unable to purchase a ticket prior to starting their journey. Northern's 'promise to pay' option on their TVM machines is perhaps a more viable method going forwards than Permit to Travel (PERTIS) machines. On TVMs where cash is not accepted, passengers can choose the 'Promise to Pay' option, which will provide a receipt that can be given to staff to prove the intent to pay.

If there is to be greater reliance on TVMs, or other methods, then some fundamental safeguards must be put in place. These include:

- ease of use and clear details of about the validity of, and any restrictions applicable to, tickets offered
- offer of a comprehensive range of tickets and/or ability to tell passengers what to do should the ticket they want not be available
- capability of remote monitoring so that any faults are identified and can be rectified.

In addition revenue protection strategies must set out:

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<sup>12</sup> [Smarter Travel research](#)

- procedures for alerting revenue protection staff if there is a fault with the machine
- systems for monitoring queue length – passengers should not be penalised for queue lengths in excess of the three/five minutes targets set out in the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement (TSA).

Transport Focus’s research has identified a number of issues with both TVMs and websites. We are now pushing for further reform as part of the Easier Fares Consultation.

Key issues to focus on include:

- printing any restrictions on passengers’ tickets to remove confusion over validity
- displaying outward and return ticket restrictions on TVMs prior to a passenger committing to purchase
- making it impossible to buy an Advance ticket on the internet at a higher price than the ‘walk-up’ fare available on the same train
- making TVMs capable of accepting cash as well as card payments.

More details of the problems that passengers experience, and recommendations about how to improve retailing through these channels, can be found in our research into ticket vending machine usability and ticket retailing website usability<sup>13</sup>.

The key is to ensure that passengers have all the necessary information on which to make an ‘informed purchase’.

#### **4.6.1 Smart ticketing**

We know, from our research programme on smarter travel<sup>14</sup>, that passengers across modes and throughout the country do see real benefits in smart ticketing.

When thinking about the development of smart ticketing, and preferences for how this will work, there are seven key attributes that drive attitudes and views.

- **Value for money**

Value for money is a key driver for ticket choice at the moment, and remains an important factor when considering smart ticketing. Passengers expect that smart ticketing will involve some kind of cost saving either via cheaper fares or new cost-effective tickets and products.

- **Convenient**

Smart ticketing needs to be a convenient option that is easy to use. The research participants told us they look for a ticketing system that makes life easier, rather than complicating their commute. When thinking about convenience, they want a system

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<sup>13</sup> [Ticket vending machine usability](#), July 2010 and [Ticket retailing website usability](#), July 2011

<sup>14</sup> [Smarter Travel research](#)

where it is easy to buy tickets, to manage their smart ticket account and use their ticket.

- **Simple**

Simplicity is important, especially for those unfamiliar with smart technology or smart ticketing. These people are most likely to need education regarding how smart ticketing will work, and a simple system is likely to support them in moving to smart ticketing.

- **Secure**

Our research participants had some concerns about the security of smart ticketing. When thinking about smart cards, people expect that their personal data will be kept safe – especially any details that will be printed and visible on the card.

When thinking about mobile ticketing and contactless, many were concerned about the safety and security of their mobile phone or credit card, and the potential for theft when using these. However, a benefit of smart ticketing is that the ticket details are thought to be safer – for instance if a card is lost or stolen then it will be easier to get the product cancelled and reissued.

- **Flexible**

Alongside a convenient and easy-to-use system, people want smart ticketing to be flexible. They want the ability to choose and purchase new products and tickets that offer flexible travel options. They also want flexibility with regards to managing their smart ticketing account, including being able to make ticket purchases at the last minute and being able to upload tickets at a range of stations.

- **Tailored management**

In addition to new products that would enable people to tailor their smart ticket products to their needs, people also want tailored smart ticketing accounts. Many want to manage them online and via an app. They want the ability to choose how they prefer to manage their account (online, app, text message), and reassurances that this will be tailored to be compatible with the technology they own (for example, Apple or Android-compliant).

- **Leading edge**

People feel that the introduction of smart ticketing is a shift into a more technology-focused way of ticketing. With this in mind they are keen that the technology used is forward-thinking. This is particularly noted by those who are familiar with smart technology and smart ticketing, and who see this as an opportunity for train operating companies to lead the way in ticketing technology rather than replicate existing systems.

Some key principles have emerged from our smart ticketing work:

- designing good systems, where passengers are consulted from the outset and their views are fully incorporated



- making sure that communications to both customers and staff are clear, easily-accessible, consistent and comprehensive
- ensuring that staff are fully trained when systems are introduced, so that they can sympathetically deal with any issues, problems or queries that their passengers may have.

#### **4.6.2 Ticketless travel**

Research has shown that passengers find the issue of fare evasion very frustrating<sup>15</sup>. There is a strong sense of injustice amongst those who have paid for a ticket when some passengers are known to be travelling without a ticket. They also felt that this reduced the amount of money available for investment.

Passengers believe that the main solution to fare evasion would be to make better provision for the purchase of tickets at stations and on board, and to implement better checking procedures and enforcement. This must include:

- clarity and consistency over when it is permissible to buy a ticket on board a train – the current system is felt to be too arbitrary
- managing ticket queues effectively (at TVMs and offices)
- providing ticket restrictions in an easy-to-access form and in plain English
- providing the passenger with verification of permission to travel without a ticket
- providing the passenger with verification of attempt to purchase a ticket if a card is declined due to bank security measures or signal issues.

Transport Focus believes ticketless travel is an important issue and one that needs to be addressed. Passengers who avoid paying for their ticket are in effect being subsidised by the vast majority of fare-paying passengers.

However, the revenue protection strategy must provide safeguards for those who make an innocent mistake and whose intention was never to defraud the system. We believe this requires:

- clear consistent guidelines explaining when staff should show discretion in the enforcement of penalties
- commitment not to go straight to any form of criminal prosecution unless operators suspect (or have proof) that there was intent to defraud
- penalties that are proportionate to the actual loss suffered by the operator
- operators to work with others in the industry to create a national system that is transparent and supports the honest passenger who makes a mistake
- giving passengers charged a penalty or a fine a genuine opportunity to appeal against that decision, to an independent appeals mechanism, before any action is taken (including the addition of administration fees).

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<sup>15</sup>[Passenger views on Northern and TransPennine rail franchises](#), December 2012



We recommend that bidders develop and publicly consult on a revenue protection strategy. In doing so they should be mindful of the recommendations within our *Ticket to Ride* publications<sup>16</sup>.

## 4.7 Access, information and making connections

### 4.7.1 Journey planning

Q16. *What additional information would be useful to you when planning your journeys or making connections on to other services? How would you like it communicated to you?*

There are two key aspects to journey planning: building an original journey, checking routes, fares, options and so on, and checking to see if a planned or regular journey is running as it should.

Passengers planning their journey will have different requirements depending on their individual situation and preferences. Pre-journey information should therefore be available through a variety of channels.

We know that websites are the first place many passengers go when planning a journey. However, in addition to digital information, passengers should be able to access printed material at stations and, if necessary, be able to contact a customer service representative via telephone or help point if there is no-one available in person to assist with queries.

Websites need to be easy to navigate and kept up to date. Passengers want a site that gives them clear information on which they can make an informed decision, uses language that they understand and instils confidence (primarily that they have bought the right ticket)<sup>17</sup>. Passengers use a range of different websites when planning their journeys, for example National Rail and The Trainline, as well as Cross Country's own website, so it is important that information is consistent across different sites. Similar requirements apply to apps.

Information on planned disruption is a key requirement during the journey planning stage. Passengers need to know if there is engineering work causing extended journey times, additional changes or bus replacements. Ensuring that passengers know in advance of buying a ticket or are informed far enough out that they can plan around the disruption, is key to managing expectations on the day. It is also an important component of trust and building a relationship with passengers.

Information is also essential during unplanned disruption. Accurate, timely information can help to empower passengers during such times<sup>18</sup>. Passengers want this information to be personalised (in other words 'what does the delay mean to

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<sup>16</sup> [Ticket to ride](#), May 2012 and [Ticket to ride – an update](#), February 2015

<sup>17</sup> [Ticket retailing website usability](#), July 2011

<sup>18</sup> [Passenger information when trains are disrupted](#), September 2014

me') so that they can rearrange meetings, alert family members and so on. Some passengers will welcome the option to sign up for journey alerts.

Our research looking at how train companies use social media found that Twitter was regarded as a useful channel for pushing information out to people<sup>19</sup>. However, it was essential that this information could be filtered to suit individual requirements; passengers want a tailored solution rather than an overwhelming amount of detail that is not directly relevant to their journey.

Some passengers may prefer to speak to a member of staff at their local station for information. This option offers reassurance, about both journey details and fares, especially to a passenger who is not a regular rail user or who is making an unfamiliar journey. Contact centre service staff should have good local area and network knowledge to deal constructively with enquiries made by phone and email.

There are also specific journey planning implications for passengers with disabilities, not only in terms of accessing the information above but also in arranging assistance on the day of travel. The latter requires up-to-date, trusted details about facilities at stations and en-route. It is important that any problems with facilities are reported in real-time – knowledge that, for instance, the lifts at a station are out of order or the accessible toilet on a train has failed can be vital when deciding whether to travel. This will become even more relevant with an increasingly ageing population.

Journeys rarely begin and end at rail stations. Passengers will welcome a joined-up approach to offering information about other train operators, other public transport services, cycling or walking options, taxis and parking and drop-off facilities.

Additionally, passengers would like to have clear information about what seats are reserved or not on the train. It is important that passengers can see whether seats are free outside of the train, before they get on. This will help reduce the confusion on board when passengers try and see if there are available seats in the carriage. Passengers expect to know that the seat they sit in will be unreserved for the whole journey- they feel particularly hard done by if they are turfed out of their seat halfway through the journey.

There needs to be predictability from the catering offer. If there is a different catering offer across the network, then it should be made clear what passengers can expect.

In general, passengers want any information to be clear, consistent and accurate. Not all passengers will have access to digital methods whether before the journey or during, and therefore physical information such as Digital Customer Information Screens and posters are still important. Staff also play important roles in providing information and support to passengers.

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<sup>19</sup>[Short and Tweet. How passengers want social media during disruption](#), June 2012

Passengers increasingly wish for more personalised information (Cross Country research 2016<sup>20</sup>). This could mean greater personalisation in the special offers and more detailed journey information for their specific journey.

