

# The 'Combined' franchise

## A consultation response from Passenger Focus on the future Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern network

September 2012



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## 1. Passenger Focus

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.

Passenger Focus is pleased to have engaged with the Department for Transport (DfT) and shortlisted bidders from a very 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 May 2012 we built on this by publishing an initial analysis and setting out our high level recommendations for the forthcoming franchise<sup>1</sup>.

Passenger Focus now welcomes the opportunity to provide further input from a rail passenger's perspective as the specification for the 'Combined' Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern franchise is developed.

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<sup>1</sup> *Thameslink franchise 2013 onwards: an initial submission from Passenger Focus* May 2012  
<http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/publications/thameslink-franchise-2013-onwards-an-initial-submission-from-passenger-focus-may-2012>

## 2. Introduction and key considerations for the franchise

Passenger Focus believes that when the requirements of the combined franchise are established it is vital that the needs of passengers who use and pay for rail services are placed squarely at the heart of the contract. This document sets out the many important issues that should be addressed in the franchise specification and by bidders before the contract is let.

This consultation response develops and expands upon the themes set out earlier this year in our initial submission to the Department of Transport (DfT)<sup>2</sup>. It is based on research with over 5000 passengers on routes within, or potentially associated with, the combined franchise. We have also examined the National Passenger Survey (NPS) results from respondents using First Capital Connect (FCC), Southern and Southeastern services. These research findings, combined with outputs from our wide-ranging studies of passenger needs and perceptions, inform this independent submission to the franchise consultation. A more detailed overview of the evidence base we are using is provided in section 4.

Feedback received from passenger and stakeholder groups has also provided information about local issues and challenges and has aided our understanding of the context in which the franchise will operate.

### Hallmarks of the new franchise

The new combined franchise is striking in scale and scope. It will bring together the two existing major franchises of FCC and Southern and will also add at least some elements of a third, Southeastern. The resulting franchise, covering a substantial part of southern England, will be large, geographically diverse and highly complex.

The challenge of melding three different organisational cultures, motivating staff, and developing cohesive working practices will be considerable. At the same time the operator must ensure that all staff focus on providing a high quality, punctual and reliable rail service.

The combined franchise will need to respond effectively to the needs of passengers making a range of journeys including those on Metro services within London, longer distance commuting and also suburban, rural and local travel. The diversity and intensity of service across the franchise suggests that route-based management at senior level will be required to ensure sufficient attention to detail for both operations and customer services. Stakeholders will also seek a locally orientated approach to engagement and information.

The backdrop to the organisational and cultural transformations and the requirements of day to day service delivery will be the tremendous changes associated with the Thameslink programme. This will include significant infrastructure work, the deployment of new rolling stock, commissioning of new train control systems and introduction of a comprehensive new

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<sup>2</sup> Please see footnote 1



timetable. The challenges of working within the constraints of such major works will be considerable and there will inevitably be impacts upon passengers.

The scale of change that will occur during the seven to nine year life of the franchise is immense. The future operator must demonstrate excellent skills in planning, project and change management and in collaborative working. The ability to build strong and effective relationships with Network Rail will be particularly important to ensure that passenger needs are considered as infrastructure works are undertaken and that there is accurate and timely information available so that passengers can plan their journeys.

A further key relationship will be with the Mayor and Transport for London as public transport in the capital continues to evolve. It is vital that rail services, regardless of who specifies them, are well integrated with other transport options and new developments taking place in the city. As demonstrated by the Transport Control Centre's very effective co-ordination of the transport challenges during the Olympics, the significance of relationships with key partners like these is such that they warrant reference within the overall objectives for the franchise.

### **The strategic context**

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 response<sup>3</sup> 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.

The recently published Rail Command Paper<sup>4</sup> and High Level Output Specification (HLOS)<sup>5</sup> mark a further evolution of the rail agenda and the context in which the combined franchise will be let. We note the significant themes addressed, particularly of capacity, performance, information and disruption, all of which are of core significance to passengers and on which we comment further in later sections of this response. The confirmation of funding for further elements of the Thameslink programme and other initiatives applicable to this network is welcome.

We note the command paper measures 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

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<sup>3</sup> *The Rail Value for Money Study, A Passenger Perspective: Comments by Passenger Focus*, July 2011

<http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/publications/the-rail-value-for-money-study-a-passenger-perspective-comments-by-passenger-focus>

<sup>4</sup> *Reforming our railways: putting the customer first* (command paper)

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/publications/reforming-our-railways/>

<sup>5</sup> High Level Output Specification 2012 (HLOS): <http://www.dft.gov.uk/publications/hlos-2012/>

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 do not deliver 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 as they clearly have a direct impact on the range of service offered to passengers and the fares charged, but cost savings must 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.



### **3. Summary of key points and recommendations**

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

#### **Evidence base and passenger priorities for the franchise**

The Passenger Focus response to the combined franchise consultation draws on bespoke research with 5520 passengers, National Passenger Survey findings and other themed research. It builds on ongoing discussions with the Department of Transport regarding the new franchise and an initial submission made in April 2012.

The top passenger priorities for improvement in the franchise are:

- value for money for price of ticket
- punctuality/reliability of the train
- the frequency of trains on the route
- being able to get a seat on the train.

The ranking of second order factors varied slightly but were still broadly consistent. They include:

- length of time the journey was scheduled to take
- provision of information during disruption
- upkeep/repair and cleanliness of train.

#### **The franchise specification**

We recommend the following factors should govern the final decisions on the combined franchise service patterns:

- The key principle should be to provide services that go where the majority of passengers want them to. This may not always be operationally possible but it should be the starting point for service planning.
- Consideration should be given to passenger preferences for specific London terminals, implications for connectivity at the local level as well as further afield and whether stations will also retain other services, particularly to alternative destinations.
- There must be clear evidence of passenger benefit to justify the proposals brought forward and it is imperative that there is wide and meaningful consultation on the eventual timetable proposition. The implications of any proposed service changes for the core passenger priorities of punctuality/reliability, value for money, frequency of trains and getting a seat should also be assessed. Journey length and comfort will also be material considerations for passengers.
- The most appropriate distribution of the combined franchise's services across the overall network should also be considered.

- Should services to any destinations transfer, in whole or in part, there must be a requirement for effective liaison between operators, particularly in relation to information, service disruption, connections and the management of station facilities.

### **Transfer of Great Northern services to Inter City East Coast**

The significant issue to be assessed in any consideration of transfer of trains/services from the combined franchise to Inter City East Coast (ICEC) must be the outcomes this would deliver for passengers. A critical factor that must be assessed is which operator is best placed to manage the services, maintain the trains, and provide the best response to passenger needs.

### **Wimbledon loop and Thameslink core services via Elephant and Castle**

Passenger Focus believes that train services should be structured around the journeys that passengers wish to make. There must be careful appraisal of industry origin and destination data as well as a thorough review of the timetabling capability on the Thameslink infrastructure before final proposals are made.

Appropriate mitigations should be developed for passengers if existing through services cease to run through the Thameslink core.

### **Specification of train service requirements**

Passenger Focus considers that the Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern franchise should have a strong and sufficiently detailed specification to protect both Government and passenger interests.

Passenger Focus strongly recommends that a detailed specification should be set out for the London Bridge construction works to maximise available capacity to enable people to travel to and from central London.

Passenger Focus believes that train services should be structured around the journeys that passengers wish to make. Specification should therefore focus on journey opportunities rather than defined train services. The key issue is whether passengers at each station have the required level of service to and from the places they want or need to travel, at the times they wish to do so.

There will undoubtedly be significant changes to train service provision during the franchise and there must be a requirement for a timely, transparent, meaningful and robust consultation process that allows all stakeholders views to be listened and responded to, prior to changes being finalised or implemented.

### **Capacity and crowding, and train service proposals**

Passenger Focus believes that it is only through an integrated approach to train service planning and delivery across the entire network that maximum efficiency and passenger benefit will be achieved.

Passengers regard provision of capacity as a fundamental requirement of the rail service. It is influenced by frequency of trains and the ability to get a seat on the train used. Both these factors rank highly in passenger priorities for improvement. Importantly, capacity also has a strong influence on passenger perceptions of value for money so has a further role in passenger satisfaction.

It is imperative that an effective response to capacity needs throughout the term of the contract is made a core requirement of the new franchise. This will need to extend to all services, not just those within the scope of the Thameslink programme. The available capacity must be allocated to provide the greatest benefit for the maximum amount of people.

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.

We recommend the application of proven train service development principles to a 'clean sheet' for the new franchise, to ensure that the timetable is optimised according to passenger needs rather than being constrained by arbitrarily imposed elements in an enforced structure.

Specific proposals that Passenger Focus recommends for detailed consideration in relation to making better use of capacity are:

- on the Brighton Main Line the opportunity to integrate and rationalise services currently run by FCC and Southern, including the Gatwick Express must be seized
- electrification of the Uckfield line to allow more effective use of the limited platform availability at London Bridge during Thameslink construction works.

Capacity should not be managed by 'pricing-off' passengers from the rail network nor perverse adjustment to timetables that nominally improve crowding but cause other difficulties for passengers

## **Performance**

The overwhelming driver of passenger satisfaction on FCC and Southeastern, as it is nationally, is the punctuality and reliability of trains. It is also the most significant driver for Southern, although on this TOC it is followed closely in importance by cleanliness of the inside of the train.

We recommend that operational focus on 'right-time' arrival at all stops is made a core requirement of the new franchise, together with a requirement for publication of detailed performance information which will inevitably act as a catalyst to improvement.

In view of the scale and complexity of the overall combined franchise, Passenger Focus recommends that a route-based management approach will provide the most appropriate structure in which performance can be effectively managed and improved.

Passenger Focus reiterates the previous recommendations<sup>6</sup> to drive improved performance in the franchise:

- Challenging but achievable Public Performance Measure (PPM) targets for the franchise as a whole and key service groups.
- Punctuality disaggregated to the maximum extent possible to be meaningful to passengers. This should include (as a minimum) reporting on all identifiable routes and service groups. Ultimately we see no reason why passengers ought not to be able to identify performance of individual trains.
- Challenging but achievable targets for reductions in the number of trains reaching their destination more than 20 minutes late, but without resorting to extended journey times.
- Moves towards a 'right-time' railway, possibly involving the reduction of the current five minutes allowance and/or publication of right-time performance.
- A requirement to report performance of trains arriving at key intermediate stations which for simplicity could also function as stations against which 'right-time' performance is published.

### **Dealing with disruption and provision of information**

Beyond the management of everyday performance requirements, bidders need to demonstrate how they will effectively manage disruption and ensure provision of information to passengers. This will be particularly important in the new franchise as the Thameslink programme moves into the key phase at London Bridge with the ramifications expected to extend across many services.

'How the train company deals with delays' is, by far and away, the biggest driver of passenger dissatisfaction. Passenger satisfaction with how the train companies in the South East have dealt with delays over the last five years has been consistently low, and is broadly unchanged despite an increased focus on this issue across the industry.

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

- Contractual targets to improve NPS scores for satisfaction with the provision of information during the journey, and a strategy developed and implemented to improve NPS scores for 'how well the train company dealt with delay' and 'usefulness of information during a delay'.

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<sup>6</sup> Thameslink franchise 2013 onwards: an initial submission from Passenger Focus May 2012 <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/publications/thameslink-franchise-2013-onwards-an-initial-submission-from-passenger-focus-may-2012>

- 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 Operating Companies' (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.
- Active co-operation to be required with the programme to feed station customer information systems directly from Darwin, the national real time train running database.
- Ensuring that information systems are equipped to explain causes of delay from the current list of industry-wide 'agreed reasons' for delays and cancellations.

In addition, bidders must also be required to show, and be assessed against, the practical steps they will take to improve how passengers are looked after during service disruption, particularly demonstrating their focus on people rather than processes.

### **Management of engineering works**

Passenger Focus is calling on the rail industry to make a simple pledge to keep passengers on trains wherever possible and to 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 combined franchise. The specification should include the following requirements:

- A requirement to reduce the impact on passengers of Network Rail maintenance, renewal and upgrade of the railway and, in particular, to demonstrate efforts to minimise total blockades and the use of bus replacement where options exist to divert or operate single line working etc. The operator should be incentivised against accepting Schedule 4 compensation payments for lack of track access in preference to taking any available opportunity to retain some level of rail service.
- The operator to be required to provide dedicated staff at key sites charged with managing the impact of major engineering activity on passengers and ensuring the highest possible quality of information.
- The operator to develop, monitor and regularly review procedures for managing both planned and unplanned disruption and to 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.
- The operator to contribute to industry work to improve responses to service disruption and make a commitment to rapid adoption of further good practice as it emerges.

The franchise specification should make specific provision for passenger information requirements relating to planned disruption. These should be based on the passenger preferences identified by our route based research.

### **Changes and improvements to services**

Passenger Focus firmly believes that changes and improvements to services should prioritise the factors that are most important to passengers. The route-based research identifies passengers' top priorities for improvement as:

- punctuality and reliability
- value for money
- frequency of service
- being able to get a seat
- length of time of journey.

In this response we focus primarily on high-level issues, but there is substantial additional detail available about passenger views and aspirations at a far more granular level from both the route research and NPS. Bidders should demonstrate how they have used this evidence in developing their proposals for the franchise. Consultation with passengers and stakeholders at the local level should also inform service plans.

### **Airport services**

The consultation document is correct to highlight the need to strike the right balance between the needs of air passengers and those of commuters in relation to the use of limited capacity on lines which are amongst the busiest in the country.

We repeat our recommendation that a 'clean sheet' should be taken to service planning for the combined franchise, and emphasise that services for the airport markets should be developed within the wider context of overall passenger demand.

Particular areas to explore for improvement to airport services would be rolling stock, connectivity and service patterns, stations, and ticketing.

### **Implications of other refranchising processes**

Given the potential impact of changes to the service provision on any of the other refranchised operations it is important that the franchise specification requires liaison between bidders for the combined franchise and Great Western, Southeastern and Inter City East Coast franchises.

### **Improving customer experience**

Passengers will undoubtedly expect that a new 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 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.

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

To improve security and safety, Passenger Focus recommends that the franchise specification should include CCTV and linked help-point provision at all stations that do not currently have these facilities. Passenger Focus also supports accreditation of stations and car parks through the established industry schemes.

The passenger growth forecasts for the combined franchise mean increased attention will need to be given to how passengers are going to access and pass through stations throughout the life of the franchise.

### **Service quality, targets and transparency**

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 should be set for all measures and performance against them published widely. There should be a requirement for the franchise operator to commit to high levels of transparency about all aspects of the franchise, including operational performance and service quality. Given the very high significance of these factors to passengers the specification must include traditional 'hard' performance targets covering punctuality, reliability and crowding.

### **Fares, ticketing and 'smart' technology**

Whilst 'smart' technology will enable an enhanced offer of ticketing products and services, there is a wider agenda about fares, retailing and revenue protection that must be considered for the new franchise.

