

Ms Millie Banerjee
Chair
British Transport Police Authority
The Forum
5th Floor
74-80 Camden Street
London NW1 0EG

3rd Floor, Fleetbank House
2-6 Salisbury Square, London, EC4Y 8JX
w www.passengerfocus.org.uk
t 0300 123 0860 f 020 7583 9848
e info@passengerfocus.org.uk
direct 0300 123 0852
e anthony.smith@passengerfocus.org.uk

8 January 2013

Our ref: Lett6062/Banerjee/AS/ad

Dear Millie

BTP strategy and medium term financial plan 2013-18, policing plan 2013/14 and budget 2013/14

Thank you for your letter, dated 21st December seeking comments from Passenger Focus on BTPs' strategy, financial and policing plan and budget.

As you are no doubt aware, passengers consider personal security across the rail network to be a relatively high priority for improvement¹. Out of 30 service attributes, passengers placed personal security on trains and at stations, twelfth and fourteenth respectively². Furthermore, we know that on some franchises passengers consider similar improvements to be an even greater priority. In the case of C2C passengers, improving security at stations was considered to be the 5th highest priority when research was conducted in 2010 as part of the forthcoming Essex Thameside consultation. Something the Department for Transport highlighted in the 2012 consultation document.

Whilst the general trend, over the last five years, has seen an increase in passenger satisfaction with personal security, the most recent wave of the National Passenger (Spring 2012), demonstrates that satisfaction scores for security are still relatively low. When asked about their satisfaction with security on stations only 68% of passengers

¹ Passenger priorities for improvements in rail services, Passenger Focus, March 2010

² *ibid*



said that they were satisfied³. Despite satisfaction with personal security on trains scoring higher, 77%, this is still below the overall satisfaction score which stands at 83%⁴.

The National Passenger Survey also tells us that those who travel most frequently, i.e. commuters, are the least satisfied with security on the train (72%) and at the station (64%); particularly those travelling with London and the South East TOCs⁵. The relatively low levels of satisfaction with personal security, both on trains and stations, would therefore suggest that there is still much the industry could do to make passengers feel that their personal security is safeguarded.

National Passenger Survey

Passenger Focus believes that the ultimate measure of whether a franchise is delivering is whether the passengers are satisfied or not. As such, we have called upon the Department for Transport to stretch those bidding for new franchises to improve satisfaction figures where they are low. Relying on overall scores risks masking specific areas of poor performance, as there is often disparity between satisfaction figures for different building blocks/routes (within a franchise). We therefore recommend that the worst performing attributes in some areas are brought up to a common, but higher, standard. For those reasons we would be supportive of a BTP objective that focused on working with operators to improve NPS scores for personal security and attempts to look at wider stakeholder confidence, particularly amongst under 16s who often have significant concerns about personal security. As a member of RSSB's Community Safety Forum we are aware of BTP's partnership with the ARC Theatre and are supportive of such initiatives to engage with those groups whose perceptions of authority present a significant barrier to overcome.

If the amount of overall crime on the railway is to reduce further, it is understandable that BTP will need to prioritise those types of crime that are most common and impact passenger perceptions of the railway most. However there must be sufficient flexibility within the strategy to allow the force to deal with high impact crimes when they occur. Given the disparity between satisfaction figures on some routes it seems entirely appropriate for BTP to have strategic themes whilst also having a central requirement on Areas to agree priority locations with stakeholders; and that partners will have an influence on where activity should take place.

If BTP is to establish an objective focused on working with operators to improve NPS scores Passenger Focus would be interested to know whether there is anything that can be done to utilise the recent RSSB research, which evaluated the effectiveness of

³ National Passenger Survey Spring 2012, Passenger Focus

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid



different personal security measures found at stations. The research concluded that both secure stations and safer parking scheme interventions can have a positive impact on reducing crime. Whilst we are sure BTP must already do a great deal of work on crime prevention with the TOCs, this research might prove to become a valuable tool in helping operators understand where they can best channel their resources. With regard to the secure stations scheme itself, we are aware that there are a number of success stories arising from stations gaining accreditation, and would urge BTP, in conjunction with industry partners, to publicise these in order to improve passenger perceptions.

