



Passenger Focus response to Network Rail's North West Route Utilisation Strategy Draft for Consultation

January 2007

Passenger Focus is the independent national rail consumer watchdog. It is an executive non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Transport.

Our mission is to get the best deal for Britain's rail passengers. We have two main aims: to influence both long and short term decisions and issues that affect passengers; and to help passengers through advice, advocacy and empowerment.

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

Our vision is to ensure that the rail industry and Government are always

‘putting rail passengers first’

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This will be achieved through our mission of

‘getting the best deal for passengers’

Contents

	Page
1. Executive summary	3
2. Introduction	5
3. Methodology	7
4. Detailed response	9

Appendices:

- A.** Passenger Focus research on North West routes – copy of questionnaire
- B.** List of stakeholders surveyed by Passenger Focus
- C.** Explanation of Gap Analysis techniques used in research

1. Executive Summary

North West rail passengers have recognised the progress that has been made by the industry to ensure that more trains are turning up on time. This is reflected in the satisfaction ratings that passengers tell Passenger Focus as part of the National Passenger Survey. In the Spring 2006 survey, 79% of passengers using Northern Rail, which is the major provider of rail services in this area, were satisfied with the punctuality and reliability of their rail service. This has probably played a part in encouraging record numbers of passengers to use the region's railway in recent years. This level of faith and commitment to local rail services by passengers has also supported the boom in economic growth which has seen significant residential and business development across much of the region.

To inform our response to this consultation we drew on research with nearly 15,500 passengers about their train journey and general experience of the railway in the North West. We know that many hundreds of passengers every day in this region face the prospect of a crowded journey, for example on the Bolton corridor, passengers tell us that 14% are rarely or never able to get a seat on their journey. More alarmingly, 9% of commuters on this same busy route tell us that they are usually or always unable to board their train because it so overcrowded.

Plans to introduce longer and more frequent trains are welcome news for passengers on these proposed routes. There are also some welcome plans to improve the existing services and links within the key economic centres in the region between Manchester, Liverpool and Central Lancashire. The growth in the number of air passengers wanting to travel to the region's airports at Manchester, Liverpool and Blackpool is also recognised with proposals to build a much needed third platform at Manchester International Airport and generally improve services to all three airports.

There are well-intended plans to improve the connections across areas of Manchester between the rail network and existing Metrolink services. There is scope for train companies and Metrolink to better advertise the existing connections through promotion campaigns and incentive packages on fares and tickets for passengers. However, almost half (49%) of the passengers we spoke to on two of the routes proposed as key rail/Metrolink interchanges, tell us that a major barrier for transferring to the Metrolink is that the destination of their existing train service is actually more convenient. Passengers also tell us that they need better information about rail and Metrolink connections. Until transport planners and the funding bodies create attractive and accessible public transport links, passengers are likely to stick with what they know best, however difficult that journey may be at times.

There is also considerable concern about the proposals to move some services into Manchester Victoria from Piccadilly station. Our research found that eight out of ten passengers on the Marple - Manchester route prefer Piccadilly over Victoria as their origin or destination station. We also know that passengers from North Wales value the onward connections from Piccadilly. There is also a vital link for thousands of passengers from North Wales through to Manchester Airport which would mean a more expensive and inconvenient journey across Manchester from Victoria to connect at Piccadilly if this proposal went ahead. However we recognise the benefit such a connection to/from North Wales and Chester would bring for passengers who currently travel into Victoria on the Calder Valley and Stalybridge corridors.

The RUS area has approximately only one quarter of the station car parking spaces that exist in the West Midlands. This inadequate lack of parking spaces can act as a real barrier for many passengers wishing to use their local station. This problem does not just affect passengers during the peak but also throughout the rest of the day. On some corridors up to 20% of passengers tell us that they can rarely park their car at their local station between 10am and 1pm. On many routes there are empty seats on trains during the day and although train companies are keen to promote their off-peak services to potential passengers, there is limited hope for success if car parking is also not addressed.

We welcome the plans for developments at some stations. Facilities for passengers at stations, especially those smaller inner city and many rural stations in the North West, have to be improved. Years of neglect at some of these stations have left them in a very poor state. Passengers tell us that they value a staffed presence, adequate car parking, access to ticket buying facilities, “real-time” journey information, shelter from the elements plus lighting and CCTV to help improve personal security at and around stations. While this consultation does not highlight these factors specifically as an area for development in the final strategy, we hope that passengers are actively included in any plans to develop these stations to make sure that facilities actually meet their needs.

Passenger Focus is concerned that Network Rail has based this RUS on data which does not provide a complete picture of how many passengers actually travel on the region’s rail services and where they journey to and from. Predictions for future passenger growth are equally difficult to accurately assess. The picture is incomplete due to the fact that hundreds of passenger journeys every day across the region are not counted because tickets are not sold and fares go uncollected which contributes to a significant gap in the data needed to forecast current and future passenger travel.

The RUS objective is defined by the Office of Rail Regulation as *“the effective and efficient use and development of the capacity available, consistent with funding that is, or is reasonable likely to become, available during the period of the RUS and with the licence holder’s performance of the duty”*.

Passenger Focus understands that the Route Utilisation Strategy process is about getting the most out of what the existing rail network can offer passengers with fairly limited opportunities for large-scale investment. So for those passengers who tell us about their daily experiences and problems, it is likely to be disappointing news that this draft strategy does not commit to the kind of grand schemes and investment they may feel is needed to provide more new trains, new services and better station facilities. The industry and funding bodies need to think hard and act swiftly to match passenger expectations of the railway and to satisfy the objectives set out in the North West Regional Planning Assessment for the railway.

2. Introduction

Passenger Focus welcomes the opportunity to respond to the North West RUS Draft for Consultation and broadly supports the objectives behind the RUS process. We recognise the difficult job that the Network Rail Route Planning Team has faced in preparing the series of options outlined in the Consultation Document against a backdrop of questionable passenger count data and conflicting passenger growth predictions. In addition Passenger Focus has welcomed the consultative approach adopted by Network Rail.

We understand there are practicalities around funding the proposed RUS options. However, we make no apologies for having an aspirational vision of the future for this part of the region's rail network that will provide passengers with a safe, reliable, efficient and sustainable transport system.

The total number of passenger journeys to, from and within the North West area was estimated to be 61 million in the 2004/2005 financial year¹. Nearly half of all these journeys were made between stations that are within the RUS area, representing an increase in passenger journeys from 1999/2000 of around 13%. This is a conservative estimate due to the conflicting and questionable passenger count data that has been available to the industry and other decision makers. True overall growth in this five year period is likely to be significantly higher.

The future demand forecasts vary greatly based upon widely conflicting models. This in itself is a problem for the rail industry. This consultation outlines two passenger journey growth forecasts over the ten year period 2007/2017 - the reference and alternative scenarios. The reference scenario forecasts total unconstrained growth to, from and within the RUS area to be around 6%. The alternative scenario results in growth of approximately 14% over the same period.

Economic growth across parts of the RUS area is evident with new building developments, job creation and improved leisure and social opportunities. On some rail corridors, passenger journey growth in the last two years has already hit the higher "alternative" forecast scenario for 2017. In stark contrast there are many towns and villages covered within the geographic scope of this RUS consultation that suffer from high levels of social and rural deprivation where easily accessible and meaningful information about rail services for many potential passengers is simply not available.

We understand the reasons for the majority of the RUS work focusing on the busier sections of the region's rail network, however an aspirational approach is required to manage current and future demand in growth and to meet the objectives of North West Regional Planning Assessment, the draft Regional Spatial Strategy and Regional Economic Strategy all of which emphasise the important role that heavy rail must play in supporting regeneration, inter-regional economic activity and sustainability.

Our response to this consultation is informed by existing and recently commissioned bespoke passenger research, liaison with stakeholders and rail user groups and extensive desktop research. As an organisation that takes its lead from the views of passengers, the Passenger Focus response to this consultation incorporates new and comprehensive research with over 2,500 passengers conducted on rail services in the North West of England.

¹ North West Route Utilisation Strategy Draft for Consultation (November 2006)

We have restricted our comments to only those options which have a clear and direct impact on passengers and where our research and stakeholder liaison informs our response. Our response is structured around the twelve generic gaps identified in table 6.1 on page 75 of the consultation. This enables us to focus our comments by grouping together many of the options outlined and avoid repetition.

3. Methodology

Passenger Focus has based this report on research with nearly 15,500 passengers², including findings obtained from new and comprehensive passenger research conducted on four of the routes covered by the North West RUS. This evidence is supported by a variety of additional sources. The types of evidence used are summarised below:

New passenger research

Passenger Focus commissioned a large-scale project of new passenger research in autumn 2006, in order to provide reliable, robust, comprehensive and up-to-date evidence on the perceptions, views and issues of concern for passengers.