Passenger Focus has conducted extensive research with passengers on fares, ticketing, and value for money and has identified many issues that remain to be adequately addressed. We set out a number of key issues for the franchise within the response and in a detailed appendix.

### **Revenue protection, penalty fares and unpaid fares notices**

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



## **Accessibility**

Passenger Focus recommends that the franchise specification should include a requirement for the operator to audit the accessibility of stations and establish a minor works fund. In addition to the provisions set out in Disabled People's Protection Policies (DPPP) guidance, we believe the franchise specification should also require a number of specific provisions, which are set out in the response.

## 4. Research, evidence and publications relevant to this refranchising process

### 4.1 The Passenger Focus evidence base

Passenger Focus is an evidence-based organisation 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 to the Department for Transport (DfT) and prospective bidders a comprehensive listing of our research 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. Reference to relevant reports is made in specific sections of this consultation response.

### 4.2 Route-based passenger research and priorities for improvement

Route-based research with 5520 passengers on FCC and Southeastern services was conducted specifically to inform our input to this and the allied Southeastern refranchise. The surveys were undertaken across a range of sub-routes to provide a detailed picture of passenger views, needs and aspirations across the different service groupings. The high-level findings demonstrate that the top passenger priorities for improvement are:

- value for money for price of ticket
- punctuality/reliability of the train
- the frequency of trains on the route
- being able to get a seat on the train.

These factors are in common with findings from previous research on London and South East commuter routes<sup>7</sup> - which indicates that they will correlate with the current priorities for Southern passengers, previously examined in some detail in 2007, prior to the current franchise. In fact, these priorities are consistent with our findings across the country.

The ranking of second order factors varied slightly across the FCC and Southeastern routes we studied but were still broadly consistent. They include:

- length of time the journey was scheduled to take
- provision of information during disruption
- upkeep/repair and cleanliness of train.

Further detail about passenger priorities is provided in Appendix 1. Tables showing the responses to all questions covered by the research, and providing a breakdown by route/service group and for commuter, business and leisure passenger sectors, are available on the Passenger Focus website<sup>8</sup>. These findings inform our response to the consultation.

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<sup>7</sup> Route-based passenger research for Kent Route Utilisation Strategy and Essex Thameside franchise replacement, 2009

<sup>8</sup> FCC: <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/publications/thameslink-franchise-excel-summary-may-2012>  
<http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/publications/thameslink-franchise-stated-preference-report-may-2012>

Footnote continued on the next page.

The full Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) data set has been made available to bidders and DfT for their detailed analysis.

### 4.3 National Passenger Survey data

The National Passenger Survey (NPS) results for spring 2012 have recently been published and Tables 1 and 2 provide the most recent information about passenger views on key elements of the three existing franchises, broken down into the main service groups within them. NPS data is also used to calculate the key drivers of satisfaction (see Figure 1 and, for drivers at building block level, Appendix 2) and dissatisfaction (Figure 2). Where relevant we draw on NPS data in our response to the consultation questions.

**Table 1 \***

StationFactors (%satisfied)	LSE Sector score	Grt N	TL Loop	TL North	TL South	FCC	High Speed	Mainline	Metro	SER	Gex	Metro	Sx Coast	SN
<b>NPS Spring 2012</b>														
<b>Overall satisfaction</b>	<b>82</b>	83	80	77	70	<b>79</b>	<b>93</b>	82	80	<b>81</b>	80	80	80	<b>80</b>
Overall satisfaction with station	<b>75</b>	73	71	<b>82</b>	69	<b>75</b>	<b>91</b>	73	72	<b>73</b>	74	76	75	<b>75</b>
Ticket buying facilities	<b>71</b>	70	63	73	65	<b>70</b>	<b>79</b>	72	67	<b>69</b>	69	67	72	<b>69</b>
Information provision on train times/platforms	<b>80</b>	79	74	81	76	<b>78</b>	84	78	76	<b>77</b>	76	79	78	<b>79</b>
Upkeep/repair- station buildings/platforms	<b>66</b>	64	64	<b>75</b>	59	<b>67</b>	85	66	62	<b>64</b>	<b>59</b>	66	64	<b>65</b>
Cleanliness of station	<b>70</b>	70	72	<b>80</b>	66	<b>72</b>	<b>85</b>	70	69	<b>70</b>	<b>62</b>	70	68	<b>69</b>
Facilities and services	<b>48</b>	44	<b>38</b>	55	46	<b>47</b>	<b>70</b>	54	46	<b>50</b>	62	45	50	<b>48</b>
Attitudes/helpfulness of staff	<b>69</b>	72	69	71	70	<b>71</b>	<b>80</b>	71	63	<b>67</b>	66	69	71	<b>69</b>
Connections with other public transport	<b>74</b>	74	68	79	76	<b>76</b>	76	72	73	<b>73</b>	<b>85</b>	71	71	<b>72</b>
Facilities for car parking	<b>46</b>	48	18	<b>53</b>	34	<b>45</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>56</b>	31	<b>41</b>	41	<b>32</b>	48	<b>40</b>
Overall environment	<b>66</b>	61	63	<b>76</b>	59	<b>65</b>	<b>84</b>	65	63	<b>65</b>	66	63	66	<b>65</b>
Your personal security whilst using station	<b>66</b>	63	61	<b>74</b>	63	<b>66</b>	<b>74</b>	66	59	<b>62</b>	71	65	66	<b>65</b>
Availability of staff	<b>57</b>	52	49	<b>63</b>	58	<b>56</b>	<b>71</b>	60	54	<b>57</b>	60	57	59	<b>58</b>
How request to station staff was handled	<b>82</b>	<b>88</b>	85	86	63	<b>83</b>	81	77	75	<b>76</b>	77	79	81	<b>80</b>
More than 5% points higher than sector average														
More than 5% points lower than sector average														

\* See Appendix 3 for key to route abbreviations

SER: <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/publications/southeastern-franchise-excel-summary-may-2012>

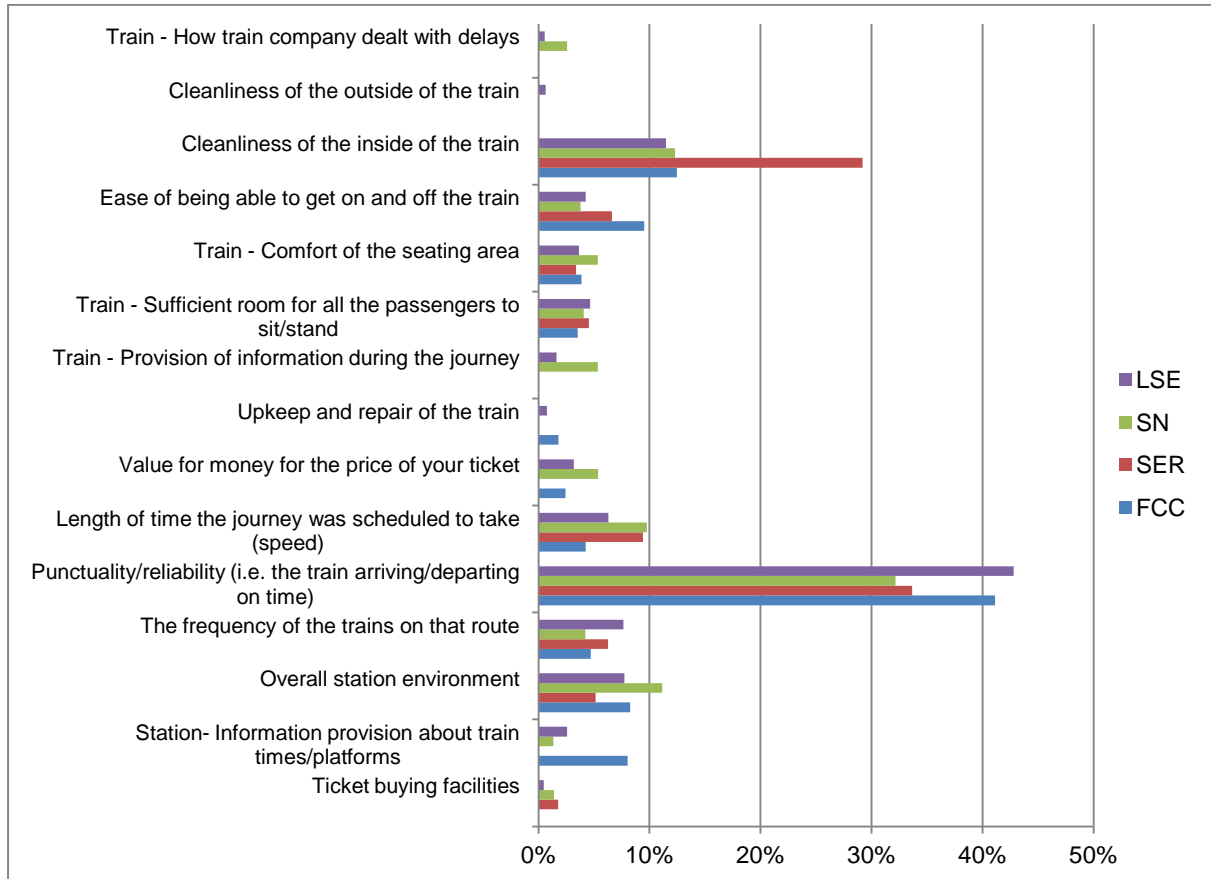
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<http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/publications/southeastern-franchise-stated-preference-report-may-2012>

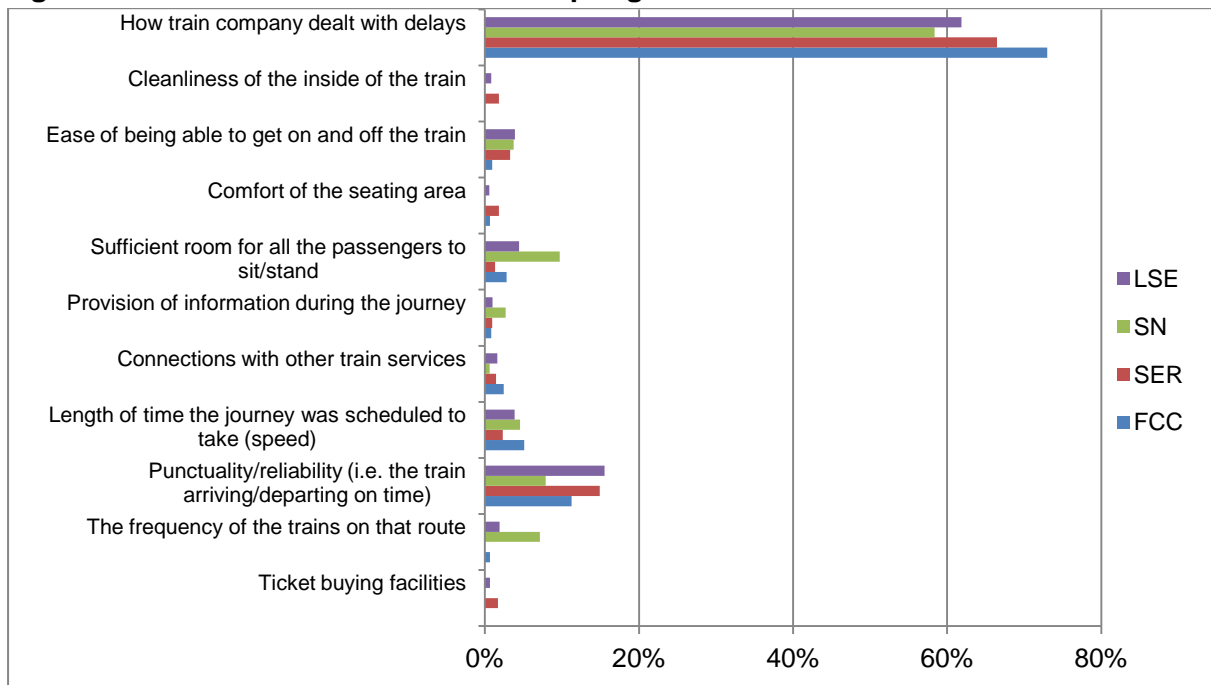
**Table 2**

Train Factors (%satisfied)	LSE Sector score	Grt N	TL Loop	TL North	TL South	FCC	High Speed	Mainline	Metro	SER	Gex	Metro	Sx Coast	SN
NPS Spring 2012														
Frequency of the trains on route	<b>77</b>	82	62	<b>83</b>	70	<b>79</b>	<b>84</b>	79	74	<b>76</b>	<b>93</b>	69	79	<b>74</b>
Punctuality/reliability (arriving/departing on time)	<b>79</b>	82	71	74	65	<b>76</b>	<b>90</b>	81	78	<b>79</b>	<b>90</b>	76	78	<b>78</b>
Time journey scheduled to take (speed)	<b>83</b>	<b>88</b>	77	84	75	<b>84</b>	<b>93</b>	74	80	<b>79</b>	<b>89</b>	84	82	<b>83</b>
Connections with other train services	<b>77</b>	78	73	76	69	<b>76</b>	<b>86</b>	70	72	<b>72</b>	81	76	77	<b>76</b>
Value for money for price of your ticket	<b>38</b>	33	36	32	39	<b>34</b>	34	34	31	<b>32</b>	31	35	41	<b>38</b>
Cleanliness of the train	<b>74</b>	65	60	67	67	<b>65</b>	<b>96</b>	77	67	<b>71</b>	78	66	75	<b>71</b>
Upkeep and repair of the train	<b>74</b>	61	59	63	63	<b>62</b>	<b>97</b>	77	68	<b>72</b>	78	62	71	<b>67</b>
Information provision during journey	<b>70</b>	53	41	49	49	<b>50</b>	<b>91</b>	74	63	<b>68</b>	64	71	73	<b>71</b>
Helpfulness/attitude of staff on train	<b>57</b>	38	27	38	39	<b>37</b>	<b>89</b>	70	36	<b>56</b>	61	39	<b>63</b>	<b>54</b>
Space for luggage	<b>53</b>	46	48	47	47	<b>47</b>	<b>73</b>	45	47	<b>48</b>	54	45	49	<b>47</b>
Toilet facilities	<b>35</b>	19	23	42	37	<b>29</b>	<b>73</b>	37	18	<b>28</b>	43	25	32	<b>29</b>
Room for all passengers to sit/stand	<b>68</b>	59	69	64	61	<b>62</b>	<b>88</b>	66	57	<b>61</b>	<b>76</b>	64	66	<b>66</b>
The comfort of the seating area	<b>71</b>	61	63	63	63	<b>62</b>	<b>92</b>	69	65	<b>67</b>	<b>78</b>	66	71	<b>69</b>
Ease of being able to get on/off	<b>79</b>	75	74	79	73	<b>76</b>	<b>92</b>	84	75	<b>79</b>	71	74	75	<b>75</b>
Personal security on board	<b>75</b>	72	64	73	70	<b>71</b>	<b>89</b>	79	65	<b>70</b>	<b>80</b>	66	78	<b>72</b>
The cleanliness of inside	<b>74</b>	63	64	67	63	<b>64</b>	<b>95</b>	76	67	<b>71</b>	79	66	74	<b>70</b>
The cleanliness of outside	<b>72</b>	61	55	52	53	<b>57</b>	<b>87</b>	68	67	<b>68</b>	75	65	74	<b>69</b>
Availability of staff	<b>39</b>	20	14	17	11	<b>17</b>	<b>72</b>	54	16	<b>33</b>	43	21	49	<b>36</b>
How well train company deals with delays	<b>35</b>	35	29	33	15	<b>30</b>	<b>55</b>	45	24	<b>31</b>	8	32	38	<b>35</b>
More than 5% points higher than sector average														
More than 5% points lower than sector average														

**Figure 1 Drivers of satisfaction NPS Spring 2012<sup>9</sup>**



**Figure 2 Drivers of dissatisfaction NPS spring 2012<sup>10</sup>**



<sup>9</sup> Based on autumn 2011 and spring 2012 NPS data

<sup>10</sup> Based on autumn 2011 and spring 2012 NPS

## **5 The consultation questions and approach to response**

Many of the consultation questions are inter-linked or are influenced by common themes. In the following sections we have grouped various questions together where we believe topics are related or we wish to make a number of similar points in our responses.

