

## Board Meeting TOC Paper

### Feb 10 BM 9.1

Contains restricted or confidential information?

Yes

No



If confidential, protective marking <sup>1</sup>	
Date of Meeting	16 February 2010
Agenda Item	9.1
Report Title	Passenger Link Report: <b>Southern</b>
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### 1. Passenger Focus objectives

**A.** Work with the successful bidder for the new South Central franchise to ensure that passenger needs and aspirations are recognised and prioritised in mobilisation and delivery plans.

**B.** Ensure that capacity constraints and issues of concern to passengers are recognised and addressed in the Sussex RUS and that passengers have genuine opportunity to understand the RUS framework and participate in the consultation process.

**C.** Work with Network Rail and TOC to improve performance on Sussex Coast services and the information passengers receive during disruption

### 2. Reasons for objectives

**A.** The way in which the next franchise is set up and operated is of critical importance to passengers. The early stages of the franchise will establish policies, procedures and contractual arrangements that will set the context for passenger rail services for the next 5-7 years.

**B.** The RUS is of critical strategic importance to passengers as it will take a medium to long term view of the needs for capacity on the Sussex Route and will determine which options are proposed for funding and future implementation.

**C.** A slump in performance following the introduction of the December 2008 timetable led to widespread passenger dissatisfaction, whilst NPS scores for dealing with delays demonstrate the need for improvements, particularly in information provision.

### 3. Progress report

**A.** Following the announcement in June 2009 that Southern was to retain the franchise, early meetings were held with the MD and communications team and a further meeting with Keith Ludeman, Chief Executive of Go-Ahead the owning group. Passenger Focus emphasised a desire to build on previously successful relationships with Southern and noted that passenger interests must remain central to the franchise operation. A process for engagement was mapped out and initial input into early consultations was agreed.

<sup>1</sup> ie RESTRICTED plus COMMERCIAL / POLICY / STAFF / PERSONAL PROTECT

Since June the focus within Southern has inevitably been on translating the bid proposals into practical actions for delivery. There has been a relatively smooth transition in terms of relationships with key personnel. However, the new franchise has introduced an entirely new organisational structure and, following announcement of appointments to the majority of senior and management posts, an organisational review is underway.

There are a significant number of commitments to be delivered in the early stages of the franchise and Southern is embarked upon a wide number of workstreams to achieve this, whilst the Service Delivery Directorate focuses on day to day operations.

Since the announcement of the franchise, in addition to general liaison and comment on a variety of passenger related issues, Passenger Focus has been involved in:

- Commenting on and influencing the content of the Passenger's Charter
- Development of the service quality regime – EQUiP- and evaluation of the merits or otherwise of weighting specific factors
- Making recommendations on the content of the Disabled People's Protection Policy
- Reviewing and suggesting improvements to the Complaints Handling Procedure
- Suggesting improvements to the postal and internet Delay Repay claim forms
- Presenting the recommendations from our Fares and Ticketing work and following up with a more detailed discussion with the Development Director
- Commenting on the proposed Access Minor works programme
- Discussion of the plans for introduction of additional rolling stock and the proposed refurbishment programme
- Discussion of the Showcase stations and Station Travel Plan schemes
- Discussion of consultation arrangements and formal submission on proposals to change the East Coastway timetable
- Planning for the first ever Stakeholder Forum and commenting on publicity material for recruitment of a 1000 strong passenger panel
- Discussion of the development of an ITSO smartcard scheme and associated potential changes to the fares structure.

Sharon Hedges was also invited to make a presentation on Passenger Focus expectations for the franchise at the first Southern Management conference since the new contract commenced. This provided an opportunity to emphasise the messages about passenger priorities and placing their interests at the heart of delivery to over 100 managers from across the organisation.

Looking ahead to the future issues that will impact on passengers, the first of the five timetable changes for the franchise takes place in May 2010, with further changes in December 2010 and December 2011. Plans are being developed for regular liaison with Head of Train Specification and Planning to ensure early information about the implications for passengers.

**B.** The Sussex RUS was published on 29 January 2010. Passenger Focus was a member of the Stakeholder Management Group (SMG) and also the Passenger Demand/Options appraisal sub-group and, through challenging input in both of these forums we played an active role in influencing the content of the strategy.

Passenger groups and stakeholders were given the opportunity to attend and comment on the developing RUS at an initial baseline information exhibition, an interim Wider Stakeholder meeting and at a formal consultation meeting once the draft strategy was published. Passenger Focus also included information about the RUS in Passenger Voice, on the website and through direct exchanges with local contacts, many of whom provided us with a copy of their responses.

The RUS has recognised the significant existing pressures on the Sussex Route and foresees a point where no further additional capacity can be squeezed out of the network. Having effectively ruled out 16 car or double-decked trains as impractical and inadequate, it recommends consideration of a new line solution for the future.