#### **4.7.2 Making connections**

Passengers generally favour direct services and tell us that connecting onto other trains can be a stress-point in their journey. Direct trains avoid the scenario of having to know which platform you need, manoeuvring heavy suitcases or young children up and down staircases, only to discover that the train is late or that you have missed it altogether.

On busy services, making a change may also mean less chance of finding a seat, or for groups to be able to sit together.

When passengers change train, they require extra support. Research from 2018 suggests that even the most confident passengers need additional support when changing train.<sup>21</sup> Helpful and knowledgeable staff, clear and consistent information through multiple channels and same platform interchanges where possible, all help relieve pressure. Passengers with disabilities have told us that they will go a long way out of their way to ensure that they do not have to interchange. Any extra support is welcomed.

Connectivity across the franchise, and indeed beyond, is critically important to a successful service specification, opening opportunities for people to access and reliably use the different parts of the rail network for work and leisure. Where passenger journeys are reliant on connections the operator must provide good-quality information for all circumstances relating to the journey. Well-timed connections with sufficient, but not excessive, time between arriving and departing trains and ease of transfer between the platforms are also important. Where possible this should be a level transfer, with minimal distance between arrival and departure points. It would be useful if journey planners could include the facility to provide travel options with the easiest connections identified.

If there are delays to trains approaching common interchange stations then consideration should be given to the practicalities of holding connecting services and passengers should be informed about this in advance of arrival. Co-operation between TOCs is also fundamental to maintain and improve the cohesiveness and usability of the network and should be a requirement for the future.

### **4.8 Complaints and compensation**

Q17. *How could the way in which Cross Country deals with your complaints and provides compensation to you be improved?*

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<sup>20</sup> [CrossCountry passenger research](#), January 2016 (published October 2017)

<sup>21</sup> [Cross Country – 2018 research](#)

### **4.8.1 Complaints handling**

In our role as the statutory appeals body (outside London) Transport Focus has extensive experience of working with passengers and rail operators to seek resolution of unresolved complaints<sup>22</sup>.

We have found a number of recurring issues with either the operators' complaints processes or response quality. We work with the industry in efforts to improve customer service, reduce complaint handling times and focus on operators providing quality complaints handling. This should decrease the number of passenger repeat complaints to train companies and, in turn, appeals to Transport Focus.

It is important that the franchise specification asks for detailed information about policies and procedures for dealing with complaints. These should demonstrate a clear commitment to best practice and should encompass the points set out in the two sections below.

Any potential change of contact centre and complaints handling supplier should be well managed, with clear plans in place to ensure a smooth transition. Consideration should be given to the possibility that a new team, unfamiliar with the network and nature of cases they will be handling, might be initially slower at resolving complaints. Contingency plans should be in place to mitigate this and avoid any build-up or back-log of cases resulting from transition. Our review of issues arising from the Great Western Railway transfer identifies a number of lessons.<sup>23</sup>

Transport Focus has previously conducted audits of train operators' complaints-handling functions. These have enabled us to provide feedback on specific issues identified and recommendations for improvements to be adopted more generally. It may be appropriate to require future operators to commit to commissioning similar reviews at appropriate stages within the life of the franchise.

The introduction of the new rail Ombudsman will bring the need for more effective complaints handling by train companies. Transport Focus will aim to access trends analysis and seek to further understand what issues drive complaints by passengers and how these may be better managed. Improving the standard of complaints handling on the front line will inevitably reduce costs for operators in the long run.

### **4.8.2 Complaints handling process issues**

We recommend that the operator should:

- Empower front-line staff to deal with complaints on the spot, with processes in place to obtain approval for goodwill there and then.
- Ensure any complaints that can't be resolved by front-line staff can be fed into customer relations on the passenger's behalf.
- Make it easy for passengers to get in contact by providing a variety of contact methods and by being pro-active when things go wrong. This includes having

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<sup>22</sup>For rail passengers in Britain outside of London.

<sup>23</sup> [Rail Passenger Complaints Backlogs, GWR lessons for the future](#), July 2017

a streamlined process where a TOC or individual takes responsibility for the complaint from first point of contact. We sometimes see passengers become very frustrated after being redirected to various departments within the TOC. This could be easily prevented by one individual taking complete responsibility for the complaint, as opposed to the passenger being continually redirected.

- Empower customer service advisors to apply ‘natural justice’ when dealing with poor passenger experiences and allow redress to go beyond the minimum levels of the Passenger Charter or National Rail Conditions of Travel.
- Monitor and manage response times, and acknowledge complaints if they cannot be resolved within the target time; this information should be published.
- Have a process for customer service advisors, and other relevant staff members, to proactively investigate issues and share findings with passengers.
- Establish mechanisms to feed complaints into service improvements, where possible, and feed information about this back to the passenger.
- Ensure a clear and well-communicated escalation process is in place for complaints handling, including referral to, and cooperation with, Transport Focus (or in London to London TravelWatch). This should comply with ORR guidance on Complaints Handling Procedures that sets out requirements for reference to the passenger body and establishment of a protocol with these organisations for the entire appeal handling process<sup>24</sup>.

#### **4.8.3 Complaints handling response quality**

We recommend that the operator should:

- train and empower customer service advisors to identify and address all the points in the complaint and give heavy weighting to ‘addressing all issues raised by the passenger’ in internal quality monitoring processes – this focus on first time resolution reduces ‘comebacks’ and the need for a subsequent response by the operator
- empower customer service advisors to prioritise good will gestures over the National Rail Conditions of Travel, which will reduce levels of subsequent complaints.
- provide clear explanations when necessary about why the passenger is not receiving compensation and/or gesture of goodwill
- make careful use of appropriately worded standard paragraphs, supplemented as necessary by bespoke responses
- ensure customer service advisors use clear, jargon-free English with correct spelling, grammar and punctuation when writing responses
- use complaints handling as an opportunity to restore a customer’s faith in the train operator

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<sup>24</sup>[Guidance on complaints handling procedures for licence holders](#), Office of Rail and Road, 2015

- seek feedback from passengers on the quality of responses and use this to contribute to ongoing quality monitoring and implementing a culture of continuous improvement.

#### **4.8.4 Dealing with legacy complaints**

In advance of the new franchise, a clear process for handling legacy complaints should be established. Transport Focus recommends that all complaints should be dealt with by the new operator from the first day onwards, with appropriate recompense mechanisms from the outgoing operator established to enable this. This should extend to honouring any complimentary journeys or vouchers which remain within their expiry date after the new franchise operation starts.

Making the new operator responsible for handling complaints reduces confusion and complexity for the passenger. It also ensures that complaints are handled by the operator with an ongoing interest in retaining the passenger, and who is best placed to resolve any issues and implement any changes as a result of the complaint.

#### **4.8.5 Compensation**

Transport Focus believes that, if not already in place beforehand, the next franchise should have Delay Repay style compensation but with the following additional safeguards:

- Not more than 464 journeys are used to calculate annual season ticket holders' fare per journey for Delay Repay purposes – that is, two trips per day, five days a week for 52 weeks, less 5.6 weeks (leave and bank holidays – see <https://www.gov.uk/holiday-entitlement-rights>). To be fair to passengers, calculations must reflect that people do not work and travel every day of the year.
- The implementation of a 15 minute threshold/trigger for compensation (DR15).

There should also be a commitment to continue with further mechanisms for additional compensation that will be implemented should there be prolonged periods of disruption that mean that season ticket holders and other frequent travellers experience regular (and sustained) inconvenience.

These safeguards should be established and available at the outset, ready to address any persistent shortcomings in performance that may arise from planned or unplanned disruption on the franchise. It is important that mechanisms to respond to potential problems are available to provide equitable recompense and demonstrate that the industry will put its money where its mouth is in the event of persistent failure.

Our 2016 report into passengers' experience of delays and compensation found that two thirds of those eligible for compensation for their delay did not make a claim<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> [Rail delays and compensation - what passengers want](#), November 2016

While this shows a welcome improvement since earlier research in 2013 there remains a great deal to be done to increase passengers' awareness of their rights to claim compensation.

Train operators should take further steps to raise general awareness that compensation schemes exist and to familiarise passengers with the eligibility requirements. Posters on trains and at stations are a key part of achieving this, supported by information on the train company's website.

It is also vital to inform passengers each time they experience a qualifying delay. Announcements should be made on trains and promptly on arrival at stations (before passengers disperse), claim forms handed out and electronic notifications issued to let passengers know about their individual eligibility and provide the information they need to make a claim.

Some passengers are put off claiming because they think the process will be complicated or take too long. Where a delay has already inconvenienced passengers the process of claiming compensation should not create additional frustration. Franchise bidders should offer solutions that will make the process swift and simple.

There should be a range of options both for making the claim and receiving the payment. Many passengers say they would value a refund to their card or bank account. There is also a clear desire for compensation to be paid automatically, using technology to make the compensation process easier for passengers.

The research found that it is important to respond quickly to passengers and swiftly process compensation claims. Bidders should look to speed up this process to meet passengers' expectations.

Transport Focus recommends that the franchise specification should contain an explicit requirement for the introduction of an automatic compensation scheme.

#### **4.9 Access and facilities for those with disabilities and additional needs**

*Q18 What more could be done to improve access and provide facilities for those with disabilities and additional needs*

Cross Country is not the Station Facility Owner for any stations. This means there is a risk that accessibility improvements that Cross Country passengers need are somewhat overlooked, particularly to the physical environment and especially at smaller stations. Transport Focus would like to see some alternative ways to ensure that the interests of Cross Country passengers at many stations are not forgotten about. This includes working with station operators to:

- ensure that at accessible stations all shelters and waiting rooms are wheelchair accessible
- ensure that all stations have modern information facilities: CIS, PA, help points and induction loops
- provide a mixture of compliant seating, some marked 'priority' where necessary



- provide compliant handrails to all stairs/slopes
- adapt platforms/ramps to enable wheelchair users to board/alight at all technically-accessible stations
- ensure that problems with facilities are reported in real-time so that passengers can have confidence that services are as expected when deciding to travel.

The new Cross Country operator could be required to have a fund specifically for improvements at stations, and to demonstrate how they will work closely with station operators and Network Rail to improve accessibility at stations which they serve but do not manage.