Additionally, we provide further comment on a number of issues that we believe are pertinent to the next franchise and which we wish to see considered in the specification and addressed by bidders in their proposals.

## **6 Schemes, stakeholders, other initiatives**

### **6.1 Question 1: What improvements do stakeholders believe could be made on the combined franchise through partnership working between Network Rail and the new operator?**

Partnership working between Network Rail (NR) and the new operator should form part of the arrangements for the combined franchise. It is particularly relevant given the scale and complexity involved in the delivery of the various aspects of the Thameslink programme. This will require all parties to work cohesively and constructively together to manage the challenges of significant infrastructure works, deployment of new rolling stock, commissioning new train control systems and the introduction of a comprehensive new timetable.

Beyond the demands of the Thameslink programme there are further operational challenges associated with such a large scale franchise stretching across a number of different NR routes. This will require an over-arching approach to partnership and service delivery across the franchise as a whole, with formal structures providing a joint mechanism at senior level for strategic planning and co-ordination and setting a coherent framework for a consistent development of alliance-style engagement at the route level.

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 NR 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. Any approach must be mindful of the consequences for passengers when considering how to manage restoration of services following disruption. A common complaint is that operational emphasis places the timing of trains at key stages on the journey into, or on either side of, the Thameslink core above the needs of passengers who suffer when turn-backs and skip-stopping is implemented, often at the expense of people travelling to/from smaller stations.

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 or road vehicles hitting bridges) to get trains moving without having to wait for the arrival of a NR staff member who may be some distance away.

A further opportunity presented by closer partnership 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 Regulation (ORR)<sup>11</sup> 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.

### **6.2 Question 2: Do consultees have any other specific aspirations for the new franchise that they wish to bring to the Department's attention?**

Passenger Focus's aspirations for the new franchise centre on a vision which places the needs of passengers at the heart of all planning and delivery of rail services. Further details about the key issues that the franchise must address to bring this to reality are provided within the following sections of this consultation response.

### **6.3 Question 3: Are consultees aware of any other rail or non-rail development schemes that might affect the new franchise?**

Transport authorities/consortia, Local Enterprise Partnerships and local groups will have knowledge of their areas and be well placed to detail specific factors that might influence future levels of passenger demand. Liaison and joint working with the Mayor of London and Transport for London (TfL) will be particularly important in relation to the Metro routes within the combined franchise. 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.

### **6.4 Question 5: What increments or decrements to the specification would stakeholders wish to see and how would these be funded?**

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, including clear passenger information, put in place from the outset. This must be a requirement should any proposed decrements be given consideration.

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<sup>11</sup> *Putting rail information in the public domain*, Passenger Focus and Office of Rail Regulation, May 2011



## 7. The franchise specification

### 7.1 Question 10: What destinations on the current Southeastern network do respondents think should be served by the combined franchise's services and what is the rationale for such proposals

Transfer of the FCC and Southeastern jointly operated services into the combined franchise, as proposed in the consultation document, makes sense. The current division between operators is artificial and based only on service patterns that existed prior to implementation of earlier phases of the Thameslink programme. A single operator for a specific service is most effective operationally and this is also more comprehensible to passengers.

Consideration of which other destinations on the current Southeastern network should be served by the combined franchise should start with the travel patterns of existing passengers and identified local aspirations for services to new destinations.

Origin and destination data should be used as the basis for understanding travel requirements. This data is available to the industry, but not generally to stakeholders. Without access to this key data and other relevant information, particularly about network capacity, timetabling options and comprehensive assessments of stakeholder views, it is not possible for Passenger Focus to derive a properly balanced judgement and we will therefore refrain from making presumptions about the other Southeastern destinations to be served by the combined franchise.

However, we recommend the following factors should govern the final decisions on the combined franchise service patterns:

- The key principle should be to provide services that go where the majority of passengers want them to. This may not always be operationally possible but it should be the starting point for service planning.
- Consideration should be given to passenger preferences for specific London terminals, implications for connectivity at the local level as well as further afield and whether stations will also retain other services, particularly to alternative destinations.
- There must be clear evidence of passenger benefit to justify the proposals brought forward, and it is imperative that there is wide and meaningful consultation on the eventual timetable proposition. The implications of any proposed service changes on the core passenger priorities of punctuality/reliability, value for money, frequency of trains, and getting a seat should also be assessed. Journey length and comfort will also be material considerations for passengers.
- The most appropriate distribution of the combined franchise's services across the overall network should also be considered.
- Should services to any destinations transfer, in whole or in part, there must be a requirement for effective liaison between operators, particularly in relation to information, service disruption, connections and the management of station facilities.

## **7.2 Question 13: What destinations on the Great Northern route do respondents consider would be appropriate to become destinations for trains which serve the core Thameslink route?**

Please see response to Q10 above which is also applicable to this question.

## **7.3 Question 14: Do respondents believe Great Northern trains which do not serve the Thameslink core route should remain as part of this franchise or be transferred to the new Inter City East Coast franchise?**

Passenger Focus has not tested the proposition of a transfer of services from Great Northern route to Inter City East Coast (ICEC). However, in recent research with passengers on Northern/TransPennine Express routes we explored passenger attitudes to both brand loyalty to operators and potential devolution of rail responsibilities. The principal findings from this research indicate clearly that passengers' requirements focus on the delivery of an effective service rather than who runs the rail operation.

The significant issue to be assessed in any consideration of transfer of trains/services from the combined franchise to ICEC must be the outcomes this would deliver for passengers. Almost inevitably there would be both benefits and drawbacks to such a transfer and the overall balance of these for the majority of passengers must be the key to any decision. There should also be a transparent evaluation of the costs of any re-organisation and clarity about how they will be met. Passengers should not have to bear the price of a transfer initiated principally to increase the stability of another franchise.

A critical factor that must be assessed is which operator is best placed to manage the services, maintain the trains, and provide the best response to passenger needs. ICEC is currently a predominantly long distance operation with a specific fleet of trains. The implications of transferring from another operator a qualitatively different fleet operating entirely different services for distinctive passenger markets must be carefully appraised, with particular emphasis on the overall service delivery by the franchisee, customer relations, and ability to stimulate off-peak market growth. There must be no diminution of the existing focus on East Coast services should a new 'division' be bolted on. Similarly, the attention to Great Northern service delivery must not be undermined by transfer to another operator.

Should Great Northern services transfer to ICEC then existing arrangements for passenger access to discounted tickets for certain journeys (e.g. carnet products) should be maintained or comparable products provided. Passengers should not suffer as a result of reorganisation.

## **7.4 Wimbledon loop and Thameslink core services via Elephant and Castle**

### **7.4.1 Question 18: What services that run via Elephant & Castle do respondents think should run via the Thameslink core route?**

Passenger Focus believes that train services should be structured around the journeys that passengers wish to make. It currently appears that operational convenience is driving the proposals about which services should terminate short of the core. There must be careful

appraisal of industry origin and destination data as well as a thorough review of the timetabling capability on the Thameslink infrastructure before final proposals are made.

The prospect of the loss of through services is clearly contentious and there is genuine and understandable concern from passengers who believe their travel patterns will be adversely affected. Similar objections can be expected from any other groups on whom the final decisions about access to the Thameslink core impact.

It is important that the timetable structure delivers the key passenger priorities of punctuality and reliability, but every effort must be made to balance these with passenger preferences. It is imperative that there is wide and meaningful consultation on the eventual timetable proposition.

Given the limited number of paths available, some passengers may regard the possibility of spreading access to the through services across the range of origin stations a better option than concentrating the loss specifically on one or two groups of passengers. The operational complexities and potential performance risk would need to be evaluated but this would potentially allow passengers the option of choosing between a limited number of through services that are likely to be heavily laden, or greater available capacity on other services that require a change.

Research with passengers on the FCC Thameslink Loop and various Southeastern Mainline and Metro routes indicate that changing trains is unpopular. On the Thameslink Loop, 48 per cent of all passengers surveyed said they would be unlikely to use trains on this route if it required a change. This rose to 53 per cent amongst commuters. On Southeastern, 41 per cent of Mainline and 42 per cent of Metro passengers expressed the same view. Amongst Mainline passengers, 47 per cent of commuters were disinclined to change compared to 29 per cent of leisure passengers.

It is possible that Thameslink Loop passengers may have stronger views about the prospect of changing as this has already been mooted for their route. However, many of these passengers may also have more journey options available to them, including bus services. Nevertheless, as they are currently using rail this does not mean that they would wish to use alternatives in preference to a direct train service.

Appropriate mitigations should be developed for passengers if existing through services cease to run through the Thameslink core. In addition to carefully managed interchange, considered in response to Question 19 below, improvements to frequency and reductions in journey time are cited by stakeholders as options to redress some of the potential inconvenience that would be experienced should it become necessary to change trains. There may be merit in considering the longer term improvements to journey opportunities that could be created by tram links to some of these destinations.

#### **7.4.2 Question 19: Recognising that not all of these services can run via the Thameslink core route, what would be the most satisfactory way of managing the interchange at Blackfriars?**

Passenger research indicates that there are various concerns which must be addressed to

provide satisfactory interchange where this has to take place.

Table 3 illustrates the range of concerns of passengers on the Thameslink Loop and Southeastern Mainline and Metro services.

**Table 3 Passenger concerns about changing train**

	Thameslink Loop	Hastings/ Tonbridge to London	Rochester/ Ramsgate to London	Ashford via Maidstone East to London	Gravesend /Dartford to London	Sevenoaks to London
Having to wait and adding too much time to the journey	86%	87%	81%	84%	83%	84%
Making the connection on time	82%	85%	80%	85%	83%	82%
Delayed arrival of connecting trains	70%	73%	71%	66%	69%	70%
Overcrowding on connecting trains	58%	61%	55%	47%	72%	56%
Journey information at the interchange station i.e. screens/notice boards	41%	47%	50%	41%	49%	41%
Personal security when making the interchange	19%	19%	18%	20%	24%	19%
Availability of station facilities at the interchange i.e. refreshments/waiting areas etc.	11%	21%	15%	14%	10%	11%
Mobility assistance/moving luggage	5%	7%	6%	6%	7%	7%
Other	9%	5%	10%	7%	7%	8%

The top passenger concerns about changing ('having to wait and adding too much time to the journey' and 'making the connection on time') emphasise the importance of careful timetabling between the incoming and joining services. With the expected frequency of services through the Thameslink core this should be less of an issue regarding the through trains at Blackfriars.

However, the frequency of originating/terminating services and their levels of punctuality will have an influence on passenger perceptions about the ease of changing trains. A cross-platform change would provide the easiest and fastest option for passengers, whilst high quality journey information will also be required. There must be appropriate help readily available for any passengers with mobility or other assistance needs.

## **7.5 Train service specification**

### **7.5.1 Question 5: Which aspects of the specification, other than for those services operating through the Thameslink core route, would stakeholders wish to see mandated and which aspects of the specification could be left to the discretion of the operator?**

Passenger Focus believes that the specification is the key to the entire franchising process. We note the DfT'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 train operator'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 an operator 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 franchisee.

Passenger Focus considers there is a need, therefore, for the Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern 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 that consistently fails to deliver the necessary levels of service.

The consultation document rightly highlights the impact of the London Bridge construction works and the importance of maximising available capacity to enable people to travel to and from central London. Passenger Focus strongly recommends that a detailed specification should be set out for these stages of the franchise and that this must balance the needs of all passengers on the services of all operators into central London.

Passenger Focus believes that the train services to operate should be structured around the journeys that passengers wish to make. Specification should therefore focus on journey opportunities rather than defining train services. The key issue is whether passengers at each station have the required level of service to and from the places they want or need to travel at the times they wish to do so. The starting point should be the available opportunities provided by existing services and the aim should be to optimise these based on passenger demand. A minimum requirement should be established in situations where compromises are required to

make an overall improvement for passengers. The provision of sufficient capacity must be addressed, particularly for the morning peak.

The franchise specification should take a holistic view of the needs of all passengers: commuter, business and leisure, from within and north, or south, of London, as well as the particular passenger mix of the airport markets. With the integration of FCC and Southern services, including the Gatwick Express, the opportunity to deliver an optimised timetable must be seized, with passenger interests placed at the heart of planning. Within the acknowledged capacity constraints of the franchise there must be an equitable distribution of train services appropriate to passenger demand.

There will undoubtedly be significant changes to train service provision during the franchise and there must be a requirement for a timely, 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.

### **7.5.2 Question 6: Are there other approaches to train service specification which you would prefer?**

In addition to our recommendations in Question 5, above, about the core aspects that should be mandated, Passenger Focus considers that 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, throughout the franchise, a service pattern that provides optimised passenger journey opportunities within the overall industry processes for track access and timetabling.

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

### **7.6 Capacity and crowding and train service proposals for Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern**

Capacity and crowding (whether on Thameslink core route, Brighton Main Line or elsewhere) will intrinsically be linked to the train service proposals, which should be based around passenger needs and their aspirations for change and improvement. This complex new franchise is described as 'combined' and Passenger Focus believes that it is only through an integrated approach to train service planning and delivery across the entire network that maximum efficiency and passenger benefit will be achieved.

Our responses below address a range of factors that must be considered in establishing the overall train service proposals for the franchise. Much of the comment is applicable to all elements of the Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern network, although we make individual distinctions where appropriate.

The tables below illustrate the importance passengers place on improvements to core elements of the train service. The factors are ranked with the most important scored at 100 and other priorities shown relative to that. Punctuality and reliability, frequency of service and being able to get a seat all feature strongly in the rankings.