This research was carried out by Continental Research, the organisation which also conducts the National Passenger Survey on behalf of Passenger Focus. The fieldwork was carried out in November 2006, and comprised 10 three-hour shifts at various times of the day and week, on four routes (in both directions):

- route 1 – Preston – Bolton – Manchester (Bolton corridor)
- route 2 – Newton-le-Willows – Manchester (Chat Moss corridor)
- route 3 – Romiley – Manchester (Marple corridor)
- route 4 – Northwich – Stockport – Manchester (Northwich corridor)

Passengers travelling on these routes were asked to complete a questionnaire with two parts:

- 1) Specific questions on issues raised in the draft RUS for consultation affecting that route
- 2) Generic questions on various aspects of rail travel - comparing passenger expectations before the journey, with their subsequent experience, weighted against the importance passengers placed on the same aspects. This produced a 'gap analysis' and therefore a list of priorities for improvement³.

In total, 2518 passenger questionnaires⁴ were returned, giving Passenger Focus a significant amount of data on which to base these report findings and recommendations.

Stakeholder engagement

Passenger Focus gathered information from various stakeholders including local authorities, Passenger Transport Executives and MPs, in order to help inform our response to Network Rail on the draft North West RUS. Our stakeholder communications were based around the following questions:

- what are your organisation's views on the proposed options?
- what are your organisation's specific priorities for the RUS?
- what evidence do you have to support your views?

² This figure is based on new passenger research on NW routes, NPS results for relevant TOCs (Spring 06) and relevant research undertaken by the former Rail Passengers Council and Passenger Focus

³ See Appendix C for an explanation of how 'Gap Analysis' is calculated

⁴ A copy of the questionnaire template used in the research can be found in Appendix A.

A total of 22 industry stakeholders and groups representing passengers responded to us with their views. Where their views and evidence supports or contradicts the findings from the passenger research, selected examples are included in this report. Appendix B lists all stakeholders Passenger Focus engaged with, and those who forwarded their response to us.

Desktop research

This consisted of research and publications produced by Passenger Focus and the former Rail Passengers Council (RPC) and new desktop research from a wide variety of sources. These sources include:

- The National Passenger Survey
- Passenger Focus “*Edge of Morning Peak Travel Research Findings & Policy Considerations*” (October 2006)
- Passenger Focus research on Car Parking “*Meeting Demand for Access to Railway Stations in the Greater Anglia RUS Area*” (not yet published)
- Passenger Focus research on Fares (Spring 2006)
- Passenger Focus response to the Scotland RUS (November 2006)
- RPC report “*What passengers want from stations*” (June 2005)
- RPC NW report “*Barriers to Interchange*” (February 2005)
- RPC NW report “*Strategy to Reality: Using Local Transport Plans to deliver on rail*” (February 05)
- RPC report “*Passenger Information: What, when, where and how?*” (September 2004)
- Railway industry statistics such as LENNON and MOIRA data.
- Regional Planning Assessment for the North West
- North West Regional Assembly - Draft Regional Spatial Strategy
- North West RDA - Regional Economic Strategy 2006
- National Rail Trends (ORR)
- RSSB Wayfinding Report (June 2006)
- RSSB Crowd Management at Stations Report (Oct 04)
- Train Operating Company Passenger Charters
- Northern Review Summary Report (March 2006)
- Eddington Transport Study (December 2006)

As with the stakeholder contributions, data and information from the desktop research is included in the report where it provides supporting evidence for issues and views raised by passengers as part of the new passenger research.

4. Detailed Response

Gap 1: Some links between the major city regions in the North West would benefit from improved service provision

- Option 6.3.7.1. Bolton corridor. Blackpool line timetable recast
- Option 6.3.7.2. Bolton corridor. Blackburn additional train off-peak
- Option 6.3.7.4. Bolton corridor. Kirkham remodelling
- Option 6.3.7.5. Bolton corridor. Salford Crescent remodelling/relocation
- Option 6.3.9.1. Chat Moss corridor. Liverpool-Manchester additional trains
- Option 6.3.9.2. Chat Moss corridor. TransPennine trains on Chat Moss line
- Option 6.3.10.1. CLC Corridor. CLC Timetable recast

The North West Regional Planning Assessment, the draft Regional Spatial Strategy and Regional Economic Strategy all emphasise the important role that heavy rail must play in supporting regeneration, inter-regional economic activity and sustainability. Public transport in the North West will play an increasingly important role in relieving the already congested motorway corridors and must provide both existing and future passengers with an attractive alternative to a private car journey.

Within the North West there already exists a healthy demand from rail passengers for intra-regional travel with 69% of rail journeys taking place entirely within the region⁵. This demand is likely to increase as the region's economic growth encourages longer distance commuting into the key employment centres and access to a wider range of social and leisure opportunities such as the Liverpool Capital of Culture 2008 and Blackpool City Council's bid for a regional casino and conference quarter. Many more passengers will demand improved service frequency, journey times and general levels of service from an intra-regional rail network.

The proposal to move the existing Arriva Trains Wales service from North Wales and Chester into Victoria from Piccadilly has been given welcome support from the passenger group STORM (Support the Oldham Rochdale Manchester Railway Line Group). They feel that passengers who currently use Victoria from the Stalybridge and Calder Valley corridors would be able to connect with the proposed services to Chester and North Wales plus Manchester Airport via Salford Crescent. STORM commented⁶:

“STORM would welcome more use of Manchester Victoria to reduce the need to change. Passengers on the Calder Valley and Stalybridge lines would benefit from the transfer of the North Wales service into Victoria. City centre redevelopment has resulted in Victoria being closer to many central destinations than Piccadilly. Development potential around Salford Central and Salford Crescent is also important”.

We consulted with stakeholders from North Wales to seek their views on the proposal to divert services from Llandudno to Victoria and to specifically comment on the impact on passengers of being denied direct access to the existing range of connections and services from Piccadilly.

⁵ National Rail Trends Yearbook 2005-2006

⁶ STORM Formal Response To The North West RUS – Summary section (December 2006)

The strongest condemnation surrounds the removal of direct access for North Wales and Chester passengers for services to Manchester Airport via Piccadilly. We know that many passengers from North Wales and Chester currently access rail services to Manchester Airport. Recent Lennon data shows that over 10,000 passengers travelled to and from Manchester Airport from the following stations in North Wales alone:

Table 1:

Station	Passenger flows ⁷
Bangor	5483
Rhyl	1992
Llandudno Junction	1296
Llandudno	1080
Flint	464
	10,315

For a region without a locally identified airport serving key UK and European destinations, the rail link to Manchester Airport via Piccadilly is a vital service for thousands of air passengers from North Wales and Chester. This is recognised by Manchester Airport who sees North Wales as a major catchment area for air passengers with between 250,000 to 500,000 able to use Manchester Airport per annum⁸. The number of passengers using Manchester Airport is estimated to increase from 22 million in 2005 to 50 million in 2030 and there is a strong likelihood that the number of passengers from North Wales will grow in proportion.

The proposal to route this service into Victoria is therefore a retrograde step. Passenger Focus believes that any service that runs into Victoria does not effectively connect with airport trains at Piccadilly.

In addition to the lack of direct access to Piccadilly for Manchester Airport services, there would be a detrimental effect on passengers from North Wales and Chester wishing to access trans-Pennine services to the east and north east as well as existing Cross Country services to the south, north of England and Scotland. As with air passengers, the need to make a difficult connection across Manchester from Victoria to Piccadilly with family and/or luggage is a further barrier to this proposal for many passengers.

North Wales and Chester passengers currently access work and education facilities in Manchester on a daily or regular basis. Both Oxford Road and Piccadilly are key termini for students and workers accessing universities, colleges and the commercial centre of Manchester. To a lesser extent, there are also day-trippers and shoppers who use Piccadilly and its facilities to access shopping and leisure locations across Manchester. While these locations could be accessed from Victoria via walking, Metrolink or free bus, the existing facilities at Victoria station are very poor when compared with Piccadilly and make a journey to and from Victoria a much less attractive proposition to the traveller making an occasional journey.

⁷ To and from Manchester Airport from P09/2006 – P08 2007. Source: LENNON

⁸ Ground Transport Strategy. Manchester Airport. September 2006

These views are supported by Albert Owen MP (Labour - Ynys Mon) who said:

“The North Wales economy and tourist base relies on its links with the North West of England, the connection with Manchester Airport and rail links to Scotland, the Midland and South of England. Any attempt to cease through trains from Manchester Piccadilly would hamper travel to and from North Wales and I urge that consideration be given to the region...”

Alun Ffred Jones AM (Plaid Cymru - Caernarfon) also supported this view:

“Any changes that affect the service from North Wales to Manchester adversely is regrettable, and the details to hand seem to suggest that this will inconvenience passengers wishing to travel to and from North Wales and the north of England. This seems to be another example of the convenience and well being of passengers from North Wales being ignored and downgraded”.