We expect franchise specifications to include requirements to comply with equalities and discrimination legislation and to produce an enhanced Disabled People's Protection Policy (DPPP). Transport Focus also recommends a minor works fund and advocates consultation with relevant groups inviting suggestions about how this money might best be spent to meet identified needs.

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

- **Scooter policy**
  - Ensure that a suitable scooter acceptance policy is in place for smaller, lighter and more manoeuvrable machines; we accept that a Scootercard scheme may be necessary. It is important to make the policy easy to understand for both staff and passengers. Blanket bans are no longer acceptable – always understanding that some models will be too wide/heavy ever to be accepted on to trains.
- **Priority seat cards**
  - 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; the scheme should be backed up by publicity on stations and greater prominence made of which seats are priority seats so that they are easily located and recognised. This is especially important should there be trains where no reservation facility is available.
- **Clarify priorities**

Clarify the priority of use of priority seating and the people considered eligible for it.

  - Clearly identify priority of usage where any 'shared' spaces are provided, in other words wheelchairs have absolute priority over prams.
- **Assistance cards**

Provide assistance cards which disabled passengers can show to staff to explain their disability – for example hearing-impaired, speech-impaired, learning difficulties, so that staff can react and provide the necessary additional assistance.



- **Promote Passenger Assist more widely and monitor service provided**  
Promote Passenger Assist across a range of channels and through outreach. Carry out comprehensive Passenger Assist monitoring – proper management, for example, 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. Call-backs to at least a representative proportion of passengers using Passenger Assist.
- We suggest inclusion of targets for successful completion of Passenger Assist within the franchise agreement. Given the importance of providing the required assistance we see no reason why this should not be for 100 per cent of booked requests to be delivered. Bidders should also demonstrate how they will make best use of the management information gained from Passenger Assist – for example enabling TOCs to plan assistance provision better.
- **Training**  
Carry out training with staff – especially front-line staff in immediate customer contact, whether face-to face or by telephone. Constantly review/update disability training especially for ‘hidden’ disabilities and if using agency staff ensure that they are trained.
- **Physical changes**
  - Examine all possibilities to improve (a) station accessibility, in conjunction with station operators: for example, induction loops, help points, accessible counters, automatic doors; and (b) on-train accessibility: colour contrast, information systems, priority seating definition, compliance.
- **For longer journeys**
  - Ensure that on-train staff have booking details of passengers using Passenger Assist on that service and that staff make themselves known to such passengers during the journey.

Other areas that will also improve the accessibility of rail services include:

- Ensuring clarity in documents and on the website.
- Wider use of social media to advise disabled passengers and to receive feedback/approaches from them.
- Develop easy-access and easy-to-use website, especially for Visually-impaired users.
- Offer full refund on disabled passengers’ tickets (and all passengers travelling together) if booked assistance fails significantly.
- Abolish the up-to-five-minute wait at terminating stations for assistance to arrive (and seek improvements at the larger stations operated by NR through which Cross Country serves).
- Improve instant-contact-in-emergency arrangements, e.g. for stranded passengers on trains or stations.

- Ensure that on-train staff circulate through all parts of the train, making themselves known to booked passengers and ensuring their well-being and fetching refreshments from static buffets where the passenger cannot manage to do so.
- Work with station operators to ensure that no text descriptions of station accessibility (website, DPPP, NRE website) etc contradict each other and that all are, in fact, correct. Too many still contradict one another. This is a failing which we have repeatedly reported to station operators and DfT/ORR. Access bookings rely on correct information.
- The reporting of faults in real-time to feed into booking and delivery systems is necessary to avoid passengers experiencing the distress and inconvenience that can occur when facilities they rely on are out of action.

We believe that despite infrastructure and on-train facility improvements across the rail network over the last two decades, the level of the assistance-provision service has failed to register such a significant improvement over the same period. Transport Focus's predecessor bodies undertook a series of mystery-shop surveys over a number of years to assess the efficiency of passenger assistance<sup>26</sup>. We have noted some improvements during the course of these, but it seems from more recent ORR research that several aspects of assistance provision still stubbornly fail to show significant improvement. We detailed a number of key elements in their recent consultation that we suggest will contribute to resolving such issues.<sup>27</sup>.

#### 4.10 Staff

*Q.19 How do you believe Cross Country staff could be more effective in providing services and assistance that passengers need on a modern railway?*

Staff play a key role in delivering customer service at all stages of the journey and we know that passengers welcome face-to-face contact with members of staff. Passengers rely on staff for information and advice, assistance using stations and trains and for help when things go wrong. They make passengers feel safer and more secure at stations and on trains, especially at night and on less-busy or rowdier services, and for some passengers that can make the difference between whether they choose to travel by train or not.

Passengers with assistance needs are particularly dependent on staff to deliver the help they require and to fulfil requests made through Passenger Assist. Disability awareness training should be considered for all staff and regarded as essential for anyone in a passenger-facing role.

Passengers also cite the lack of staff as a major reason for their feelings of concern over personal security and consistently identify a visible staff presence as being important to providing reassurance to those travelling on the railway. It is vital that those staff receive the appropriate training both in terms of managing the station environment and personal security within it, and customer service.

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<sup>26</sup> [Passenger assist summary report](#), March 2014

<sup>27</sup> Awaiting publication, available on request

The new operator needs to give serious consideration to how it can best use staff and make best use of the different types of complementary policing available to it. Our research sets out passengers' concerns in more detail<sup>28</sup>. The specification should include a requirement to set out how these issues will be addressed across the franchise.

It is important that staff are trained, managed and supported to deliver the highest possible levels of customer service. Workforce development needs to be an ongoing process as expectations of customer service continue to rise, as standards do across the range of passenger experience, both within and beyond the rail industry. A proactive and empowered staff are best placed to respond effectively to meet passenger needs.

The pressure on the industry to reduce costs inevitably places a focus on the overheads associated with staff. However, Transport Focus is concerned that the very significant roles staff play, and the value passengers attach to a visible staff presence, especially at stations, is not overlooked. We urge that the franchise specification is mindful of the many benefits derived from staffing and that bid evaluation ensures sufficient credit for initiatives to make proposals viable.

More widely, in a competitive marketplace for staff and skills the operator needs to do everything possible to ensure a work environment that is attractive to retain existing personnel and attract new entrants. There need to be positive plans for training, support and career development, and a careful review of the need for succession planning to ensure key functions continue to be resourced for safe and effective operations.

In our 2015 research Cross Country passengers told us that their journey experience is improved by staff who are visible and helpful. They identified this need at stations as well as on train. This is pertinent on the Cross Country franchise as its staff are generally only located on trains as it does not operate any stations. At stations staff help, where available, is provided by other operators and they may not be sufficiently knowledgeable about Cross Country or take ownership of the issues raised by passengers. This can be frustrating and sometimes unsettling for passengers who expect all staff at the station to be able to assist with their queries and needs.

Table 3, below, shows Cross Country passengers' satisfaction with factors related to staff. Areas to improve include the availability of staff on the train and at stations. The gap between availability factors and attitudes/helpfulness suggest that proactivity and engagement with passengers are aspects that could usefully be developed to increase satisfaction.

The specification should require bidders to consider both where a Cross Country staff presence may be necessary, for example at larger stations and significant interchanges, and how they can work with SFOs elsewhere to ensure that other staff are equipped and informed to be responsive to passengers' needs.

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<sup>28</sup> [\*Passenger perceptions of personal security on the railways\*](#), May 2016

	Cross Country	East-West	Manchester Routes	Scotland & NE Routes	Commuter	Business	Leisure
Availability of staff at the station	77	72	77	79	80	74	77
How request to station staff was handled	91	87	91	93	88	87	93
Attitudes and helpfulness of the station staff	85	85	83	87	82	82	88
Availability of staff on the train	64	53	61	70	50	60	69
Helpfulness and attitude of staff on train	81	74	81	83	72	84	82

*Table 3-Spring 2018 NRPS Satisfaction with staff availability and assistance, percentage satisfied*

On Cross Country trains it is important that staff make themselves visible and available to passengers at all stages of the journey and that, whatever their role on the train, they have the information and attitude to deliver a helpful service. Given that Cross Country staff are not generally available at stations on-board announcements prior to arrival should provide helpful information about connections, onward journeys and station facilities.

Staff should be empowered to do their best to resolve issues so they do not need to be escalated into a complaint. This could be ensuring that staff can use discretion, validate tickets for passengers who have missed trains or lost railcards, or giving out vouchers for coffees if trains are delayed. This will go some way to ensure that fewer passengers complain - a time consuming process for them, and an expensive process for the organisation.

#### **4.11 Overall passenger experience**

*Q. 20 What comment, if any do you have, on improving the overall passenger experience before [Q 16 in pro-forma document online also includes during] and after the journey*

Journey planning is covered in our response to Question 16 above. There are other important issues about the passenger experience during and after the journey that we set out below. Some of the most important themes are delivering a punctual and reliable service, careful management of planned and unplanned disruption and improving resilience of the train service.

#### **4.11.1 Getting the basics right: punctuality and reliability**

The 2017 research, *Rail passengers' priorities for improvements*, found that 'more trains arrive on time than happens now' is the fourth-highest priority for improvement for Cross Country passengers, whilst 'less frequent major unplanned disruption' and 'fewer trains cancelled than happens now' are seventh and eighth. These factors are all above average importance.

Punctuality and reliability is of critical importance to passengers, and particularly to commuters. Our research, *Train punctuality: the passenger perspective*<sup>29</sup>, demonstrates a clear link between punctuality and overall satisfaction, which declines one and a half percentage points for every minute of lateness for all passengers and three percentage points for commuters.

Concerns with performance can be felt more acutely by commuters than by leisure or business travellers. Many leisure and business users find delays less frequent in off-peak hours and these also tend not to cause such significant overcrowding when they happen. In addition, leisure passengers often feel less time sensitive so are not as frustrated by minor delays. Table 1 above shows that satisfaction scores for punctuality and reliability are generally reasonable, although there is still room for improvement on this important element of the journey. However, only 61 per cent of commuters are satisfied which suggests there needs to be a particular focus on trains in the morning and evening peaks.

It will be important that the next Cross Country operator can be seen to take action to eliminate causes of delays within its control, such as staff shortages. Running trains with the maximum number of carriages during periods of disruption would also help alleviate overcrowding issues arising as a knock on effect of delays and cancellations.