**Table 4 First Capital Connect passenger priorities for improvement by sub-route<sup>12</sup>**

Factor	Overall Rank	TOTAL	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Punctuality/reliability of the train	1	100	100	96	100	100	100	100	94
Value for money for price of ticket	2	80	47	100	92	90	65	73	100
Frequency of trains for this route	3	63	73	54	76	46	46	70	62
Being able to get a seat on the train	4	49	30	59	41	65	29	42	58
Length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed)	5	32	22	36	28	40	21	32	43
Provision of information during times of disruption	6	27	23	23	28	26	32	28	32
Top three priorities for improvement on each sub route									
Next three priorities for improvement									

**Table 5 Southeastern passenger priorities for improvement by service group**

Factor	Overall rank (including High Speed)	Mainline	Metro
Value for money for price of ticket	1	100	81
Punctuality/reliability of the train	2	87	100
Frequency of trains for this route	3	53	71
Being able to get a seat on the train	4	52	59
Length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed)	5	47	31
Provision of information during times of disruption	6	29	29

<sup>12</sup> Key to sub routes at Table 4:

- A** Thameslink Loop,
- B** Blackfriars/Kentish Town to Luton/Bedford,
- C** Blackfriars/Kentish Town to Harpenden,
- D** St Pancras/London Bridge to Three Bridges and Brighton,
- E** St Pancras/London Bridge to Denmark Hill/Sevenoaks,
- F** Kings Cross/Moorgate to Hertford North and
- G** Kings Cross/Finsbury Park to Arsley/Peterborough



## 7.6.1 Capacity and Crowding

**Question 8: How might better use be made of the capacity currently available?**

**Question 9: What steps might bidders be expected to take to meet passenger demand and what might be the most appropriate mechanisms for managing demand?**

**Question 11: How might better use be made of the capacity available on the Brighton Main Line?**

Questions eight and nine implicitly reference the Thameslink route, whilst Question 11 explicitly considers the Brighton Main Line. However, there is a strong inter-relationship between these two routes, particularly on the Brighton Main Line. Airport services (covered further in response to Question 16 and 17) are also delivered on these routes and the Gatwick Express service has a pronounced impact on the available capacity on the Brighton Main Line. Passengers on Great Northern services will also expect capacity improvements during the next franchise. For these reasons we will take a wider view in our response to these capacity questions.

## 7.6.2 The significance of capacity to passengers

Passengers regard provision of capacity as a fundamental requirement of the rail service. It is influenced by frequency of trains (thus increasing the overall total of seats available by running more services) and the ability to get a seat on the train used. Both these factors rank highly in passenger priorities for improvement, generally below only punctuality and reliability and value for money in significance. Importantly, capacity also has a strong influence on passenger perceptions of value for money so has a further role in passenger satisfaction.<sup>13</sup>

Quotes from some recent qualitative research undertaken to inform our input to another franchise consultation are reflective of many passengers' feelings:

*You shouldn't have passengers standing on a train...why should you pay the same amount to stand*  
(Manchester Airport - Leisure)

*It's 'down-time', you can't get your laptop out if you haven't got a lap*  
(Manchester/Leeds-Glasgow – Business)

*The other galling thing is that it's more expensive to travel at busy times, when they are ram jam full*  
(Manchester Airport - Leisure)

The severe crowding on certain London commuter services is well documented and, even with the planned interventions on infrastructure and enhancements to the train fleet, provision of sufficient capacity will remain an ongoing challenge. Findings from the route-based research

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<sup>13</sup> *Passenger Focus response to the Government's rail fares and ticketing review*, June 2012  
<http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/publications/passenger-focus-response-to-the-governments-rail-fares-and-ticketing-review>

indicate that 21 per cent of commuters surveyed on FCC Thameslink North report that on their journeys 'I usually stand and it is very crowded.' 18 per cent of Passengers on Thameslink South and 17per cent of Great Northern also reported the same experience.

Table 6 shows how current passenger satisfaction with the capacity related factors of 'frequency of service' and 'room for passengers to sit and stand' varies across the different train operating company (TOC) service groups and in the peak/off-peak. The notably low level of peak passenger satisfaction with sufficient room to sit and stand on all services bar the premium high speed and Gatwick Express illustrates the scale of the capacity challenge. The particularly low levels of satisfaction with peak frequency should also be addressed on the Thameslink Loop and Thameslink South.

**Table 6 NPS Peak and off-peak satisfaction with frequency and capacity by building block<sup>14</sup>**

Factor	FCC				SER			SN		
	GN	Loop	TL N	TL S	HS	ML	Metro	GEx	SC	Metro
The frequency of the trains on that route PEAK	81	57	74	52	82	65	73	93	64	74
The frequency of the trains on that route OFF-PEAK	79	68	86	78	85	79	76	94	73	79
Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand PEAK	35	53	41	30	82	40	36	68	37	45
Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand OFF-PEAK	67	77	73	66	93	78	71	81	72	70

### 7.6.3 Making better use of capacity

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, especially whilst infrastructure works are underway. However, this issue is too important to passengers to be ignored.

It is imperative that an effective response to capacity needs throughout the term of the contract is made a core requirement of the new franchise. This will need to extend to all services, not just those within the scope of the Thameslink programme.

<sup>14</sup> Autumn 2011 and spring 2012 data combined. Please see Appendix 3 for route abbreviation definitions.

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 available capacity must then be allocated to provide the greatest benefit for the maximum amount of people.

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 routes and services to make it more representative of an individual passenger's experience and use this information to improve capacity where it is inadequate. Published data should make the crowding levels on different services easily comparable so that decisions about allocation of resources can be scrutinised. 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.

A careful review of all timetables applicable to the combined franchise must be undertaken to explore how services can best be matched to passenger needs. There may well be opportunities to adapt frequencies and stopping patterns to provide a better match of capacity with demand, whilst still ensuring the needs of all passengers are balanced appropriately. Where this is the case, Passenger Focus would expect clear evidence to be produced and comprehensive consultation to be carried out with passengers prior to any changes being made. Within the previous Southern franchise there was evidence of an ability to undertake a sophisticated and responsive approach to train service development, combined with a positive strategy of stakeholder engagement to explain the rationale for service proposals (both elements effectively demonstrated on the West Coastway/Arun Valley timetable revisions for December 2007).

We recommend application of similar train service development principles to a 'clean sheet' for the new franchise to ensure that the timetable is optimised according to passenger needs rather than being constrained by arbitrarily imposed elements in an enforced structure.

Specific proposals that Passenger Focus recommends for detailed consideration in relation to making better use of capacity are:

- On the Brighton Main Line, the opportunity to integrate and rationalise services currently run by FCC and Southern and must be seized. The current arrangements are substantially influenced by fare box revenue rather than prioritising the optimal service pattern for passengers. Similarly, the Gatwick Express service also fulfils a revenue generating function whilst frequently running at lower loadings than other services. In the new franchise the balance of passenger needs, service patterns, and network capacity needs to be more carefully evaluated. It is not acceptable that some trains should operate very lightly loaded at high frequencies where there is evidenced demand for greater capacity and increased frequency elsewhere.
- Electrification of the Uckfield line to allow more effective use of the limited platform availability at London Bridge during Thameslink construction works. If services continue to be operated by diesel trains then the ability to turn them swiftly around is constrained by the available paths back to that specific route. If electric trains were in operation they could be diagrammed to a more rapidly available path and platform

occupation time will be reduced, providing increased opportunities to allow further trains to arrive at the station.

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.

Other approaches to management of capacity should also be implemented. Transparent information about the loadings of specific trains provides passengers with the knowledge that may enable them to make an informed decision. Recent research<sup>[1]</sup> found that over two thirds of passengers who had seen information about the levels of crowding on specific train services had found it useful and just over a fifth of these people had made a regular or occasional change to the trains they used as a result of the information. Similarly, incentivising passengers to sometimes swap peak journeys with travel in the shoulder or off-peak, or perhaps work closer to home on some days, may also make a contribution to capacity pressures. See response to Question 31 for further detail on this latter point.

There appears to be some doubt about the final quantity of new rolling stock for the Thameslink programme. DfT should work with bidders to resolve this by establishing the requisite level to meet the projected demands. This should also include reviewing the proposal for fixed formation eight and 12 car units, which may not provide the flexibility to best match capacity with demand at quieter times of the day. The final order should then be swiftly confirmed and expedited so the trains will be available for Thameslink services as planned.

Outside of Thameslink, 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 the expected rise in demand and ensure this information is available to inform future High Level Output Specification (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.

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<sup>[1]</sup> *The impact of publishing more information on seat availability: South West Trains case study*, ORR July 2012

### 7.6.3.1 Off-peak capacity

There are two distinct issues relating to making better use of capacity in the off-peak. On certain routes at various times of day there is insufficient capacity for the off-peak demand meaning that passengers experience crowding. Bidders should be required to adapt service provision and train availability to meet off-peak capacity shortfalls where these are identified.

Secondly, to improve the financial performance of the franchise and maximise use of the rolling stock, bidders should have clear proposals for promoting usage in the off-peak. Marketing strategies and ticket offers will have a role to play here, as will the delivery of high quality services that passengers will find an attractive travel option, especially if their journey or modal choice is discretionary. There are parts of the combined franchise where joint initiatives with Community Rail Partnerships should be further developed, or established, to extend the reach into wider communities and promote off-peak travel.

## 7.7 Performance

### 7.7.1 The significance of performance to passengers

#### Question 12: What steps should bidders be expected to take to improve performance on the route?

The Brighton Main Line is the focus of Question 12 which asks how bidders should be expected to improve performance. However, this question is undoubtedly relevant to all routes on the combined franchise.

There can be no mistaking the crucial importance of punctuality and reliability to passengers. The overwhelming driver of passenger satisfaction on FCC and Southeastern, as it is nationally, is the punctuality and reliability of trains. It is also the most significant driver for Southern, although on this operator it is followed closely in importance by cleanliness of the inside of the train.

Table 7 shows passenger satisfaction scores for punctuality and reliability across the different service groups for each operator and for peak and off-peak passengers.

Aside from the Gatwick Express and High Speed premium routes, only Great Northern and Southeastern Mainline have satisfaction scores above the London and South East (LSE) sector average of 79 per cent. On Thameslink South only 65 per cent of passengers are satisfied with this important factor and scores are also low for peak passengers travelling on Southern and FCC.

**Table 7 NPS scores for punctuality and reliability, Spring 2012, % satisfied**

First Capital Connect		Southeastern		Southern	
Great Northern	82	High Speed	90	Gatwick Express	90
Thameslink Loop	71	Mainline	81	Sussex Coast	78
Thameslink North	74	Metro	78	Metro	76
Thameslink South	65				

Peak	63	Peak	72	Peak	61
Off-Peak	80	Off-Peak	83	Off-Peak	81

### 7.7.2 Improving performance

We noted in our initial submission that other research<sup>15</sup> demonstrates that commuters' satisfaction with punctuality falls from the very first minute a train is late, not just after the five minutes on commuter services 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' arrival at all stops. We recommend that this is made a core requirement of the new franchise, together with publication of detailed performance information which will inevitably act as a catalyst to improvement.

Bidders should demonstrate an ability to take an organisation-wide approach to delivering improved performance. There should be plans to ensure that every department, team and individual involved in train operations knows and does precisely what is required to achieve right-time, and how to respond to any challenges that threaten this delivery. Comprehensive reporting on all elements of performance across the entire franchise should be a matter of course and management should ensure sufficient focus and attention to detail to be confident that nothing is overlooked. A powerful strategy to engage and motivate all staff to understand and play their role should also be evidenced.

In view of the scale and complexity of the overall combined franchise, Passenger Focus recommends that a route-based management approach will provide the most appropriate structure in which performance can be effectively managed and improved.

Performance improvements should be a core aspect of the working arrangements with Network Rail (NR) and these should build on previous joint plans. Where services overlap or connect there should also be an explicit commitment to work collaboratively with other operators and to ensure that passenger interests are firmly established as the first priority when decisions relating to performance are made.

Passenger Focus recognises that much of the infrastructure on which the franchise operates is intensively used and that this can have an impact on performance, especially once something has started to go wrong. However, this is the operating scenario for this very busy network and performance must not be used as an argument to reduce capacity. Rather, this reinforces the argument for operational focus on right-time running to ensure valuable capacity is not eaten up by delays.

Passenger Focus reiterates the previous recommendations<sup>16</sup> to drive improved performance in the franchise:

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<sup>15</sup> *Towards a 'right-time' East Anglian railway*, March 2010

- Challenging but achievable PPM targets for the franchise as a whole and key service groups.
- Punctuality disaggregated to the maximum extent possible to be meaningful to passengers. This should include (as a minimum) reporting on all identifiable routes and service groups - ultimately we see no reason why passengers ought not to be able to identify performance of individual trains.
- Challenging but achievable targets for reductions in the number of trains reaching their destination more than 20 minutes late, but without resorting to extended journey times.
- Moves towards a 'right-time railway', possibly involving the reduction of the current five minutes allowance and/or publication of right-time performance.
- A requirement to report performance of trains arriving at key intermediate stations which for simplicity could also function as stations against which right-time performance is published.

### **7.7.3 Dealing with disruption and provision of information**

Beyond the management of everyday performance requirements, bidders need to demonstrate how they will effectively manage disruption and ensure provision of information to passengers. This will be particularly important in the new franchise as the Thameslink programme moves into a key phase at London Bridge, with ramifications expected to extend across many services. See Section 7.7.5 for specific comments about engineering work.

Figure 2, above, shows clearly that 'how the train company deals with delays' is, by far and away, the biggest driver of passenger dissatisfaction. Figure 3, below, shows that passenger satisfaction with how the train companies in the South East have dealt with delays over the last five years has been consistently low, and is broadly unchanged despite an increased focus on this issue across the industry. Clearly, more must be done.