David Bithell, Branch Secretary Wrexham of The National Union of Rail, Maritime & Transport Workers added:

“I feel that this would be detrimental to passengers travelling from Wrexham and North Wales. Manchester Piccadilly is a strategic hub that facilitates onward connections to other destinations including Manchester International Airport, Scotland, the Midlands and Southern England. Passengers could be hampered if they were intending to travel beyond Manchester. In addition, the loss of direct access to Oxford Road and Piccadilly stations would potentially impact students living in North Wales and Wrexham studying at Manchester’s universities”.

Passenger Focus believes therefore that the proposal 6.3.9 option 1 to route existing Arriva Trains Wales services from Llandudno and Chester to Victoria should be excluded from the final RUS. We have considered all the views expressed by stakeholders and believe that there will be a sufficiently detrimental effect on North Wales and Chester passengers of being able to easily access services from Piccadilly. The remaining options within this section should be included in the final RUS.

Gap 2: Many corridors serve only one side of Manchester city centre but passenger destinations are evenly distributed

Option 6.3.2.1. Marple corridor. Marple line services to Victoria

Option 6.3.3.1. Hadfield corridor. Develop Guide Bridge as an interchange

Option 6.3.4.1. Stalybridge corridor. Stalybridge interchange development

Option 6.3.6.3. Stalybridge corridor. Through trains to Salford Crescent

Option 6.3.6.4. Calder Valley corridor. Through trains to Salford Central

Option 6.3.7.5. Bolton corridor. Salford Crescent remodelling/relocation

Option 6.3.9.5. Chat Moss corridor. Salford Central additional platforms

Option 6.3.9.6. Chat Moss corridor. Develop Newton-le-Willows as an interchange

Passenger Focus recognises that the traditional city centre of Manchester is expanding, especially northwards towards and around Victoria station with the recent large scale construction of residential and business accommodation along with social, leisure and education facilities. In theory Victoria station is therefore ideally located for a range of services that meet existing and future passenger demand.

However, what is not evident from the consultation is the data needed to compare existing and proposed journey times to ultimate destinations for passengers to support the diverting of some services on the Marple corridor from Piccadilly to Victoria. Without this evidence it is therefore difficult to assess what the true journey time benefit would be for passengers affected by these proposals.

In the absence of such data, Passenger Focus spoke to 510 passengers on the Marple corridor to see what they thought of the proposal to move some services from Piccadilly to Victoria and what impact this would have on their daily commute, business or leisure journey⁹. 92% of passengers were travelling to/from Manchester City Centre with 87% of these preferring Piccadilly station as their origin or destination over Victoria.

Several different motivations drive this choice of preferred station:

- 55% say Piccadilly is more convenient for work
- 25% say there are better onward transport links from Piccadilly
- 19% more convenient for the shops
- 14% better choice of station facilities at Piccadilly
- 10% feel safer at Piccadilly

In addition to moving some services to Victoria, we also asked passengers on this route about proposals to change the frequency of service from the current 15 minute service from Piccadilly to a half hourly service from both Piccadilly and Victoria. 83% of all passengers prefer a frequent service every 15 minutes which would always depart from Manchester Piccadilly to a service every 30 minutes departing from both Victoria and Piccadilly. This is clearly driven by the fact that most prefer Piccadilly as their city centre origin or destination.

⁹ Breakdown of passenger journey type - Commuters 66%, Leisure 32% and Business 2%

Unless there is a clear demand for passengers to exploit new services into Victoria for their onward destination, the proposals to divert some of the existing services on the Marple corridor from Piccadilly to Victoria would only appear to satisfy an operational need to release some capacity at Piccadilly.

Passenger Focus supports the proposals to include all the options outlined above with the exception of the Marple corridor 6.3.2 option 1 which should not be considered as part of the final RUS. There is clear evidence from a majority of passengers surveyed on this corridor that they prefer Piccadilly as their station of origin/destination and any plans to move some services to Victoria would have a detrimental effect on the majority of journeys.

Gap 3: Rail is insufficiently integrated with Metrolink

Option 6.3.9.7. Chat Moss corridor. Eccles interchange with Metrolink

Option 6.3.10.2. CLC corridor. Cornbrook or White City new station and interchange

Option 6.3.11.1. Northwich corridor. Additional Altrincham train and timetable recast

The proposals to better integrate rail services with existing Metrolink facilities at Eccles, Cornbrook/White City and Altrincham are welcomed as long as this is not purely an operational exercise to free up heavy rail capacity in Manchester by moving passengers on to the tram. There must be clear benefits for passengers in terms of improved journey times, easy connections and, perhaps most importantly, that the tram serves a station near their ultimate destination to make this an attractive alternative.

Passenger Focus undertook passenger research on the Chat Moss corridor through which 601 passengers expressed their views on the existing opportunities for connecting with Metrolink services from Eccles and what type of effective integration of services they would want to see in the future. We also spoke to 501 passengers on the Northwich corridor about their views and experience of the existing connections with a more established and better integrated Metrolink service from Altrincham into Manchester and beyond.

On the Chat Moss corridor, 20% of passengers surveyed said that if more train services stopped at Eccles they would consider a change with the Metrolink at this station. Onward travel for these switchers would be:

Table 2:

To/from	
Piccadilly Gardens	45%
St. Peter's Square	19%
Salford Quays stations	12%

For the 80% of all passengers surveyed that would not consider making a switch to the tram on the Chat Moss corridor the key reasons given were:

- The destination of the existing train service is more convenient (49%)
- The tram does not serve a station near their ultimate destination (40%)
- Concern about the additional fare (28%)
- Lack of knowledge of the frequency of the tram (20%)
- Lack of knowledge of the length of the tram journey (19%)
- Lack of knowledge of the stations where the tram calls (18%)
- Lack of knowledge of how to connect with the tram (16%)
- Concern about tram reliability (15%)
- Getting a seat (9%)

Although the latter issues concerning lack of passenger knowledge could be countered by a publicity campaign, the key concern about the tram service is the fact that the stations it serves are not close to the passengers' ultimate destination.

On the Northwich corridor, 48% of passengers surveyed would consider interchanging with the tram at Altrincham if more train services stopped there. Of this figure the origin/destination stations on the tram would be:

Table 3:

To/from	
Piccadilly Gardens	47%
St. Peter's Square	30%
Salford Quays stations	2%

For the 52% who would not switch at Altrincham, the key reasons are:

- The tram does not serve a station near their ultimate destination (49%)
- The destination of the existing train service is more convenient (37%)
- Concern about the additional fare (33%)
- Concern about getting a seat on the tram (16%)
- Concern about reliability (14%)
- Lack of knowledge of the frequency of the tram (13%)
- Lack of knowledge of the length of the tram journey (12%)

We also asked all Chat Moss and Northwich corridor passengers how concerned they were about various factors regarding the tram. Their key concerns were:

Table 4:

	Very Concerned or Concerned	
	Chat Moss corridor	Northwich corridor
Making a connection on time	71%	70%
Adding too much time to your journey	67%	59%
Frequency of the trams	66%	63%
Journey information at the interchange station	60%	61%
Validity of tickets on both parts of the journey	56%	62%
Getting a seat	46%	51%
Availability of station services at the interchange station	39%	36%
Mobility assistance at the interchange station	26%	20%

Comparing the views of over 1100 passengers from both the Chat Moss and Northwich corridor of the features of the tram service, it is clear that very similar experiences and perceptions exist amongst rail passengers despite the fact that the Altrincham interchange is physically better connected than Eccles and better established through more effective promotion to passengers.

With the distinct possibility of road congestion charging being introduced to Manchester city centre within the life of this study, there are inevitable opportunities for improved public transport facilities and services across Manchester to ease the pressure for the travelling public. Rail integration with other forms of public transport and especially the Metrolink in Manchester should be high on the agenda of GMPTE, Network Rail and TOCs.

The Friends of Eccles Station (FRECCLES) feel that there is potential to develop a rail, Metrolink and bus interchange at Eccles. They comment¹⁰:

“Highlighting the potential of Eccles as an interchange with Metrolink and buses would encourage people travelling from the west to change at Eccles for destinations between Eccles and Manchester. This would reduce congestion into Manchester”.

However FRECCLES also identify some existing barriers to effective transport interchange at Eccles. They suggest:

“Signage for bus passengers is inadequate and for Metrolink non-existent”.

“Through ticketing facilities should be provided”.

“Limited signage and only one train per hour at Eccles do not enhance the opportunities for interchange. Even for these limited opportunities, there is very little information available currently”.

However, the opportunities to effectively connect with Metrolink at Eccles may always remain limited even with a well planned and delivered promotion, fares and ticketing campaign, because of the physical distance between the two stations. While the distance in practical terms may not be too far for many passengers, it may hinder those passengers with limited mobility. There is also limited appeal for those passengers who choose to walk through the main Eccles shopping area especially in the hours of darkness or when the weather is poor.