#### **4.11.2 Unplanned service disruption**

In 2017 Transport Focus updated research looking at passengers' needs and experiences during disruption, including around the provision of information<sup>30</sup>.

We made a number of recommendations we would encourage bidders to make credible plans to address. However, there are two key points that must be tackled from day one of the new franchise:

- the cultural issue, across the industry, that deficiencies in passenger information at times of disruption persist in a way that would not be tolerated if they were operational or safety failures
- operators must measure the quality of information provided during disruption on a robust and ongoing basis.

In addition to the recommendations within that research, we encourage Government to secure two important factors in providing effective passenger information during disruption:

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<sup>29</sup> [Train punctuality: the passenger perspective](#), November 2015

<sup>30</sup> [Rail passengers' experiences and priorities during engineering works](#), Oct 2017

- reliable, accurate and consistent visual and audible information at all stations
- train movement data sufficiently detailed to deliver accurate live departure predictions for all stations – this could mean fitting GPS devices to all trains. Allowing positional data to be fed to Darwin via the ‘GPS gateway’ currently under development would seem likely to be the best solution.

#### **4.11.3 Resilience**

Transport Focus recommends that new franchises have a strong emphasis on service resilience, including in the face of severe weather. For Cross Country, the challenge of ensuring continued operation of regular services through Dawlish should also be a high priority.

Specifically, we feel bidders should be required to:

- set out the extent to which they will rely on overtime and rest-day working to deliver the service, including on Sundays and at Christmas
- show they have effective maintenance and repair facilities balanced with reasonable rolling stock availability assumptions that are not so optimistic that passengers are at continual risk of experiencing short-formed and cancelled trains.

Research into passengers’ views and expectations of rail services during extreme weather found three core principles that the rail industry must embrace<sup>31</sup>:

- provide timely, accurate information so passengers can make informed decisions about their journeys
- be transparent – help passengers understand why timetable changes and service suspensions have been made
- demonstrate that train companies and Network Rail are doing their best on behalf of passengers, despite the weather.

#### **4.11.4 Engineering works**

Engineering works are inevitable in maintaining the infrastructure that supports rail operations and allowing future improvements. As such, the planning, scheduling and management of this disruption is part and parcel of regular business. There should be structured procedures for managing this activity that are regularly reviewed, then adapted and refined in the light of experience.

Regardless of scale, and as a core principle, it is vital that passengers receive appropriate and timely information about the effect that engineering works will have on their particular journey and are given appropriate advice about alternatives. It is important that revised timetables are robust and achievable.

More generally, bidders should be required to set out how they will work with Network Rail to minimise the use of ‘all line’ engineering blocks. Culturally, the

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<sup>31</sup> [Reacting to extreme weather on the railways](#), July 2015

default assumption must be that routes remain open while maintenance, renewal and enhancement takes place, with exceptions made where there is compelling need.

Bidders should recognise that 55 per cent of passengers say they would not travel at all if a replacement bus is involved<sup>32</sup>. We encourage a joint, public commitment from future operators and Network Rail that, wherever practically possible, they will keep passengers on trains and transfer them to buses only as a last resort. Decisions should not be based solely on operational convenience and plans must also consider the needs of disabled passengers, as well as those with larger items of luggage/equipment.

Use of diversionary routes and/or using shuttles to move passengers as far along the route as possible is an important way to minimise the number of passengers needing to use replacement buses or the length of this element of the journey. Where this is unavoidable there should be consideration of where, for some passengers, coaches may provide a more palatable alternative and how a good and consistent service can be provided where passengers transfer between rail and replacement vehicles.

Transport Focus encourages bidders to have credible proposals for regularly submitting a high-quality bid to Network Rail 18 weeks out from work starting, so accurate amended timetables are in the public domain and reservations open 12 weeks before. We recommend that operators should be required to report, period by period, on the level of changes to the train plan after this 12-week point.

Recent Transport Focus research looks at passengers' experiences from three sets of planned works, at Reading and Bath Spa, in 2015<sup>33</sup> and Waterloo in 2017<sup>34</sup>. While the nature and impact of the engineering projects were very different, the research findings provide useful insight into passengers' core information needs and offer valuable lessons for the rail industry as a whole.

The research indicates the need for a flexible approach to communications planning in the build up to scheduled disruption. The fact that every project and the associated disruption is different means that the onus is on train companies and Network Rail planners to know what their passengers want and understand how a specific project will affect different passenger types.

The results of that assessment should then allow them to tailor communications to give the right level of detailed information when passengers want it, using the most effective communications channel.

The research makes five key recommendations for planning and delivering engineering schemes:

- Consider how the various elements of the engineering work are likely to affect individual passengers' journeys: who does it affect and how?

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<sup>32</sup> [Rail passengers' experiences and priorities during engineering works](#), October 2017

<sup>33</sup> [Planned rail engineering work – the passenger perspective](#), December 2015

<sup>34</sup> [Putting passengers at the heart of the London Waterloo upgrade](#), published February 2018



- Build this insight into your planning approach so that you are able to deliver a tailored information campaign: tell passengers what they want to know about their journey, when they need to know it.
- Tailor your message.
- Timing of information: every project is different so be prepared to be flexible.
- Use full range of information channels to reach different types of passengers.

#### 4.11.5 Information, communication and dealing with disruption

Our work on passenger priorities shows that keeping passengers informed when there is disruption is the eighth highest priority for improvement for Cross Country passengers.

The provision of high-quality and effective passenger information during disruption is vitally important. However, it is intrinsically linked to the broader topic of managing or, better still, minimising the disruption that blights far too many passenger experiences. It is important that staff have access to the most up-to-the-minute information, especially during times of disruption, and that they are suitably empowered to be able to make decisions in the interests of passengers.

NRPS (Table 4) shows that there is considerable improvement to be delivered to increase levels of passenger satisfaction with this factor.

	Cross Country	East-West	Manchester Routes	Scotland and NE Routes	Commuter	Business	Leisure
Provision of information during the journey	75	72	74	78	65	73	79
How well train company deals with delays	46	50	43	47	33	37	58
Usefulness of information about delay	56	65	52	56	40	48	69
Provision of information about train times/platforms	90	90	89	91	89	90	91

*Table 4-Spring 2018 NRPS satisfaction with information and dealing with disruption*

Passengers are frustrated with a lack of quality, accurate information during disruption. They want to know how long the delay will last, when the next trains will run and details about alternative routes with the likely impact on travel connections. They want to see accurate, real-time, GPS-based trackers presented on apps and screens to show the progress of trains. They want regular announcements, and they would like to see staff taking ownership of disruption situations, apologising for the inconvenience and being honest about how they are able to help.



#### 4.11.6 Stations and interchange

Passengers will generally visit at least two stations as part of a rail journey and the quality of the experience there can influence views about the journey overall. Whilst station improvements are not such a high priority as the core service and on-train factors, they are nevertheless an important element of overall experience.

Stations present a challenge for Cross Country which currently relies on other SFOs for delivery of the station experience to customers. This can lead to less positive outcomes for passengers, particularly in relation to staff knowledge about Cross Country services but also in delivery of improvements to the station estate.

This is a particular issue where, as the consultation identifies, there are stations where Cross Country run the majority, if not all of the trains, but does not run the stations. This is especially a problem in the East and West Midlands. This is a key passenger care issue, as there is little incentive on the SFO to improve services at stations they rarely, if ever, serve their own passengers.

Appendix 3 shows Cross Country passengers' priorities for improvement at stations and highlights the key priorities of toilets, seating on platforms and free Wi-Fi.

Table 5 below shows differing satisfaction levels for station attributes and how these vary across the network. The bigger ticket items of satisfaction overall, the environment, upkeep and cleanliness are all reasonably satisfactory. However, across the network, lower scores for toilet facilities and seating reinforce the fact that basic factors do need improvement, as does provision of Wi-Fi, with the choice of shops/eating and drinking facilities also less satisfactory for passengers.

	<b>Cross Country</b>	<b>East-West</b>	<b>Manchester Routes</b>	<b>Scotland &amp; NE Routes</b>
Overall satisfaction with station	86	84	85	88
Upkeep repair station buildings/platforms	80	79	80	81
Overall environment	81	81	79	83
Cleanliness	83	81	83	85
Toilet facilities	65	66	59	68
Shelter	76	82	72	75
Availability of seating	65	68	60	66
Choice of shops/eating/drinking facilities	66	61	67	68
Availability of Wi-Fi	45	36	46	48

*Table 5-Spring 2018 NRPS satisfaction – Station factors, percentage satisfied*

To address the challenge of supporting a high quality station experience for Cross Country passengers the specification should require bidders to demonstrate tangible plans for working with station operators and other partners such as Local Authorities, establishing mechanisms for two-way feedback about what improvements are needed and ensuring these are responded to.

We suggest a fund or pot of money could be specified by the DfT and written into delivery plans. The successful bidder would be obliged to use this fund, working in partnership with the SFO or other stakeholders, to improve station facilities for Cross Country passengers at non Station Facilities Operator (SFO) stations. This could be used across the network, both in the Midlands, but also beyond.

The Cross Country operator also needs to consider that it is not only important to provide high quality station environments with the required facilities, it is also important to ensure these are available whilst services are running, and passengers are using the station. There are too often situations where facilities are locked out of use when the station is unstaffed, rendering them useless. This will be a further issue to address with SFOs.

#### **4.11.7 Transport interchange**

Another issue for the Cross Country specification is how to facilitate and support improvements to transport interchange at the stations they call at. This will also need to be addressed in conjunction with other operators and stakeholders, including local authorities. The fund we propose above may also have application in these circumstances.

In general, 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 take<sup>35</sup>. This applies to the whole door-to-door journey. Improving access to stations should therefore drive rail usage and provide additional revenue.

Table 6 below shows that only around two-thirds of Cross Country passengers are satisfied with car parking and that there could be improvements to other access means as well.

	<b>Cross Country</b>	<b>East-West</b>	<b>Manchester Routes</b>	<b>Scotland and NE Routes</b>
Car parking	65	69	68	61
Cycle parking	72	77	74	68
Connections with other train services	77	77	76	78
Connections with other forms of public transport	80	77	85	78

*Table 6- Autumn 2017 NRPS Satisfaction with getting to the station, percentage satisfied*

<sup>35</sup> [Integrated transport – perception and reality](#), January 2010

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. Similarly, car parking charges can add sometimes substantial sums to the price of a journey and can create disincentives to choosing rail.

