

The Essex Thameside Franchise: A consultation response from Passenger Focus

May 2012



Passenger Focus

Passenger Focus is pleased to submit our response to the consultation on the Essex Thameside franchise building on our previous work and utilising research involving over three thousand passengers using services on these routes.

Passenger Focus is the independent public body set up by the Government to protect the interests of Britain's rail passengers, England's bus and tram passengers outside London and coach passengers in England on scheduled domestic services. We are funded by the Department for Transport (DfT) but operate independently.

Our mission is to get the best deal for passengers. 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 passengers and we work with the industry, passenger groups and government to secure journey improvements.

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1. Introduction

Passenger Focus welcomes the opportunity to provide a rail passengers' perspective as the specification for the Essex Thameside franchise is developed.

This consultation response is based on research with 1078 passengers on c2c services which provided a detailed understanding of their views, needs and aspirations. We also examined the National Passenger Survey (NPS) results from 2230 respondents using these services. These research findings, combined with outputs from our wide ranging studies of passenger needs and perceptions on many issues, inform this independent submission to the franchise consultation.

Passenger Focus is pleased to have engaged with the Department for Transport (DfT) from an early stage in this franchise replacement process. We have used discussions to highlight key passenger issues and the findings of our research on a range of subjects. In January 2012 we built on previous research into passenger needs on this franchise and updated our original input in a further submission setting out our high-level recommendations for the forthcoming 15 year franchise¹.

The recently published Rail Command Paper² marks a further evolution of the rail agenda and the context in which the Essex Thameside franchise will be let. We note the significant themes addressed, particularly of capacity, performance, information and disruption and anticipate that these will be reflected in the approach to the final specification. The accompanying documents on fares and ticketing and devolution/decentralisation require further consideration and Passenger Focus will make formal responses on these issues during the applicable consultation periods.

1.1 Franchise consultation response

This document develops and adds to the analysis and recommendations made in our previous submissions. In this response we address the consultation questions for which we have relevant information and appropriate evidence of passenger needs and aspirations. We also discuss other significant issues we believe should be considered within the Essex Thameside franchise specification and final contract. Feedback received from passenger and stakeholder groups has provided information about local issues and challenges and has aided our understanding of the context in which the franchise will operate.

¹ What passengers want from the Essex Thameside rail franchise, November 2009
Passenger Focus's response to the Essex Thameside franchise consultation, June 2010
The Essex Thameside franchise: a further submission from Passenger Focus, submitted in January 2012 and published in February.

² Reforming our Railways: Putting the Customer First, Department for Transport, March 2012

2. Summary of key points and main recommendations

This section provides a summary of the key points and our main recommendations for the Essex Thameside franchise. Full details of the research and analysis that Passenger Focus has undertaken to inform this consultation response are set out in the following pages.

2.1 Evidence base and passenger priorities for the franchise

The Passenger Focus response to the Essex Thameside franchise consultation draws on research with over three thousand passengers using current services and other themed research. It builds on considerable previous work and ongoing discussions with the Department of Transport regarding the new franchise.

The top passenger priorities for improvement in the franchise are:

- providing a punctual and reliable service
- provision of sufficient capacity, both in terms of frequency of service and sufficient seating on the train
- delivering value for money
- effective management of any disruption, especially through information to passengers
- making available accurate information about trains and platforms
- improvements to personal security.

2.2 Vision for the franchise

The vision for the franchise is acknowledged. However, the following points should also be addressed:

The franchise specification will need to include detailed commitments and obligations that the operator can be held to and performance measured against.

The specification should require current high standards of punctuality and reliability to be maintained, if not improved, and require a strong operational focus on right-time performance and the measurement of punctuality at key intermediate stations as well as destination.

The lack of any clear reference to the significant issue of peak capacity is a real concern. There must be mechanisms in place to ensure capacity effectively keeps pace with growing demand – and without resorting to pricing passengers off.

It is important that there are adequate safeguards to ensure retailing is responsive to passenger needs, particularly in terms of ease of purchase and clarity about terms and restrictions.

Passengers value a visible staff presence at stations and this important role, especially in providing information and enhancing perceptions of personal safety should not be overlooked.

Ensuring passenger satisfaction should be a cornerstone of the franchise structure, along with explicit targets for measuring this. Passenger Focus believes that there is an important role for the National Passenger Survey (NPS) in these assessments, as a genuine measure of passenger views.

There should be a requirement to publish information that research has identified is important to passengers, particularly punctuality and crowding.³ Clear expectations should be set for disaggregation to the lowest level possible to enable passengers to access data relating to the services relevant to them.

2.3 Schemes, stakeholders and other initiatives

Investment plans should focus on identified passenger priorities and prioritise for investment schemes which improve punctuality/reliability and capacity.

Franchise agreements should have clauses that enable changes to be quickly agreed between parties when new schemes require to be implemented.

Experience shows that those who lose services can encounter a number of difficulties unless there are well-planned and effective mitigations put in place from the outset. This must be a requirement should any proposed decrements be given consideration.

2.3.1 Rail value for money

Passenger Focus recognises the importance of delivering value for money for taxpayers and passengers and the need to increase the efficiency of the rail industry. However, we are concerned at some of the proposals surrounding demand management. Many commuters have little (or limited) ability to change travel patterns in response to rising fares.

There are some legitimate anxieties expressed by passengers surrounding cost-cutting. These are particularly around the availability of staff and ensuring that station facilities are available whilst trains are in service. Reducing costs through genuine improvements to efficiency will largely be welcomed, but there will be negative impacts if this simply results in wholesale cutbacks that impact on reasonable passenger expectations and a quality of experience that makes the railway a viable and safe environment in which to travel.

2.4 The service specification

The Essex Thameside franchise needs a strong and sufficiently detailed specification to protect both Government and passenger interests. This should allow intervention when required to ensure improvement and, as a final sanction, the removal of an operator who consistently fails to deliver the necessary levels of service.

There must be sufficient detail in the specification to protect key journey opportunities. The provision of sufficient capacity must also be addressed.

The specification for the future franchise should provide a framework to ensure that service provision is based on passenger needs and priorities and is linked to key measures of passenger satisfaction.

Where there is potential for any significant change to train service provision at any time during the franchise there must be a requirement for a transparent, meaningful and robust consultation process which allows all stakeholders' views to be listened to and responded to, prior to changes being finalised or implemented.

³ Putting rail information in the public domain, Passenger Focus and Office of Rail Regulation, May 2011

2.4.1 Capacity

Provision of sufficient capacity is a key concern for passengers and Passenger Focus is seriously concerned about the prospect of a 15-year franchise being let without sufficient mechanisms to address this critical issue as demand grows over time.

In view of the capacity challenge we stress that the franchise must include requirements for regular, accurate and comprehensive crowding measures and a requirement to plan in advance for growth. There needs to be a review mechanism that can be invoked where capacity has been identifiably outstripped by demand.

Passenger Focus believes that the franchise contract should require the operator to take all possible steps to provide sufficient capacity across all services throughout the life of the franchise. We recognise this will present some significant challenges. However, this is too important an issue for passengers to be excused or ignored.

To effectively manage crowding a train company needs high quality loadings data, with the ability to analyse individual trains, different days of the week, and seasonal impacts. The public reporting of crowding levels needs to be more transparent and data should be disaggregated by route to make it more representative of an individual passenger's experience.

Targets for provision of capacity should be set and monitored throughout the length of the franchise, with the expectation they will be achieved at the earliest possible opportunity. Whilst seating capacity must be part of the metrics, the specification should also allow for sensible reconfigurations of interiors where this can be demonstrated to be appropriate for passenger interests. Capacity should not be managed by 'pricing-off' passengers from the rail network nor adjustment to timetables that nominally improve crowding but cause other difficulties for passengers.

2.4.2 Reliability and performance

The significance of delivering on reliability and performance cannot be overstated. It is the top priority for improvement amongst passengers surveyed on the Essex Thameside research.

Our recommendation for this franchise to be a right time railway is a realistic aspiration and the specification should include requirements to move towards this during the initial years of the franchise.

The franchise specification should require punctuality to be measured and reported at intermediate stops.

Punctuality and performance should be disaggregated to the maximum extent possible to be meaningful to passengers.

2.4.3 Engineering works and maintenance

It is important that best practice is incorporated into the new franchise specification. Passenger Focus is calling on the rail industry to make a simple pledge to keep passengers on trains wherever possible and use buses only as a last resort.

Passenger Focus recommends that improved management of service disruption, whether planned or unplanned, is incorporated into the key objectives for the Essex Thameside franchise.

2.5 Delivering improvements for passengers

Passengers will undoubtedly expect that a 15-year franchise will include proposals to improve the overall quality of service delivered to passengers. Passenger Focus recommends that the specification sets out clear requirements for delivering improved passenger satisfaction across a range of areas.

2.5.1 Fares and ticketing and revenue protection

Our research indicates three main themes relating to passenger concerns about fares and ticketing: value for money, complexity and lack of trust and transparency. We recommend that the specification includes a number of proposed measures to help address these problems.

The franchise should also include a requirement to include a demonstration of customer satisfaction with retailing overall within the service quality measures. In the interests of transparency the operator should be required to provide data that illustrates the experience of different passenger groups.

An effective strategy for revenue protection is important for the new franchise. However, the strategy must provide safeguards for those who make an innocent mistake and whose intention was never to defraud the system.

2.5.2 Stations

Bidders should commit to a strategy to ensure that at least minimum standards are met at all stations within the franchise within a specified time from commencement. Further cycles of investment should also be committed to maintain and progressively improve upon the station environment and facilities.

Bidders should be encouraged to commit to station travel plans schemes, with roll out dispersed across the network and throughout the life of the franchise.

Passenger Focus research on stations consistently demonstrates that, in addition to station facilities, there are two key factors that operators need to consider when thinking about how to improve passenger satisfaction with stations: Information and staff.

2.5.3 Information

Real time information provision at all stations should be a core requirement of the franchise.

The franchise specification should require bidders to meet high standards of information provision for all stages of the journey. This should include requirements to meet passenger needs for initial planning, at the station of departure, during the journey, at the arrival station, and particularly when there is disruption.

2.5.4 Staff and security

Passenger Focus is concerned that bidders for the franchise do not overlook the very significant roles that staff play and the value that passengers attach to a visible staff presence, especially at stations.

Passengers with assistance needs are particularly dependent on staff to deliver the help they require and to fulfil requests made through Passenger Assist.

Many station facilities and services are only available whilst staff are present. Feedback indicates significant concern about the lack of access to toilets and waiting rooms if staff are withdrawn from stations or hours are significantly reduced.

To improve security and safety Passenger Focus recommends that the franchise specification should include CCTV and linked help-point provision at any stations that do not currently have these facilities.

It is clear from research evidence that the visible presence of staff will be a major factor in improving perceptions of personal security.

Passenger Focus recommends that development and implementation of a strategy to improve passenger satisfaction with personal security should be a key objective for the franchise.

2.6 Service quality and other targets

Passenger Focus strongly supports the principle of monitoring and improving service quality through a combination of NPS results and periodic reviews of Train Operating Company (TOC) Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Disaggregated targets for both measures should be set and performance against them published widely. A financial penalty regime should apply with resources ring-fenced for additional investment into service quality measures that are most likely to improve passenger satisfaction.

Given the very high significance of these factors to passengers the specification must include traditional 'hard' performance targets covering punctuality, reliability and crowding. However, we believe that there is a need for much more transparency surrounding these targets.

Overall, the franchise should require an appropriate level of disaggregation on current measures and require the operator to comply as reporting requirements evolve.

Passenger Focus recognises the value of both input and output measures provided that they are based on passengers' priorities and needs. Passenger responses to the consultation should be used to further inform the targets and measures that go into the franchise specification.

2.7 Accessibility, the Equality Act and minor works fund

Passenger Focus recommends a requirement for an audit of accessibility of stations, establishment of a minor works fund and advocates that consultation with relevant groups should include inviting suggestions about how this money might best be spent to meet identified needs.

A number of other requirements beyond the provisions of Disabled People's Protection Policy (DPPP) guidance are also suggested, including a mobility scooter policy and priority card and seating measures.

2.8 Updated status of 2009 recommendations

Appendix 2 provides an update on the status of Passenger Focus recommendations from 2009. These complement the detail in the main sections of the report and should be read in conjunction with the relevant sections.