There is currently poor signage at both Eccles stations to make the casual passenger aware of the existence of the potential transport links. With improved information and signage there may be a better opportunity to improve integration between rail and Metrolink at Eccles but a lot has to be done to make the physical connection between the two stations easier and more attractive for passengers.

There is, however, scope for an improved rail and Metrolink integration at Altrincham if an extra train is provided each hour on the Northwich-Knutsford-Altrincham service. Our research shows that easy connections for passengers are dependant on the provision of good information on timings, fares, ticketing and access. In 2005, the Rail Passenger Council in the North West commissioned passenger research to explore the perceived barriers to interchanging between forms of public transport¹¹. Over 1600 responses were studied, highlighting that passengers have clear priorities for station interchanges, including improved information, safety and security, car/cycle parking and more visible staff.

What the strategy does not examine is how an already busy and at times overcrowded Metrolink can cope with additional passengers either through proposals to better integrate rail and tram services, or the inevitable additional strain that the Metrolink (and other forms of public transport) will face if a road congestion charging scheme is introduced across Manchester. This is major issue for GMPTC and

¹⁰ FRECCLES NW RUS Consultation Response (January 2007)

¹¹ *Barriers to Interchange*, Rail Passengers Council North West (February 2005)

Network Rail if the Authority succeeds with its imminent Transport Innovation Fund (TIF) bid which is likely to include the introduction of a road congestion scheme during the life of this strategy.

Whatever this strategy can offer rail passengers in terms of operational and infrastructure developments by better integrating train and tram services over the next ten years, GMPTE and TOCs have a lot to do to convince rail passengers that connecting with Metrolink is an easy, comfortable, convenient and cost effective move to make.

Passenger Focus supports the inclusion of all the options highlighted in this section of our response in the final RUS. However, there needs to be a better understanding of the future demands from passengers on what is an already crowded Metrolink and the potential impact on these proposals of the potential introduction of a road congestion charging scheme in Manchester.

Gap 4: Rail services to airports are insufficient for the market

Option 6.3.6.3. Calder Valley corridor. Through trains to Salford Crescent

Option 6.3.7.5. Bolton corridor. Salford Crescent remodelling/relocation

Option 6.3.7.6. Bolton corridor. Blackpool Airport service increase

Option 6.3.10.3. CLC corridor. Liverpool South Parkway shuttle

Option 6.3.12.1. Styal corridor. Styal Manchester Airport additional platform

Option 6.3.12.2. Styal corridor. Styal line service recast

The North West RUS recognises the anticipated growth at the three airports this consultation covers – Manchester International Airport, Liverpool John Lennon and Blackpool Airport.

Manchester Airport recently published its Ground Transportation Strategy consultation which forms part of the Manchester Airport Plan, outlining its desire to increase the range of public transport links and number of air passengers and employees accessing the airport by public transport until 2015.

The number of passengers using Manchester Airport is estimated to increase from 22 million in 2005 to 38 million in 2015. In its Ground Transport Strategy, the Airport has set out its objectives to develop the airport as a major regional transport hub, achieve a gradual reduction in the proportion of vehicle trips by road relative to the number of air passengers and to actively encourage the use of public transport for journeys to and from the Airport for passengers and employees.

Congestion on the major highway network will increase alongside the growth in passenger and employee numbers. Currently over 40,000 vehicles access Manchester Airport on a busy day and this could increase to 50,000 vehicles¹². The strategic road network cannot be expected to keep pace with such growth; especially given the continuing growth in non-airport road traffic.

Clearly the building of a third platform will greatly help Manchester Airport meet its published aims in line with the anticipated increase in air passengers, as well as easing current rail operational pressures caused by the existing two platforms. If the third platform development is successful, there is potential to operate a half hourly service to Crewe, of which one could go beyond, possibly to the West Midlands. The third platform proposals should safeguard current train paths and cater for longer trains.

Liverpool John Lennon Airport has seen constant growth in the volume of air passengers carried over the last few years with this level anticipated to continue for the medium to long term. In 2005 over 4.4 million passengers used the Airport for a growing series of “budget”, charter and scheduled air services. This level of patronage has grown from a figure of 1.3 million in 1999¹³. The airport expects passenger levels to grow especially in 2008 with Liverpool celebrating the European Capital of Culture with the prospect of new routes to and from the Airport.

Like Manchester Airport, Liverpool John Lennon has a published commitment to improve the surface transport links to the airport and the number of air passengers that use public transport services to access the Airport. While Liverpool John Lennon is not directly served by rail, the recent opening of

¹² Greater Manchester Local Transport Plan 2006

¹³ Liverpool John Lennon Airport Traffic Statistics (January 2007)

Liverpool South Parkway at least provides an effective link to the rail network for the growing number of passengers using this airport.

Blackpool Airport has also seen considerable passenger growth in more recent times. While the total number of air passengers is still reasonably modest in comparison to other UK regional airports, Blackpool International Airport is the fastest growing airport in the United Kingdom and is undergoing a multimillion pound refurbishment and modernisation to create new infrastructure, passenger facilities, new air routes and car parking. This work has already seen a tenfold increase in air passengers from 70,000 in 2002 to 700,000 in 2005. This level is expected to reach 6 million passengers by 2014¹⁴.

There is tremendous scope to improve the frequency of services and facilities at Squires Gate station (for the Airport) to meet the likely growth in rail and air passengers into the area.

Passenger Focus supports the inclusion of the six options listed above in the final RUS.

¹⁴ Blackpool Council – Regeneration website (January 2007)

Gap 5: Forecast freight growth will exceed current network capability

Passenger Focus recognises the important role that rail freight plays in the area covered by the North West RUS and the challenge that the current and anticipated growth will provide Network Rail, rail freight operators and TOCs.

It is vital that Network Rail balances the needs of passengers, TOCs and freight operators in a fair and transparent process by providing access, paths and frequency of services that all parties are satisfied with. From a passenger perspective we would hope that wherever there are contentious or conflicting demands on new or existing routes that passengers are given priority over freight services.

Gap 6: Regular heavy stone trains cannot be accommodated without use of special operating arrangements

From a passenger perspective, Passenger Focus has no specific view on this area of the RUS, however we would want assurances from Network Rail that passenger services are not subjected to delays because the current or proposed operating arrangements for heavy stone trains cause operational difficulties for Network Rail and TOCs.

Gap 7: Passenger demand for seats exceeds supply during the peaks on some corridors

- Option 6.3.1.6. Stockport corridor. Buxton line longer peak train
- Option 6.3.2.4. Marple corridor. Bredbury line longer peak train
- Option 6.3.3.2. Hadfield corridor. Hadfield line rolling stock
- Option 6.3.3.3. Hadfield corridor. Hadfield line additional peak train
- Option 6.3.4.1. Stalybridge corridor. Stalybridge interchange development
- Option 6.3.4.2. Stalybridge corridor. Huddersfield longer peak train
- Option 6.3.4.3. Stalybridge corridor. Stalybridge longer peak train
- Option 6.3.4.4. Stalybridge corridor. Stalybridge extra peak train
- Option 6.3.6.5. Calder Valley corridor. Rochdale line longer peak train
- Option 6.3.7.5. Bolton corridor. Salford Crescent remodelling/relocation
- Option 6.3.7.7. Bolton corridor. Lostock additional platforms
- Option 6.3.7.8. Bolton corridor. Westhoughton line longer peak train
- Option 6.3.7.9. Bolton corridor. Blackburn/Clitheroe longer peak trains
- Option 6.3.8.1. Atherton corridor. Atherton/Southport longer peak train
- Option 6.3.9.11. Chat Moss corridor. Extra Chat Moss peak train
- Option 6.3.9.12. Chat Moss corridor. Longer Chat Moss peak train
- Option 6.3.10.5. CLC corridor. Longer CLC peak trains
- Option 6.3.13.2. St. Helens corridor. Wigan longer peak trains

There is no doubt that passenger crowding currently exists on many corridors covered by this strategy which can become acutely crowded during the peaks leaving many passengers without a seat or in cases of extreme crowding unable to board services.

Passenger Focus is concerned that the passenger count data used for this strategy is questionable. The same concerns apply for the levels of anticipated growth over the life of this strategy. We fear that Network Rail and TOCs have made decisions based upon an incomplete picture of the facts.

There is sufficient evidence to support the concerns from Rail User Groups, passengers and TOCs that at times when trains are busy or operate late at night fares are not collected especially where passengers from unstaffed stations have not had the opportunity to buy tickets before travel. During the peak when trains are at their busiest, operating services with several station stops in close proximity, the conductor has great difficulty getting through the train to collect fares, operate the doors and handle passenger queries. Not only are fares going uncollected, vital passenger count and ticket information is therefore also not being captured.

