



Managing user expectations when responding to major disruptions

Guy Dangerfield
Head of Strategy
7 May 2019

We are the independent consumer watchdog

Transport Focus represents the interests of:

- Rail passengers in Great Britain
- Bus, coach and tram users across England outside London
- All users of England's motorways and major 'A' roads (the Strategic Road Network)



We present users' priorities and experiences ... we are pro consumer

We carry out robust research and publish all our work

We aim to be useful and to make a difference through our policy recommendations and influencing

Transport Focus research



Reacting to extreme weather on the railways

July 2015

National Task Force

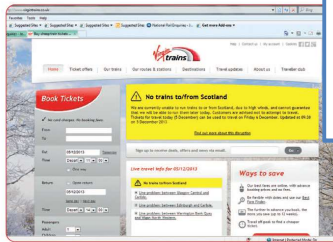
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Incidents and roadworks

A road user perspective
November 2016

transportfocus



Passenger information when trains are disrupted

Research report
May 2014

Passengerfocus



Train punctuality: the passenger perspective

November 2015

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Measuring performance of England's strategic roads: what users want

March 2017

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What do transport users want?

The **starting point** is:

- Punctual services
- Reliable journey times

And where that is a **problem**:

- Timely, accurate, useful information
- Get back to normal as quickly as possible



So what should be done?

Strive relentlessly to have **fewer disruptions ...**









- Infrastructure must break less often
- Road vehicles must crash less often
- Trains, buses, road vehicles must break down less often

Get slicker at **sorting out** the problem:

- Fix the problem fast
- Worry about the users while you do it

Tell people **what's going on!**

- Honesty, plain English
- Help me avoid the problem in the first place
- I'm caught up in it, tell me what I need to do

Gatwick Express	Good service	✓	Follow us on Twitter		▼
Grand Central	Good service	✓	Follow us on Twitter		▼
Great Northern	Good service	✓	Follow us on Twitter		▼
Great Western Railway	Good service	✓	Follow us on Twitter		▼
Greater Anglia	Good service	✓	Follow us on Twitter		▼
Heathrow Express	Good service	✓	Follow us on Twitter		▼
Hull Trains	Good service	✓	Follow us on Twitter		▼
Island Line	Good service	✓	Follow us on Twitter		▼



Have fewer disruptions

- Transport users:
 - Want things to work all the time
 - And often only just accept that laws of physics sometime intervene
- Very positive that rail Control Period 6 has an uplift in expenditure on infrastructure renewal – should help
- The railway – infrastructure and trains – has to withstand the weather more effectively
 - Snow and ice
 - High winds
 - Heavy rain
 - High temperatures
- On road, a key cause of disruption is crashes – a resilient road network keeps traffic moving
 - Other drivers' behaviour / enforcement
 - Flooding
 - Gritting

23 Aug 2018

Southeastern and Network Rail announce action plan following independent report into Lewisham train disruption



Weather – how resilient is good enough?

- Safety is very important to transport users
- But so is getting where you want to go
- Giving it a go versus giving up
- Trying today causing disruption tomorrow

“I’m furious. They have cancelled trains after 10pm with no regard for people who work late. There are no trains, no bus replacements and there is no snow. I don’t pay £3,000 a year for a season ticket for this non-service. They don’t seem to realise people have to go to work and cancelling trains like this leaves people stranded.”

express.co.uk, 27 February 2018

Greater Anglia @greateranglia · 26 Feb 2018
⚠️ UPDATE ⚠️ Severe Weather Warning Information - Please find last services for this evening here - [greateranglia.co.uk/travel-informa...](https://greateranglia.co.uk/travel-information) KB

🗨️ 32 🔄 3 ❤️ 10 ✉️

David shiers
@shiers_david

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Replying to @greateranglia

Wickford station car park at 06:00 not even enough snow for a snowball and you can't run a train, once again you fail greater anglia



5:55 AM - 27 Feb 2018

Sorting the problem – looking after people!

- Transport users ‘get’ that stuff goes wrong
- But they want a competent, professional response
- Act joined up
 - different parts of the railway
 - Highways England and emergency services

- Fix the problem, but look after the people affected
- Tendency to focus on mending the hole, not the chaos the hole is causing
- Welfare and duty of care – including of disabled transport users



“Do they go to some vehicles quicker than they go to others? Would they prioritise a disabled person’s vehicle over another one?”

Road user with a physical disability

Tell people what's going on!





- Run-of-the-mill disruption; a severe event; extreme weather – **communication** is key, whatever the mode
- “Help me avoid the problem in the first place” – warn transport users, help them make a choice not to travel, or to go a different way
- Once something has gone wrong
 - What’s happened?
 - How long am I stuck?
 - Anything I can do instead?
- Built trust
 - Honest
 - Accurate
 - Useful
 - Plain English “normal not formal”

M6 CLOSED AT J3

Tell people what's going on!

- May 2018 timetable crisis
- Clearly, it should not have happened
- Glaister Review
- Somebody needs to be in charge
- Information!
 - Honest
 - Accurate
 - Useful
 - Plain English “normal not formal”
- Govia Thameslink License breach



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11 July 2018

Dear Marcus

20 May timetable crisis: impact on passengers

Thank you for seeking input from Transport Focus to the 'impact on passengers' strand of the Glaister Inquiry into the 20 May timetable crisis. You have asked that, as far as is practicable, we concentrate on the immediate post-20 May period. We will be writing separately in response to Daniel Brown's letter about the crisis as a whole.

There are essentially three points to make about impact on passengers:

- The service was not the improvement passengers were promised; it was not what they had paid for
- The service was unpredictable; for many passengers it was a lottery with practical and emotional impacts
- The crisis has affected people's work life and their home life; for example, being late for work, missing appointments and not getting home before children go to bed.

Appendix A gives a selection of comments Transport Focus has received from passengers talking about how they were impacted. However this one sums up a number of the themes:

"18/06/18 Welwyn Garden City to Kings Cross: Train was delayed yet again so late into work and had to make the time up this evening which meant I missed picking my children up on time."

It is reasonable to assume that the crisis has eroded trust and consumer confidence in the railway, potentially more widely than the directly-affected train companies. We know from the National Rail

Three things

- **Have fewer disruptions**
- **Sort out problems fast**
(and worry about the users while you do it)
- **Tell people what's going on!**