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, Transport Focus supports the use of Station Travel Plans. Local groups and Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) should be involved in developing proposals to improve station access and Cross Country should also be mindful of what options might benefit their passengers and where they can play a role in supporting these.

Providing information about onward travel options is also important as are facilities for easy transition from the rail journey.

#### **4.11.8 Rolling stock and on board train environment**

*Q.21 Rank your priorities for improvement to carriage layout regional/local trains on Cross Country*

*Q.22 Rank your priorities for improvement to carriage layout for long distance inter-city Cross Country trains*

- a. extra room for luggage*
- b. cycle storage*
- c. more seats*
- d. greater leg room*
- e. more table seats as opposed to 'airline' seats*
- f. seats that align with windows*
- g. more room for comfortable short distance standing*

*Q.23 What other comments or suggestions do you have about the on-board experience?*

The quality of rolling stock and the on-train environment are important to passengers.

We have already noted above the key requirement for more seats. Across all journey purposes and on all Cross Country routes, getting a seat on the train is second on the list of priorities for improvement. Therefore, more seats are a key ask for the next franchise.

The layout preferences will undoubtedly reflect individual circumstances and the purpose of travel. Leisure passengers travelling together may be more likely to desire table seats, whereas business and possibly lone travellers may prefer the

relative privacy of an airline seat. A mix of provision to accommodate differing needs would be sensible with the balance informed by market assessment and passenger feedback.

It is also worth noting that passengers may be commuting on supposedly 'long distance' services and going substantial distances on 'regional' services, and therefore, perhaps it is more difficult to rank absolute improvements on specific trains as Cross Country serves a particularly large and diverse market.

Whilst more room to stand comfortably on busy trains is a low priority, we interpret this as passengers placing the emphasis for improvement on seating provision rather than enforced standing. Where standing occurs then, for safety and practicality, it will be important to passengers in this situation. For this reason, even for passengers travelling without luggage or bicycles, suitable provision for storage of such items will help create a more comfortable train environment as well as facilitate getting on and off the train and moving through the carriage.

We have not specifically asked passengers about greater legroom, nor seats that align with windows. However, given the increasing height as well as width of the population, we surmise that sufficient legroom is a necessary feature for a comfortable journey, particularly those of the length of many on Cross Country. Similarly, it is hard to imagine any passenger, let alone those travelling for leisure, preferring to stare at the laminated side of the train rather than being able to see the view from the window.

	<b>Cross Country</b>	<b>East West</b>	<b>Manchester Routes</b>	<b>Scotland &amp; NE Routes</b>	<b>Commuter</b>	<b>Business</b>	<b>Leisure</b>
Overall satisfaction with Train	82	82	78	83	66	80	86
Upkeep and repair of the train	77	71	78	80	67	76	80
Luggage space	60	60	60	60	62	59	60
Toilets	51	47	53	52	38	46	57
Comfort of seats	69	71	69	68	65	66	71
Level of crowding	67	66	63	70	52	64	73
Cleanliness of inside	78	76	76	79	65	78	81
Reliability of internet connection	32	30	37	29	17	30	38
Availability of power sockets	64	23	68	77	51	66	67

*Table 7- NRPS Spring 2018, Satisfaction with train factors, percentage satisfied*

NRPS scores in Table 7 show that only just over two-thirds of passengers are satisfied with the comfort of seats and level of crowding. Satisfaction with the internet connection is particularly poor and that toilets, luggage space and power sockets all leave substantial room for improvement.

The priorities for improvement shown in Figures 1, 2 and 3 demonstrate that several train factors are of above average importance to passengers and some of these are particularly important to certain travellers. These factors are free Wi-Fi available on the train and high standards of maintenance and cleanliness of the inside of the train and the toilet facilities.

The cleanliness of the inside of the train is the second highest driver of Cross Country passenger satisfaction at 18 per cent, whilst the comfort of the seats and the level of crowding are at 9 and 8 per cent respectively. There are, however, some differences across the building blocks as shown in Figure 6 above.

In our qualitative research with Cross Country passengers they had a number of priorities for the on-board environment, in addition to the primary comment about more seating. Another important factor was a greater presence of Cross Country staff to deal with any on-board issues.

Beyond this, other factors that were regarded as needing improvement were:

- toilets: cleaner and less smelly
- carriage environment: newer and tidier
- seating reservations: better organised and better monitored by staff
- seating layout: more space provided
- tables: larger and better placed
- catering: more options provided at a better value
- personal security: greater staff visibility would impact on this
- luggage storage: larger, better placed storage
- First Class Passengers would appreciate a more 'premium' experience.

#### **4.11.9 Train design**

Ultimately, passenger views on the suitability of particular 'rolling stock' set-ups are likely to be driven by personal circumstances related to the type of journey being made and the likelihood of a seat, or even standing room, being available when they get on.

Transport Focus has conducted several research projects on rolling stock design and, where capacity has proved to be a driving force for change, there are two areas that passengers consistently point to in terms of need for improvement:

- the design of the aisle and gangway running the length of the carriage
- the vestibule area and entrance to the carriage.

Research among Thameslink passengers indicated that on busy peak trains the design should allow passengers who have to stand to do so in complete safety and as comfortably as possible<sup>36</sup>. This could include improved provision of grab handles and rails. Passengers welcomed designs that showed wider gangways and aisles between each coach, as they were felt to greatly enhance freedom of movement along the train and provided more standing space; but only if coupled with something to hold on to when doing so.

These findings were echoed in Merseyrail rolling stock research<sup>37</sup>. Congestion in the vestibule area was identified as an issue. Passengers are reluctant to stand in the aisles, primarily due to a lack of usable grab poles in this part of the carriage. The narrowness of the space also creates the perception that there is a risk of those who move down the aisle becoming trapped there. This creates concerns about being able to get off quickly enough and perhaps missing the intended stop, especially for those making relatively short journeys.

While neither Thameslink or Merseyrail operations are comparable with Cross Country it does show that aspirations for the type and layout of trains differs according to passenger characteristics across various routes. The best way of capturing these is with bespoke research.

Whilst we believe that, wherever possible, trains should be appropriate for the needs of the markets they serve, the practicality of offering specific services for particular passengers seems potentially limited; although there is no doubt that people travelling for various journey purposes can frequently have different and sometimes conflicting needs, as evidenced by views on quiet carriages which remain valued by many but opposed by others. In a similar vein, even allocating carriages for specific purposes is likely to be a challenge, especially at busy times when every passenger wants to embark as swiftly as possible.

However, where there are opportunities to differentiate the travel offering and provide tailored journey options then this could promote a more comfortable and enjoyable experience for passengers. Technological advancements may make this easier in the future. The passenger priorities for improvement simulator allows analysis by multiple criteria and might assist in identifying the requirements of different groups that could form the basis for new approaches.

More detailed research with a cross-section of passengers would provide the opportunity to gather ideas and receive feedback on potential offerings.

*Q.24 Which initiatives would you suggest to try to reduce the disturbance caused by the 'churn' of passengers alighting and boarding at frequent station calls?*

Whilst current rolling stock provides limited opportunities, the possibility of optimising layouts to improve embarking/disembarking, flow throughout carriages, as well as increasing handholds and comfort should be explored if circumstances permit, along

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<sup>36</sup> [Thameslink rolling stock qualitative research](#), September 2008

<sup>37</sup> [Future Merseyrail rolling stock – what passengers want](#), April 2014

with options to make some space more flexible, for example through use of tip-up seats.

As noted above, providing advance information to passengers about the availability of seating within carriages at the station prior to boarding and clear indications about which seats are already reserved, or may be during the journey, could minimise traffic through the coaches as passengers seek a suitable seat. Better arrangements for the storage of luggage may also reduce the volume of movement within carriages and discomfort of those already boarded.

Where any remodelling of carriage layouts is taken forward it should be a fundamental requirement to ensure that passenger opinions are taken on board from the outset. Their views should be sought on the development of potential layouts and as designs emerge these should be tested on passengers who will be using them.

#### **4.12 Engagement and communication**

*Q.25 Are there any improvements to the level of stakeholder engagement by Cross Country that you would like to see and how could stakeholder engagement be improved?*

Effective passenger and stakeholder engagement is central to improving the passenger experience. This is particularly important for gathering intelligence on local aspirations and potential developments, seeking partnership opportunities and for consulting on future proposals. Given the extent of the Cross Country network it will be important that this includes Transport Scotland, Transport for Wales and the number of other devolved transport authorities and groupings.

Our 2015 research with Cross Country passengers identified a lack of awareness of the operator and brand, along with a strong feeling that more could be being done to improve and enhance customer relationship. Respondents suggested more visible branding, higher profile staff and more proactive communication. Loyalty rewards were also desired.

We are aware that the current Direct Award has strengthened the stakeholder team but we don't have evidence about how this is now regarded by passengers, although local people will have experience on which to comment.

It is legitimate for passengers to want a responsive operator – and have access to information relevant to their personal circumstances so a multi-channel engagement strategy should be available, including non-digital methods for those who would prefer these.

More formal stakeholders can play an important role in joint projects e.g. integrated transport, community schemes etc so a structured framework for engagement is important.



We carried out research on passenger understanding of the franchise process and their appetite for engagement with it<sup>38</sup>. It is clear from this work that passengers have unanswered desires to contribute their thoughts, both about priorities for franchise specifications and the performance of the train operator. There is also a desire for greater two-way communication about what each franchise promises – and what is actually achieved.

Our research exploring reactions to the Customer Reports required as part of new franchises found that passengers welcomed this additional channel of engagement<sup>39</sup>. The Customer Report provides a clear statement of promises and addresses passengers' desire to understand what a new franchise will deliver and what they can expect over the months and years to come. This is a positive step towards a train operator building a relationship with passengers and generating trust.

When negotiations with a successful bidder are concluded we recommend that there is a clear public statement about key elements of the franchise, particularly how they address passenger requirements. It is important that the contract announcement does not simply cover the 'good news' and high-profile initiatives but also covers any aspects of the new franchise which may have potential to be detrimental. This would demonstrate an appropriate level of transparency and avoid the negative impact and distrust that can follow when less-good news emerges further down the line.

We also recommend the DfT should publish a redacted version of the franchise agreement and associated documents as soon as possible after the winning bidder is announced, and certainly by the time the new franchise begins.