3. Research, evidence and publications relevant to this refranchising process (Question 3)

3.1 The Passenger Focus evidence base

Passenger Focus is committed to evidence-based influencing and has produced research and reports on a wide range of topics relevant to this refranchising process and to future operations under the new contract. We have provided the Department for Transport (DfT) and prospective bidders a copy of our research library index containing links to virtually all our publications. We have also directly provided these organisations with particularly important reports and discussed with them in some detail our research into subjects most salient to this refranchise.

3.2 Evidence on Essex Thameside

In addition to research on particular themes we also have evidence relating specifically to the Essex Thameside refranchise. This comprises:

- research with 1078 c2c passengers on mainline and Tilbury Loop routes conducted in 2009
- National Passenger Survey results for all recent waves for the current c2c franchise (including 2230 from 2011 alone) which can be interrogated in a variety of ways.

Previous input to the Department includes:

- What passengers want from the Essex Thameside rail franchise, November 2009
- Passenger Focus's response to the Essex Thameside franchise consultation, June 2010
- The Essex Thameside franchise: a further submission from Passenger Focus submitted in January 2012 and published in February.

Data from the route research is included in the November 2009 document which, along with all previous input on this franchise, is available on the Passenger Focus website⁴. We recommend reference to these documents for additional detail on passenger requirements from the franchise as, for brevity, we do not replicate all previous commentary within this response.

On the basis of current and previous research the core priorities identified for the next Essex Thameside franchise are:

- providing a punctual and reliable service
- provision of sufficient capacity, both in terms of frequency of service and sufficient seating on the train
- delivering value for money
- effective management of any disruption, especially through information to passengers
- making available accurate information about trains and platforms
- improvements to personal security.

Our further submission provided a commentary on the core factors identified for the franchise and confirmed the validity of virtually all our 2009 recommendations. For clarity we provide an extract from this submission in Appendix 1, reference the status of the original recommendations in the various sections of this response and confirm applicability in an updated listing at Appendix 2.

⁴ www.passengerfocus.org.uk

4 Vision for the franchise (Question 1)

Passenger Focus notes the proposed elements of the vision for the franchise, but would emphasise the points below.

A vision for the franchise is a legitimate concept but this would have greater value if this was framed in aspirational terms that drive progress on the key components. Ultimately, however, the franchise specification will need to include detailed commitments and obligations that the operator can be held to and performance measured against.

c2c passengers rank punctuality and reliability as a top priority for improvement and it is also a driver of overall satisfaction so it is a vital objective for the franchise. The specification should require current high standards to be maintained, if not improved, and require a strong operational focus on right-time performance and the measurement of punctuality at key intermediate stations as well as destination.

Responsive and relevant information, particularly during disruption is an important service requirement and it is right that this features within the vision and ensuing commitments by the operator.

The lack of any clear reference to the significant issue of peak capacity is a real concern, particularly in the context of a 15 year franchise. Differentiation of services and incentivising the use of shoulder peak or alternative travel patterns can play a role. However, in the context of “the dominant use of the railway by commuters into central London”⁵ there must be mechanisms in place to ensure capacity effectively keeps pace with growing demand – and without resorting to pricing passengers off.

Recognition that stations should be welcoming, secure and integrated with other local transport is welcome, as are the various comments about the potential for passengers to benefit from smart ticketing and other retail developments. However, it is important that there are adequate safeguards to ensure retailing is responsive to passenger needs, particularly in terms of ease of purchase and clarity about terms and restrictions. Passengers value a visible staff presence at stations and this important role, especially in providing information and enhancing perceptions of personal safety should not be overlooked.

It is disappointing that there is no explicit reference to ensuring passenger satisfaction in the vision statements. This should be a cornerstone of the franchise structure, along with explicit targets for measuring this. Passenger Focus believes that there is an important role for the National Passenger Survey (NPS) in these assessments, as a genuine measure of passenger views.

We agree that the franchise should incorporate flexibility and be characterised by transparent, efficient and strong relationships. These elements should be reinforced by a requirement to embrace the principles of genuinely Open Data and to publish information that research has identified is important to passengers, particularly punctuality and crowding.⁶ Clear expectations should be set for disaggregation to the lowest level possible to enable passengers to access data relating to the services relevant to them.

⁵ Essex Thameside Franchise Consultation, DfT, February 2012, paragraph 1.2

⁶ Putting rail information in the public domain, Passenger Focus and Office of Rail Regulation, May 2011

5 Schemes, stakeholders and other initiatives (Section 7 and Questions 2 and 4)

Passenger Focus believes that future investment plans should focus on identified passenger priorities and prioritise for investment schemes which improve punctuality/reliability and capacity.

We note that no major renewals are planned for the immediate future following comprehensive renewal of the route infrastructure in the 1990s⁷. However, as the infrastructure is also a limiting factor constraining operations to 75 mph or less⁸ we suggest that enhancements that improve the speed of journeys will merit consideration within the life of the new franchise.

Bidders should anticipate that further investment requirements may emerge over time and ensure that they have the resources to engage in industry planning processes and assist in delivering change. Franchise agreements (particularly of 15 years length) should have clauses that enable changes to be quickly agreed between parties when new schemes require to be implemented.

5.1 Remapping, increments/decrements and decentralisation

The Passenger Focus remit does not extend to proposing either increments or decrements for the franchise. However, experience shows that those who lose services can encounter a number of difficulties unless there are well-planned and effective mitigations put in place from the outset. This must be a requirement should any proposed decrements be given consideration

5.2 Stakeholders

Passenger Focus welcomes recognition of our input to the Essex Thameside franchise and the encouragement to bidders to use our research in formulating their proposals for the franchise. We are committed to engagement with the Department and prospective operators.

Transport authorities/consortia, Enterprise Partnerships and local groups will have knowledge of their areas and will be well placed to detail specific factors that might influence future levels of passenger demand. The potential of Community Rail Partnerships to support developments on the local rail network has been successfully demonstrated in many areas and emergent groups may play a valuable role on Essex Thameside, particularly in promoting off-peak usage and contributing to initiatives to enhance stations.

The franchise specification should include requirements for passenger and community engagement and, specifically, consultation mechanisms around planning and possible changes to timetables.

All opportunities to create synergy between rail and other development projects and any potential to seek partnership funding and align delivery mechanisms with other organisations should be seized. With the generally acknowledged importance of integrated transport, a wide commitment to promoting economic development and an increased emphasis on 'place' within local communities the future franchise operator, along with the DfT and Network Rail, should ensure channels of communication are fostered with all significant stakeholder organisations.

⁷ Essex Thameside Franchise Consultation, DfT, February 2012, paragraph 7.4

⁸ Essex Thameside Franchise Consultation, DfT, February 2012, paragraph 4.17

5.3 Rail Value for Money

Passenger Focus recognises the importance of delivering value for money for taxpayers and passengers and the need to increase the efficiency of the rail industry. We made a detailed response⁹ to Sir Roy McNulty's rail value for money study, highlighting the important issues from a passenger perspective. This includes a number of relevant points on asset management, programme and project management and supply chain management.

We note the measures set out in the recent Command Paper¹⁰ to implement rail reform and reduce the cost of the industry and are supportive of those strategies which enhance efficiency and create closer collaboration, reduce duplication and overlap and generate further income by increasing the attractiveness of rail. However, we are concerned at some of the proposals surrounding demand management. Many commuters have little (or limited) ability to change travel patterns in response to rising fares. Such decisions are often tied into longer-term choices on where to work or live. Some may be able to change modes of travel but others, especially when commuting into London, have little in the way of a viable alternative or the flexibility to change work patterns. In such instances increasing commuting fares will have little impact on demand and will not lead to changes in travelling behaviour.

There are also some legitimate anxieties expressed by passengers surrounding cost-cutting. These are particularly around the availability of staff and ensuring that station facilities are available whilst trains are in service. Reducing costs through genuine improvements to efficiency will largely be welcomed but there will be negative impacts if this simply results in wholesale cutbacks that impact on reasonable passenger expectations and a quality of experience that makes the railway a viable and safe environment in which to travel.

We believe it is essential that the 'post-McNulty' debate does not get lost in too narrow an assessment of cost. Efficiency and cost are important - they clearly have a direct impact on the range of service offered to passengers and the fares charged - but cost savings must also be set alongside the value of rail to the economy and the country as a whole. Demand for rail has soared in the last 15 years – with passenger numbers now being at levels last seen during the 1920s. If this growth is to be sustained then it will be essential that the benefits of rail are taken into account in any debate as well as the cost of provision.

5.3.1 Partnership working between Network Rail and the operator on the Essex Thameside franchise

Aligning incentives and working more closely together can certainly help improve efficiency. We know from our research that passengers want a sense of someone being in charge when it comes to the delivery of services, especially during times of disruption. But it cannot just be a case of aligning Network Rail and train company processes to achieve cost-savings, such processes must also be aligned with passengers' priorities. If the end-game is better services for passengers then internal processes and systems must work towards this rather than vice versa. Two particular areas stand out: increasing punctuality and reducing service disruption.

Closer working may provide the opportunity to revisit previously successful practice and have the operator's staff, especially those on stations, trained as first responders to minor local operational incidents (e.g. signal and point failures, road vehicles hitting bridges etc) to get trains moving without having to wait for the arrival of a Network Rail staff member who may be located some distance away.

⁹ The Rail Value for Money Study A Passenger Perspective: Comments by Passenger Focus July 2011

¹⁰ Reforming our Railways: Putting the Customer First, Department for Transport, March 2012

A further opportunity presented by an alliance is the achievement of a step-change in transparency. The 'open-data' agenda is driving the industry towards higher levels of information being in the public domain. We know from our research with the Office of Rail Regulation¹¹ that passengers want access to more tailored information (i.e. data that is relevant to their route/journey). A new, more responsive alliance could make a very public commitment towards accountability by promising greater transparency from the outset.

¹¹ Putting rail information in the public domain, Passenger Focus and Office of Rail Regulation, May 2011

6 The service specification (Section 8 and Questions 5- 8)

Passenger Focus believes that the specification is the key to the entire franchising process. We note the Department's intention to provide greater flexibility for operators to respond to demographic and market changes and commercial opportunities. However, it is only against a sufficiently detailed specification that a TOC's performance can be effectively monitored. And, in the worst case, it would be the standards set out in the specification that would provide the framework for determining if a TOC should be removed for poor performance. For the Government to ensure it gets what it pays for with taxpayers' money there must be specification to set out what is required of the new operator.

Passenger Focus considers there is a need, therefore, for the Essex Thameside franchise to have a strong and sufficiently detailed specification to protect both Government and passenger interests. This should allow intervention when required to ensure improvement and, as a final sanction, the removal of an operator who consistently fails to deliver the necessary levels of service.

6.1 Train service requirements

Passenger Focus welcomes confirmation that the current level of Essex Thameside services rather than the contracted minimum will be the starting point for the new franchise. Whilst acknowledging the need for some flexibility to adapt the train service to changing demands over a 15-year period, Passenger Focus is clear that there must be sufficient detail in the specification to protect key journey opportunities. These must include journeys to/from school and work.

As a minimum Passenger Focus would expect the specification to give a broad outline of the core service to be provided: frequency, first and last trains, basic service patterns, and key journey times. The provision of sufficient capacity must also be addressed.

Where there is potential for any significant change to train service provision at any time during the franchise there must be a requirement for a transparent, meaningful and robust consultation process that allows all stakeholders views to be listened to and responded to, prior to changes being finalised or implemented.

6.2 Service frequency and service patterns

The specification for the future franchise should provide a framework to ensure that service provision is based on passenger needs and priorities and is linked to key measures of passenger satisfaction. This should require the operator to plan, resource and deliver a passenger focused, optimised service pattern.

Engagement with local communities should be regarded as a starting point for service developments.

Comprehensive and well-publicised consultation with passengers must be a mandated requirement for all timetable proposals other than minor adjustments to existing services.

6.2.1 Service frequencies – evidence from passenger research

Findings from Essex Thameside route based research and NPS provide evidence that can inform service planning. Bidders' proposals should be assessed for ability to deliver on the factors that passengers identify as priorities for improvement and to increase passenger satisfaction.

It should be noted, however, that the references below are to the views of existing passengers and cannot be taken to be representative of non-users whose journey choices may be influenced in different ways.

6.2.1.1 Drivers of passenger satisfaction and priorities for improvement

In our 2009 route research¹² frequency of trains was the highest priority for improvement for mainline passengers and second for those on Tilbury Loop.

Table 1 demonstrates that frequency of trains is also the most important factor in determining the satisfaction of c2c passengers. It is the highest factor for both the franchise overall, the Tilbury Loop and for off-peak passengers on the mainline.