Delay minutes

Passengers tell us that they want a punctual and reliable railway. Punctuality is one of the top passenger priorities for improvement and is the main driver of overall passenger satisfaction. Delays caused by cable theft clearly have a significant impact on passengers. Up until 2011 the incidence of cable theft and the number of delay minutes this caused had reached such a level that it was estimated to be costing the industry £15m a year. The fact that 2012 saw a 62% reduction in delay minutes attributed to this type of crime must, in no small part, be attributed to BTPs' contribution towards the national metal theft taskforce. The 11% reduction in delay minutes attributable to the improved management of fatalities is also noteworthy. Given the emphasis that passengers place on the importance of a punctual rail service Passenger Focus is supportive of BTP setting targets to further reduce the number of delay minutes caused by metal theft and for incidents that involve a police presence. Whilst we note funding for the task force comes to an end this year, we would hope that the various bodies involved will find a way of continuing its work and utilising the lessons that have been learnt.

Whilst a target to reduce the number of delay minutes will be welcomed by passengers (if delivered) the delays themselves are often further compounded by the way that the industry manages delays. This is the main cause/driver of dissatisfaction amongst passengers, and we would therefore encourage BTP to further explore what it can do to help operators provide accurate and reliable information. In 2012 Passenger Focus responded to BTP's disruption strategy, and in doing so commented on the guidance intended for BTP staff when particular types of disruption occur. In the case of the trespass guidelines, for example, we suggested that there was merit in having an explicit mention of communication. For instance, how long might it take officers to reach the scene/ confirm it is safe. Whilst the latter may be hard to predict, it might be possible if it is a hotspot and officers have some experience of checking it. We presume that records are kept of incidents and that they help form the list of hot-spots, so it may be possible to add how long it took to clear the event as part of those records.



Such estimates – if passed back to passengers - at least begin to give them a sense of how long they might be delayed and allow them to start making alternative arrangements. This doesn't have to be expressed in terms of targets for the police but more of a best guess based on previous experience. Indeed, this 'predictive delay' element is something that we would like to see considered in general throughout the strategy for managing disruption – i.e. are BTP officers able to give a 'best guess' as to how long they might take to reach/assess a situation. The reduction in average clearance time after a fatality, by BTP, is a welcome development but passengers are often left guessing how long it will take to get the railway running again; though this is not necessarily attributable to BTP directly. There are a number of different variables that will determine the length of delays/advice given, such as displaced rolling stock, the availability of diversionary routes etc, but on some parts of the network having such an estimate will provide a clear indication of how long passengers are likely to be left waiting for services to resume.

Anti-social behaviour

Research undertaken by Passenger Focus continues to point to visible staffing and anti-social behaviour (in particular the problem of dealing with those that are under the influence of drugs/alcohol) as being the key issues that rail passengers want addressed. It is therefore encouraging that BTP are looking to encourage officers to challenge anti-social behaviour and other lower level but impactful offences.

Value for money

In previous years Passenger Focus highlighted the fact that, given the economic climate, several train operating companies were looking to reduce front-line staff and that in some cases this meant proposals to reduce booking office opening hours. The economic climate continues to exert such pressures on train operators and it is likely that additional weight will be placed on BTP to provide a more visible presence at stations where the number of staff hours is reduced. Particularly so, after dark, when passenger concerns over personal security are heightened. Proposals to redirect some visible resources to the frontline later in the day, and a proactive attempt to tackle ASB are therefore welcomed.

We are aware through our involvement in the Rail Football Task Force, sponsored by the Rail Safety Standards Board, that whilst high impact crimes of violence, committed by fans travelling on the railway are in decline the number of lower level anti-social behaviour offences is increasing. Regardless of who's committing the offences, be that football fans, groups of youths etc, passengers are clear that it is this type of disorder that concerns them most. It is therefore not only important to detect, but deter as well.



Perhaps efforts can be made to target those groups most likely to be committing the offences in order to get the message across, that particular types of behaviour will not be tolerated on the railway.

I trust that the above comments will be helpful; should you have any queries, please feel free to get in touch.

Yours sincerely


Anthony Smith
Chief Executive