The new franchisee should demonstrate a clear engagement strategy that accommodates the needs of different passengers. Transport Focus advocates that a wide range of means should be employed to communicate with passengers and wider communities to allow people to access information and provide input in the ways that are most suited to each individual or group. This should not overlook the various needs of passengers with disabilities.

Transport Focus recommends that the franchise specification includes provision for Customer and Communities Investment Schemes (adapted for the non-SFO role that Cross Country has), the production of an initial customer report and a commitment to regular updates, or revisions, at key stages of the franchise. These reports should include information about performance on the factors important to passengers and, particularly where targets are missed or results fall, plans for improvement.

The contract should also require the operator to establish mechanisms that, at the appropriate time, will be used to alert passengers to the prospect of changes as a result of the forthcoming competition when the franchise approaches its end.

As the independent passenger watchdog, Transport Focus will naturally expect a constructive and meaningful relationship with the next operator, from mobilisation

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<sup>38</sup> [Franchising: What Passengers Want](#), August 2017

<sup>39</sup> [What Passengers want from Customer Reports](#), March 2015



and throughout the term of the contract. We will structure engagement to be as effective as possible within the resources we have available.

We require a co-operative, responsive and collaborative approach to working with us in our role as the statutory appeals body.

We also expect a commitment to engage with us around NRPS performance, service delivery and any major disruption events, whether planned or unplanned, as well as responding swiftly to feedback on issues arising across the network. Opportunities to collaborate on research projects would also be welcomed, as would sharing of relevant data.

*Q.26 Does Cross Country provide a sufficient level of support to relevant Community Rail partnerships in your experience?*

*Q.26 Has their support improved in the last year to 18 months?*

Community Rail Partnerships and local stakeholders are best place to answer these questions based on their experience with the current Cross Country operator.

*Q.27 Provide ideas on what more you feel the franchise could do to help the relevant Community Rail partnerships?*

Typically, CRPs are centred around specific stations or branch lines, often in more rural areas and thus we would largely expect that the focus of activity, support and liaison will be centred on, and driven by, the primary operators in the areas Cross Country serves.

However, there may be an opportunity for Cross Country to utilise a new way of working with CRPs that can bring benefit to their passengers, and potentially plug some of the gap that arises because they are not an SFO or have a staff presence beyond the trains. It would also be useful to consider how the CRP concept might be adapted to more populated areas.

Opportunities could include exploring 'Virtual' CRP groupings and support, using engagement through webinars, skype, what's app, twitter groups. An initiative at Birmingham station introduced (but not sustained as far as we are aware) the concept of local volunteers to provide localised advice and information during a key stage of development and change at the station. This suggests there may be scope to adopt different approaches to achieve benefits for passengers and widen the awareness of the Cross Country services and brand, although this should not be to the detriment of formal staff roles where these are the appropriate means of delivering assistance.

Beyond this, Cross Country could provide more traditional forms of support to CRP groups. Resourcing for staffing and marketing, practical encouragement to steering groups and 'supporters of', linking objectives to the wider activities of the franchise (for example promoting Cross Country to tourists and leisure passengers both as a means of travel to destinations and for local trips whilst on holiday) and facilitating

streamlined access to funding and wider partnerships are all ways in which the CRP sector can be assisted to engage and deliver more within local communities.

Providing regular opportunities for interaction and sharing of good practice amongst CRP groups also fosters further enthusiasm and encouragement, as do local, regional and national awards schemes.

A genuine commitment to partnership working, including joint activity with local TOCs may bring benefits to passengers, communities and the operator alike. This needs to recognise the challenges of promoting rail and the fundamental needs for appropriate frequency and timing of services and reliable performance.

The phasing of CRP activities, particularly schemes to promote increased ridership, need to reflect the potential to deliver dependable services and provide an attractive option to new, as well as existing, passengers. CRPs could be helped to provide 'taster tickets' or other incentives to trial/return to rail services where there have been periods of disruption or upheaval, especially when this has been widely and negatively covered.

Where there is scope CRPs might be assisted to explore more ambitious business models to create commercial conditions in a way that enables them to prosper and to deliver benefits to the regional economy.

The 2015 report on the Value of Community Rail Partnerships shows that they can be extremely successful<sup>40</sup>. Focusing on the regional and local level, results can be seen in increased footfall at stations along CRP lines. The report goes on to show that the costs of running CRPs are less than the value of additional revenues earned by their lines and they therefore present a commercial case.

We welcome the emphasis in franchising on supporting and working with CRPs. Not only is it important that funding and dedicated staff are written into franchise bids, but also, perhaps just as important is building working with CRPs into rail industry managerial structures. Proper local engagement requires not only finance, but also senior management buy-in and a culture in favour of working with local groups.

*Q.28 Do you have any other views on how the future Cross Country franchise could be improved that have not been captured in the questions above?*

#### **4.12.1 Lost property**

Every year passengers lose a huge number of items on the rail network. Many of those passengers never manage to locate the items, even if they have been handed in.

From our preliminary investigation into this subject, we have concluded that some operators' systems are not efficient or consistently effective in managing lost property. It is important that bidders develop systems that will:

- register and track an item of lost property from the point it comes into their possession and allow it to be open to enquiry within 24 hours

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<sup>40</sup> [Value of Community Rail Partnerships, Association of Community Rail Partnerships](#), January 2015

- provide secure storage from the point an item is handed in at the station until its arrival at the location where it will be held
- register the item with an accurate description including any distinguishing marks, brands or serial numbers
- make it simple for the passenger to try and locate items – at minimum, operators should provide a phone number and an online service with a reasonable response time advertised and stuck to
- re-check the register on a regular basis and inform the passenger promptly by their preferred method of contact if their item is located.

Transport Focus also recommends that bidders:

- Cap any charges to reunite the passenger with their item at a reasonable level.
- Actively seek to increase the number of items repatriated to their owner.
- Define a process for dealing with ‘live incidents’ in which a passenger reports that they have left an item on a train that is about to depart.
- Ensure the system can work with British Transport Police to identify any items held by the operator that have been reported as stolen.
- Monitor and measure the system to ensure it is effective in meeting the above objectives.
- Actively work towards the establishment of a national lost property system and, if established, participate in the scheme. This could be either a national system or the ability to ensure that local schemes can ‘talk’ to other lost property systems.

#### **4.13 Working with Network Rail**

The operator and Network Rail share responsibility for delivering day-to-day services that meet the needs of passengers, especially in relation to punctuality and reliability. Delivering the infrastructure upgrades and maintaining the railway also requires close working and co-operation, particularly around the scheduling of engineering works, planning possessions and ensuring all necessary information is available in a timely fashion to passengers. There is also a need for liaison on the development of future timetables to optimise travel opportunities across the network. Network Rail’s perspective on proposals arising from any future competition must also be considered to ensure realistic expectations about their deliverability.

Cross Country, operating across seven of eight Network Rail routes, is in a singular position and works primarily with the Freight and National Passenger Operations (FNPO) team, rather than specific routes. However, regardless of how the relationship is managed, it is still vital that the needs of the TOC and its passengers are represented both at everyday service delivery levels and in the planning for the future. How this relationship is developed and improved within the context of increasing route devolution and the scope for involvement in the various Route Supervisory Boards needs to be carefully considered.

#### **4.14 Passenger trust in the rail industry**

In 2014 Transport Focus carried out a study exploring passengers' relationship with the rail industry<sup>41</sup>. The main finding is that to improve passengers' trust in the rail industry, train companies not only need to get the basic service right day-to-day, they need to put effort into building long-term relationships with their passengers.

Trust consists of three elements: service, relationship and judgement. Service elements include day-to-day issues such as punctuality, reliability, helpfulness of staff and value for money. They are the foundations for building passengers' trust.

It is important to focus on relationship factors to build passenger trust once the service elements are in place. Communicating directly and proactively with passengers goes down well with them. The research identified particular problem areas for communication, including confusion over ticketing options and when there are delays or cancellations. Communicating and acting honestly, with integrity and transparency, and seeking to build long-term relationships with passengers can inspire trust.

Many train companies score well on the third trust element – judgement. They are seen to have high principles, a good reputation and show leadership. However, judgement does not contribute as much to trust as service and relationship.

One way is through high quality communication. Passengers should feel that train companies are 'on their side'.

#### **4.15 Culture, customer service, reward and recognition**

The organisational culture must recognise that passengers are the very reason the organisation exists, ensuring that passengers are valued and appreciated at every level of the operation. This is especially true with a franchise like Cross Country, where a high proportion of customers are leisure passengers who may have discretion over the frequency of travel and the means to make journeys. These passengers are important to the business, and should be valued as such.

This approach needs to be driven from the top to achieve exemplary staff behaviour among a workforce that is genuinely engaged and empowered. The ethos must be that passenger interests are central to the decisions and actions of the business. There should be a genuine and consistent demonstration of care for whether a passenger returns to travel again.

We believe that empowering frontline staff to proactively address passenger needs and giving them the authority and tools to respond to issues where and when they arise, will do much to improve perceptions of customer service.

The focus for good customer service should not solely be on staff at stations and on trains. Customer service is about every aspect of interaction the passenger has with the operator. Provision of adequate journey-planning tools, a useful, easy-to-use website and a helpful, knowledgeable contact centre are all vital to the overall

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<sup>41</sup>[\*Passengers' relationship with the rail industry\*](#), August 2014

experience. If a customer has cause to make a complaint then how it is handled can have a substantial impact on overall impressions of customer service.

Passengers' experiences on rail are clearly also influenced by the services they experience in the wider aspects of their lives. Our work on trust identified a hierarchy of need. The base level relates to delivery of the core service and is fundamental for building any degree of trust. Beyond this, the middle tier emphasises communication and customer service, while the higher levels rely on a more individualised experience and a sense of being valued.

The theme of recognition and reward has become increasingly evident in our work with passengers. There is a real sense that they wish to be known as individuals, with information and contact personalised to their own requirements and relevant to the interactions they have with the operator. In a world where loyalty schemes and benefits linked to base purchases are common currency, passengers expect similar from their experience on rail.

The franchise specification should encourage the next operator to demonstrate how they will rise to the challenge of delivering improved customer service and build strong, positive and trusting relationships with passengers.

#### **4.16 Performance targets**

It is important that there are a range of measures in place to assess the performance of the franchise. Given the very high significance of these factors to passengers, the specification must prioritise traditional, 'hard' performance targets covering punctuality, reliability and crowding.