Table 1 – NPS main drivers of satisfaction

NPS 2011	c2c All	c2c (All Mainline)	c2c (Peak Mainline)	c2c (Off-Peak Mainline)	c2c Loop
Station Factors					
Cleanliness Of The Station		6%		5%	
The Overall Station Environment			11%		9%
Train Factors					
The Frequency Of The Trains On That Route	31%	27%	14%	31%	24%
Punctuality/Reliability (i.e. The Train Arriving/Departing On Time)	15%	9%	13%	6%	19%
The Length Of Time The Journey Was Scheduled To Take (Speed)	4%	3%	5%		6%
Up Keep And Repair Of The Train	5%		5%		20%
The Comfort Of The Seating Area	6%	4%		14%	
The Ease Of Being Able To Get On And Off The Train	15%	15%		26%	10%
Your Personal Security Whilst On Board The Train		6%	24%		
The Cleanliness Of The Inside Of The Train	15%	30%	28%	17%	12%
Key: Green = top factor/ orange = second factor(s)					

6.2.1.2 Comparison of NPS scores on frequency, journey time and other key factors

Table 2 below shows c2c NPS scores for a number of key factors broken down by peak and off-peak and also by mainline and loop services. It illustrates that whilst there are relatively high levels of satisfaction with frequency of trains and the length of time of journey, these factors are ranked lower by off-peak passengers and those on Loop services. Increasing the frequency of service is also likely to improve satisfaction with sufficient room to sit/stand as this will result in an overall increase of seats.

¹² What passengers want from the Essex Thameside rail franchise, November 2009

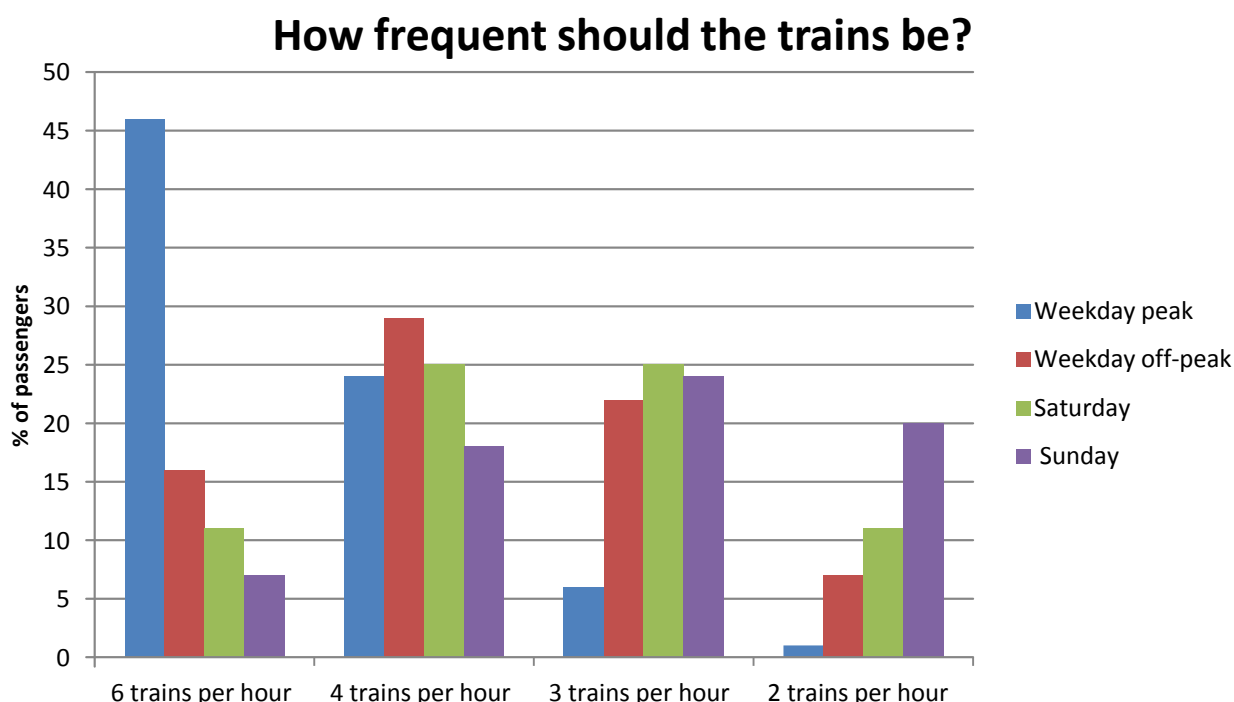
Table 2 Comparison of NPS scores for frequency, journey time and other key factors, autumn 2011, % satisfied

Factor	c2c Peak	c2c Off-Peak	c2c Mainline	c2c Loop
Frequency of trains on route	86	83	88	79
Length of time of journey	89	91	93	87
Punctuality and reliability	92	92	93	91
Sufficient room to sit/stand	46	76	64	66
Value for money	30	51	45	41

6.2.1.3 Off- peak frequency requirements

The responses of leisure passengers to our 2009¹³ route research can be used as a proxy for those that are most likely to use off-peak services. Figure 1 below demonstrates that these passengers wanted at least four trains per hour in the off-peak.

Figure 1 – Off-peak frequency requirements



6.2.1.4 Balance between journey times and provision of stops at intermediate stations

In the 2009 research we asked Leisure users travelling on the mainline whether, if they had a choice, would they prefer longer trains with more carriages, faster trains that stopped less often or slower trains stopping at more stations:

¹³ What passengers want from the Essex Thameside rail franchise, November 2009

- 73% of the leisure users on the mainline wanted faster trains that stopped less often (more so than Commuters, 69%)
- On the Tilbury Loop 69% of leisure passengers gave the same answer (again more so than Commuters, 50%)

Stakeholder feedback at the DfT consultation event in Westcliff indicated that in order to attract more passengers to destinations such as Southend a faster off-peak service should be offered.

If there are opportunities to increase off-peak frequencies then the option of providing faster limited stop services is likely to be attractive to passengers. If no additional services were to be provided then the needs of those passengers whose station may be omitted from calling patterns in order to speed up existing services would need to be considered.

6.2.1.5 Passenger demand for earlier or later trains

The 2009 research found that passengers were broadly happy with the time their Monday to Saturday services commenced in the mornings. However, on Sundays, 34% of passengers on the Tilbury Loop wanted a pre- 06.00 start time. This may be a reflection of the fact that for some Loop passengers the first arrival into London was not until 09.30.

There is evidence of greater interest in later services. On Mondays – Fridays 41% of main-line and 36% of Tilbury Loop passengers wanted a post 01.00 departure. This demand was higher still on Saturdays at 52% and 49% respectively.

6.2.1.6 Bank holiday services

Passenger Focus recommends that in line with changing lifestyle patterns the provision of Boxing Day services should be explored to accommodate leisure, shopping and sporting opportunities.

6.2.1.7 Status of previous recommendations

Recommendation 2 from 2009 is confirmed and set out in full in Appendix 2.

6.3 Capacity and crowding

Provision of sufficient capacity is a key concern for passengers and is influenced by both available seats on individual trains and the overall number of trains running (frequency). Frequency ranks in the top two priorities for improvement on mainline and loop services whilst ability to get a seat is fourth priority for mainline passengers and fifth for those on the Loop. A significant priority in its own right, the ability to get a seat also has an important influence on passenger perceptions of value for money.¹⁴ Room to sit/stand and frequency of trains are notable as drivers of passenger dissatisfaction on the c2c Mainline.¹⁵

Table 2 above shows sufficient room to sit and stand was rated satisfactory by only 46% of c2c passengers travelling in the peak, and 76% off-peak, in autumn 2011.

It is clearly the peak that represents the major capacity challenge and, given the Department expects the “already heavy commuter demand to grow”,¹⁶ we question whether the consultation suggestion that “purchasing additional rolling stock... will be difficult to justify”¹⁷ can be an acceptable approach to

¹⁴ Passenger Focus Fares and Ticketing Study 2009:

<http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/news-and-publications/document-search/document.asp?dsid=2526>

¹⁵ NPS waves 22-25

¹⁶ Essex Thameside Franchise Consultation, DfT, February 2012, paragraph 8.10

¹⁷ Essex Thameside Franchise Consultation, DfT, February 2012, paragraph 8.10

delivering the necessary economic and social outcomes that depend on commuters travelling to their place of work at required times.

We note and accept that differentiation of services and incentivising the use of shoulder peak or alternative travel patterns can play a role in managing some demand. Passenger Focus supports the introduction of smart-ticketing as a tool to enable and incentivise changes to travel patterns. However, in the context of “the dominant use of the railway by commuters into central London”¹⁸ there must be mechanisms in place to ensure capacity effectively keeps pace with growing demand – and without resorting to pricing passengers off.

Many commuters have little (or limited) ability to change travel patterns in response to rising fares. Such decisions are often tied into longer-term choices on where to work or live. Some may be able to change modes of travel but others, especially when commuting into London, have little in the way of a viable alternative or the flexibility to change work patterns.

Passenger Focus is seriously concerned about the prospect of a 15-year franchise being let without adequate mechanisms to address this critical issue as demand grows over time.

In view of the capacity challenge we stress that the franchise must include requirements for regular, accurate and comprehensive crowding measures and a requirement to plan in advance for growth. There needs to be a review mechanism that can be invoked where capacity is identifiably outstripped by demand.

Passenger Focus believes that the franchise contract should require the operator to take all possible steps to provide sufficient capacity across all services throughout the life of the franchise. We recognise this will present some significant challenges. However, this is too important an issue for passengers to be excused or ignored.

To effectively manage crowding a train company needs high quality loadings data, with the ability to analyse individual trains, different days of the week, and seasonal impacts. The public reporting of crowding levels needs to be more transparent and data should be disaggregated by route to make it more representative of an individual passenger’s experience.

We welcome the Government’s procurement of a rail passenger counts database which is intended to provide accurate data on train loadings and crowding levels. The future operator must be required to adopt and publish appropriate crowding measures across the range of services and use this information to improve capacity where it is inadequate. NPS satisfaction measures for relevant factors, including overall satisfaction and room to sit and stand, should be published alongside capacity data to demonstrate the impact this has on passengers.

The prevailing standard that no passengers should have to stand, other than by choice, for over 20 minutes on a journey, should remain the benchmark. At no point should stock available for use be sitting in sidings when there is evidence of need for additional capacity on services where it could be deployed. In addition, the franchise specification should require that the particular needs for additional capacity for special events must also be planned for and managed.

Targets for provision of capacity should be set and monitored throughout the length of the franchise, with the expectation they will be achieved at the earliest possible opportunity. Whilst seating capacity must be part of the metrics, the specification should also allow for sensible reconfigurations of interiors where

¹⁸ Essex Thameside Franchise Consultation, DfT, February 2012, paragraph 1.2

this can be demonstrated to be appropriate for passenger interests. Capacity should not be managed by 'pricing-off' passengers from the rail network nor adjustment to timetables that nominally improve crowding but cause other difficulties for passengers.

Where investment in additional rolling stock would provide the necessary capacity to meet identified requirements the onus should be on the operator to build a business case to enable this to happen. If there is a commercial case then there should be prompt action to deliver the necessary vehicles. Where additional subsidy may be required, Passenger Focus expects the operator and the DfT to work together to seek an affordable solution. Where required, assessments should look beyond the immediate franchise into the longer term to create a viable mechanism to respond to identified demand.

Over the lifetime of the franchise the operator must be required to work with Network Rail and within the wider industry processes to develop proposals to further increase capacity to meet demand that is expected to emerge and ensure this information is available to inform future HLOS plans and investment cycles.

Additional efforts should be made to respond to passengers who have physical difficulties in standing for any length of time. Initiatives such as priority seating and cards that the holder can show to identify a proven need should be part of the overall plan for improving accessibility within the franchise.

6.3.1 Status of previous recommendations

Recommendation 3 from 2009 is confirmed and set out in full in Appendix 2.

6.4 Reliability and performance

Beyond noting the importance of delivery of high levels of performance in the new franchise the consultation document makes little mention of this aspect of service. However, the significance of delivering on reliability and performance cannot be overstated. Even with the acknowledged consistently high performance on the current franchise it is the top priority for improvement amongst passengers surveyed on the Essex Thameside research. It is also a notable driver of passenger satisfaction. (See Table 1 above).

We noted in our January 2012 submission that other research¹⁹ demonstrates that commuters appear to notice lateness from the first minute, not just after the five or 10 minutes allowed by Public Performance Measure (PPM). It was also found that the average passenger lateness in the evening peak was worse than the average train lateness. This was because of the effect of cancellations and because many trains were late arriving at intermediate stations even if on time at their destination.