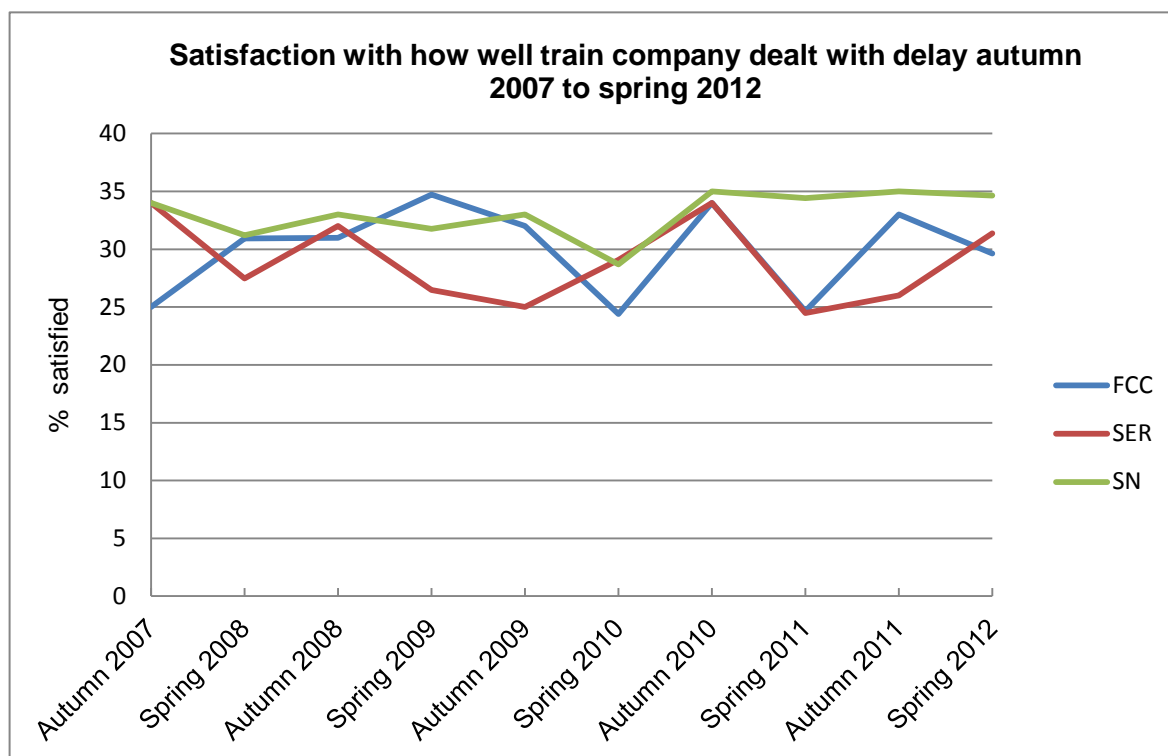
An important factor in keeping passengers on the move during service disruption is train crew route knowledge for key diversionary opportunities. We encourage bidders to ensure that their plans include train crew 'signing' for diversionary routes that will allow them to keep passengers on the move and on trains, even during disruption. This will also have benefits in allowing passengers to stay on trains during engineering works. Given the huge volumes of passengers travelling between London, Gatwick Airport and Brighton, we particularly encourage bidders to consider the train crew route knowledge implications of keeping passengers on trains by diverting trains via/to Horsham in the event of major disruption on the Brighton Main Line in the Croydon area.

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<sup>16</sup> *Thameslink franchise 2013 onwards: an initial submission from Passenger Focus May 2012*  
<http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/publications/thameslink-franchise-2013-onwards-an-initial-submission-from-passenger-focus-may-2012>



**Figure 3**



Passenger Focus supports efforts by the industry to improve the management of disruption and also to raise standards of information provision. Research into disruption and passenger needs for information<sup>17</sup> has identified the problems to be addressed and shown how solutions may be found.

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

- Contractual targets to improve NPS satisfaction with the provision of information during the journey, and a strategy developed and implemented to improve NPS scores for 'how well the 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.

<sup>17</sup> *Delays and Disruption: Rail passengers have their say*, Passenger Focus, December 2010

*Reading station engineering works: what passengers want*, Passenger Focus, May 2011

*Information: Rail passengers' needs during unplanned disruption*, Passenger Focus and Southern, August 2011

*Short and Tweet. How passengers want social media during disruption*. June 2012

*Passenger Focus assessment of online information provided to rail passengers during high winds*. March 2012



- Full adoption of the Association of Train Operating Companies' (ATOC) *Approved Code of Practice: passenger information during disruption* and compliance with the Good Practice Guide on provision of passenger information, together with a programme of audit and mystery shopping to assess delivery on the ground.
- Active co-operation to be required with the programme to feed station customer information systems directly from Darwin, the national real time train running database.
- Ensuring that information systems are equipped to explain causes of delay from the current list of industry-wide 'agreed reasons' for delays and cancellations.

In addition, bidders must also be required to show, and be assessed against, the practical steps they will take to improve how passengers are looked after during service disruption, particularly demonstrating their focus on people rather than processes.

#### **7.7.4 Compensation policies**

Passenger Focus recommends that, in line with other recent franchises, a Delay Repay compensation policy, applicable to all passengers whose journeys have been disrupted, should be a requirement for the franchise. However, there is a need for the specification to also require meaningful measures to address the specific problems that can be experienced by season ticket holders who may suffer 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 definition should take into account both the frequency of 10-29 minute delays and their cumulative total in any period. The assessment of poor performance should also reflect the proportion of time the passenger was delayed in relation to the scheduled journey.

The proposals for additional compensation should be subject to consultation.

#### **7.7.5 Management of engineering works**

Passenger Focus posed a number of questions about engineering works to passengers on FCC and Southeastern routes and recommends that the passenger preferences demonstrated are incorporated into requirements for the next franchise.

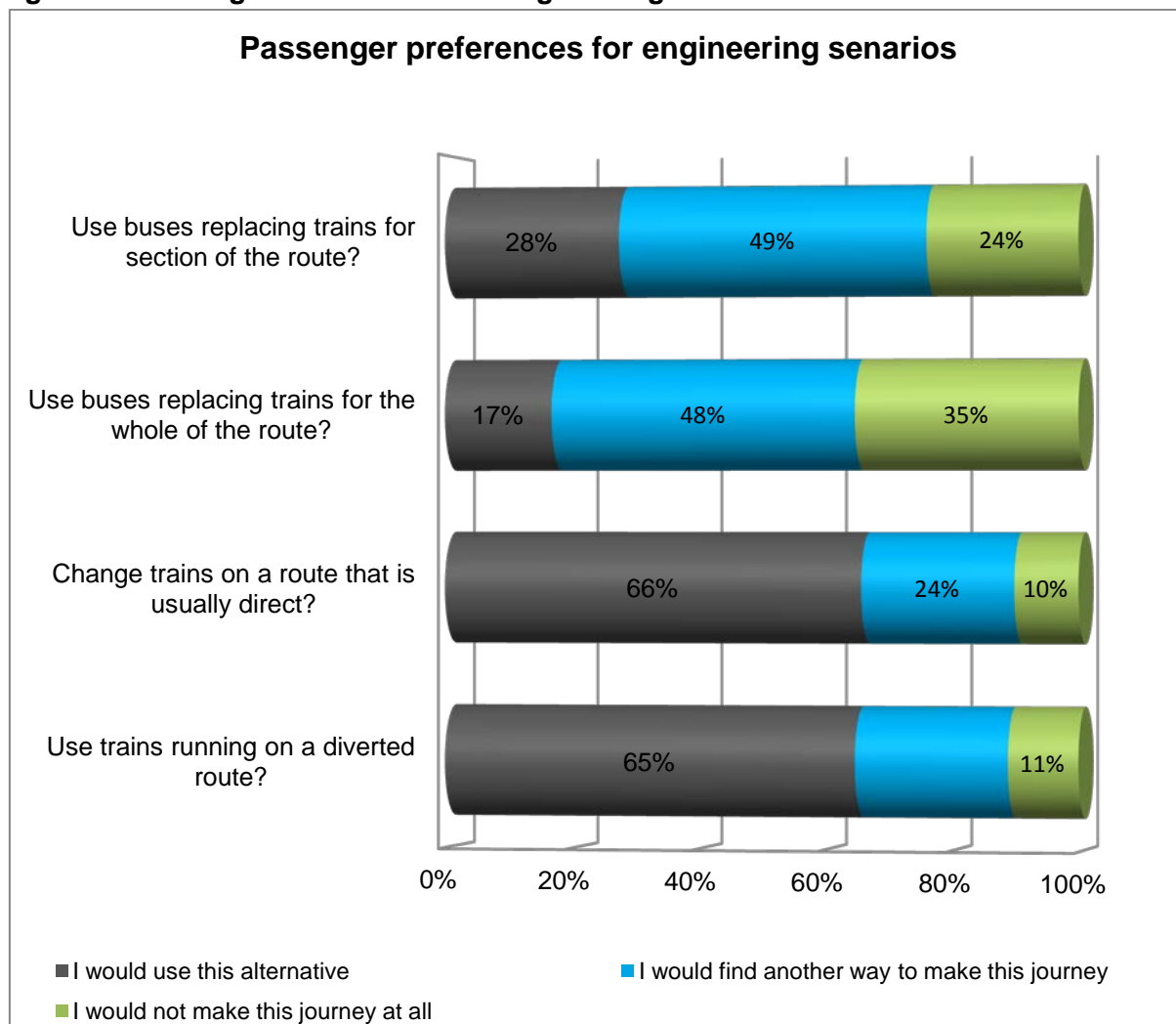
The route research found passengers have a very strong preference for engineering options that allow them to remain on a train rather than have services transferred to bus. This is consistent with other research<sup>18</sup> and the strength of views is such that this passenger preference should be accommodated whenever possible as work is undertaken on the combined franchise.

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<sup>18</sup> *Reading Station Engineering Works: What Passengers Want* (26/05/2011):

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

**Figure 4: Passenger Preferences for Engineering Service Scenarios**



### 7.7.5.1 Passenger preferences for scheduling of engineering

The route-based research also explored passenger preferences about when engineering work should be scheduled. Generally, passengers on FCC were most in favour of ‘weekend closures over a number of weeks’ (31 per cent) and ‘weekend line diversions or amended timetables over a number of weeks’ (26 per cent). This was followed by ‘no trains running after 9pm until the next morning over a number of weeks’ (19 per cent). Of all the options presented to FCC passengers, the least popular were ‘Christmas/Easter/Bank Holidays line closures’ (9 per cent) or ‘full line closures for a week or more’ (5 per cent). On Southeastern Mainline and Metro weekend diversions (35 and 39 per cent respectively) were more favoured than weekend closures (24 and 29 per cent respectively) but these still rated above other options and the least favoured scenarios were the same.

There were some differences in the preferences expressed by different passenger types on different routes, with commuters, in most instances, less likely to opt for works that would impact their regular journey, whilst leisure passengers were less likely to opt for weekend line closures. Full details are in the route research tables and should be carefully appraised by bidders in conjunction with Network Rail.

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 combined franchise. The specification should include the following requirements:

- A requirement to reduce the impact on passengers of Network Rail maintenance, renewal and upgrade of the railway and, in particular, to demonstrate efforts to minimise total blockades and the use of bus replacement where options exist to divert or operate single line working etc. The operator should be incentivised against accepting Schedule 4 compensation payments for lack of track access in preference to taking any available opportunity to retain some level of rail service.
- The operator to be specifically required to provide dedicated staff at key sites charged with managing the impact of major engineering activity on passengers and ensuring the highest possible quality of information.
- The operator to develop, monitor, and regularly review procedures for managing both planned and unplanned disruption, and to 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.
- The operator to contribute to industry work to improve responses to service disruption and make a commitment to rapid adoption of further good practice as it emerges.

### 7.7.5.2 Advance information about planned engineering

The franchise specification should make specific provision for passenger information requirements relating to planned disruption. These should be based on the passenger preferences identified by our route-based research shown below.

**Table 8: Passenger top five preferences for receiving information on planned disruption**

Method	% FCC passengers stating as a preference
Posters at the station in the weeks leading up to the disruption	67%
Announcements at the station in the weeks leading up to the disruption	37%
Announcements on trains in the weeks leading up to the disruption	34%
A timetable on the internet	31%
An email from the train company	30%

In 2010 Passenger Focus conducted research with passengers into communications 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 how the situation was managed, we believe that the Reading station project should be used as a best practice guide for handling future engineering works.

## **7.8 Changes and improvements to services**

**Question 7: What changes to services would stakeholders propose, what is the rationale for them and would these provide economic benefit?**

**Question 15: What improvements would respondents like to see made to Great Northern services as part of the combined franchise and what is the rationale for this?**

**Question 20: What improvements would respondents like to see made to Coastway East and West services, the rationale for such proposals and the economic benefit expected to be delivered from these changes?**

**Question 21: What improvements would respondents like to see made to other Southern services as part of the combined franchise from 2015, what is the rationale for such proposals and the economic benefit expected to be delivered from these changes?**

Passenger Focus firmly believes that changes and improvements to services should prioritise the factors that are most important to passengers. In this response we focus primarily on high level issues but there is substantial additional detail available about passenger views and aspirations from both the route research and NPS, and bidders should demonstrate how they have used this evidence in developing their proposals for the franchise. Consultation with passengers and stakeholders at the local level should also inform service plans.

The route-based research, highlighted in tables 4 and 5 above, identifies passengers' top priorities for improvement as:

- punctuality and reliability
- value for money
- frequency of service
- being able to get a seat
- length of time of journey.

Key points in relation to improving punctuality and reliability, and making effective use of capacity, have already been set out in the preceding sections. Issues around value for money are addressed in the section on Fares and Ticketing and the accompanying Appendix 4.

### **7.8.1 Improvements to frequency of service**

Frequency of service is a high priority for improvement. Our route-based research indicates that expectations of peak frequency are loosely linked to distance travelled. Those travelling on Metro routes, where there will be higher levels of crowding in the peak, are more likely to want a turn up and go frequency (around six trains per hour). Passengers travelling from further afield tend to be content with three or four trains per hour.

Our route research showed that satisfaction with frequency was typically lower at either end of the day and at weekends. This was as low as 14 per cent for services before 9am on the

Thameslink Loop. NPS also shows a similar pattern on Southern where satisfaction with frequency was over 20 per cent higher on weekdays.

In general, there was little interest in being able to take an earlier train than the current timetable allows, although a fifth of Thameslink Loop passengers said they would make use of earlier trains Monday-Friday.

The route research indicates that later trains than present would be a more popular proposal, particularly on Friday nights when 31 per cent said they would use them if provided. Stakeholder aspirations for Southern timetables also indicate that later trains would be of value to passengers on these services.

The case for improved frequencies on Sundays and bank holidays, in response to passenger aspirations, should also be explored by bidders.

### **7.8.2 Speed of journey**

A further priority for improvement is increasing the speed of journey. The franchise research reveals satisfaction can vary considerably by route. For example, 75 per cent of all Thameslink passengers were satisfied with the journey time but this dropped to just 59 per cent amongst those using Three Bridges/Brighton (FCC) services. Similarly, on the Southeastern Rochester/Ramsgate to London line only 64 per cent are satisfied.

There is often a difficult balance between meeting the needs of those who want a faster service (e.g. those making time-critical journeys such as commuters) and passengers travelling to/from intermediate or smaller stations who don't want the reductions in frequency that arise if stops are taken out to speed up a service.

Optimum solutions could be delivered through joint working with Network Rail and carefully targeting investment to parts of the route which have a particular impact on speed of travel, or where passing loops would allow faster trains to overtake slower, stopping services. The franchise specification should encourage bidders to explore all such opportunities.

Clearly, the scope to balance differing journey needs and improve speed will depend on the overall timetable proposition and this emphasises the need to take a holistic look at all services. Comprehensive consultation with all passengers must be a fundamental part of the timetabling process.