##### **4.16.1 Punctuality**

Punctuality data provided only at the overall operator level can easily mask significant differences between routes and times of day. Transport Focus supports the provision of performance data (PPM, 'on time'/'right time', and cancellations) in a fully granular way, allowing data to be aggregated as required. This would allow those who use, for example, only the 07:19 and 17:20 service to see the performance of those trains – because that is all that matters to them.

The existing measure (PPM) for Cross Country allows a five or ten-minute leeway<sup>42</sup> on late arrival and is only measured at the train's destination station; a train is not late until it exceeds this allowance. However, we know from our research exploring passenger perspectives on train punctuality that a delay can have an effect on passengers before that. We advocate introducing new measure based on right-time arrival, measured ideally at every station along the route, but at least at key points. Recent steps by the industry towards publication of right-time data on particular trains make this increasingly feasible and more likely to be the measure on which performance is publicly judged.

Within the new franchise contract, we think there should be:

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<sup>42</sup> Five minutes for regional trains and ten for long distance.

- Targets to improve PPM, ‘on time’/‘right time’ and cancellations across all routes and to report these at a disaggregated level. Reliance on service group averages, let alone a whole TOC average, risks exposing passengers on individual routes to poor performance.
- Targets for PPM and ‘on time’/‘right time’ at key intermediate stations in addition to at the train destinations and a commitment to report these regularly.
- A requirement to make historic train performance information easy to obtain and understand. Passengers should be able to view the performance of individual trains they catch (or a group of trains) between the stations they use. When journey planning, the performance record of individual trains should be one of the elements presented to assist passenger decision-making.
- A requirement to report publicly the number of trains each period that appear in the public timetable but are excluded from the ‘plan of the day’ and therefore do not count officially as cancellations. The fact that any cancellation – if declared by 10pm the day before – does not appear in performance statistics fuels many passengers’ underlying suspicion and mistrust of the industry. Being open about what is going on would help.

#### **4.16.2 Crowding**

There is generally very little data in the public domain about crowding. This is another fundamental aspect of a passenger’s journey and an area where greater transparency can generate improvements for passengers. It is a key priority for improvement for Cross Country passengers.

The future operator must be required to adopt and publish appropriate crowding measures that are more representative of individual passenger’s experiences across the range of routes and services. Published data should make the crowding levels on different services easily comparable so that decisions about allocation of resources can be scrutinised. NRPS 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.

Technological solutions should also be adopted. Crowding can now be monitored in real time and information systems and apps are becoming available to indicate where available seats on trains are located.

A traffic-light system of information should be made available to passengers to help them understand the likelihood of getting a seat, or even getting onto, a particular train. This allows passengers who have more flexibility to make an informed choice about their travel options. Even where there are more defined patterns of travel, some passengers may appreciate the option of being able to make small adjustments or trade-offs to have a more comfortable journey.

Monitoring and publishing the extent and frequency of short-formations and cancellations should also be a requirement.

#### **4.16.3 National Rail Passenger Survey**

We have long advocated more use of quality-focused targets within the 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.

The NRPS is ideally suited to capture information that directly reflects the customer perspective. NRPS has a large sample size, currently covering over 60,000 rail passengers nationally in two waves each year, providing for a fair assessment of measures across identified franchise building blocks. The sampling plan ensures that it is representative of day of travel, journey purpose (commuter, business and leisure), and, of course, by a range of demographic attributes (age, sex, ethnicity and so on).

We may also explore the scope for boosting sample sizes in particular areas, in line with practice in some other transport authority areas. In some circumstances it may be appropriate to consider increasing the frequency of surveys.

We recommend bespoke NRPS targets should be established on each of the franchise building blocks to measure passenger satisfaction with station, train and customer service attributes. Doing so simply at a global level risks masking the poorer performing areas.

Existing levels of satisfaction should be the starting point for establishing NRPS targets which should generally become more stretching as the franchise progresses and also increase to reflect the outcomes delivered by investment (for example in capacity improvements). An annual assessment of the combined spring and autumn results would provide a fair measure of the overall passenger satisfaction within each given year. We would encourage DfT to consider targeting improvements to satisfaction over the life of the franchise, rather than allowing bidders to focus solely on the early years.

In line with existing DfT policy, bidders for new franchises should be asked to submit bids that include plans on how they will improve NRPS scores.

#### **4.16.4 Key Performance Indicators**

The franchise specification should require operators to conduct KPI assessments 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, Passenger Assist, complaints handling, and the level of appeals to Transport Focus should also be measured and reported, as should the level of adherence to T-12. All assessments should be conducted regularly to provide ongoing management information as well as a basis for regular reviews based on collated information. Cross Country should also take a keen interest in compliance with Schedule 17 ticket office opening times at the stations where it calls.

#### **4.16.5 Transparency and monitoring service quality**

We recommend a transparent approach to making information about all aspects of the franchise available in the public domain.

Specifications should set out clear expectations for publication of franchise performance in all areas of interest to passengers, particularly those relating to service quality. This should include commitments to disaggregation of data which will also make it easier for passengers to find information that is more relevant to the journeys they make and meaningful to them. Bidders should be encouraged to demonstrate how they will take steps to personalise information to make it most relevant to passengers

Transparency will promote greater accountability by making clear to rail passengers, staff, management and other parties how key aspects of the rail service are performing at different places and at different times. The provision of detailed information will enable rail passengers and others to hold the train company to account and to ask what is being done to improve services in return for the fares paid.

Good management should not feel threatened by this. Indeed, the availability of accurate data may actually help them as a particularly bad journey can linger in the memory and distort passengers' perceptions. Accurate, relevant data can help challenge these negative perceptions and is also a vital management tool.

The ultimate measure of whether a train company is performing well is whether passengers are happy with the quality of service provided. This is good from a commercial perspective as well as a customer service one, as evidenced by the conclusions on passenger demand forecasting which suggest that service quality does have an impact on levels of demand.

Specifications for new franchises must stretch the successful bidder to take passenger satisfaction to higher levels. This should apply both for the franchise as a whole and at a building-block level. The goal should be to achieve greater consistency of performance across the component parts of each franchise and to drive satisfaction on all aspects of service delivery upwards, to bring the whole operation up to the achievements of the best comparators and to meet the reasonable expectations of passengers.

Targets, measurements, monitoring and transparent reporting are fundamental to delivering improvements to service quality. The balance between input and output measures is a fine one and Transport Focus recognises the value of both provided that they are based on passengers' priorities and needs. We strongly support the principle of monitoring and improving service quality through a combination of NRPS results and periodic reviews of train operating company Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

Passenger responses to the consultation should be used to further inform the targets and measures that go into the franchise specification. Financial penalty regimes



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

## **5 Further information**

For further information about this response to the Cross Country franchise consultation, please contact:

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Further details of all our publications exploring passenger perspectives on a range of issues can be found on the Transport Focus website ([www.transportfocus.org.uk](http://www.transportfocus.org.uk)).

For specific information about franchising please see:

<https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/key-issues/franchising/>

## 6 Appendices

### Appendix 1 NRPS building block definitions

#### A1.1 Cross Country NRPS building blocks

##### **Cross Country: East – West**

Journeys on routes Birmingham – Leicester, Birmingham – Cambridge and Stansted Airport, and Nottingham/Derby – Bristol/Cardiff.

##### **Cross Country: North-South Manchester**

Journeys on route Manchester to/from the South West and South Coast.

##### **Cross Country: North-South Scotland & North East**

Journeys on route Scotland/North East England to/from the South West/South Coast.

#### A1.2 NRPS typology groups and comparator services

##### **Interurban Typology:**

##### **Cross Country East-West**

Arriva Trains Wales - Inter Urban

Greater Anglia - Intercity

Northern - East

ScotRail - Interurban

South West Trains - Longer distance

TransPennine Express - North West

TransPennine Express - South

West Midlands Trains - West Coast

##### **Long Distance Typology:**

##### **Cross Country - North - South Manchester**

##### **Cross Country - North - South Scotland & North East**

Grand Central - London - Bradford

Grand Central - London - Sunderland

East Midlands Trains - Liverpool - Norwich

Hull Trains

TransPennine Express - North

Virgin Trains - London - Birmingham - Scotland

Virgin Trains East Coast - London - Scotland

### Appendix 2 NRPS satisfaction scores, Spring 2018, percentage satisfied

Key: NB Figures are rounded but comparisons made on raw data

Score is 5 per cent, or more, lower than comparator average

Score is 5 per cent, or more, higher than comparator average

## A2.1 Cross Country compared to Long Distance Sector

	Cross Country	Long- Distance	TOC Index <sup>43</sup>
<b>Overall satisfaction</b>	86	87	99
<b>STATION FACILITIES</b>			
Overall satisfaction with the station	86	86	101
Ticket buying facilities	88	87	101
Provision of information about train times/platforms	90	91	99
Upkeep/repair of the station buildings/platforms	80	80	100
Cleanliness	83	83	101
Toilet facilities at the station	65	60	108
Attitudes and helpfulness of the staff	85	84	101
Connections with other forms of public transport	80	83	97
Facilities for car parking	65	61	107
Facilities for bicycle parking	72	71	102
Overall environment	81	80	101
Your personal security whilst using the station	81	80	102
Availability of staff at the station	77	76	101
Shelter facilities	76	74	102
Availability of seating	65	59	111
How request to station staff was handled	91	89	102
Choice of shops/eating/drinking facilities available	66	63	105
Availability of Wi-Fi	45	46	96
<b>TRAIN FACILITIES</b>			
Overall satisfaction with the train	82	84	97
Frequency of the trains on that route	78	84	94
Punctuality/reliability (i.e. the train arriving/departing on time)	83	81	102
Length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed)	87	89	98
Connections with other train services	77	80	97
Value for money of the price of your ticket	50	55	91
Upkeep and repair of the train	77	81	95
Provision of information during the journey	75	79	96
Helpfulness and attitude of staff on train	81	82	99
Space for luggage	60	64	94
Toilet facilities	51	57	89
Comfort of the seats	69	75	92
Step or gap between the train and the platform	63	68	94
Your personal security on board	80	83	97
Cleanliness of the inside	78	82	94
Cleanliness of the outside	73	77	95
Availability of staff on the train	64	65	97
How well train company deals with delays	46	55	85
Usefulness of information about delay	56	58	98
Level of crowding	67	73	92
Reliability of Internet connection	32	37	86
Availability of power sockets	64	60	105

<sup>43</sup> TOC Index shows performance of TOC against the sector as a percentage (e.g. if TOC score is equal to sector score the TOC Index would be 100 per cent. If it is 102 per cent the performance is better).