Passenger Focus's principal conclusion from the research is that Britain's railway must in future ensure operational focus on 'right time'²⁰ arrival at all stops. The consistent performance delivered on this part of the network and the opportunities for close working with Network Rail indicate that our recommendation for this franchise to be a right time railway is a realistic aspiration and the specification should include requirements to move towards this during the initial years of the franchise.

The franchise specification should also require punctuality to be measured and reported at intermediate stops. Punctuality and performance should be disaggregated to the maximum extent possible to be

¹⁹ Towards a 'right time' East Anglian railway, March 2010

²⁰ Right time meaning arriving as scheduled, rather than within the five minute allowance given for official industry punctuality measures

meaningful to passengers. This should include breakdowns to show figures for morning and afternoon peaks, daytime, evening and weekend services.

6.4.1 Compensation for delays

The proposal for a 'delay-repay' compensation policy²¹ applicable to all passengers is welcome. However, there is a need for the specification to require meaningful measures to address the specific problems that can be experienced by season-ticket holders if levels of performance should drop and they experience regular delays of between 10-29 minutes that are not covered by the 30 minute threshold for 'delay-repay'.

A formal definition of sustained poor-performance to cover these circumstances and some firm proposals about how this will be reflected in additional compensation to regular travellers should be required.

The specification should also require bidders to set out proposals for raising awareness amongst passengers of when they are entitled to claim compensation and the ways in which they will make the process of requesting and receiving a refund easier.

6.4.2 Status of previous recommendations

Recommendations 1 and 9 from 2009 are confirmed and set out in full in Appendix 2.

6.5 Rolling stock options

We note that the specification will not require specific rolling stock to be used on the franchise. Generally, Passenger Focus considers that decisions about deployment of rolling stock on specific routes and issues of condition, refurbishment and replacement are predominantly for the industry, subject to due regard to passenger needs and preferences on the services for which the trains are used. The key questions to address are:

- what rolling stock is most suitable for passenger needs and travel comfort on the journeys made?
- is there an appropriate balance of seating types, standing room and sufficient capacity overall and is there ease of access within the train?
- can mobility scooters, wheelchairs, prams/buggies and other bulky items be loaded easily and positioned safely and are the needs of disabled passengers accommodated?
- are passenger needs for access to facilities such as toilets, catering, power-sockets, Wi-Fi, and luggage or cycle space addressed?
- are there adequate systems to provide information to passengers about their journey, particularly when there is disruption?
- is the condition and cleanliness of an appropriate level?

The 2009 route based research found 46% of passengers would be very or fairly likely to use Wi-Fi internet connections and 49% to use at seat power sockets. Given the increasing use of mobile technology, these numbers can confidently be expected to have increased, making these important factors to consider within any rolling stock proposition.

²¹ Essex Thameside Franchise Consultation, DfT, February 2012, paragraph 9.5

Passenger Focus has also conducted specific research into passenger needs to inform rolling stock decisions and we recommend that these findings are taken into account in any consideration of options for Essex Thameside²².

Local feedback has indicated concerns about the prospect of changes to the current train fleet. The potential bearing of any train changes on passenger satisfaction should not be overlooked, particularly if performance is impacted in the introductory stages.

6.5.1 Status of previous recommendations

Recommendation 12 from 2009 is confirmed with minor amendment and set out in full in Appendix 2.

6.6 Engineering works and maintenance

Although there is little in the way of major engineering work currently planned for Essex Thameside, there will inevitably be requirements to maintain the infrastructure and other needs may emerge over the life of the franchise. It is therefore important that best practice is incorporated into the new franchise specification.

6.6.1 Preferred engineering service scenarios

Passenger research²³ has found passengers have a very strong preference for engineering options that allow them to remain on a train rather than have services transferred to replacement buses. This consistent passenger preference should be accommodated whenever possible if any intrusive infrastructure access is required on the Essex Thameside franchise.

Passenger Focus is calling on the rail industry to make a simple pledge to keep passengers on trains wherever possible and use buses only as a last resort. It is important that the new operator is incentivised to embrace this approach.

Passenger Focus recommends that improved management of service disruption, whether planned or unplanned, is incorporated into the key objectives for the Essex Thameside franchise. The specification should include the following requirements:

- a requirement to reducing the impact on passengers of Network Rail maintenance, renewal and upgrade of the railway and, in particular, demonstrate efforts to minimise total blockades and the use of bus replacement where options exist to divert, operate single line working etc. The operator should be incentivised against the easy option of a Schedule 4 compensation payment.
- that the operator develop, monitor and regularly review procedures for managing both planned and unplanned disruption and assess the adequacy of plans and actual delivery on the ground with reference to the issues identified in Passenger Focus research into passenger experiences and needs during disruption
- that the operator contribute to industry work to improve responses to service disruption and make a commitment to rapid adoption of further good practice as it emerges.

²² Designing the future: Passengers' preferences for new national intercity rolling stock from 2012 (06/05/2009):

<http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/news-and-publications/document-search/document.asp?dsid=2717>

http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/news-and-publications/document_search/document.asp?dsid=1013

²³ Reading Station Engineering Works – What Passengers Want (26/05/2011):

<http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/news-and-publications/document-search/document.asp?dsid=5162>

Additional comments relating to the provision of information during disruption are included in Section 7.3.

6.6.2 Status of previous recommendations

The recommendations above, together with those in section 7.3.3, supersede Recommendation 7 from 2009.

6.7 Tilbury Town and Tilbury Riverside bus service

Passenger Focus has not directly explored the views of passengers regarding this bus service. However, from work conducted on end-to-end journeys²⁴ we know that passengers value seamless interchange between modes and connections with other forms of public transport. We also know that a lack of information is often a barrier that prevents car drivers using other modes of transport to access the rail network.

Local feedback has suggested that more could be done to advertise the existing bus service to passengers and also points to improvements to the ferry point that the bus serves which may provide the potential to attract new customers.

²⁴ The challenge of getting to the station, passenger experiences, Passenger Focus, August 2011
[http://www.britishparking.co.uk/write/Documents/Library/Reports%20and%20research/getting_to_the_station_august_2011\[1\].pdf](http://www.britishparking.co.uk/write/Documents/Library/Reports%20and%20research/getting_to_the_station_august_2011[1].pdf)

7 Delivering improvements for passengers (Section 9 and Questions 9 -14)

Passengers will undoubtedly expect that a 15-year franchise will include proposals to improve the overall quality of service delivered to passengers. Passenger Focus recommends that the specification sets out clear requirements for delivering improved passenger satisfaction across a range of areas.

Passenger Focus has published research on many aspects of passenger experience, some of which are cited in the consultation document. The specification should require bidders to identify the passenger research they have considered and the steps they will take to ensure that the issues important to passengers will be addressed in their service proposals.

7.1 Fares, ticketing and revenue protection

7.1.1 Fares and ticketing – evidence from passenger research

Evidence from NPS and the 2009 research suggests that new forms of ticketing and payment arrangements would be welcome and could potentially improve perceptions of value for money.

NPS Autumn 2011 figures illustrate that 40% of passengers who classified themselves as ‘less regular commuters’ and 19% of daily commuters were travelling on some form of anytime ticket, generally a more expensive option than season tickets.

Table 3 Ticket purchases by daily and less regular commuters, NPS Autumn 2011

Type of ticket	Less Regular Commuters	Daily Commuters
Anytime	40%	19%
Weekly/Monthly Season	7%	25%
Annual Season	3%	31%

Across the two routes surveyed in 2009, 46% of passengers told us that they would be interested in a carnet ticket, whilst 59% were very or fairly interested in a direct debit scheme to spread payment for annual season tickets.

Given the number of less regular commuters currently travelling on anytime tickets it is possible that a carnet type scheme, that offered the potential to make monetary savings, would be popular with those that don't commute every day. Similarly it would seem a direct debit system would offer a number of those travelling on weekly/monthly season tickets a means to be able to switch to an annual ticket that offers greater savings.

7.1.2 Improving passenger satisfaction with fares and ticketing

Passenger Focus will make a separate response to the recently published consultation on fares and ticketing. The comments in this response focus on identified issues with current policy and practice, further detail of which can be found in our published research.

Our research indicates three main themes relating to passenger concerns about fares and ticketing: value for money, complexity and lack of trust and transparency. We recommend that the specification includes the measures detailed below to help address these problems.

The franchise should also include a requirement to include a demonstration of customer satisfaction with retailing overall within the service quality measures. In the interests of transparency the operator should be required to provide data that illustrates the experience of different passenger groups.

7.1.2.1 Recommendations on fares

- **Single-leg pricing for off peak fares**
- On many journeys passengers can commit to a firm outward travel time but are less able to fix the time of the return journey. Our research on business travel found this to be one of the main barriers for business passengers. Properly structured single-leg pricing, especially for the longer-distance flows that extend beyond existing c2c boundaries (e.g Southend – Banbury or Tilbury – Bedford), allows passengers to use a mix-and-match approach to journey planning without being penalised by the disproportionately high cost of the off-peak single ticket (which may only be 10p or £1 less than the return fare).
- **Improve value for money for commuters by:**
 - developing discounted travel for frequent commuters for whom a traditional season ticket is not cost-effective (e.g. carnet books or wider availability of lower-rate season tickets valid only certain days of the week)
 - developing and promoting a facility to spread the cost of an annual season ticket – allowing more people to take advantage of the benefits offered by an annual ticket
 - offering 'Early-bird' season tickets, with the ability to trade up to the higher price in case of later travel.
- **Protect the travel opportunities of off-peak passengers**

There should be no further dilution of periods of validity of off-peak tickets.
- **Provide greater transparency and reassurance**

Our research on integrated transport found that one of the principal reasons for not using rail was the cost of the ticket/perception of value for money. Research by DfT among non- and irregular users of rail identified cheaper travel as the most important improvement in encouraging them to use trains for short-distance trips more often. And yet, when asked the cost of fares, many passengers will over-estimate the true cost. This shows that the perception of cost and value is important – if passengers perceive the cost to be higher than it is, or the value to be lower, then the industry is losing potential customers and revenue. We believe that more can be done to provide the necessary reassurance and information:
- **Reassure passengers that they have received the best deal**

Display at the station the cheapest 'buy on the day' price for a through ticket to key destinations. Off-peak fares can be considerably cheaper than peak fares - this will help inform perceptions.
- **Give passengers the information on which to make an informed purchase**

Ticket restrictions and validities must be supplied at the point of purchase. Passenger Focus's recent research on ticket-vending machines²⁵ showed that some passengers struggle to buy a ticket from a machine as they were not provided with sufficiently precise or enough information to ensure they got the correct ticket at the right price. This potentially results in passengers buying the more expensive ticket, utilising a 'better safe than sorry' mentality, or taking a chance on the cheaper ticket and risking a penalty or excess fare. We believe that validities intelligible to passengers and staff alike

²⁵ Ticket Vending Machine Usability, Passenger Focus, July 2010

should also be printed on the ticket itself (or at least be supplied with the ticket) to provide continuing reassurance to passengers.

7.1.2.2 Recommendations on retailing

- **Improve usability of TVMs and ensure full range of tickets are available**

Effective retailing via TVMs requires additional safeguards to ensure passengers can purchase the appropriate ticket for their journey. The franchisee must commit to addressing the following points within a defined timescale:

- As an absolute minimum, TVMs at all stations should offer tickets to all others in the franchise, and to principal points, via convenient routes, for through journeys via London, Upminster, Barking, Limehouse and Tilbury. Passenger Focus believes that good practice requires all TVMs to sell tickets to all destinations.
- TVMs should state clearly the range of tickets available from them and if they do not offer a full range of tickets and destinations, then there should be clear information stating what a passenger should do if they are unable to purchase a ticket.
- Information about restrictions and routes needs to be provided in an easily-understandable format on TVMs.
- Card-only machines should clearly inform passengers without a card what to do. Ideally the machine should offer a ticket with the departure station date and time printed on it so that the passengers can purchase a ticket at the next opportunity but meanwhile travel without fear of penalty.

- **Improve confidence in internet retailing**

Some passengers are suspicious that train company websites favour their own services over those of other companies and that they do not necessarily offer the best value tickets for the journey being made. It is important to take the opportunity through the new franchise to protect the unwary, potentially irregular traveller paying more than they need and to give all online purchasers confidence that they have obtained the best price available. This can be achieved by formally extending impartial retailing rules to cover internet ticket sales through the new operator's website.