This is perhaps best illustrated on the Northwich corridor where the RUS makes comment about this corridor being less than 75% loaded during the one hour morning high peak (08:00-08:59). The local rail user group (Mid-Cheshire Rail Users Association) and the Mid-Cheshire Community Rail Partnership have recently undertaken onboard passenger counts on many different services and their results indicate a very different picture with regular crowding on services throughout the peak and also on some off-peak services.

The trains that primarily serve this route are Class 142 trains, with seating capacity of between 102 and 120. As can be seen from the table below¹⁵, several trains are full or overcrowded, contrary to the LENNON data used in this study:

Table 5:

Date	Service	Unit	Reference stations for passengers numbers	Number
17-Nov	1500	142.xxx	pax ASY/HAL	152
21-Nov	0653	142.058	pax ASY/HAL	136
27-Nov	0653	142.067	pax ASY/HAL	148
28-Nov	0653	142.070	pax ASY/HAL	130
28-Nov	1500	142.xxx	pax ASY/HAL	156
29-Nov	0653	142.018	pax ASY/HAL	113
01-Dec	0653	150.141	pax ASY/HAL	142
04-Dec	0653	142.0xx	pax ASY/HAL	168
04-Dec	0724	142.060	pax ASY/HAL	102
05-Dec	0724	142.067	pax ASY/HAL	104
06-Dec	0653	142.032	pax ASY/HAL	106
07-Dec	0653	142.005	pax ASY/HAL	136
08-Dec	0653	142.064	pax ASY/HAL	139
11-Dec	0654	142.049	pax ASY/HAL	105
11-Dec	0739	150.xxx	pax HAL/ASY	180
12-Dec	0654	142.027	pax ASY/HAL	113
12-Dec	0730	142.xxx	pax ASY/HAL	114
13-Dec	0654	142.044	pax ASY/HAL	125
13-Dec	0739	150.274	pax HAL/ASY	166
13-Dec	1504	150.274	pax ASY/HAL	157

We analysed the views of 906 passengers who travelled on the Bolton corridor throughout November 2006. This is a typically busy corridor as recognised in this study which experiences severe crowding during the peaks.

Passengers on this corridor tell us that just over one in seven of them (14%) are either never or rarely able to get a seat on their service. Just over one in four (26%) can always obtain a seat, with 60% usually able to get a seat on any service.

Of particular concern is the fact that almost one in twelve (8%) of all passengers on this corridor have told us that due to the severe extent of crowding on their local service they are always or usually unable to board their train. This issue becomes more apparent for commuter passengers with 9% telling us that they are always or usually unable to board their train.

We specifically asked all passengers who currently travel on this corridor between 8am and 9am, which represents 41% of all passengers surveyed, what they thought about travelling earlier in the morning and what kind of incentive it would take to switch their journey times on a regular basis. 45%

¹⁵ Source: Mid Cheshire Rail User Group (December 06)

would be very or fairly likely to start their journey before 8am if the cost of the ticket was reduced by 10%.

Interestingly, if a 20% fare reduction was offered, 67% of all passengers who currently travel between 8am and 9am would be very or fairly likely to start their journey before 8am. There is an identical level of interest specifically amongst commuter passengers should such an offer be available.

Passenger Focus commissioned a small scale qualitative research project¹⁶ on passengers travelling to and from Waterloo, to establish whether passengers would be willing to shift travel patterns and, if so, what would persuade them to do so. The research indicated that there is support for the concept of 'early/late bird' incentive schemes as a short-term means of reducing congestion/crowding. The key incentive that would lead to this shift was a reduction in price in the region of 25-30%. Passenger Focus believes, therefore, that train companies should explore the potential for an incentive scheme, especially before considering more punitive measures to restrict demand through measures such as increasing peak fares or restricting ticket validities.

The growth in passenger numbers in the area covered by this strategy over recent years has been supported by the improvement that passengers have seen in train service punctuality and reliability. Passengers now place a greater degree of faith in rail services to get them more consistently on time to and from work, places of education, business trips and other social journeys. We know that passengers travelling with Northern across its entire network have recognised the improvement in punctuality/reliability and this is reflected in their recent National Passenger Satisfaction results:

Table 6:

	Spring 2006	Autumn 2005
% passengers satisfied with punctuality/reliability (the train arriving/departing on time)	79%	79%

The good news coming out of the railway in the area covered by this strategy about improved performance is likely to mean sustained passenger growth. New passengers are likely to be attracted to the railway due to issues such as the anticipated introduction of road congestion charging in Manchester and chronic road congestion across many of the motorway and major road corridors in the region. There will also be a demand from new passengers built upon growing awareness of the environmental impact of private car journeys with members of the travelling public making a conscious decision to move to more environmentally sustainable modes of transport.

On top of these longer-term considerations, growth will also be seen in passenger demand for journeys into Liverpool because of the continuing economic development in the City alongside the European Capital of Culture status in 2008. These two factors are likely to mean increased demand for passenger journeys to/from Liverpool from within the region.

Central Lancashire is also experiencing significant regeneration and new investment. There is likely to be increased demand for passenger journeys into Preston from towns such as Blackburn, Blackpool and Burnley as well as smaller towns and villages in the surrounding area as a result of this

¹⁶ Passenger Focus "Edge of Morning peak Travel Research Findings & Policy Considerations" (October 2006)

economic growth. Additionally, passenger journeys to Blackpool should attract significant growth if the Blackpool Masterplan is successful with the development of a national casino and conference centre which is likely to be completed within the life of this strategy.

Passenger Focus recognises that predicting levels of future passenger demand is often difficult to accurately assess. To complicate matters further we understand that baseline data has had to be used which does not provide a complete picture of how many passengers are truly using the region's railway services.

What remains unclear to us however is the impact on the growth models of the likely increase in the numbers of people across the region moving away from their car to public transport in the short to medium term. Proper consideration has to be given to the impact of an already busy railway accommodating those members of the travelling public making a conscious decision to move to more environmentally sustainable modes of transport.

The RUS makes reference to some of the options that passengers may face to alleviate peak crowding. Passenger Focus is pleased that this strategy recognises there is little benefit in considering the use of increased fares to price passengers off the railway to "manage" crowding on trains. Passenger Focus would strongly oppose any plans to price passengers off the region's rail services as a means of constraining passenger growth and restricting passenger expectations of the regional rail network; however we would support further work to look at incentives for passengers to alter travel patterns. We also recognise that the strategy highlights the need for a further review if road congestion charging is introduced across Manchester over the life of this strategy.

In light of passenger experience and anticipated growth where levels of patronage have soared in the last two years and in extreme cases grown to such an extent that they are already approaching predicted levels for 2017, Passenger Focus supports the inclusion of all options listed above in the final RUS to strengthen existing services, provide additional services, build new platforms and increase existing platform lengths where necessary to meet current and future demand. We also support the use of the "alternative" scenario rather than the "reference" scenario to assess future passenger demand.

Gap 8: Platforms at Salford Crescent and Manchester Piccadilly (13/14) are congested at times and may restrict forecast growth

Option 6.3.1.7. Stockport corridor. Improve circulation on platforms 13/14 at Piccadilly

Option 6.3.4.1. Stalybridge corridor. Stalybridge interchange development

Option 6.3.7.5. Bolton corridor. Salford Crescent remodelling/relocation

For passengers travelling at peak times from Salford Crescent and Platforms 13/14 at Piccadilly, heavy congestion on the platforms can present difficulties in terms of boarding and alighting trains, and moving around the platforms quickly and safely, especially for those with limited mobility. Accessing real-time information and finding assistance can also be a real challenge.

Passenger Focus considers that if this strategy is looking at congestion problems at Salford Crescent and Piccadilly platforms 13/14, then Oxford Road station must be worthy of similar consideration in this area of the strategy. Passenger groups tell us that at peak times severe congestion on the platforms often leads to difficulty moving around the platforms which becomes more of an issue for those with limited mobility or heavy luggage. Passenger Focus is aware of congestion being so acute that some passengers feel in danger of falling from the platform at times of peak congestion.

We feel that whatever the scale of the plans that finally emerge to ease congestion, passenger participation should be actively encouraged in the design and testing of the planned works by Network Rail and the TOCs, working with Passenger Focus and other representative organisations to ensure that the views of all passengers are fully incorporated.

The Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) produced a good practice guide to manage crowds at stations¹⁷. The following points taken from this guide are worthy of consideration in any future developments in the final strategy:

Physical layout:

- *Are there obstructions, gates or barriers in the passengers' routes?*
- *Are there narrow passages or entrances to slow the passengers down?*
- *Are there awkward staircases or escalators to negotiate?*
- *Are the platform and concourse areas big enough to accommodate the expected crowds?*

Operating environment:

- *What effect can hot days, rain; snow and ice have on station operation?*
- *Are ticket sales, collection and checking facilities sufficient to cope with crowded conditions?*
- *Can you control station access safely? How do people arrive?*
- *Do timetable gaps create problems?*

Crowd flow:

- *Where are the pinch points in crowd flows?*
- *Where are the crowd flow conflict areas?*
- *What peaks are there in crowd flow and when?*

¹⁷ Rail Safety and Standards Board Crowd Management at Stations (Oct 2004)

- *Where do your passengers gather in groups?*
- *What trespass opportunities are available?"*

Passenger Focus supports the inclusion of all the options listed above in the final RUS. Consideration should be made of expected passenger growth at both stations and whether greater investment in a rebuilding of the platforms would be more beneficial for passengers in the long term rather than more modest enhancement plans.

Gap 9: Facilities at some stations, including parking, discourage off-peak travel

Option 6.3.3.1. Hadfield corridor. Develop Guide Bridge as an interchange

Option 6.3.4.1. Stalybridge corridor. Stalybridge interchange development

Option 6.3.9.6. Chat Moss corridor. Develop Newton-le-Willows as an interchange

Stations and their facilities which cover aspects such as car parking, the provision of information, access to advice, ticket purchasing, toilets, shops, waiting rooms, upkeep of the station buildings, cleanliness plus personal security and public transport connections all play a big part in the passengers' journey experience and whether passengers actually want to use the rail service.

The Rail Passenger Council commissioned and published research in June 2005 to look at what passengers want from stations¹⁸. The findings were very clear and very much apply to the options outlined in this strategy. The key findings were:

"The basic needs of passengers do not differ significantly:

- *passengers need to be able to find the station and find their way around the station*
- *they need to be able to get to the station and their platform*
- *they need to feel safe*
- *they need adequate light and shelter.*

Not all stations appear to be meeting even these most basic of needs, with examples of poor signage perhaps most common.

Differences between passengers' requirements do start to appear once the basic needs have been met, with needs conditioned by factors such as the time at which the station is being used, how busy it is, whether it is after dark, how long the passenger is at the station, and how familiar they are with their journey."

Passengers' views on station facilities are further supported by the National Passenger Survey figures for the Northern Rail network, which operates the majority of stations covered by this strategy:

Table 7:

% passengers satisfied with:	Spring 2006	Autumn 2005
Facilities for car parking	49%	49%
The facilities and services	54%	49%

Our new research also asked passengers to consider their local station facilities. They told us that provision of information about train times and platforms was a high priority for improvement across all four routes, and was the top priority for improvement on the Marple corridor and the Chat Moss corridor. Passengers on the Bolton and Chat Moss corridors, but particularly on the Northwich corridor, stated that ticket buying facilities were also in need of improvement.

¹⁸ *What Passengers want from Stations*, Rail Passengers Council (June 2005)

It is unclear from the consultation how much the strategy can achieve in terms of improving the full range of facilities at stations for passengers where commitments exist on leases, funding and TOC franchises. On the four corridors on which we undertook passenger research, passengers told us that personal security at stations is an area of significant priority in their journey experience.

Research by Crime Concern in 1996 and 2002 suggested that measures to improve personal security would result in 11% more journeys by public transport, including 15% more by train and Underground. Much of the increase would occur outside peak hours.¹⁹

Through our regular work with Rail User Groups and passengers across the region we understand that a lack of adequate lighting, CCTV and a staffed presence at some stations may discourage some passengers from using local rail services particularly in the evening. If taken forward in the strategy, there may be scope for further work to better understand if passenger demand for off-peak evening travel is suppressed because of concerns about personal security at stations.

We specifically talked to passengers about their experience of car parking facilities. After the morning peak, 18% of passengers on the Bolton corridor, and 20% of passengers on the Marple corridor can hardly/never get a space in the station car park. On the Chat Moss corridor, the situation is even worse, with 22% of passengers unable to get a station parking space during the morning peak.

This is further supported by evidence from the National Passenger Survey as shown in table 7 above. Only 49% passengers are satisfied with the facilities for car parking across the Northern network, as compared with a low national average for regional operators of 53%.

From regular discussions with local Rail User Groups we know that station car parking at many stations becomes fully occupied during weekdays before the peak is over. This inevitably means that access to rail services throughout the rest of the day becomes more difficult for passengers wishing to drive to their station. This problem is not restricted to smaller stations but larger ones as well with places like Stockport Station almost impossible to park at after 8am on a weekday.

The inability for car users to park at the station of their choice is a particular problem for occasional or infrequent users of rail services. It is a reasonable expectation of occasional rail users to be able to park at or near their local station. The fact that many cannot park after the peak is likely to deter them from using rail services.

Passenger Focus supports the inclusion of the three options listed above in the final RUS. We know that Northern Rail and GMPTE are keen to actively promote off-peak travel to help fill spare capacity on many services. However based upon the experience of Rail User Groups and passengers in the North West, there is likely to be suppressed demand for off-peak travel unless more car parking spaces are provided and general facilities at stations improved.

¹⁹ National Audit Office (NAO) Maintaining and improving Britain's railway stations (July 2005)

Gap 10: There are numerous stations with low footfall

Option 6.3.1.8. Stockport corridor. Close Reddish South and Denton

Option 6.3.2.5. Marple corridor. Close Ardwick station

Option 6.3.11.3. Northwich corridor. Fewer stops on the Northwich line

We know that the three stations have low footfall from information provided by the local operator Northern Rail. In the fiscal year 2005/2006 the number of tickets sold to/from the three stations was:

Table 8:

Station	Fiscal year 2005/06		P1-P8 2006/07	
	From	To	From	To
Ardwick	349	199	79	196
Denton	37	52	1	31
Reddish South	84	32	7	17

A balanced approach is required when trying to understand the reasons for stations having a low footfall. On one hand the rail industry notes that demand for services at some stations is low, whilst on the other passengers note that the service provision is low thereby reducing demand.

On the Northwich corridor, our passenger research showed that the frequency of trains on the route was the second most important factor for passengers, beaten only by punctuality/reliability of the train. When this is combined with the fact that 28% of passengers surveyed on this route had decided to make that journey by train because they had no access to a car, it highlights the importance of the rail service.

If the off-peak service calling at request stops on the Northwich corridor was reduced to a two-hourly service, 78% of the passengers we surveyed said they would be fairly or very unlikely to use this service again. Therefore we feel that gap 6.3.11 option 3 should not be included in the final RUS because of the detrimental effect on passengers who rely heavily on the current service.

Passenger Focus understands the concerns raised in this strategy about stations with such few journeys and passengers. We would review such proposals in accordance with statutory procedures issued by the Department for Transport.

Gap 11: Performance is worsened by significant levels of reactionary delay

Option 6.3.1.7. Stockport corridor. Improve circulation on platforms 13/14 at Piccadilly

Option 6.3.4.1. Stalybridge corridor. Stalybridge interchange development

Option 6.3.6.3. Calder Valley corridor. Through trains to Salford Crescent

Option 6.3.6.4. Calder Valley corridor. Through trains to Salford Central

Option 6.3.7.5. Bolton corridor. Salford Crescent remodelling/relocation

Option 6.3.7.10 Bolton corridor. Bolton additional platform

Option 6.3.11.2. Northwich corridor. Terminate Northwich trains at Stockport

Option 6.3.12.1. Styal corridor. Manchester Airport additional platform

Option 6.3.12.2. Styal corridor. Styal line service recast

Delays clearly impact on passengers' experience of their rail journey. We know from our recent research that passengers on all four routes value reliability/punctuality and frequency of trains as their top two priorities.

Passengers do not necessarily wish or need to know what plans the industry has to reduce the effect of reactionary delays. What matters most to passengers is that delays are kept to an absolute minimum and that helpful and accurate information is provided in a timely and clear way at the time of the delay as to the cause and the impact it will have on the rest of their journey.

Many of the proposals in this strategy to improve performance have little or no direct impact on passengers as the options are looking at engineering, technology or infrastructure enhancements. The only real outcomes that passengers want to see are reductions in the overall level of delays and improved journey times.

However there are a small number of proposals which have a greater direct impact on passengers as these affect congestion on platforms at Piccadilly platforms 13/14²⁰, plans to remodel or relocate Salford Crescent²¹ and the terminating of existing services short of Manchester at Stockport²².

Passenger Focus has already commented in greater detail under Gap 8 in this response on the proposals to ease congestion at Piccadilly platforms 13/14.

Whatever the operational and performance benefits that arise from the plans to remodel or relocate Salford Crescent station, it is important that the redevelopment of the station and its facilities incorporates views of all groups of passengers and that the planners adopt industry best practice in terms of access to the station, information facilities, ticket vending, signage, passenger security, car parking etc. The Rail Passenger Council 2005 report on "what passengers want from stations"²³ highlighted key passenger priorities and we will be happy to work with Network Rail, TOCs and planners to ensure that the views of passengers are fully represented in the developments.