## A2.2 Manchester Routes, Scotland and North East Routes, compared with Long Distance typology average and the Best in Class

	Manchester Routes	Scotland and NE Routes	Long Distance	Best in Class
<b>Overall satisfaction</b>	81	90	86	100
<b>STATION FACILITIES</b>				
Overall satisfaction with the station	85	88	86	89
Ticket buying facilities	89	88	87	89
Provision of information about train times/platforms	89	91	91	93
Upkeep/repair of the station buildings/platforms	80	81	80	86
Cleanliness	83	85	83	87
Toilet facilities at the station	59	68	60	68
Attitudes and helpfulness of the staff	83	87	84	88
Connections with other forms of public transport	85	78	82	90
Facilities for car parking	68	61	60	69
Overall environment	79	83	81	84
Your personal security whilst using the station	80	81	81	82
Availability of staff at the station	77	79	77	81
Shelter facilities	72	75	73	81
Availability of seating	60	66	61	66
How request to station staff was handled	91	93	90	100
Choice of shops/eating/drinking facilities available	67	68	65	70
Availability of Wi-Fi	46	48	45	57
<b>TRAIN FACILITIES</b>				
Overall satisfaction with the train	78	83	83	97
Frequency of the trains on that route	80	80	81	87
Punctuality/reliability (i.e. the train arriving/departing on time)	79	83	79	96
Length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed)	86	86	86	94
Connections with other train services	76	78	77	97
Value for money of the price of your ticket	49	50	54	78
Upkeep and repair of the train	78	80	82	88
Provision of information during the journey	74	78	78	94
Helpfulness and attitude of staff on train	81	83	83	96
Space for luggage	60	60	61	88
Toilet facilities	53	52	58	72
Comfort of the seats	69	68	74	89
Step or gap between the train and the platform	66	61	67	79
Your personal security on board	77	82	82	93
Cleanliness of the inside	76	79	83	96
Cleanliness of the outside	74	73	77	88
Availability of staff on the train	61	70	68	90
How well train company deals with delays	43	47	51	64
Level of crowding	63	70	71	93
Reliability of Internet connection	37	29	38	62
Availability of power sockets	68	77	68	84

### A2.3 East-West Route compared to Interurban typology and Best in Class

	East-West Route	Interurban	Best in Class
<b>Overall satisfaction</b>	87	82	89
<b>STATION FACILITIES</b>			
Overall satisfaction with the station	84	81	85
Ticket buying facilities	85	84	87
Provision of information about train times/platforms	90	88	94
Upkeep/repair of the station buildings/platforms	79	74	82
Cleanliness	81	77	86
Toilet facilities at the station	66	48	72
Attitudes and helpfulness of the staff	85	81	92
Connections with other forms of public transport	77	79	87
Facilities for car parking	69	56	66
Overall environment	81	77	84
Your personal security whilst using the station	82	75	83
Availability of staff at the station	72	71	82
Shelter facilities	82	74	81
Availability of seating	68	53	70
How request to station staff was handled	87	88	98
Choice of shops/eating/drinking facilities available	61	60	72
Availability of Wi-Fi	36	39	56
<b>TRAIN FACILITIES</b>			
Overall satisfaction with the train	82	76	83
Frequency of the trains on that route	74	78	86
Punctuality/reliability (i.e. the train arriving/departing on time)	87	79	86
Length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed)	90	84	89
Connections with other train services	77	77	88
Value for money of the price of your ticket	52	49	66
Upkeep and repair of the train	71	70	91
Provision of information during the journey	72	75	86
Helpfulness and attitude of staff on train	74	80	90
Space for luggage	60	63	79
Toilet facilities	47	48	66
Comfort of the seats	71	64	84
Step or gap between the train and the platform	64	64	73
Your personal security on board	79	80	89
Cleanliness of the inside	76	74	85
Cleanliness of the outside	74	70	84
Availability of staff on the train	53	62	72
How well train company deals with delays	50	42	58
Level of crowding	66	72	81
Reliability of Internet connection	30	33	47
Availability of power sockets	23	28	85

## A2.4 Passenger satisfaction for Cross Country, split by journey type

	Cross Country	Commuter	Business	Leisure
<b>Overall satisfaction with the journey</b>	86	70	85	92
<b>STATION FACILITIES</b>				
Overall satisfaction with the station	86	83	85	87
Ticket buying facilities	88	83	87	89
Provision of information about train times/platforms	90	89	90	91
Upkeep/repair of the station buildings/platforms	80	73	80	82
Cleanliness	83	78	85	84
Toilet facilities at the station	65	61	58	70
Attitudes and helpfulness of the staff	85	82	82	88
Connections with other forms of public transport	80	74	80	81
Facilities for car parking	65	54	71	66
Facilities for bicycle parking	72	76	78	68
Overall environment	81	79	79	83
Your personal security whilst using the station	81	82	77	83
Availability of staff at the station	77	80	74	77
Shelter facilities	76	70	75	78
Availability of seating	65	56	63	69
How request to station staff was handled	91	88	87	93
Choice of shops/eating/drinking facilities available	66	62	65	68
Availability of Wi-Fi	45	34	48	48
<b>TRAIN FACILITIES</b>				
Overall satisfaction with the train	82	66	80	86
Frequency of the trains on that route	78	67	76	83
Punctuality/reliability (i.e. the train arriving/departing on time)	83	61	82	89
Length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed)	87	81	82	91
Connections with other train services	77	69	74	81
Value for money of the price of your ticket	50	25	43	60
Upkeep and repair of the train	77	67	76	80
Provision of information during the journey	75	65	73	79
Helpfulness and attitude of staff on train	81	72	84	82
Space for luggage	60	62	59	60
Toilet facilities	51	38	46	57
Comfort of the seats	69	65	66	71
Step or gap between the train and the platform	63	58	67	63
Your personal security on board	80	75	82	81
Cleanliness of the inside	78	65	78	81
Cleanliness of the outside	73	64	76	75
Availability of staff on the train	64	50	60	69
How well train company deals with delays	46	33	37	58
Usefulness of information about delay	56	40	48	69
Level of crowding	67	52	64	73
Reliability of Internet connection	32	17	30	38
Availability of power sockets	64	51	66	67

### Appendix 3 Passenger priorities for station improvements

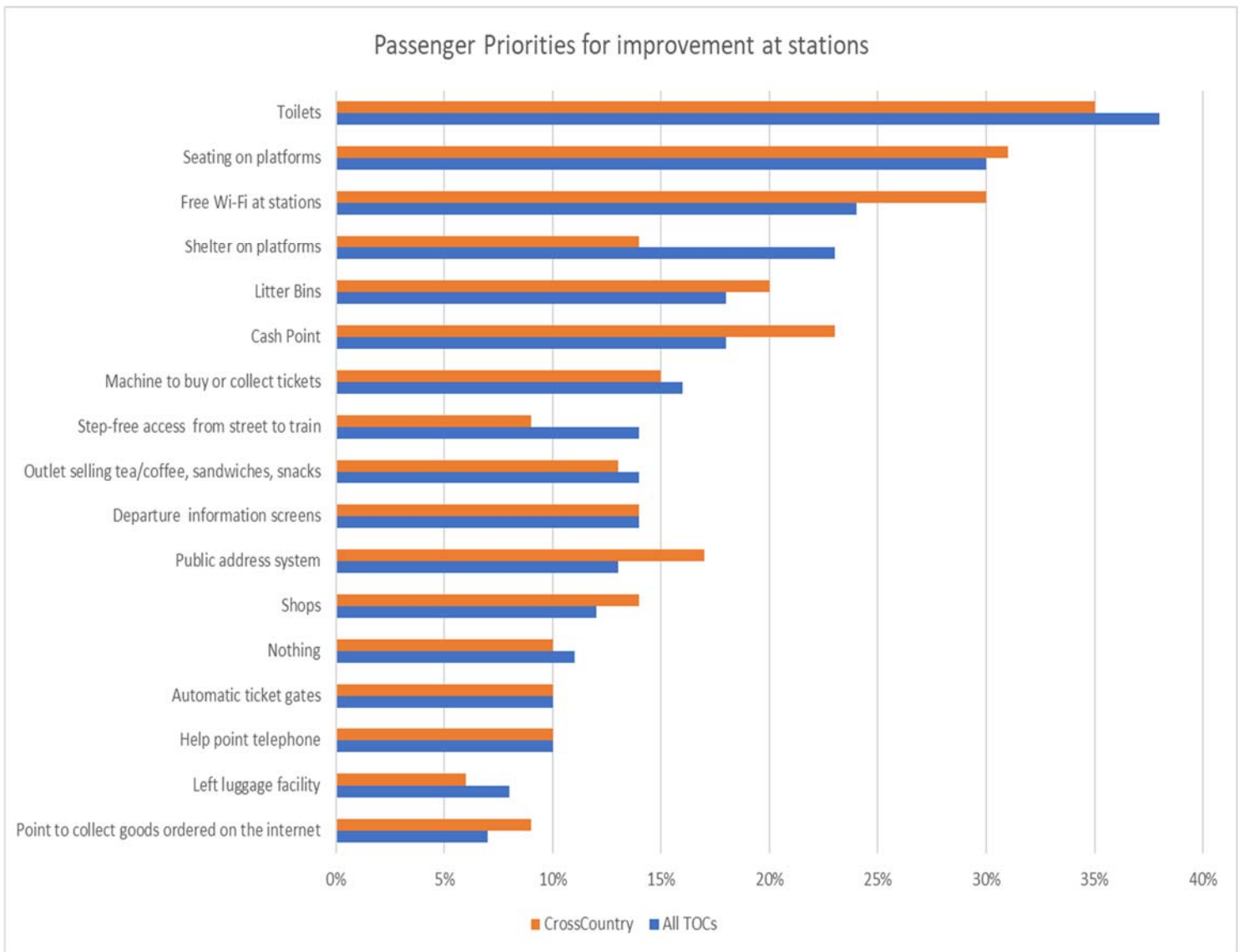


Figure 10- Passenger Priorities for improvement at stations

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