- **Deliver agreed standards at ticket offices**

- There should be a commitment to ensure agreed ticket-office opening hours be maintained and delivered consistently at all stations, with a formal requirement to report adherence levels to DfT station by station, period by period
- Ticketing and Settlement Agreement standards for queuing times should be met at all stations, with a formal requirement to report adherence levels to DfT station by station every six months and to publish standards and the adherence to them so as to give passengers confidence that these are met.

- **Make it easier to actually buy a ticket**

The success of Oyster PAYG in London shows that passengers will embrace new technology. The continuing development of smartcards and ticketing via mobile phones and 'print at home' technology can help to increase access to fares and reduce the overall cost of retailing.

- **Ensure new ticketing developments benefit passengers**

Over the lifetime of the new franchise some significant changes and developments in retailing can be expected. It is important that these initiatives provide tangible benefits to passengers. The following safeguards should be put into place:

- bidders should commit to adopting and implementing nationally-agreed retailing processes and standards
- the needs of all passengers need to be considered
- the functionality arising from new technology should be capable of being utilised to provide additional passenger benefits
- electronic reimbursement of 'delay repay' compensation
- keeping a record/database of railcard holders so that their entitlement to a reduction can be verified if they do not have their railcard to hand, thereby avoiding a penalty fare/unpaid fare notice if they fail to carry it.
- It is important to ensure that passenger interests are maintained during the trial periods of new ticketing methods. Customer-facing specifications need to be developed involving full consultation with representative bodies.
- It is important that the National Rail Conditions of Carriage (NRCoC) should keep pace with the emerging means of ticketing.
- Given the many retailing channels now available to passengers, a means must be found to make clear to them which is the most suitable for them in terms of ease of use and cost.
- Steps need to be taken to ensure that those intending passengers who have no web access or who cannot use TVMs - fast becoming the predominant means of retailing – are not sidelined from rail travel or penalised.

7.1.3 Status of previous recommendations

In light of the current fares and ticketing consultation, our more recent research and ongoing developments in this area Recommendations 4, 5 and 6 in the 2009 submission are superseded by those in the sections above.

7.1.4 Revenue Protection, Penalty Fares and Unpaid Fare Notices

An effective strategy for revenue protection is important for the new franchise. Passenger Focus believes ticketless travel is an important issue - and one that needs addressing. Passengers who avoid paying for their ticket are in effect being subsidised by the vast majority of fare-paying passengers. It is right that the franchisee will take steps to deter, to catch and to punish those who deliberately set out to avoid payment. However, the revenue protection strategy must provide safeguards for those who make an innocent mistake and whose intention was never to defraud the system.

Passenger Focus has raised with the industry a number of significant concerns around application of penalty fares and unpaid fare notices that have arisen as a result of disturbing passenger experiences brought to our Appeals team. A new franchise provides an opportunity to take a fresh look at how the system operates.

Bidders should be mindful of passenger intent in developing and applying a revenue protection strategy. The DfT should ensure that the following safeguards are written into the franchise agreement:

- The operator should provide clear consistent guidelines explaining when staff should show discretion in the application of penalties. For example when:
 - passengers do not have their railcard with them
 - the required tickets are not available from a ticket machine

- they are told by a member of staff that they can board a train without a valid ticket
- ticket restrictions are not clear or available at the point of purchase.
- The operator must clearly state that they will not go straight to any form of criminal prosecution unless they suspect (or have proof) that there was an intent to defraud.
- Penalties should be proportionate to the actual loss which would have been suffered by the operator.
- The operator must monitor the number of unpaid fare notices / penalty fare notices being issued and the numbers being overturned on appeal.
- Train companies need to retain overall accountability even when they have outsourced revenue protection to a third party. In the longer term this should be governed by a national code of practice (covering such things as discretion and process for appeals).

7.2 Better stations

7.2.1 Funding station improvements

The proposals to transfer greater responsibility for maintenance and upkeep of station facilities from Network Rail to the new franchisee should simplify and streamline relationships, improve efficiency and speed up delivery of station improvements. However, the specification must include appropriate measures/targets to ensure that standards are maintained and enhanced.

Bidders should commit to a strategy to ensure that at least minimum standards are met at all stations within the franchise within a specified time from commencement. Further cycles of investment should also be committed to maintain and progressively improve upon the station environment and facilities.

The operator should also look beyond the industry and work with stakeholders and other partners to seek opportunities to bring in funding for allied improvements where these address wider objectives such as promoting economic development, improving transport integration, increasing safe access or enhancing the public realm. Holistic improvements to investments in and around stations are likely to deliver better results and increase efficiency and value.

7.2.2 Station investment should focus on passenger needs

Whilst Passenger Focus is supportive of the principle of funding streams allocated to specific purposes, it is important passenger needs are central to the investments made and that resources are directed to the factors valued by the users of stations and the rail services from them. To this end, bidders should reference how their proposals address the findings of research into passenger requirements and perceptions of stations, including NPS satisfaction scores and the results of the route-based research.

Table 4 shows NPS satisfaction scores for attributes at c2c stations on the mainline and Tilbury Loop. This demonstrates relatively low levels of satisfaction with facilities and services. Whilst passengers are fairly pragmatic about what facilities should be provided at different category stations, low scores for facilities and services would suggest that in many instances stations fail to meet even basic expectations.

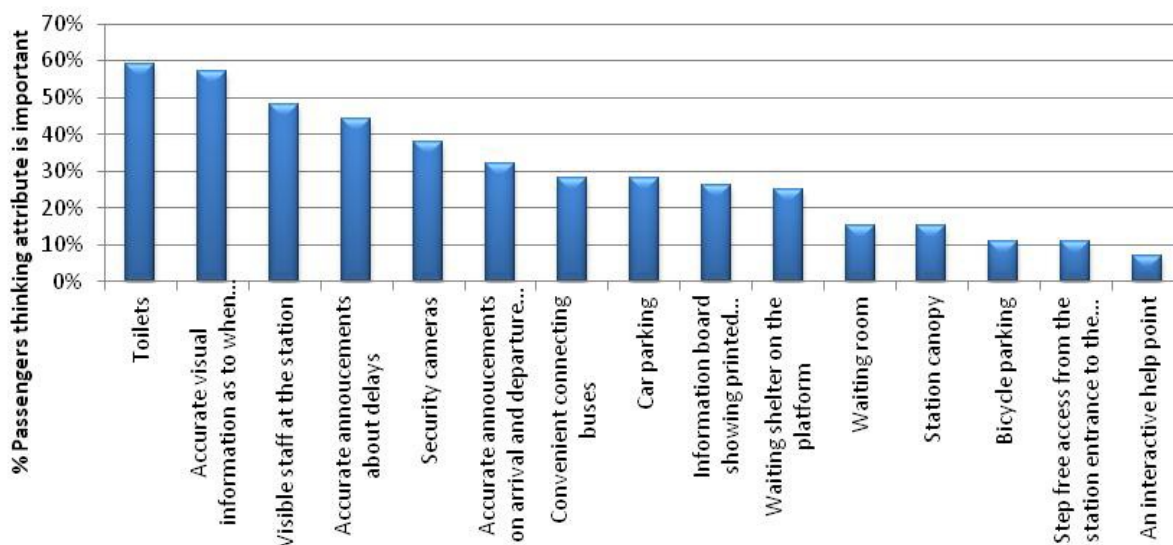
Table 4 NPS satisfaction scores for station factors on mainline and Tilbury loop, Autumn 2011

Factor	c2c Loop	c2c Mainline
STATION - TICKET BUYING FACILITIES	72	80
STATION - PROVISION OF INFORMATION ABOUT TRAIN TIMES/ PLATFORMS	84	89
STATION - THE UPKEEP/ REPAIR OF THE STATION BUILDINGS/ PLATFORMS	71	73
STATION - CLEANLINESS	78	76
STATION - FACILITIES AND SERVICES	52	56
STATION - THE ATTITUDES AND HELPFULNESS OF THE STAFF	73	77
STATION - CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER FORMS OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT	72	69
STATION - FACILITIES FOR CAR PARKING	49	54
STATION - THE OVERALL ENVIRONMENT	71	75
STATION - YOUR PERSONAL SECURITY WHILST USING	66	67
STATION - THE AVAILABILITY OF STAFF AT THE STATION	64	67
STATION - HOW REQUEST TO STATION STAFF WAS HANDLED	85	93

The 2009 route research asked c2c passengers what facilities and services were important to have at stations and the results are shown in Figure 2 below. These priorities are consistent with other station research we have carried out and indicate that passengers want the basics, delivered well, first.

Figure 2

What facilities/services do passengers consider important to have at the station?



In 2009 the most preferred improvements desired by c2c passengers were:

- toilets (16%)
- visible staff at the station (12%)
- accurate announcements about delays. (12%)

Passenger Focus research conducted at Clapham Junction, Barking and Luton stations following the Better Stations report²⁶ shows that at individual stations there are often specific areas of improvements that passengers want to see and that priorities can vary according to location and circumstance. Bidders should seek station feedback from local passengers and any emerging community rail partnerships to identify aspirations for specific locations and gather information about relevant accessibility issues.

7.2.3 Status of previous recommendation

Recommendation 13 from 2009 is confirmed and set out in full in Appendix 2.

7.3 The importance of staffing and information

Passenger Focus research on stations consistently demonstrates that, in addition to station facilities, there are two key factors that operators need to consider when thinking about how to improve passenger satisfaction with stations: Information and staff.

7.3.1 Passenger information – evidence from NPS and route research

NPS results demonstrate that, for both the c2c mainline and Tilbury Loop, information provision contributes to passengers' dissatisfaction. Appendix 3 shows drivers of dissatisfaction on these routes.

It is apparent that information on train times and platforms is a significant driver of dissatisfaction on the c2c mainline (14%). How well the train company dealt with delays (5%) and information during the journey (5%) are also drivers of mainline passengers' dissatisfaction.

On the Tilbury Loop the picture is slightly different, with the overwhelming driver of dissatisfaction being how well c2c deal with delays (37%). Information during the journey (3%) and information on train times and platforms (3%) are less significant drivers of dissatisfaction than on the mainline.

The NPS Autumn 2011 scores show only 40% of c2c passengers were satisfied with the way that delays were handled, compared to a London and South East sector average score of 45%.

Table 5 shows passenger ratings of information provided about planned and unplanned disruption from the 2009 research. This indicates areas where improvements are required, particularly for those factors where there are a high percentage of passengers rating the provision very, or fairly, poor.

²⁶ The Better Stations Report identified 10 of the worst category B stations in the country. Clapham Junction, Barking and Luton, all featured in that list.

Table 5 Passenger ratings of information provision for planned and unplanned disruption

UNPLANNED DISRUPTION		
	Total	
	Very/fairly well	Very/fairly poor
Providing accurate real-time information at stations (995)	67%	26%
Providing helpful information via text msg (925)	51%	30%
Providing sufficient information on c2c website (920)	61%	25%
Providing alternative transport, i.e. bus replacement (952)	56%	32%
PLANNED ENGINEERING WORKS		
Giving advanced notice of engineering work at the station (992)	80%	11%
Giving advanced notice of the engineering work on c2c website (945)	84%	7%
Providing sufficient information on likely additional journey time (946)	61%	23%
Providing information on alternative transport routes (937)	64%	21%

In the 2009 research 57% of the passengers we spoke to reported that having accurate visual information as to when trains will arrive was important. Furthermore when asked what facility they would like improved at the station 12% said accurate announcements about delays and 8% said improved visual information on the arrival time of trains.

7.3.2 Improving information provision

By and large (87%)²⁷ passengers only tend to find out about disruption once they have arrived at the station; it is therefore crucial that operators look at how they can best pass on accurate information to the passenger once it is known to the industry. This is particularly important at unstaffed stations where the passengers' only source of information might be a Customer Information Systems (CIS) screen. Real-time information provision at all stations should be a core requirement of the franchise.

Other types of information are also important to passengers. It is important that the franchise specification requires bidders to meet high standards of information provision for all stages of the journey: This should include requirements to meet passenger needs for initial planning, at the station of departure, during the journey, at the arrival station and, particularly, when there is disruption.

It is also important that, at all times when trains are running, passengers can have access to someone who can provide information and, if disruption means that journeys are curtailed, is also empowered to help stranded passengers by arranging/authorising alternative transport, accommodation or other appropriate responses.