²⁰ 6.3.1 Stockport corridor option 7 improve circulation on platforms 13/14 at Piccadilly

²¹ 6.3.7 Bolton corridor option 5 Salford Crescent remodelling/relocation

²² 6.3.11 Northwich corridor terminate Northwich trains at Stockport

It is not clear how many, if any, passengers would have a longer or more difficult onward journey as a result of the proposals to relocate Salford Crescent. It is likely that some passengers would be affected however, Passenger Focus recognises the fact that many more passengers should experience the benefits proposed in the strategy. These are likely to include improved access and facilities at Salford Crescent, better connections to new and existing services and quicker journey times through improved train operating performance and reliability.

From the 501 passengers surveyed on the Northwich corridor during November 2006, 60% were travelling to or from Manchester city centre stations, highlighting the importance of this direct journey. We note that gap 6.3.11 option 2 in the consultation is unlikely to be developed therefore agree that this option should not be included in the final RUS because of the potentially detrimental effect on the majority of passengers on this corridor who travel to and from Manchester.

Passenger Focus supports the inclusion in the final RUS of the other options listed above.

Gap 12: Much of the rolling stock in the area is not well-suited to its current use

The consultation seeks views on the operational performance of the current rolling stock used across the network and how these varying types of rolling stock enable the network to perform more consistently and more efficiently. We know that there is a diverse range of rolling stock operating across the network covered by this strategy, from modern 185 units operated by TransPennine Express through to much older class 142 units operated by Northern.

The majority of rail journeys in the area covered by this strategy are run by Northern Rail. The Spring 2006 National Passenger Survey shows passengers' satisfaction with a range of onboard factors across the entire Northern Rail network compared with an average rating of all regional train operators, highlighting a lower satisfaction level by Northern passengers:

Table 9:

Onboard factor	Passenger satisfaction (satisfied or good) with Northern Rail	Average passenger satisfaction with regional operators
Cleanliness	62%	70%
Upkeep & repair	58%	68%
Space for luggage	57%	59%
Toilet facilities	38%	39%
Sufficient room to sit/stand	66%	69%
Comfort	64%	72%
Ease of getting on/off	78%	80%

There are two factors that the National Passenger Survey asks passengers to consider which are perhaps more closely linked to operational performance of the rolling stock:

- Train arriving/departing on time
- Time the journey was scheduled to take

From results gathered across the Northern Rail network and an average result from all regional TOCs in Spring 2006, passengers rated these factors in terms of satisfaction as:

Table 10:

Factor	Passenger satisfaction (satisfied or good) with Northern Rail	Average passenger satisfaction with regional operators
Train arriving/departing on time	79%	82%
Time the journey was scheduled to take	87%	88%

The vast majority of passengers have no choice in terms of which operator they travel with and therefore the rolling stock available for their journey. We know that existing franchise holders, DfT and Passenger Transport Executives are working hard together to find ways to fund and source better performing rolling stock that more closely matches passenger expectations and industry needs. Passenger Focus urges the industry to provide all passengers with safe, reliable and comfortable rolling stock to match passenger expectations of a modern and thriving railway.

Appendix A

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D D M M Y Y

Route 1

Thank you again for agreeing to take part in this short survey being conducted by Continental Research on behalf of Passenger Focus. Passenger Focus is the official independent consumer organisation representing the interests of rail users nationally. We would like to hear your views on the service provided on this route. It should take no more than five minutes to complete. Any answer you give will be treated in confidence in accordance with the Code of Conduct of the Market Research Society.

The interviewer will collect this questionnaire from you when you have completed it or please use the post paid envelope provided to send it back to us. If you have any queries the interviewer will be pleased to help. As a thank you for your help we are offering you the opportunity of taking part in a prize draw with a prize of £500. If you wish to take part please tell us your name and contact details where we can contact you in the space provided on the last page.

• TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS PLEASE TICK THE BOX NEXT TO THE ANSWER(S) THAT APPLY OR WRITE IN YOUR ANSWER IN THE SPACE PROVIDED. UNLESS THE QUESTION ALLOWS YOU TO TICK SEVERAL ANSWERS PLEASE JUST TICK ONE BOX PER QUESTION.

Your Journey Today

Q1 Please fill in the scheduled departure time of the train from the station where you boarded.
Use the 24 hr clock e.g. 17 : 25

:

Q2 Please write in the name of the station where you boarded **this** train :

Q3 Please write in the name of the station where you are travelling to on **this** train :

Q4 Please write in the location from where you started your journey before catching this train. Can you give as much detail as possible ideally postcode, but if not then road / street or at least area.

Q5 How did you travel to the station where you boarded this train? (Tick all that apply)

On foot / walking..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Tram / Light Rail (inc. Metrolink)..... <input type="checkbox"/>
Bicycle (parked at or near station)..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Taxi..... <input type="checkbox"/>
Bicycle (taken onto train)..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Car parked at or near station..... <input type="checkbox"/>
Motorbike..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Car - dropped off..... <input type="checkbox"/>
Bus / Coach..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Air / Sea..... <input type="checkbox"/>
National Rail train..... <input type="checkbox"/>	

If National Rail train: please specify station you travelled from

Q6 Please write in the location where your journey will end when you leave this train. Can you give as much detail as possible ideally postcode, but if not then road / street or at least area.

Q7 How will you travel to your final destination after leaving this train? (Tick all that apply)

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| On foot / walking..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | Tram / Light Rail (inc. Metrolink)..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Bicycle (parked at or near station)..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | Taxi..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Bicycle (taken onto train)..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | Car parked at or near station..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Motorbike..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | Car - dropped off..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Bus / Coach..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | Air / Sea..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| National Rail train..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

If National Rail train: please specify station you will travel onto

Q8 What is the **main** purpose of your rail journey?

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| Daily commuting to / from work | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Less regular commuting to / from work | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Daily commuting for education (to/from college/school/university) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Less regular commuting for education (to/from college/school/university) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| On company business (or own if self employed) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Shopping trip | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Visiting friends or relatives | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sport / entertainment | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A day out | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Travel to / from holiday | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| On personal business (job interview, dentist etc) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Q9 If you had not made this journey by train today, what other modes could you have used? (Tick all that apply)

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| On foot / walking..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | Taxi..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Bicycle..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | Car as a driver..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Motorbike..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | Car as a passenger..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Bus / Coach..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | Air / Sea..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Tram / Light Rail (inc. Metrolink)..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | No alternative..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

Other : please specify

Q10 Why did you choose to travel by train for this journey? (Tick all that apply)

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| Train is more reliable..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | Speed / faster than alternatives..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Train is the most direct / sensible route.... | <input type="checkbox"/> | No reasonable route by other public | |
| Comfort..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | transport..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Availability / cost of parking..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | No access to car..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Cost..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | Rail station near home / destination..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Other : please specify

Q11 How many times have you made this journey in the last two weeks?
(Please note that if you make a return journey that would count as two journeys)

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|------------|
| This is my first journey..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | Go to Q14a |
| 2-5..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | Go to Q12 |
| 6-10..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | Go to Q12 |
| 11-20..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | Go to Q12 |
| 21+..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | Go to Q12 |

Q12 Out of these journeys, how often were you able to get a seat on the train?

- Always.....
- Usually.....
- About half the time.....
- Rarely.....
- Never.....

Q13 Again, out of these journeys, how often have you been unable to board your preferred train due to overcrowding?

- Always.....
- Usually.....
- About half the time.....
- Rarely.....
- Never.....

Q14a Do you travel by train on services departing between 08:00 and 09:00?

- Yes..... Go to Q14b
- No..... Go to Q15

Q14b How likely would be to start your journey earlier than 08:00 if the price of your ticket was reduced by the following amounts?

- | | Very likely | Fairly likely | Neither likely nor unlikely | Fairly unlikely | Very unlikely | No opinion |
|---------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 10% less..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 20% less..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Q15 For your journey today, did you get on / will you get off this train at any of the following stations?

- Manchester Victoria..... Go to Q16
- Manchester Piccadilly..... Go to Q16
- Manchester Oxford Road..... Go to Q16
- Deansgate..... Go to Q16
- Salford Central..... Go to Q16
- Salford Crescent..... Go to Q16
- None of them..... Go to Q18

Q16 If you had the choice, which of these would be your preferred station to start or end your journey?

- Manchester Victoria..... Go to Q17
- Manchester Piccadilly..... Go to Q17
- Manchester Oxford Road..... Go to Q17
- Deansgate..... Go to Q17
- Salford Central..... Go to Q17
- Salford Crescent..... Go to Q17
- No preference..... Go to Q18

Q17 Why would this be your preferred choice of station?

(Tick all that apply)

- More convenient for work.....
- More convenient for the shops.....
- Better choice of station facilities.....
- I feel safer at this station.....
- Better onward transport links.....
- More convenient for my home.....

Other : please specify

Q18 Which of the following best describes parking at the station car park where you started your journey today?

