

Towards a 'right time' East Anglian railway

What passengers want

Independent national passenger watchdog

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Passengerfocus
putting passengers first

Passengers' overall satisfaction with National Express East Anglia journeys measured by the National Passenger Survey (NPS) has been below the London and South East sector average for some time and is well below the highest performing franchise in the sector. This is despite train punctuality, measured by the Public Performance Measure (PPM), now being over 90% of trains arriving at destination within five or 10 minutes of the scheduled time¹.

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This led Passenger Focus to work with National Express East Anglia to understand why satisfaction with the company's services has not improved greatly, despite improved train service punctuality – a pattern which has been seen elsewhere.

The focus of this work was to examine in detail the correlation between passenger satisfaction with train punctuality as measured by NPS and actual train punctuality on National Express East Anglia over the last three and a half years. Passenger Focus is grateful to National Express East Anglia for its active co-operation with this work by providing access to historic train performance records.

The key findings are:

- That among commuters, who make up 60% of National Express East Anglia's passengers, whether their train is on time is a strong determinant of whether they are satisfied. For every minute that a train is late passenger satisfaction will drop two points. Commuters appear to notice lateness from the first minute, not just after five minutes or 10 minutes allowed by PPM.
- That commuters appear to take into account their experiences over the past three months in determining satisfaction with their journey "today".



¹ 90.96% PPM moving annual average to Period 7 of the 2009/10 year. All National Express East Anglia services are measured to five minutes, except the London to Norwich route which is measured to 10 minutes

- That average passenger lateness in the evening peak on National Express East Anglia is worse than average train lateness. This is because of the effect of cancellations and because many trains that are on time at their destination are late at intermediate stations.

- 62% of National Express East Anglia passengers in this study arrived in London on time, whilst only 48% travelling from London arrived on time.

Passenger Focus's principal conclusion is that Britain's railway must in future focus on 'right time' arrival at all stops.

These findings also have implications for how DfT specifies the Greater Anglia franchise to operate from 1 April 2011. They are:

- Punctuality and reliability is the key determinant of overall satisfaction, a measure in which National Express East Anglia is 22nd among 23 train companies in Great Britain². Therefore improvement in satisfaction with punctuality and reliability should be one of DfT's key objectives for the new Greater Anglia franchise.

- Satisfaction among commuters is highly sensitive even to small delays, with 'right time' arrival being critical – not whether PPM is achieved. Passenger Focus believes the Greater Anglia franchise specification should contain an explicit vision of moving towards a Right Time Railway, with challenging but achievable targets for increasing the number of trains arriving 'right time', but without resorting to extended journey times.
- On many journeys, principally from

London, trains arrive late at the stations where most passengers get off – despite then counting as on time at final destination. Passenger Focus believes the Greater Anglia franchise specification should require the train company to report the percentage of trains arriving 'right time' at key intermediate stations.

- Satisfaction among commuters is influenced by past experience of punctuality. Passenger Focus believes that in addition to the 'right time' focus, the Greater Anglia franchise specification should set challenging but achievable targets to reduce the number of trains that are significantly late or cancelled. This will require action to reduce the number of major 'one off' incidents that affect passengers.

Passenger Focus will also explore with the rail industry and Government the implications for other franchise specifications and the importance of punctuality in future policy.

² Passenger Focus National Passenger Survey Autumn 2009

Passenger Focus is currently researching passengers' priorities for improvement on National Express East Anglia routes. In Spring 2010 we will publish our advice to Government about what passengers want the new Greater Anglia franchise to deliver.



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Contact us

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