The franchise specification should also make specific provision for passenger information requirements relating to planned disruption. In 2010 Passenger Focus conducted research into communications with passengers about the impact on journeys from the closure of Reading station for a large re-signalling project, and other infrastructure improvements, to take place. On the basis of the findings, that a majority of the passengers surveyed were aware of the works in advance of travelling and were satisfied with

²⁷ Passenger Priorities for Improvement in rail services, Passenger Focus, 2009

how the situation was managed, we believe that the Reading Station project should be used as a best practice guide for handling any future engineering works.

7.3.3 Recommendations for improving the management of service disruption and provision of information to passengers

Passenger Focus recommends the following requirements to improve the management of service disruption and provision of information to passengers are incorporated into the key objectives for the Essex Thameside franchise:

- contractual targets to improve NPS satisfaction with the provision of information during the journey, and that a strategy be developed and implemented to improve NPS scores for “how well train company dealt with delay” and “usefulness of information during a delay”.
- a facility for passengers to receive email or SMS text alerts free of charge warning them if disruption will, or is likely to, affect their journey – with an associated requirement to achieve a strong level of uptake through marketing of the service.
- full adoption of the Association of Train Operators (ATOC) *Approved Code of Practice - passenger information during disruption* and compliance with the Good Practice Guides on provision of passenger information, together with a programme of audit and mystery shopping to assess delivery on the ground.
- that active co-operation be required with the programme to feed station customer information systems directly from Darwin, the national real time train running database.

The next franchisee must also be required to show what practical steps they will take to improve how passengers are looked after during service disruption, particularly demonstrating their focus on people rather than simply processes.

7.3.4 Status of previous recommendations

The recommendations above reflect evolution of industry programmes and, together with points in section 6.6, supersede Recommendation 7 from 2009.

7.3.5 Staffing

The pressure on the industry to reduce costs inevitably places a focus on the overheads associated with staff. However, Passenger Focus is concerned that bidders for the franchise do not overlook the very significant roles that staff play and the value that passengers attach to a visible staff presence, especially at stations.

Staff are an important and trusted source of information for passengers. This role can encompass information about journey planning, cover wider issues relating to ticket retailing, where there remains considerable complexity about terms and conditions applicable to tickets, and, of course, sale of tickets that are unavailable from Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs).

During disruption staff have a central role in providing information and advice to passengers, helping them with queries and to make further plans for their journey.

Passengers with assistance needs are particularly dependent on staff to deliver the help they require and to fulfil requests made through Passenger Assist.

Many station facilities and services are only available whilst staff are present. Feedback indicates concern about the lack of access to toilets and waiting rooms, if staff are withdrawn from stations or hours are significantly reduced.

Passengers cite the lack of staff as a major reason for their feelings of concern over personal security. Passengers consistently identify staff presence as important to providing reassurance to those travelling on the railway. The industry therefore needs to give serious consideration to how it can best deploy staff.

7.4 Security and safety

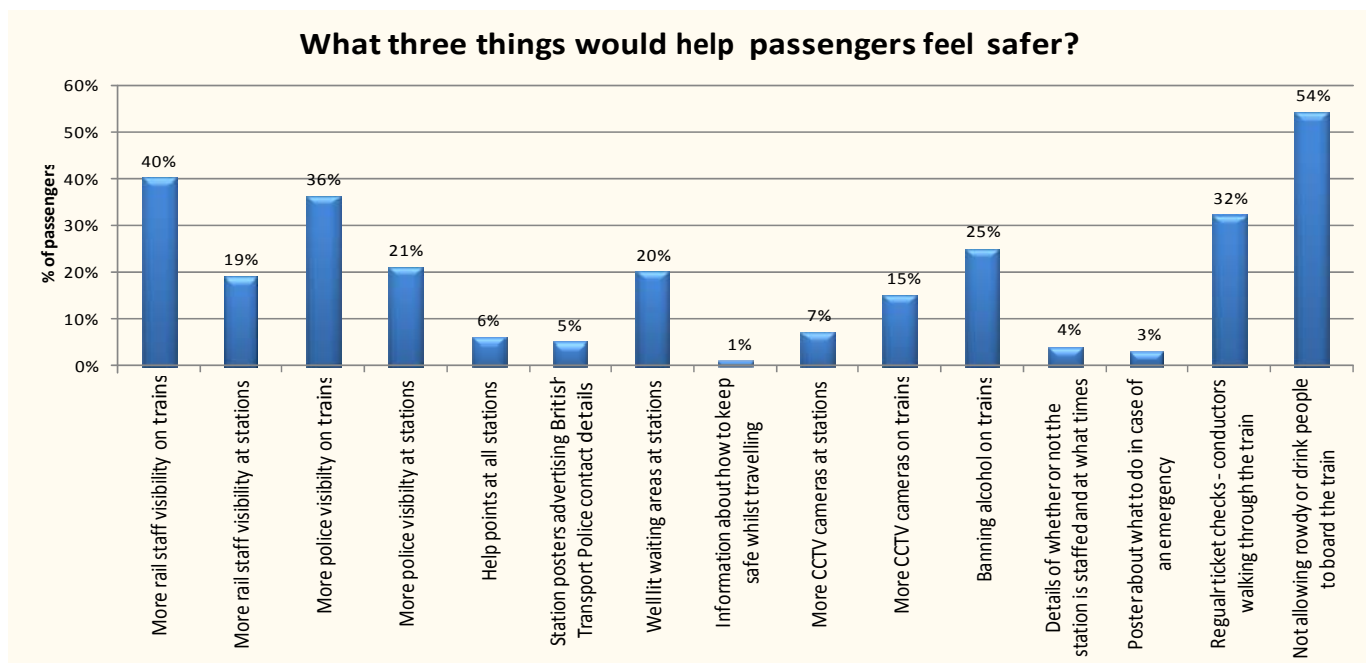
Our previous submissions have highlighted the significance of personal safety concerns for the Essex Thameside franchise²⁸.

The autumn 2011 NPS found 17% of c2c passengers had had cause to worry about their personal safety during the past six months. This compares with 12% for the London and South East sector.

At the station a majority of those passengers that had said they had been concerned attributed this to the anti-social behaviour of others (61%), a lack of station staff (41%), and a lack of police officers (31%). It is a similar picture on the train, where 79% of passengers attributed their concern to the anti-social behaviour of other passengers, 50% to the lack of train staff and 32% to the lack of police officers.

When passengers are asked what would help allay their concerns about security the answers provided, as shown in figure 3, consistently relate to the role of staff²⁹:

Figure 3



To improve security and safety Passenger Focus recommends that the franchise specification should include CCTV and linked help point provision at any stations that do not currently have these facilities.

²⁸ What passengers want from the Essex Thameside rail franchise, 2009, section 4.5

The Essex Thameside franchise: a further submission, February 2012, section 4.1.2 and 4.3.7

²⁹ Experiences and perceptions of crime and anti-social behaviour on public transport, NatCen (<http://www.natcen.ac.uk>) Omnibus for the Department for Transport. September 2006

Where stations are currently unstaffed during any part of the day when trains operate, they should be priorities for such investment. We believe that virtually every station should have appropriate technology to enhance personal security.

Passenger Focus also supports accreditation of stations and car parks through the established industry schemes.

It is clear from research evidence that the visible presence of staff will be a major factor in improving perceptions of personal security.

Our publication “Passenger perceptions of personal security on the railways” sets out passengers concerns in more detail. Bidders should set out how they intend to address these issues within the franchise.

7.4.1 Recommendations to improve satisfaction with personal security – adapted from recommendation 8 in 2009

Passenger Focus recommends that development and implementation of **a strategy to deliver improved passenger satisfaction with personal security** while using the railway be one of DfT’s key objectives for the Essex Thameside franchise. The specification should include the following requirements:

- contractual targets to improve NPS satisfaction with personal security on board trains and at stations
- measures to increase the visible presence of staff, particularly at times of the day when passenger satisfaction with personal security is lowest
- provision of comprehensive CCTV coverage within each coach of each train operated by the franchise
- achievement and maintenance of Secure Stations accreditation at all stations.

Additionally, the new operator should consider how enhanced working arrangements with the British Transport Police can increase the safety and security of passengers on the Essex Thameside franchise.

7.5 Improving station access and connections

When passengers decide what mode of transport to take they are swayed by three overwhelming factors: how convenient will the journey be, how much will it cost and how long will it take³⁰. This applies to the whole door to door journey. The way passengers access the station can affect both overall journey cost and time. If getting to the rail station becomes too inconvenient passengers will often choose to make their whole journey by car; adding congestion to the roads and to transport’s carbon footprint.

At some locations the solution to station access needs will be to improve public transport links and parking provision, but at others the solution will be more complex and could be more creative. With limited space for car parking at some stations, and the industry’s desire to look at more sustainable options, Passenger Focus is supportive of the use of Station Travel Plans. Local groups should be involved in developing proposals to improve station access.

³⁰ Door to door by public transport – improving integration between National Rail and other public transport services in Britain, June 2009 http://www.cpt-uk.org/_uploads/attachment/690.pdf

Bidders should be encouraged to commit to station travel plans schemes, with rollout dispersed across the network and throughout the life of the franchise. The stations selected should not just be those with the highest footfall, as the 2011 Network RUS (Stations) demonstrated that congestion does not just occur at those stations with the highest number of passengers starting or ending their journeys.

The successful bidder should be able to demonstrate how they will work in partnership with local authorities and other agencies to improve accessibility to stations by all modes, including cycling. Where identifiably beneficial schemes for passengers can be delivered by other partners, they should be encouraged and their future assured. The franchise should accommodate commitments to the future operation of any facilities provided.

The specification should also encourage improvements to interchange and connections between rail, underground and bus services. Bidders should be invited to submit proposals for enhancements at key points, for example between Fenchurch Street station and Tower Hill underground and also at West Ham.

7.5.1 Status of previous recommendations

The status of recommendation 11 from 2009 is confirmed and set out in full in Appendix 2.

7.5.2 Passenger views about Fenchurch Street and Liverpool Street

The consultation raises the potential for increasing the use of Liverpool Street for more services.

Our 2009 route based research asked c2c passengers whether they travelled at weekends or not. Those that did were then asked whether they would prefer Liverpool Street or Fenchurch Street as an end destination. 46% chose Fenchurch Street, 17% Liverpool Street and 37% had no preference.

A potential explanation for the preferences above may be found in passenger views about which station was the most important interchange with the tube and DLR. 29% of all respondents selected West Ham; 17% selected Barking and 10% Liverpool Street.

7.6 Service quality and other targets

We note that the Department is considering approaches to the specification of service quality for the new franchise. Passenger Focus strongly supports the principle of monitoring and improving service quality through a combination of NPS results and periodic reviews of TOC Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Disaggregated targets for both measures should be set and performance against them published widely. A financial penalty regime should apply with resources ring-fenced for additional investment into service quality measures that are most likely to improve passenger satisfaction.

7.6.1 NPS

We have long advocated more use of qualitative targets within a franchise. Our strong preference is for targets based on what passengers think – the best judge of quality being those who have used the services in question. NPS provides this measure although there may be arguments for examining how changes to sampling can increase the differentiation between service groups and provide enhanced understanding of peak and off-peak experiences.

We suggest bespoke targets should be established to measure service quality. This could be done in terms of composite targets for station, train and customer-service for each service group; alternative methods might include using individual criteria that are weighted in terms of how important they are to passengers. Existing levels of satisfaction should be the starting point for establishing targets which should generally become more stretching as the franchise progresses. An annual assessment of the

combined spring and autumn results would provide a fair measure of the overall passenger satisfaction within each given year.

Passenger Focus would be happy to further discuss the application of NPS targets for the franchise with the DFT as required.

7.6.2 KPIs

The KPI assessments should be conducted across the entire franchise and include all stations and representative samples of the train service groups. Standards of satisfaction with the customer services function, complaints handling and the level of appeals to Passenger Focus should also be measured. All assessments should be conducted regularly to provide ongoing management information as well as a basis for a periodic review based on collated information.

7.6.3 Performance targets

Given the very high significance of these factors to passengers the specification must include traditional 'hard' performance targets covering punctuality, reliability and crowding. However, we believe that there is a need for much more transparency surrounding these targets.

Transparency generates greater accountability. Giving rail passengers access to performance figures will help them to hold the train company to account and to ask what is being done to improve services in return for the fares they pay. Good management should not feel threatened by this. Indeed the availability of accurate data may actually help them – a particularly bad journey can linger in the memory and distort passengers' perceptions. Accurate, relevant data can help challenge these negative perceptions.