### **7.8.3 Question16: What services would be appropriate to serve the Airport market?**

The consultation document is correct to highlight the need to strike the right balance between the needs of air passengers and those of commuters in relation to the use of limited capacity on lines which are amongst the busiest in the country. This is particularly the case on the Brighton Main Line, where the non-stop Gatwick Express runs four trains per hour in both directions between the airport and London Victoria, using a significant proportion of available paths on the route and platform capacity at both stations, although frequently much less well used than many other services.

As we have stated in earlier sections of this response, Passenger Focus firmly believes that service planning and management of capacity must start with an understanding of passenger travel requirements based on origin and destination data and must take into account stakeholder aspirations. The available capacity must then be allocated to provide the greatest benefit for the maximum amount of people. We repeat our recommendation that a 'clean sheet' should be taken to service planning for the combined franchise and emphasise that services for the airport markets should be developed within the wider context of overall passenger demand.

It should be noted that the core service requirements for airport passengers are common to those of other passengers. Punctuality and reliability, sufficient room to sit/stand, frequency of service and length of time of journey should all be key considerations for the airport offer as with other services.

#### **7.8.4 Question 17: What improvements [for the airport market] could be made without adversely affecting the service provision on the remainder of the franchise?**

Analysis of NPS building block results for Gatwick Express (which carries some, but not all, of the airport passengers to/from that airport) indicates other service factors that should be considered for the airport market, some of which are also common to all passenger groups while others appear to be more specific.

Upkeep and repair of the train, space for luggage, connections with other forms of public transport and personal security on board all appear to have greater significance to Gatwick Express passengers than is generally the case on most other building blocks for FCC, Southern and Southeastern. Ease of getting on/off the train and comfort of the seating area are also important to Gatwick Express passengers, as they are to those on a number of other building blocks. These issues would appear to be a starting point for consideration of improvements for the wider airport market.

##### **7.8.4.1 Rolling stock**

Following on from our recommendation for a holistic approach to service planning, we would emphasise that the suitability of rolling stock for services on which it is deployed should be reviewed in the new franchise. It is clear that the 442 trains currently employed on services to Gatwick Airport and extension services to Brighton are unsuited to either airport usage or intensively used commuter services. Passengers express frustration with the narrow aisles, vestibules and doorways which make entry and egress slow and difficult, particularly for passengers with luggage.

Similarly, passengers on the Thameslink route are likely to appreciate recent and anticipated improvements to the quality of the trains employed on services to Luton Airport Parkway.

##### **7.8.4.2 Connectivity and service patterns**

Opportunities should be taken to improve the connectivity of the airports to a wider range of places. Routes through the Thameslink core will provide new opportunities for Luton and these will be further enhanced when Crossrail services commence.

Improvements to the connectivity of Gatwick Airport could bring benefits to airport passengers, and more widely. Access from East and West Coastway, Arun Valley and stations along the Brighton Main Line should be reviewed, along with the linkages to/from Kent, suburban London and also the West.

The consultation document omits any reference to Southampton Airport which is currently very poorly served by existing Southern services. The scope to improve links to this airport, either as part of the Thameslink structure or within the wider combined franchise, should be explored, including any infrastructure enhancements that may facilitate this.

The needs of both staff and air passengers to access airports across the day and night should be a focus for service improvements. The adequacy of early morning services from a range of points across the network should be reviewed and targeted for improvement. Similarly, later evening or night time services to/from various places should be considered.

#### **7.8.4.3 Stations and ticketing**

Gatwick Express building block analysis highlights that the overall station environment is a major driver of satisfaction for passengers, as are ticket buying facilities.

An assessment of the adequacy of station facilities and services for the future needs of air passengers should be undertaken with improvements planned where necessary. This should include a review of the origin of flights at each airport and the consequent requirement for signage in the languages most prevalent amongst air passengers.

At stations where many passengers will be unfamiliar with the language and vagaries of the rail ticketing system there must be increased emphasis on the provision of appropriate ticket buying facilities and clarity about the options available to passengers. It must be easy for them to find and purchase the cheapest, most suitable, ticket for their journey.

#### **7.9 Implications of changes to other franchises**

There are a number of other refranchising processes underway and changes to the service provision on any of these will potentially impact on the overall availability of journey opportunities on some parts of the combined franchise. It is important that the franchise specification requires liaison between bidders for the combined franchise and Great Western, Southeastern and Inter City East Coast franchises.

With the ITT for the Great Western already published there should be careful consideration of the future journey opportunities available to passengers along the West Coastway and also between Reading, Redhill and Gatwick Airport.

#### **7.10 Question 22: What are respondents' views on the practice of splitting trains at stations such as Haywards Heath?**

Splitting/joining can introduce some performance risk, whether caused by the delayed arrival of one portion of the train, availability of the crew, or problems with the operation itself. It also has a journey time impact. However, if managed efficiently by confident, well trained, staff it can offer improvements to frequency to certain destinations that may not otherwise be possible. For example, the current practice at Haywards Heath has enabled a half-hourly



frequency to East Coastway/West Coastway which would have been precluded within the given timetable structure. This has been of greater benefit to most passengers than a single hourly service, albeit of a slightly faster journey time.

The need for continuing or introducing splitting/ joining trains at key stations is likely to be influenced by the proposed structure of future service patterns on the combined franchise. These should be responsive to passenger journey aspirations and reflect a balance of needs.

Longstanding stakeholder ambitions, specifically on the East Coastway, suggest that a reallocation of train paths within the combined franchise should be able to provide a reasonable level of frequency without the need for splitting and joining, thus improving journey times.

One potential solution to the conundrum of providing waiting trains and longer boarding times at Gatwick within a more integrated service pattern could be splitting and joining some trains at the airport.

Passenger Focus would not advocate an arbitrary decision to rule splitting/joining in or out but suggests that the use of this practice should be assessed on the merits of each case and the benefits it would bring to passengers.

## **7.11 Newhaven Marine**

**Question 23: Do respondents feel that the Newhaven Marine branch line and station should be kept open and maintained or should the rail industry deploy the relevant funding elsewhere on the rail network?**

It is clear that no passenger benefit has been derived from Newhaven Marine branch line and station for a long period of time. At a time of significant resource pressure and an emphasis on validating costs it is increasingly unacceptable that resources are tied up in this manner.

Newhaven Marine is one of three stations in relatively close proximity in the town and the likelihood of any real demand here should be carefully considered before decisions are made. This assessment should take into account the views of bidders, freight operators, the local authority, and any other significant stakeholders. Network Rail should then make clear proposals for the future of the branch line and station, and embark on the appropriate wider consultation process. A final decision should be swiftly reached and acted upon.



## **8. Improving customer experience**

**Question 27: What are the priorities that respondents consider should be taken into account to improve the passenger experience of using these services?**

**Question 28: What do stakeholders see as the most important factors in improving security (actual or perceived) and addressing any gap between the two?**

**Question 29: What is important to stakeholders in the future use and improvements in stations?**

Passengers will undoubtedly expect that a new 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. Bidders should be required to demonstrate that they have given full consideration to Passenger Focus and other research on relevant topics and to show how their proposals address the aspects that are important to passengers, especially where levels of satisfaction are currently low.

In this response we focus primarily on high level findings from the route research and NPS but there is substantial additional detail available and bidders should demonstrate that they have used this evidence in developing their proposals for the franchise.

### **8.1 Train and journey improvements**

In our route research we asked passengers about the importance of different on-board services and what aspects of the service they would like the rail company to concentrate on improving.

On both FCC and Southeastern routes, a wif-fi Internet connection was regarded by passengers as the most important on-board facility across all routes, followed by at seat power sockets.

The aspects of journey comfort passengers most wanted the TOC to concentrate on improving were upkeep and maintenance of the seating and fixtures on the train, and the cleanliness of the seating and common parts, followed by cleanliness of train toilets and clearing away of litter on the trains.

### **8.2 Station improvements**

NPS shows low levels of satisfaction with station facilities and services across all three TOCS. 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.

Passenger Focus research conducted at Clapham Junction, Barking and Luton stations following the Better Stations report<sup>19</sup> shows that at individual stations there are often specific improvements that passengers want to see and that priorities can vary according to location and circumstance. Bidders should consider the detailed results from NPS and the route research and also seek station feedback from local passengers and community rail partnerships to identify issues and aspirations for specific locations and gather information about relevant accessibility issues.

### **8.3 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.

#### **8.3.1 Passenger information**

The way the industry manages delays is the biggest single driver of rail passenger dissatisfaction; the key to improving this is through the provision of real-time information on delays. By and large (87 per cent)<sup>20</sup> 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 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 empowered to help stranded passengers by arranging/authorising alternative transport, accommodation or other appropriate responses.

#### **8.3.2 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.

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<sup>19</sup> 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.

<sup>20</sup> *Passenger Priorities for Improvement in rail services*, Passenger Focus, 2009

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 TVMs.

During disruption staff have a central role in providing information and advice to passengers, helping them with queries and in making 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 significant concern about the lack of access to toilets and waiting rooms if staff are withdrawn from stations or hours are significantly reduced.

#### **8.4 Security and safety**

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. 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.

The autumn 2011 NPS found that, on average, just over one in ten passengers had cause to be concerned about their personal security. The main causes for that concern, both on the train and at the station, were attributed to the anti-social behaviour of others and a lack of staff.

Some notable concerns about security emerged from the route research. Although 10 per cent of FCC passengers overall had experienced concern for their security, this was 17 per cent on Thameslink Loop and 14 per cent on the stations to Harpenden sub-route. Even higher levels of concern were expressed by passengers on Southeastern routes, noted by an average of 15 per cent on the mainline and 20 per cent on Metro. Particular concern was expressed by passengers on the routes to London by passengers from Gravesend/Dartford (24 per cent), Rochester/Ramsgate (20 per cent) and Sevenoaks (17 per cent). 20 per cent of passengers on other mainline routes also noted security concerns.

To improve security and safety Passenger Focus recommends that the franchise specification should include CCTV and linked help-point provision at all stations that do not currently have these facilities. 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, although we acknowledge that it may be appropriate to specifically exempt this requirement for a few particularly lightly used stations in order to ensure best use of limited resources.

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

## 8.5 Improving station access

### **Question 30: What priorities would respondents give to car parking and cycling facilities at locations where these are fully used?**

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 take<sup>21</sup>. 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<sup>22</sup>, adding congestion to the roads and to transport's carbon footprint.

The passenger growth forecasts for the combined franchise mean increased attention will need to be given to how passengers are going to access and pass through stations throughout the life of the franchise.

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 and Community Rail Partnerships should be involved in developing proposals to improve station access.

Many passengers get to the station on foot but arrival by car is also an important means of access for a significant minority of passengers, particularly those travelling in more rural areas, who may not have any other viable alternative. In these places, improvements to car parking provision where it is currently oversubscribed is a priority, especially if increased off-peak usage is to be promoted.

Increasing the options to travel by bus may be a fruitful area to explore. We asked passengers, if they used a car regularly to travel to the station, what would encourage them to use alternative transport. More frequent, cheaper, and/or direct bus services were the main preferences.

Improvements to cycle facilities including access routes, parking and, potentially, changing rooms may help increase the number of passengers who use this option to access the station.

Bidders should be encouraged to commit to Station Travel Plan 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 Rail Utilisation Strategy

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<sup>21</sup> *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](http://www.cpt-uk.org/_uploads/attachment/690.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> *Getting to the station*, Passenger Focus, March 2007

(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 demonstrably 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.

## **8.6 Service quality, targets and transparency**

Targets, measurements, and monitoring are fundamental to delivering improvements to service quality. 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 all 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.

There should be a requirement for the franchise operator to commit to high levels of transparency about all aspects of the franchise, including operational performance and service quality.

### **8.6.1 National Passenger Survey**

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 and, with an existing sample size of 2000 on FCC and 2338 on Southern each wave, this already enables robust measures across seven building blocks.

We have suggested bespoke targets should be established on each of the building blocks to measure passenger satisfaction with station, train service, train facility and customer service attributes. 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 will continue to discuss the application of NPS targets for the franchise with the Department and bidders as required.

### **8.6.2 Key Performance Indicators**

The KPI assessments should be conducted across the entire franchise and include all stations and representative samples of the major 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 regular reviews based on collated information.

### 8.6.3 Performance targets

**Question 24: How would you like to see performance information published?**

**Question 25: How frequent should its publication be?**

**Question 26: What level of disaggregation of performance do you believe is reasonable?**

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 will promote greater accountability by making clear to rail passengers, staff, management and other parties how key aspects of the rail service are performing at different places and at different times. The provision of detailed information will enable rail passengers and others hold the train company to account and to ask what is being done to improve services in return for the fares paid. Good management should not feel threatened by this. Indeed the availability of accurate data may actually help them as a particularly bad journey can linger in the memory and distort passengers' perceptions. Accurate, relevant data can help challenge these negative perceptions and is also a vital management tool.

Punctuality data only provided at the overall operator level can easily mask significant differences between routes and times of day. Providing disaggregated performance data, at minimum, at a route/service group level for morning/afternoon peaks, daytime and evening would help prevent this and focus attention on areas that need improving. Passenger Focus would support further steps to open up performance data (including cancellations) at station level to allow passengers to see information on the particular services that interest them.

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 generate improvements for passengers.

In the medium term we also see value in looking more closely at the choice of performance measurement used. The existing measure (PPM) allows a five minute leeway on late arrival; a train is not late until it exceeds this allowance. However, we know from our research<sup>23</sup> 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 introducing a secondary measure based on right-time arrival. Recent steps by the industry towards publication of right-time data on particular trains make this increasingly feasible and more likely to be the measure on which performance is publicly judged.

Network Rail's performance clearly has a huge bearing on an operator's punctuality and yet a franchise agreement typically only creates an obligation on factors within the train company's

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<sup>23</sup> *Towards a 'right-time' East Anglian railway*, Passenger Focus. March 2010

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 operator 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 alliances. We would like to see the franchise 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.

Passenger Focus is currently working with the Office of Rail Regulation and National Rail Enquiries, on behalf of all train operators, to explore passenger views on performance and other data and to understand how this may best be made available to them. The results of this qualitative research will be provided to the DfT and bidders at the earliest opportunity to inform the approach to data publication in the new franchise.

#### **8.6.4 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. Some input targets will clearly remain important to passengers e.g. to cover 'hard' targets for things like punctuality, cancellations and crowding; while output targets (based on passenger satisfaction) may be better placed to address some of the 'softer' qualitative elements of a journey. Passenger responses to the consultation should be used to further inform the targets and measures that go into the franchise specification.

#### **8.6.5 Complaints handling**

In our role as the statutory appeals body<sup>24</sup> Passenger Focus has extensive experience of working with passengers and rail operators to seek resolution of appeal complaints. We have found a number of recurring issues with either the operators' complaints processes or response quality. We have been working with the industry in an effort to improve customer service, reduce complaint handling times as well as decrease the number of passenger appeals to train companies.