- I can always get a space.....
- I can get a space most of the time.....
- I can hardly ever get a space.....
- I can never get a space.....
- There is no station car park.....
- Not applicable / do not use.....
- Don't know.....

Q19 How important is a regular timetable to you e.g. knowing your train always departs at 10 minutes past the hour (09:10, 10:10 ...15:10 etc)?

- Very important.....
 - Fairly important.....
 - Neither important nor unimportant.....
 - Not very important.....
 - Not at all important.....
-

Your Expectations

Q20 Before you started your journey today, what level of service did you **EXPECT TO GET?** Please rate your **expectation** for each of the following aspects of the station and train given what you know about this line and train travel on similar routes.

	Very good	Fairly good	Neither good nor poor	Fairly poor	Very poor	Did not use/no opinion
Ticket buying facilities.....	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Personal security at the station.....	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Provision of information about train times / platforms..	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Connections with other forms of transport.....	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Ease of getting to/ from the station.....	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Frequency of the trains on the route.....	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Punctuality / reliability of the train.....	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed).....	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Value for money for price of ticket.....	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Being able to get a seat on the train.....	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Personal security while on board the train.....	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Not having to change trains on your journey.....	<input type="checkbox"/>					
The ease of being able to get on and off the train.....	<input type="checkbox"/>					

	Very good	Fairly good	Neither good nor poor	Fairly poor	Very poor	No opinion
OVERALL EXPECTATION OF SERVICE ON ROUTE	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Your Experience

Q21 Thinking now about the level of service you **actually experienced** on your journey on this route **today**, please rate what you experienced at the station and on the train?

	Very good	Fairly good	Neither good nor poor	Fairly poor	Very poor	Did not use/no opinion
Ticket buying facilities.....	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Personal security at the station.....	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Provision of information about train times / platforms..	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Connections with other forms of transport.....	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Ease of getting to/ from the station.....	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Frequency of the trains on the route.....	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Punctuality / reliability of the train.....	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed).....	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Value for money for price of ticket.....	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Being able to get a seat on the train.....	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Personal security while on board the train.....	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Not having to change trains on your journey.....	<input type="checkbox"/>					
The ease of being able to get on and off the train.....	<input type="checkbox"/>					

	Very good	Fairly good	Neither good nor poor	Fairly poor	Very poor	No opinion
OVERALL EXPERIENCE OF SERVICE ON ROUTE	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Importance of Aspects of Rail Travel

Q22 Thinking now about each of the different aspects of your journey, please rate how **important** each of the following is to you.

		Very Important	Important	Neither	Not very important	Not at all important	No opinion
Ticket buying facilities.....	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Personal security at the station.....	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Provision of information about train times / platforms..	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Connections with other forms of transport.....	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Ease of getting to/ from the station.....	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Frequency of the trains on the route.....	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Punctuality / reliability of the train.....	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed).....	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Value for money for price of ticket.....	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Being able to get a seat on the train.....	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Personal security while on board the train.....	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Not having to change trains on your journey.....	<input type="checkbox"/>						
The ease of being able to get on and off the train.....	<input type="checkbox"/>						

About You

Q23 What is your employment status?

Work full time (30+ hours)..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Retired..... <input type="checkbox"/>
Work part time (9-29 hours)..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Student..... <input type="checkbox"/>
Not employed - seeking work..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Other..... <input type="checkbox"/>
Not employed - not seeking work..... <input type="checkbox"/>	

Q24 Which age group do you fall into?

Under 16..... <input type="checkbox"/>	45-54..... <input type="checkbox"/>
16-24..... <input type="checkbox"/>	55-59..... <input type="checkbox"/>
25-34..... <input type="checkbox"/>	60-64..... <input type="checkbox"/>
35-44..... <input type="checkbox"/>	65+..... <input type="checkbox"/>

Q25 Are you.....

Male..... <input type="checkbox"/>	Female..... <input type="checkbox"/>
------------------------------------	--------------------------------------

Q26 Which of the following best describes your ethnic background?

White <input type="checkbox"/>	Chinese <input type="checkbox"/>
Black or Black British <input type="checkbox"/>	Asian or Asian British <input type="checkbox"/>
Mixed <input type="checkbox"/>	Other ethnic group <input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix B

This list contains the names of all organisations Passenger Focus has directly contacted as part of the North West RUS consultation, and which ones have submitted their response to us.

Organisation	Responded?
ACORP	
Albert Owen MP (Labour - Ynys Mon)	yes
Alun Ffred Jones AM (Plaid Cymru - Caernarfon)	
Alun Pugh AM (Labour - Clwyd West) Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport	
Ann Jones AM (Labour - Vale of Clwyd) Chair of Local Government & Public Services Committee	yes
Betty Williams MP (Labour - Conwy)	
Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council	
Blackpool Borough Council	
Bolton Council	
British Transport Police	
Brynle Williams AM (Conservative - North Wales)	
Bury Metropolitan Borough Council	
Carl Sargeant AM (Labour - Alyn and Deeside)	
Cheshire County Council	
Chris Ruane MP (Labour - Vale of Clwyd)	
City of Salford Council	
Clitheroe Line Community Rail Partnership	yes
David Hanson MP (Labour - Delyn)	
David Jones MP (Conservatives - Clwyd West)	
Denise Idris Jones AM (Labour - Conwy)	
Derbyshire County Council	
Eleanor Burnham AM - Liberal Democrat - North Wales	
Elflyn Llwyd MP (Plaid Cymru - Meirionydd Nant Conwy)	
FRECCLES (Friends of Eccles Station)	yes
GMPTE	Yes (meeting)
Government Office for the North West	
Goyt Valley Rail Users' Association	yes
Halton Borough Council	
Hope Valley RUG & Transport 2000 Derbyshire & Peak District	yes
Hywel Williams MP (Plaid Cymru - Caernarfon)	
Ian Lucas MP (Labour - Wrexham)	
Ieuan Wyn Jones AM (Plaid Cymru - Ynys Mon) Leader of Plaid Cymru	
Janet Ryder AM (Plaid Cymru - North Wales)	
John Marek AM (Forward Wales - Wrexham) Deputy Presiding Officer & Chair of The House Committee	yes
Karen Sinclair AM (Labour - Clwyd South)	
Lakes Line RUG	yes

Lancashire County Council	
Liverpool John Lennon Airport	
Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas AM (Plaid Cymru - Meirionnydd Nant Conwy) Presiding Officer	
Manchester Airport	yes
Manchester City Council	
Mark Isherwood AM (Conservative - North Wales)	
Mark Tami MP (Labour - Alyn & Deeside)	
Martyn Jones MP (Labour - Clwyd South)	
Merseytravel	Yes (meeting)
Mid Cheshire CRP	yes
Mid Cheshire Rail Users' Association	yes
North Cheshire Rail User Group	yes
North West Regional Assembly	
North West Regional Development Agency	
Northern Rail	Yes (meeting)
Oldham Council	
Railfuture North West	yes
Railfuture West Midlands	yes
RMT - National Union of Rail, Maritime & Transport Workers (Branch Secretary Wrexham)	yes
Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council	
Sandy Mewies AM (Labour - Delyn)	
St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council	Yes (meeting)
STORM	yes
Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council	
Train Passengers' Consultancy	yes
TravelWatch North West	yes
Warrington Borough Council	
Wrexham Birkenhead Rail Users' Association	yes

Appendix C

Gap analysis

Gap analysis is a technique that prioritises passenger service improvements by taking into account both expectation and satisfaction or experience with attributes of the service provided, coupled with the importance of these same attributes to passengers.

In this technique each experience question is mirrored with an equivalent importance and expectation question, measured on a five-point scale. This identifies the importance of attributes, which are then used to weight the performance gap (i.e. the gap between expectations of a factor compared to experience of it). By using the importance scores to weight the performance 'gap' we can see at a glance where they are meeting, exceeding or failing to meet passengers' requirements on key parameters.

It is not sufficient to simply measure the gap between expectations and experience because some things will be more important to passengers than others and the most important requirements will influence their judgement of their overall satisfaction with the experience to a greater extent than things they view as less important.

Passengers surveyed on the routes were asked to rate their expectation and experience of aspects of the stations and service on their route and then asked for the importance they attribute to them. Scores for experience were subtracted from the expectation scores to give a numerical value to the 'gap' while the importance scores showed how important it would be to correct for any negative imbalance that occurs. The greater the negative expectation/performance gap the greater the need for action, particularly where importance scores are high.

This approach highlights priorities for improvement, which also helps to target where changes can be most effective. In other words, this helps Passenger Focus to concentrate on the issues that matter most to passengers. The research also indicates where franchisees could afford to 'relax' further improvements if there are attributes for which the performance outstrips expectation whilst at the same time the importance for that attribute is low.

More information

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Passenger Focus is the operating
name of the Rail Passengers Council