Punctuality data only provided at the overall TOC level can easily mask significant differences between routes and times of day. Providing disaggregated performance data at a route/service group level would help prevent this and focus attention on areas that need improving. It is important to stress that this information already exists – it would not involve any new costs in terms of data gathering.

Equally, there is currently next to nothing in the public domain about crowding. This is another fundamental aspect of a passenger's journey and an area where greater transparency can again generate improvements for passengers.

In the longer term we also see value in looking more closely at the choice of performance measurement used. The existing measure Public Performance Measure (PPM) allows a five or 10 minute leeway on late arrivals – a train is not late until it exceeds these allowances. However, we know from our research³¹ mapping passenger satisfaction against train performance that a delay begins to have an effect on passengers well before that. This might mean addressing the suitability of the current thresholds or even of introducing a secondary measure based on right-time arrival. We are discussing these issues as part of the debate surrounding the metrics to be used for the next High Level Output Statement (HLOS2).

Network Rail's performance clearly has a huge bearing on a TOC's punctuality and yet a franchise agreement typically only creates an obligation on factors within the train company's control. Clearly there are limits to how far one organisation is willing to be held accountable for another's performance but, from a passenger's perspective, it is overall punctuality that matters not just how well the train company did. There are obvious benefits in aligning TOC and Network Rail incentives and there is much work going on to address this - not least in terms of joint improvement performance plans and potential

³¹ Towards a 'right time' East Anglian railway. Passenger Focus. March 2010

Alliancing. We would like to see the franchising specification encourage and cement this joint working approach. To this end we would ask DfT to consider the scope for introducing joint targets within this franchise.

Overall, the franchise should require an appropriate level of disaggregation on current measures and require the operator to comply as reporting requirements evolve.

7.6.4 Input vs output measures

The balance between input and output measures is a fine one. For instance, the franchise could specify that the bidder purchases 50 new ticket vending machines (an input target) or that it increase passenger satisfaction with retailing (an output target). The latter follows the pattern set in the South Central franchise with the bidders setting targets for passenger satisfaction and these becoming contractual targets with fines for non compliance.

Passenger Focus recognises the value of both input and output measures provided that they are based on passengers' priorities and needs. Passenger responses to the consultation should be used to further inform the targets and measures that go into the franchise specification.

7.7 The Equality Act 2010, accessibility and mobility

We note the requirements to comply with equalities and discrimination legislation and to produce a Disabled People's Protection Policy (DPPP).

Passenger Focus recommends that the franchise specification should also include a requirement for the operator to audit the accessibility of stations and establish a minor works fund resourced, on an annual basis, at such a level that the operator can deliver a range of schemes, making appropriate adaptations to ensure that the accessibility of the franchise increases steadily over its duration. There should be a requirement for consultation with relevant groups including inviting suggestions about how this money might best be spent to meet identified needs.

In addition to the provisions set out in DPPP guidance, Passenger Focus believes the franchise specification should also require the following provisions:

- Mobility-scooter policy – ensure that a suitable scooter acceptance scheme is in place for smaller, lighter and more manoeuvrable machines. The new franchisee must not offer worse terms than the current operator which carries unfolded scooters not exceeding the size of a 'reference' wheelchair (i.e. 70cm x 120 cm); existing passengers should not be prevented from travelling with their scooters merely as a result of franchise change.
- Provide a priority seat card scheme (as initiated by Southern and now adopted as good practice by a number of operators) to help passengers demonstrate a specific need for a seat, backed up by publicity on stations and greater prominence made of which seats are priority seats so that they are easily located and recognised. This is especially important in the case of trains where no reservation facility is available and even more so where no on-board staff are generally present to assist disabled passengers in finding a seat.
- Clarify the priority of use of priority seating and the groups considered eligible for it.
- Clearly clarify priority of usage in 'shared' spaces – i.e. wheelchairs have absolute priority over prams.

- Provide assistance cards which disabled passengers can show to staff to explain their disability – hearing-impaired, speech-impaired, learning difficulties etc - so that staff can react and provide the necessary additional assistance.
- Comprehensive Passenger Assist monitoring: the number of bookings made, the number of bookings carried out and the passenger satisfaction. The results should be published in each revision of the franchisee's Disabled People's Protection Policy and the Passenger's Charter.

Best use should be made of the management information gained from Passenger Assist – e.g. enabling TOCs to plan assistance provision better.

- Training of staff – especially front-line staff in immediate customer contact, whether face-to face or by telephone.
- That the new operator participates in the 'railways for all' process including a quantified commitment to improve access to stations over the life of the franchise. This should include an examination of all possibilities to improve station accessibility: e.g. induction loops; help points; adjustable-height counters; automatic doors etc.
- Ensure that passengers can always contact staff, either by telephone or via help points at stations, whenever trains are running, or by intercom or telephone aboard trains to ensure that passengers cannot be stranded in the event of assistance failure, disruption etc.
- Ensure that special attention is given to maintaining fully-accessible websites, updated as necessary, given the increasing importance of this mode of obtaining information and tickets. At minimum the new operator should not fall below the standards achieved by the current operator.
- That an annual action plan be developed and implemented to enhance the service provided to disabled passengers using the Essex Thameside network and to improve customer satisfaction among those using the Passenger Assist system.
- That all passengers with a Passenger Assist booking whose journey will be affected by amendments, cancellations or disruption to services will be contacted as soon as possible to help them re-plan their journey.

7.6.1 Status of previous recommendations

Recommendation 10 from 2009 is superseded by the recommendations in the section above.

7.8 Improving the environmental performance of the railway (Question 14)

The environmental impact of the railway is of lower importance to most passengers than many factors that influence the immediate quality of their journeys such as punctuality and getting a seat.

Looking more widely, the key candidates for improvement should be those factors which can reduce costs, for example regenerative braking, as already applied on the franchise. Developments that improve comfort would also be welcomed by passengers. Bidders might be encouraged to explore the potential benefits of the introduction of LED lighting at stations and in car parks.

8. Further information

For further information regarding this response or any other aspect of our work on the Essex Thameside franchise please contact:

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We would also like to thank Thames Gateway South Essex Rail Group for inviting us to discuss our research with them and providing their consultation response and aspirations to us to help highlight regional passenger issues.

Appendix 1 –

Extracts from ‘The Essex Thameside franchise: a further submission from Passenger Focus’

Passenger Focus made a ‘further submission’ to the DfT in January 2012. This updated work on the earlier proposed franchise replacement and a response made to the initial consultation in June 2010. The sections below are extracted from the January 2012 document and are as originally numbered. On the basis of the analysis we undertook for the update we confirmed that there was little to suggest that the priorities for the next Essex Thameside franchise should change from those we set out in 2009.

This Appendix includes the review of the research and identified priorities from the further submission. Appendix 2 provides an update on the status of the original recommendations.

Section 4.1 Passenger Priorities

Our original input⁴ was based on research with 1078 passengers using c2c rail services which provided clear feedback about their priorities for improvement on the franchise. These are set out in Table 1, alongside a comparison with the results of a national study of Passenger Priorities⁵. This illustrates some differences that should be considered in assessing the requirements for the new Essex Thameside franchise.

Table 1 Passenger Priorities for Improvements

	National priorities*	All c2c passengers' priority	main line passengers' priority	Tilbury loop passengers' priority
Punctuality / reliability of the train	2	1	2	1
Frequency of trains on the route	3	2	1	2
Value for money for price of ticket	1	3	3	3
Being able to get a seat on the train	4	4	4	5
Your personal security at the station	14	5	5	6
The provision of information about train times/platforms during times of disruption	5	6	6	4
Length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed)	11	7	7	7
Personal security while on board the train	12	8	8	8
<i>Ease of getting to/from the station</i>	<i>n/a*</i>	9	9	9
Facilities for car parking at the station	27	10	10	10
Connections with other forms of transport	15	11	12	11
<i>Buying your ticket from a member of staff at the booking office</i>	7*	12	11	13
Facilities available at the station	23	13	13	12
<i>Buying your ticket from a ticket machine</i>	7*	14	14	14

* Note: The two passenger priorities surveys were not identical and factors in italics indicate questions asked of c2c passengers that were not included in a directly comparable format in the national research. Where available the priority for the most appropriate related factor has been used. The full list of national priorities is shown in Appendix 1.

⁴ What passengers want from the Essex Thameside rail franchise , Passenger Focus, November 2009

⁵ Passengers' priorities for improvements in rail services Passenger Focus, 2010

4.1.1 Core Priorities for Essex Thameside

The core priorities the Essex Thameside franchise must address are the fundamentals for all passengers. These are:

- providing a punctual and reliable service
- provision of sufficient capacity, both in terms of frequency of service and sufficient seating on the train
- delivering value for money
- effective management of any disruption, especially through information to passengers
- making available accurate information about trains and platforms.

4.1.2 The Importance of Personal Security factors

The significance of personal security factors to c2c passengers is an additional and striking local priority.

Priorities for improvement to personal security at the station ranks 5th and security on train ranks 8th. These are still important at national level but somewhat lower, at 14 and 12 respectively. This suggests that improvements to personal security should be another identified priority for the new franchise to address. Other work by Passenger Focus³² has demonstrated the importance of staffing to passengers' sense of personal security.

4.2 National Passenger Survey data

We have supplemented and updated the assessments used in our original submission by analysis of the most recent National Passenger Surveys (NPS). Together with an analysis of the current drivers of satisfaction and dissatisfaction on Essex Thameside, this is another comprehensive source of information about prevailing passenger perceptions.

4.2.1 Drivers of satisfaction and dissatisfaction

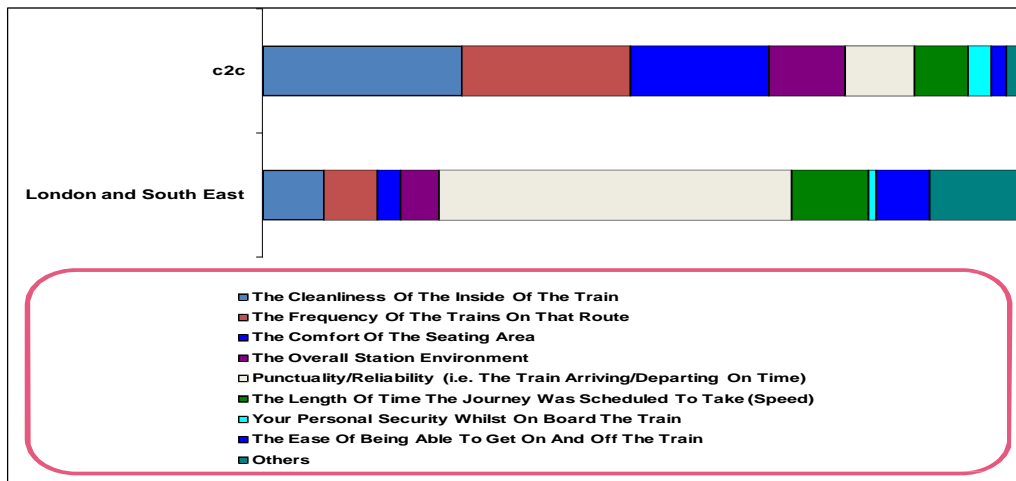
Multi-variate analysis of NPS reinforces the importance of some of the highest passenger priorities identified for the franchise and also highlights other factors that impact on passenger satisfaction.

The drivers of satisfaction for c2c passengers (Chart 2) are somewhat different to the usual patterns for London and South East operators. Punctuality and reliability is still an important factor but it falls fifth, rather than first, and this will be a reflection of the high levels of punctuality and reliability delivered quite consistently by c2c for some time.

As a consequence, c2c passenger satisfaction is influenced to a higher degree by train factors, notably; cleanliness of the inside, frequency, comfort of seating and, again, personal security. The station environment and length of journey are also drivers of satisfaction.