It is important that the specification for the franchise seeks detailed information from bidders about their policy and procedures for dealing with complaints. These should demonstrate a clear commitment to best practice and should encompass the following points:

Process issues

Empower customer service advisors to apply 'natural justice' when dealing with poor passenger experiences and allow redress to go beyond the minimum levels of the Passenger Charter or National Rail Conditions of Carriage.

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<sup>24</sup> For British rail passengers outside of London



#### Process issues

- Ensure mechanisms to monitor and manage response times and to acknowledge complaints if they cannot be resolved within the target time, which should be published.
- Implement a process whereby appropriate issues are proactively investigated by the customer service advisor, and other relevant staff members, and feed back the findings to the passenger.
- Establish mechanisms to feed complaints into service improvements, where possible, and feed information about this back to the passenger.

#### Response quality

- Train and empower customer service advisors to identify and address all the points in the complaint and give heavy weighting to 'addressing all issues raised by the passenger' in internal quality monitoring processes.
- Provide clear explanations about why the passenger is/ is not receiving compensation and/or gesture of goodwill.
- Make careful use of appropriately worded standard paragraphs, supplemented as necessary by bespoke responses.
- Ensure customer service advisors use clear, jargon-free English with correct spelling, grammar and punctuation when writing responses.

#### **8.6.5.1 Legacy complaints**

A clear process for handling legacy complaints should be established. Passenger Focus recommends that all complaints should be dealt with by the new operator from the first day onwards, with appropriate recompense mechanisms from the outgoing operator established to enable this.

Making the incumbent responsible for handling complaints reduces confusion and complexity for the passenger. It also ensures that complaints are handled by the operator with an ongoing interest in retaining the passenger, and who is best placed to resolve any issues and implement any changes as a result of the complaint.

#### **8.7 Fares, ticketing and 'smart' technology**

**Question 31: What sort of ticketing products and services would you expect to see delivered through 'smart' technology on this franchise?**

Whilst 'smart' technology will enable an enhanced offer of ticketing products and services, there is a wider agenda about fares, retailing and revenue protection that must be considered for the new franchise.

Passenger Focus has conducted extensive research with passengers on fares, ticketing and value for money and has identified many issues that remain to be adequately addressed. We



have recently submitted and published a response to the Government’s rail fares and ticketing review<sup>25</sup> which summarises our research findings and sets out the improvements we are seeking on behalf of passengers. Appendix 4 is extracted from the fares and ticketing response and provides our overall aspirations for fares, ticketing and value for money for the combined franchise. We do, however, wish to emphasise some particularly important points:

- We recognise that retailing is evolving but ticketing arrangements in the new franchise must accommodate the needs of all passengers. Our research on FCC routes indicated that 45 per cent of passengers preferred to purchase tickets from ticket offices and 54 per cent expressed a preference to receive ticket in standard paper format. The preferences expressed for ‘newer’ forms of ticketing are shown below:

Loaded onto smartcard	25%
Sent to your mobile (you can scan a barcode at the ticket gate)	6%
Sent to your mobile (show message as proof of purchase)	4%
Ticket printed at home/work	4%
Other	4%

- The new operator must support passengers to take advantage of new ticketing methods and products as retailing evolves.
- 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. This should include monitoring and publishing ticket queuing times at ticket offices and TVMs.
- New products should build on the experience of the smartcard pilots being implemented on the current Southern franchise and elsewhere. However, the new operator should also be encouraged to exploit the opportunities to use other rapidly emerging technologies such as mobile ticketing where this can provide passenger benefits.
- ‘Smart’ products should include carnet-style tickets for less regular travellers and discounted fares for travel outside the peaks, both of which can benefit passengers and also provide incentives that assist management of capacity. A range of other products and services should also be encouraged, including integrated multi-modal tickets, car parking and, potentially, other station services. The role for zonal-type fares outside of London should be considered.

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<sup>25</sup> *Passenger Focus response to the Government’s rail fares and ticketing review*  
[http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/all?research\\_filter%5Bmode%5D=1&research\\_filter%5BpublicationType%5D=&research\\_filter%5Btopic%5D=&research\\_filter%5ByearOfPublication%5D=&research\\_filter%5Bq%5D=Rail+fares+and+ticketing+review](http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/all?research_filter%5Bmode%5D=1&research_filter%5BpublicationType%5D=&research_filter%5Btopic%5D=&research_filter%5ByearOfPublication%5D=&research_filter%5Bq%5D=Rail+fares+and+ticketing+review)

- Existing arrangements for special fares (e.g. Southern’s All Network Downlander), discounts (e.g. FCC 50 per cent student fares at Meldreth) and ‘rainy day’ guarantees should be retained where they exist and extended to other parts of the franchise where the market exists. No change of franchise should erode passengers’ existing benefits.
- The travel opportunities of off-peak passengers should be protected and there should be no further dilution of periods of validity of off-peak tickets.
- We also wish to see wider use of Advance fares across the breadth of the new franchise and beyond for better value long-distance travel.

An issue of particular concern for the combined franchise is the impact of the loss of competition on Brighton Main Line fares, especially for those passengers who currently use an operator-specific ticket. Passengers should not be penalised as a result of franchise changes so we suggest a mechanism is established to allow passengers to travel on comparable arrangements to those that currently exist. Should there be any move towards harmonisation of fares in the longer term, Passenger Focus recommends that this should be gradual to avoid sharp increases for current passengers.

### **8.7.1 Thameslink and London Terminals fares**

Passenger Focus also recommends that the creation of the combined franchise should be taken as an opportunity to address the confusion and inequity surrounding the north-south London Terminals issue. Currently passengers travelling on a London Terminals ticket are only permitted to travel to certain stations within the Thameslink core depending on the direction from which they have travelled. A London Thameslink ticket, allowing travel anywhere within the core, is only available on the route from Bedford and this fare option is unknown to many passengers. To passengers, London is London; the fine nuances of which station is applicable to which ticket from which origin is incomprehensible and many passengers are penalised for genuine mistakes, the actual cost of which to the industry is negligible.

We wish to see a single, unified London Terminals ticket applicable to all London stations on the Thameslink route from any direction on the combined franchise or Southeastern (including Farringdon, not technically a terminal but nevertheless a London destination within the core). This should be priced at the lowest comparable existing fare when the franchise commences.

### **8.8 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 recently published a document<sup>26</sup> highlighting significant concerns around the application of penalty fares and unpaid fare notices that have arisen as a result of disturbing passenger experiences brought to our Appeals team. These issues have been raised with the industry and we await a promised code of conduct from ATOC. The core principles we would expect to see contained within a code are set out in Appendix 5.

In the meantime, 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 suffered by the operator.
- The operator must monitor the number of unpaid fare and 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).

### **8.9 Question 32: What local accessibility and mobility issues do stakeholders see and how they might be addressed?**

We note the requirements to comply with equalities and discrimination legislation and to produce a Disabled People's Protection Policy (DPPP). However, we would also highlight the fact that many mobility impaired people do not regard themselves as falling within the scope of disability legislation so access improvements can benefit a much wider range of people including older or frailer passengers and those encumbered by luggage or small children.

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<sup>26</sup> *Ticket to ride*, Passenger Focus, May 2012

<http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/publications/ticket-to-ride-full-report-may-2012>

Passenger Focus recommends that the franchise specification should 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 to 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 operators; existing passengers should not be prevented from travelling with their scooters merely as a result of franchise change.
- Retain the priority seat card scheme (as initiated by Southern and now also adopted as good practice by FCC) 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 hierarchy of use of priority seating and the categories of passenger considered eligible for it.
- Clearly indicate 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.
- Undertake comprehensive Passenger Assist monitoring: the number of bookings made, the number of bookings carried out and passenger satisfaction. The results should be published in each revision of the franchisee's Disabled People's Protection Policy and the Passenger Charter.
- Best use should be made of the management information gained from Passenger Assist e.g. enabling the operator s 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 and automatic doors.

- 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 they 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 best of the standards achieved by the current operators.
- An annual action plan should be developed and implemented to enhance the service provided to disabled passengers using the combined franchise network and to improve customer satisfaction among those using the Passenger Assist system.
- All passengers with a Passenger Assist booking whose journey is or will be affected by amendments, cancellations or disruption to services, should be contacted as soon as possible to help them re-plan their journey, especially in the case of passengers whose journeys have already begun

### **8.10 Question 33: What environmental targets would stakeholders like to see within the franchise specification?**

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.

However, looking more widely, the key candidates for improvement should be those factors which can reduce costs such as the successful example of the application of regenerative braking. Developments that improve comfort would also be welcomed by passengers.

The potential longer term contribution to environmental performance and passenger comfort that would be offered by electrification of the two short stretches on the Uckfield and Marshlink lines should also be considered. This would have the further benefits of reduced running costs once the initial investment in introduction has been met, a more streamlined fleet with consequent improvements to diagramming and driver availability, and freeing up scarce diesel stock for use in other areas which require additional units to alleviate capacity pressures.

Bidders might be encouraged to explore the potential benefits of the introduction of LED lighting at stations and in car parks.

## 9. Contact for further information

For further information about this submission or other aspects of Passenger Focus's work on the combined franchise please contact:

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## 10. Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Department for Transport and the Thameslink Consortium for inviting Passenger Focus to attend and present our research at stakeholder consultation events for the combined franchise. It has also been helpful to discuss the London perspective with Transport for London and London TravelWatch.

We would like to thank all the groups and individuals who submitted their consultation response comments and aspirations with us to help highlight regional passenger issues. At the time of printing, these responses include\*:

- Clapham Rail Users Group
- Forest Hill Society
- Three Oaks and Winchelsea Action for Rail Transport
- Watford Rail Users' Group
- Thameslink 2000 Consortium
- East Surrey Transport Committee
- Crofton Park Transport Users' Group
- West London Line Group
- Newington Parish
- East Sussex Rail Alliance
- Kent County Council
- The Access Group (Tunbridge Wells Borough Area)
- Sevenoaks Rail Users' Association
- Association of Public Transport Users
- Friends of Lewes Line
- Gatwick Airport Consultative Committee
- East Sussex Council
- Hearing Dogs for the
- Southwark Rail Users Group
- Trains 4 Deal
- Railfuture (London and South East Branch)
- Sussex Community Rail Partnership
- Hawkhurst Community Partnership and members
- Bedford Commuters' Association
- Reigate, Redhill and District Rail Users' Association
- Luton Airport
- Bexhill Rail Action

#### Council

- Hitchin Rail User Group
- Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail Users' Group

#### Deaf

- Ashwell and Morden Rail Users' Group
- Southeastern Trains Stakeholder Advisory Panel

#### Group

- South Hampshire Rail Users' Group
- Bedford Area Bus Users' Society

#### ***Members of Parliament***

- Gavin Shaker Luton South
- Heidi Alexander Lewisham East
- Tom Brake Carshalton and Wallington
- Stephen Hammond Wimbledon
- Stephen Lloyd Eastbourne

\* For data protection reasons, we have refrained from printing the names of individual contributors. Their responses however are very welcome and appreciated.

# Appendix 1

## Passenger Priorities

Table A1 First Capital Connect passenger priorities by sub route<sup>27</sup>

Factor	Overall Rank	TOTAL	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Sample size		2786	498	500	300	557	210	462	259
Punctuality reliability of the train	1	100	100	96	100	100	100	100	94
Value for money for price of ticket	2	80	47	100	92	90	65	73	100
Frequency of trains for this route	3	63	73	54	76	46	46	70	62
Being able to get a seat on the train	4	49	30	59	41	65	29	42	58
Length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed)	5	32	22	36	28	40	21	32	43
Provision of information during times of disruption	6	27	23	23	28	26	32	28	32
Upkeep/ repair and cleanliness of the train	7	25	18	22	21	28	26	24	38
Ease of buying a ticket	8	16	9	17	20	18	14	15	26
Provision of information during the journey	9	16	13	15	22	16	17	17	18
Connections with other train services	10	15	13	12	16	19	15	15	16
Availability of staff	11	11	8	11	14	9	13	13	15
Quality of facilities and services at the station (e.g. toilets/shops/cafes)	12	11	6	10	12	11	11	10	19
Ease of getting to and from the station	13	9	5	10	11	9	10	9	12
Facilities and services on board the train	14	7	4	6	7	9	6	6	11
Top three priorities									
Next priorities									

<sup>27</sup> Key to sub routes at Table A1:

**A** Thameslink Loop,

**B** Blackfriars/Kentish Town to Luton/Bedford,

**C** Blackfriars/Kentish Town to Harpenden,

**D** St Pancras/London Bridge to Three Bridges and Brighton,

**E** St Pancras/London Bridge to Denmark Hill/Sevenoaks,

**F** Kings Cross/Moorgate to Hertford North and

**G** Kings Cross/Finsbury Park to Arslay/Peterborough



**Table A2 – Southeastern passenger priorities by sub route<sup>28</sup>**

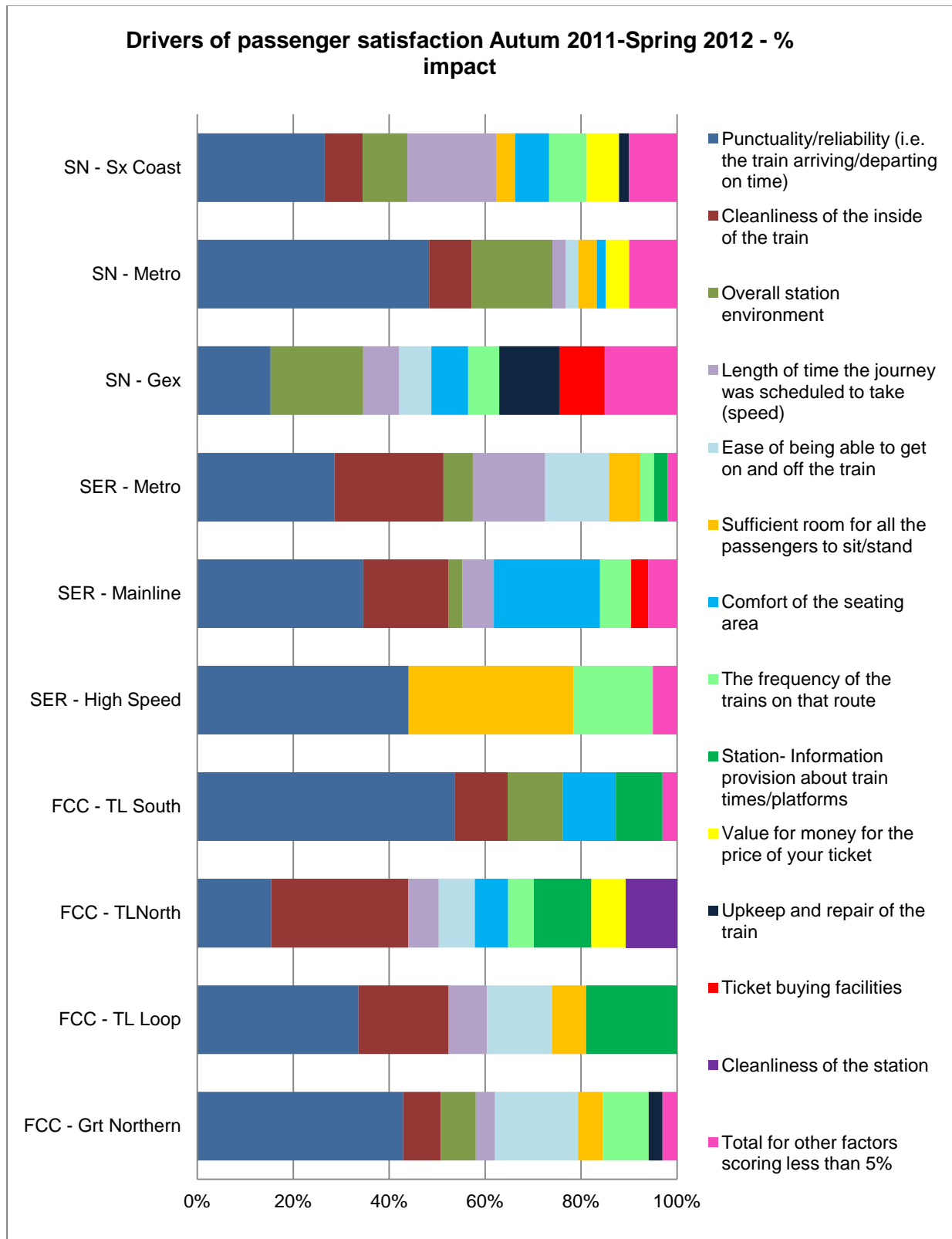
	Overall Rank	A	B	C	D	E	F
Sample size		440	244	254	166	404	512
Value for money for price of ticket	1	100	100	100	100	86	80
Punctuality reliability of the train	2	84	75	99	98	100	100
Frequency of trains for this route	3	40	58	63	72	71	75
Being able to get a seat on the train	4	58	44	52	47	65	57
Length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed)	5	42	44	66	47	28	35
Provision of information during times of disruption	6	26	27	29	38	28	31
Upkeep/ repair and cleanliness of the train	7	25	28	35	30	24	29
Ease of buying a ticket	8	15	17	24	17	17	17
Provision of information during the journey	9	16	17	21	19	19	17
Connections with other train services	10	11	13	18	20	12	16
Availability of staff	11	11	18	19	17	13	13
Quality of facilities and services at the station (e.g. toilets/shops/cafes)	12	12	16	17	14	11	11
Ease of getting to and from the station	13	9	11	16	14	8	10
Facilities and services on board the train	14	10	10	14	12	6	6
Top three priorities							
Next three priorities							

<sup>28</sup> Key to sub routes at Table A2:

- A** Hastings/ Tonbridge to London,
- B** Rochester/Ramsgate to London,
- C** Ashford London via Maidstone East to London,
- D** Other Mainline,
- E** Gravesend/ Dartford to London,
- F** Sevenoaks to London.

## Appendix 2

### Drivers of satisfaction by building block



## Appendix 3

### Key to route abbreviations used in NPS tables

LSE London and South East (NPS sector)

#### **FCC - First Capital Connect (train operating company)**

GN/Grt N - Great Northern

Loop/TL Loop - Thameslink Loop

TL N/TL North - Thameslink North

TL/S/TL South - Thameslink South

#### **SER - Southeastern Railways (train operating company)**

HS - High Speed

ML - Mainline

Metro

#### **SN - Southern (train operating company)**

GEx - Gatwick Express

Metro

SC/Sx Coast - Sussex Coast

## Appendix 4

### Passenger Focus response to the fares and ticketing review: Appendix A

In the area of fares, ticketing and value for money, Passenger Focus is seeking the following improvements on behalf of passengers:

#### Improvements to regulatory and legal arrangements

- That an individual regulated fare should not be allowed to increase by more than two percentage points above the nominal price cap (currently an individual fare can increase by five percentage points above the price cap, leading to a postcode lottery in regulated fare increases).
- That TVMs and ticket retailing websites should be subject to formal 'impartial retailing' rules, as are ticket offices at stations.
- As a 'second best' to the previous point, that TVMs and ticket retailing websites should be obliged to say explicitly if they sell all tickets and on an impartial basis, or restrict their range.
- That all normally-available tickets, whether issued as physical tickets or electronically, should be subject to the NR Code of Conduct, undiluted by more restrictive conditions applicable to the type of ticket held.
- As called for in Passenger Focus's May 2012 publication *Ticket to ride?*<sup>29</sup> that passengers should not be treated as if guilty of a criminal offence relating to ticketing without the train company demonstrating deliberate intent to defraud.

#### Improvements to the pricing structure

- That, in order for passengers to effectively mix and match between Advance and 'walk up' ticket types, Off-Peak Single tickets for long-distance journeys should be half the price of the current Off-Peak Return (this would deal with the illogical situation in which a single ticket can be just £1 less than a return and provide a mid-priced ticket that fills the gap between the complete inflexibility of Advance and the fully-flexible Anytime).
- That a comprehensive exercise should be carried out to identify where fares do not exist between pairs of stations; where they exist but are not valid for a perfectly reasonable routing; and where for no apparent reason Advance tickets do not exist for a journey between pairs of stations.

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<sup>29</sup> *Ticket to ride?* Passenger Focus, May 2012

<http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/publications/ticket-to-ride-summary-report-may-2012>

## Improvements for commuters

- That passengers should be able to pay for an annual ticket by monthly direct debit at the same cost as a conventional annual season ticket.
- That ticketing arrangements should offer regular commuters who travel less than five days each week a discount on the price of five full price day return tickets.

## Giving passengers confidence that they are not paying more than they need to

- That on any 'walk up' interavailable flow the through fare should not exceed the cost of buying 'walk up' interavailable fares for individual legs of the journey. One example of many where the unwary currently pay more than necessary is Aberystwyth to Leicester: the Anytime Single through fare is £55.50, yet an Anytime Single Aberystwyth to Birmingham ticket (£26.20) plus an Anytime Single Birmingham to Leicester ticket (£15.50) comes to £41.70. Addressing the problem by increasing the price of the individual legs of the journey would not be an acceptable solution.
- That TVMs should display only the tickets that it is appropriate to sell at the time, in order that passengers do not buy a more expensive ticket than they need (at present, many TVMs display tickets that are more expensive than needed at the time, leading to confusion and potential for the unwary to overpay).
- That TVMs and websites must charge the GroupSave price when a passenger seeks to buy three or four tickets for a journey where that product is offered. It is unacceptable that the unwary are charged for all passengers in their party when a 'three/four for the price of two' deal is available to anyone in the know.
- That, to help passengers through the 'two singles may or may not be cheaper than a return' jungle, ticket retailing websites should not sell a more expensive ticket than a passenger needs, without at least warning them first. Scenarios to cover include:
  - not selling an Advance ticket when a cheaper 'walk up' single ticket is valid on the same train.
  - not selling out and back Advance tickets (in the same transaction) at a higher price than a 'walk up' return ticket valid on the same trains.
  - not selling a 'walk up' ticket for a specific train or trains without first warning the purchaser when a cheaper ticket is available for the same train or trains.
- That ticket retailing websites should alert passengers making enquiries about journeys where Advance tickets are normally available, but on dates where reservations are not yet open, that the cheaper tickets have not yet gone on sale (at present, there is nothing to stop passengers buying a 'walk up' ticket in the mistaken belief that it is the cheapest price unaware that cheaper, potentially very significantly cheaper, tickets will go on sale at a later date).
- That towards the end of peak periods, booking offices, TVMs and websites should warn passengers making long distance journeys that it may be cheaper to buy an Anytime ticket for part of the journey and an Off-Peak ticket for the remainder (for

example, an Anytime Single from Kettering to Exeter for the 08:56 departure costs £175; however, by the time the passenger departs from Paddington at 11:06, Super Off-Peak tickets are valid a Kettering to London Anytime Single at £60 including Underground from St. Pancras to Paddington and a London to Exeter Super Off-Peak Single at £43 would save £72).

- That sufficient information about all Day Ranger tickets (e.g. restriction times, geographic boundaries etc.) should be contained in the fares system to enable websites to sell them to passengers making relevant journey enquiries. At present, many websites are 'blind' to Day Rangers, even when they are the most appropriate ticket for the journey in question and passengers are instead offered a higher-priced ticket. Resolving this problem would, we understand, also allow Day Rangers to show on TVMs where relevant.

### **Acting in a fair and reasonable way towards passengers**

- That if a passenger misses the train on which they booked an Advance ticket, the sum paid already should count towards the new ticket they need to buy (less a reasonable administration fee).
- That passengers who have a ticket for the date in question between relevant stations, but are asked to buy a new one or pay an excess because it is not valid for the train they are on, should be sold/upgraded to the cheapest 'walk up' ticket valid on that train. In these circumstances passengers should not be forced to buy a full-price Anytime ticket on a train where Off-Peak fares are valid. This is already the policy of Virgin Trains, Southern, ScotRail and Hull Trains and should become universal.
- That if a passenger cannot produce a ticket for the train they are on, but can prove at the time or later that they have bought an Advance ticket for that train they should not be asked to pay again, or should receive a refund of any additional fare paid.
- That passengers who hold a railcard-discounted ticket but who have forgotten their railcard should have the option to present it within a fixed period without financial penalty, with further action taken only if they fail to do so. A limit to the number of 'grace' occasions within a 12-month period may be reasonable; names and addresses should always be taken discreetly in these circumstances. The industry should also consider how technology can help in future with on-the-spot verification that the individual concerned holds a valid railcard.
- That passengers who have bought a train company-specific 'walk-up' ticket, but travel on another company's train, should be asked to pay the difference between what they have paid already and the interavailable price and not treated as if they had bought no ticket at all.

- *Ticket to ride?*<sup>30</sup>, also called for a code of practice to be introduced to provide safeguards for passengers, including appeal arrangements, around the use of Unpaid Fare Notices by train companies.
- That passengers wishing to change previously-purchased advance tickets for a different date or time should pay one £10 administration fee to cover all the tickets in the transaction (at present, a family of four needing to change out and back return tickets would face £80 in administration fees, which feels utterly disproportionate to the train company's costs and makes many Advance tickets de facto 'no refund, no change').
- It should be permitted to change the origin or destination of an Advance ticket prior to departure (on payment of a reasonable administration fee). At present, there is no facility to change an Advance ticket from, say, London-York to London-Leeds, adding to the inflexibility of this ticket type. Venues change as well as dates and times.
- That TVMs should be programmed to allow off-peak fares to be sold early enough for passengers to buy one and board the first off-peak train. As soon as the last more expensive train has departed, the cheaper ticket should be available (passengers have problems with TVMs displaying off-peak tickets only from the moment they are valid, in some instances allowing no time to buy one and board the first train on which that ticket can be used).
- That automatic ticket gates should be programmed to allow holders of off-peak tickets to access platforms in sufficient time to board the first off-peak train (in some instances passengers find that an off-peak ticket will not open the gates in time to get on the first train on which it is valid).

### Transparency, clarity and reassurance

- That validity restrictions should be printed on 'walk up' tickets, whichever purchasing channel is used.
- That booking offices, TVMs and websites should be able to show passengers the permitted routes' applicable to any 'walk up' or season ticket.
- That season tickets should be sold with a map of 'permitted routes'.
- That, to guard against passenger perception that no or very few tickets are available at the advertised headline price (e.g. A to B one way from £8), train companies should be transparent about how many tickets they have sold at the lowest Advance price for their key passenger flows.

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<sup>30</sup> *Ticket to ride?* Passenger Focus, May 2012

<http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/publications/ticket-to-ride-summary-report-may-2012>



## **Ticket vending machines and ticket retailing websites**

- That validity restrictions, for both outward and return legs if applicable, should be clear to passengers before they commit to purchase the ticket.
- That TVMs and websites should recognise London stations with or without the prefix 'London' (e.g. Paddington and London Paddington), with arrangements to prevent confusion around similarly named stations elsewhere in the country (e.g. Waterloo on Merseyside and Charing Cross in Glasgow).
- That TVMs and websites should display '(5-15 years)' wherever child fares are referred to.
- That TVMs and websites should give a clear explanation of the London Travelcard zones to which they are selling tickets.
- That sufficient information (e.g. restriction times, geographic boundaries etc.) should be contained in the fares system about all non-national railcards to enable websites to sell discounted tickets to passengers making relevant journey enquiries. At present, some websites are unaware that particular railcards exist, making it impossible for passengers holding them to buy online. Resolving this problem would, we understand, also allow TVMs to offer discounts relevant to those railcards.
- That TVMs should be able to sell tickets with an origin station other than that at which they are located. A passenger wishing to buy out and back single tickets because it is cheaper than a return cannot currently do so using a TVM at the start of their outward journey. Boundary zone 'add on' tickets also need to be available from TVMs. The 'remote purchase' option exists at ticket offices and TVMs should replicate this functionality to ensure passengers are not disadvantaged at times when the booking office is closed.

## **Access to Advance tickets**

- That the cut-off time for Advance tickets should be two hours before departure, unless there is a genuine practical reason to make it longer.

## **Ticket office opening and queuing times**

- That, for each station, train operators should report regularly on their success at achieving published opening hours and at ensuring passengers do not wait more than three minutes (off-peak) or five minutes (peak). Passenger Focus research suggests that ticket office queuing times need to be monitored and managed more proactively by train companies<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> *Still waiting for a ticket? Ticket queuing times at large regional rail stations*, Passenger Focus,

### **Ticket sales during service disruption**

- That ticket sales should be prevented on trains that have been cancelled, but should be possible on replacement trains or buses. There is partial progress in this direction, but more needs to be done.

## Appendix 5

### Ticket to Ride: Passenger Focus suggested principles for code of practice

1. It is an operator's duty to sell a passenger the right ticket. There is evidence that current retailing systems do not necessarily provide all of the information required to make a purchasing decision. Where a passenger has not been provided with full information, the operator should not impose a penalty fare.
2. The operator should demonstrate that there are systems and process in place that helps to differentiate the passenger who makes an honest mistake from one committing intentional fraud. No passenger should be prosecuted unless there is proof of intent to defraud.
3. Operators should make it easier to change tickets to ensure passengers travel with a valid ticket e.g. allowing passengers to use advanced tickets as part payment for new tickets when the passenger's plans have changed or the train has been missed.
4. All passengers should be provided with written information when they are given a penalty fare. This information should include the specific reason why they have been given a penalty fare, where they can obtain a copy of the conditions of carriage, and how the appeals system works.
5. The appeals system should be simple to use, timely and fit for purpose. The language used by appeals bodies should be in plain English and information should be displayed in a logical sequence. Passengers should be able to pay or appeal from the day that the penalty fare is imposed. A choice of communication channels should be made available. The needs of passengers with disabilities, or those who are unable to read English, should be catered for.
6. Where Unpaid Fare Notices are used the operator should allow 21 days for appeal.

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