One of the most contentious aspects of the existing service pattern is the operation of the Gatwick Express which operates non-stop between Gatwick airport and London Victoria at a fifteen minute frequency in both directions throughout the day. Since December 2008, the Gatwick Express has been extended to Brighton in the morning and evening high peaks. This has created a loss of connectivity at East Croydon and, particularly, Clapham Junction, for Brighton passengers and had a consequent knock-on impact on other services, notably those to the East and West Coastway.

Passenger Focus has argued for some time that the Gatwick Express, with considerably lighter loadings than most other services, represents a poor use of capacity on a constrained network. Whilst the wishes of airport passengers should not be overlooked, there is a clear view amongst the majority of passengers and stakeholders that the current service pattern of Gatwick Express needs to be changed to optimise carrying capacity on the network as a whole.

During development of the Sussex RUS the need for evidence to quantify the needs for interchange at East Croydon and Clapham Junction was identified and Passenger Focus part-funded this research in conjunction with Network Rail. As a result of the findings the RUS recommends inserting stops in between two and four of the high peak Gatwick Express services in the morning and evening. Passenger Focus will now be pressing the DfT and Southern to make implementing this recommendation an early priority.

Overall, the recommendations of the Sussex RUS are welcome. There is a clear strategy to increase capacity through a variety of measures. However, even when all the identified options for implementation are in place, the expectation is that crowding will be only somewhat improved upon today's levels which many passengers comment are unacceptable. With the challenging financial climate ahead there must also be a question about the resources available for Control Period 5 and beyond, even if no adjustments are made to the schemes anticipated for delivery in CP4.

**C.** Around the time the 09/10 objectives were set, Passenger Focus was consulted by Southern on proposed changes designed to improve the resilience of the timetable and increase reliability and punctuality of Sussex Coast services. These had been adversely affected since the December 2008 timetable was introduced, alongside 442 trains to operate the extended Gatwick Express services in the morning and evening peaks. We supported the changes which, when introduced, began to turn around some of the worrying performance problems seen at the turn and in the early months of the year.

During the course of the year Passenger Focus has continued to discuss performance issues with both Southern and Network Rail and has monitored efforts by both organisations to ensure improved punctuality and reliability. A number of initiatives have been introduced, including investment in various infrastructure improvements designed to reduce weaknesses in the system and improve ability to restore services more swiftly after incidents or problems.

Southern and Network Rail have established joint working procedures as well as internal systems and teams to focus on maintaining and improving performance. To some extent these paid off and, for parts of the year, performance ran at welcome high levels. However, recent months have seen deterioration in performance and further focus on the problems is required.

Requests for detailed performance figures have met with partial success. Passenger Focus receives from Network Rail a useful Performance Overview for each reporting period. This sets out the overall performance figures, the impact of NR delays on Southern and First Capital

Connect and identifies the main causes of performance impacts.

Southern are now providing weekly performance reports which identify a range of contributors to delay. Further discussions are continuing about access to the 'dashboard' compiled by Network Rail and more detailed analysis of Southern performance on a route by route basis, particularly the causes of repeated or significant delays.

In November, Sharon Hedges attended a Southern internal open day with performance, control and train planning teams to learn more about how all elements of the operation combine together with the aim of delivering resilient performance.

NPS figures show that whilst there has been some improvement in passenger perceptions of punctuality/reliability and how well Southern deals with delays there is still some way to go, particularly in the latter case.

NPS	Autumn 09		Spring 09	
	satisfied	dissatisfied	satisfied	dissatisfied
Punctuality/reliability	79%	12%	74%	27%
How well company deals with delays	33%	26%	32%	30%

Southern and Network Rail have introduced posters to apologise for and explain the problems when there has been significant disruption. Websites also provide more information about service problems. However, the principal needs of passengers are for information whilst their journeys are affected.

Work is now underway with the passenger disruption panel and the next steps are to start more detailed dialogue with Southern about how the feedback can be used to drive improvements in provision of information during delays.

#### **4. Other issues**

In addition to attention to general issues under the Sussex RUS and performance objectives, Passenger Focus has been engaged in ongoing discussions about the particular concerns of passengers on East Coastway services.

Prior to December 2008 there were already concerns about the length of journey and some dissatisfaction with performance. Since the timetable change date there have been further impacts on these journeys and a particular problem with over-crowding. A new passenger group has been formed and has forged an effective alliance with other groups, local MPs and other stakeholders.

Discussions have been held with Southern, the DfT and passenger groups to seek a solution. Following direct lobbying of Lord Adonis a meeting convened between DfT officials, Southern, passenger representatives and MPs was attended by Sharon Hedges in late November. The outcome of various proposals put to Southern and the DfT at that meeting is awaited.