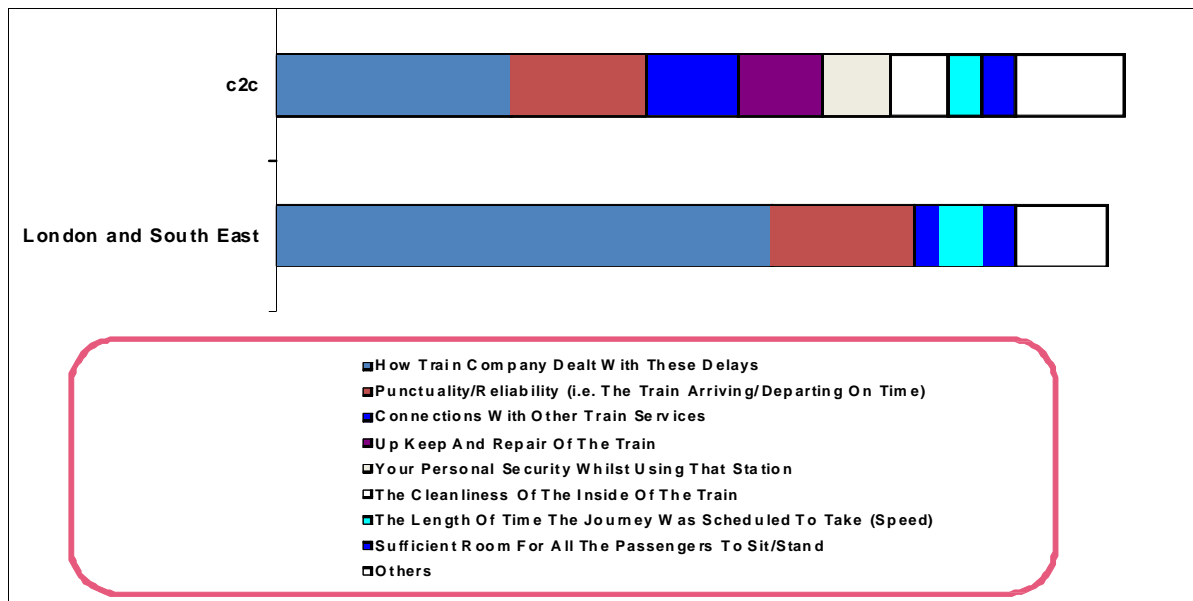
³² [Passenger perceptions of personal security on the railways](#) Passenger Focus. March 2009

**Chart 2: Drivers of customer satisfaction –Autumn 2010/Spring 2011
(bar size shows share of overall satisfaction due to factor)**



An analysis of the factors that drive passenger dissatisfaction also echoes the importance of key factors to passengers. Where delays are not dealt with well and there are poor perceptions of punctuality and reliability, passengers will be dissatisfied. For c2c passengers, connections with other train services, upkeep/repair and cleanliness of the train and personal security at the station also notably influence dissatisfaction. Other factors that clearly influence passenger dissatisfaction are speed of journey and sufficient room for passengers to sit or stand.

**Chart 3: Drivers of customer dissatisfaction –Autumn 2010/Spring 2011
(bar size shows share of overall satisfaction due to factor)**



4.2.2 Updated National Passenger Survey scores

Table 2 compares the scores for the two Spring waves of NPS undertaken since our original submission based on Spring 2009 data. It shows overall satisfaction steady at 91%.

Table 2 – A comparison of c2c NPS scores Spring 2009, 2010 and 2011

NPS Factor	Spring 2009	Spring 2010	Spring 2011
Overall satisfaction	91	91	91
Ticket buying facilities	77	75	77
Provision of information about train times/platforms	85	85	87
Upkeep/repair of station buildings/platforms	70	69	71
Cleanliness of stations	77	76	78
Facilities and services at stations	44	51*	53
Attitudes and helpfulness of staff at stations	75	75	74
Connections with other forms of public transport	69	70	72
Facilities for car parking	42	49*	53
Overall station environment	69	67	72*
Your personal security whilst using the station	61	62	65
Availability of staff at the station	63	64	66
How request to station staff was handled	88	89	83
Frequency of trains on that route	86	85	86
Punctuality and reliability	90	94*	92
Length of time the journey was scheduled to take	90	91	93
Connections with other train services	78	83*	78
Value for money for the price of your ticket	40	46*	43
Upkeep and repair of the train	88	90	90
Provision of information during the journey	73	80*	80
Helpfulness and attitude of staff on the train	29	31	37
Space for luggage on the train	47	50	48
Toilet facilities on the train	47	52	55
Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand	62	65	61
Comfort of the seating area on the train	78	80	79
Ease of being able to get on and off the train	82	84	84
Your personal security whilst on board the train	67	72*	72
Cleanliness of the inside of the train	89	91	89
Cleanliness of the outside of the train	85	87	86
Availability of staff on the train	16	19	22
How well train company deals with delays	53	51	50
Key: * indicates a statistically significant improvement in the scores since preceding spring Red = core passenger priorities Bold = additional factors influencing satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction			

Spring 2010 results show statistically significant improvements in a number of factors, including punctuality and reliability, value for money and personal security on the train. Nevertheless, there remains plenty of scope for improvement on most of the key factors influencing passenger satisfaction and, as we identified in 2009, the time is now right to build on c2c performance and move towards the first 'right time' railway.

Overall, Passenger Focus concludes that there is little to suggest that the priorities for the new Essex Thameside franchise should change from those set out in 2009 and we confirm the majority of our previous recommendations which we set out in Appendix 2³³

³³ We recognise that there may be some areas where lifestyle, technical and other changes over the course of a fifteen year franchise may lead to the need to adapt and review the way services are delivered and we will discuss these further with OfT and bidders during the next stages of the franchise replacement process.

Appendix 2 - Updated status of recommendations from the 2009 submission

This Appendix provides an update on the status of Passenger Focus recommendations from 2009. These complement the detail in the main consultation response and should be read in conjunction with the relevant sections.

Recommendation 1: confirmed

Punctuality and reliability, moving towards a Right Time Railway

Passenger Focus recommends that further **improvement in punctuality and reliability** be one of DfT's key objectives for the Essex Thameside franchise. The specification should include the following requirements:

- an explicit vision that Essex Thameside becomes Britain's first Right Time Railway, with challenging but achievable targets for increasing the number of trains arriving 'right time' without resorting to extended journey times.
- an obligation to report the percentage of trains arriving 'right time' at key intermediate stations. We suggest Barking and West Ham on trains to London and Barking and Benfleet on trains from London.
- challenging but achievable targets to continue the downward trend in the number of trains that are significantly late or cancelled. Among other things, this may require the train operator and Network Rail to tackle the high level of delay caused by 'external factors, excluding weather'.

Recommendation 2: confirmed with date change to 2014

Improving aspects of the current c2c timetable

Passenger Focus recommends that **improvement to aspects of the current c2c timetable** be one of DfT's key objectives for the Essex Thameside franchise. The specification should include the following requirements:

- that services on Sundays from all Tilbury loop stations should start earlier than at present, with a much earlier first train from Purfleet, Rainham and Dagenham Dock.
- that the last train from London on Mondays to Fridays and Saturdays be later than at present. We suggest between 0100 and 0130 to all destinations.
- that trains be provided on 26 December for a period of 5 years from December 2014, at which point demand will be assessed and a decision made about making the service permanent.
- that bidders are asked to propose how they would align the timetable with passengers' aspirations for more frequent services, including improved connectivity with London Underground, Docklands Light Railway and London Overground services.

Recommendation 3: confirmed recognising CP4 works conducted and CP5 outputs to be set

Additional peak capacity

Passenger Focus recommends that delivery of **additional peak capacity** be one of DfT's key objectives for the Essex Thameside franchise. The specification should include the following requirements:

- that sufficient capacity is provided in the high peak hour when the largest volume of passengers wish to travel, not just on average across the three hour peak period, in order that passengers joining peak trains at Basildon or east of Basildon are not forced to stand.
- that the High Level Output Specification (HLOS) requirements for c2c – longer trains, platform lengthening – be implemented as quickly as possible so that passengers do not suffer as growth resumes.

- that plans are developed to deliver capacity in addition to the current HLOS proposals for implementation in the event that demand grows more strongly than expected.

Recommendation 4: Increasing passenger satisfaction with value for money

Recommendation 5: Making ticket purchase easier for passengers

Recommendation 6: Increasing transparency and trust in the fares system

In light of the current consultation on fares and ticketing and following further research and continued developments in this area these recommendations are replaced by those in section 7.1.

Recommendation 7: Improving the management of service disruption and provision of passenger information

These recommendations are replaced by those in sections 6.6 and 7.3.3.

Recommendation 8: confirmed with minor change

Increasing satisfaction with personal security while using the railway

Passenger Focus recommends that development and implementation of **a strategy to deliver improved passenger satisfaction with personal security** while using the railway be one of DfT's key objectives for the Essex Thameside franchise. The specification should include the following requirements:

- contractual targets to improve NPS satisfaction with personal security on board trains and at stations
- measures to increase the visible presence of staff, particularly at times of the day when passenger satisfaction with personal security is lowest
- provision of comprehensive CCTV coverage within each coach of each train operated by the franchise
- achievement and maintenance of Secure Stations accreditation at all stations.

Recommendation 9: confirmed but with reference to Passenger Assist

Passenger's charter

Passenger Focus believes that the Essex Thameside operator should be required to introduce a new Passenger's Charter. Drawing on best practice from around the industry, we recommend that it contains the following provisions, including protection for season ticket holders who could experience a large number of sub-30 minute delays but receive no compensation under 'delay repay' Charters:

- an 'irrespective of cause' delay repay scheme giving compensation to the value of 50% of either the outward or return portion for a delay of 30-59 minutes; compensation to the value of 100% of either the outward or return portion for a delay of 60-119 minutes; and compensation to the value of 100% of the outward and return portions (where applicable) for a delay of 120 minutes or more
- compensation to the value of your ticket in the event that a Passenger Assist booking is not honoured
- in the event of a missed connection because of delay to or cancellation of an Essex Thameside train, a commitment to arrange alternative transport to get passengers to their final destination if the next connecting train is more than 60 minutes later and the alternative transport will result in an earlier arrival than waiting for the next train
- in the event that delay to or cancellation of a Essex Thameside train makes it impossible for a passenger to get to their destination at a reasonable time by train or alternative transport, a commitment EITHER to get the passenger back to their origin point and let them travel again the

following day OR arrange overnight accommodation and let them continue the following day, in either instance without additional charge

- a commitment to provide refreshments at stations in the event of severe delays
- protection for season ticket holders in the event of poor punctuality in the peaks over a sustained period. Our suggested wording is “Should customers on any Essex Thameside route experience a sustained period of poor punctuality on peak services we will compensate Season Tickets holders over and above the Delay Repay arrangements”. Agreement would be needed about an appropriate delay threshold and trigger level and, based on research conducted previously on this subject we suggest a 10 minute threshold.

Recommendation 10: Meeting the needs of disabled passengers

Developments in this area mean that this recommendation is now replaced by those set out in section 7.7.

Recommendation 11: confirmed

Getting to the station

Passenger Focus recommends that DfT includes the following requirements in the specification of the Essex Thameside franchise:

- that alongside assumptions about growth in passenger volume during the franchise term a strategy must be developed for how passengers will get to and from Essex Thameside stations, including implications for car and bicycle parking. This should include a requirement to implement station Travel Plans at key locations.

Recommendation 12: confirmed with minor amendment

On train environment

Passenger Focus recommends that DfT includes the following requirements in the specification of the Essex Thameside franchise:

- that all additional rolling stock brought into the franchise is refurbished to a standard comparable with the existing Class 357 fleet.
- that the operator meets contractual targets for NPS satisfaction for train cleaning and upkeep/repair of the train and commit to ensuring high levels of availability of toilets where they are provided.

Recommendation 13: confirmed

Station environment

Passenger Focus recommends that DfT includes the following requirements in the specification of the Essex Thameside franchise:

- that the operator meets contractual targets for NPS satisfaction with up-keep/repair of stations, station cleanliness and station facilities and services.

Source: [What passengers want from the Essex Thameside rail franchise. A submission from Passenger Focus](#). November 2009

Appendix 3 Drivers of Dissatisfaction, NPS 2011

Drivers of dissatisfaction on c2c main line	
Punctuality/reliability	18%
Frequency of trains on route	16%
Information on train times/platforms	14%
Scheduled journey length (speed)	8%
Sufficient room for all to sit/stand	6%
Connections with other train services	6%
How well dealt with delays	5%
Information during the journey	5%
Connections with public transport	4%
Your personal security on board	4%
Comfort of seating	3%
Personal security on station	3%
How request to station staff was handled	3%
Cleanliness inside train	3%
Toilet facilities	2%

Drivers of Dissatisfaction on c2c Loop	
How well dealt with delays	37%
Ease of getting on and off	17%
Connections with other train services	15%
Scheduled journey length (speed)	8%
Upkeep And Repair Of The Train	7%
How request to station staff was handled	3%
Information during the journey	3%
Information on train times/platforms	3%
Your personal security at the station	3%
Punctuality/reliability	2%
Your personal security on train	2%

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