



First Capital Connect – Ticket restrictions research

October 2006

First Capital Connect – Ticket restrictions research

Introduction

In June 2006 train operator, First Capital Connect, imposed evening peak restrictions affecting passengers on cheap day returns returning from London between 16:30 and 19:01 Monday to Friday.

One of First Capital Connect's arguments for imposing the restrictions was to resolve the issue of crowding on the route, and that restrictions were necessary to get passengers to alter their travel behaviours in order to reduce the effect of crowding on the evening peak.

Passenger Focus therefore commissioned an initial small scale research project to look at the impact these changes have had on passengers.

Summary

- The restrictions on certain tickets introduced four months ago do not appear to have resulted in any major changes in behaviour – very few respondents have changed the station at which they start their journey and only a small minority have changed their journey times as a result.
- The changes have been noticed (around 50% were aware).
- There are more passengers opposed to the changes than support them – even among commuters there is no net support.
- Trains are perceived to be the same or more crowded than in the spring, even among commuters.
- Therefore there is no evidence that the fare restrictions have helped reduce overcrowding (as there is limited evidence they have really affected consumer behaviour).

Methodology

- 517 respondents were interviewed in total - 135 at London Kings Cross, 137 at London Kings Cross Thameslink, 124 at Bedford, and 121 at Cambridge
- at the two London stations, passengers had to be travelling to/from one of the stations affected by the fare restrictions (listed at Annex A or B) to be surveyed
- at Bedford and Cambridge, passengers had to be travelling into/back from London.
- all interviews were undertaken between 07:00 and 21:00 on Monday 16th and Tuesday 17th October

- all respondents had to have been using the route they used for at least four months (prior to the fare restrictions coming into force) – two thirds had been using the route for 2 years or more.

Results

All

- 60% of respondents were commuters, 18% business travellers, and 22% were leisure travellers
- 33% travel at least five days per week (at least) on the route they were using, 31% travel one to four times a week, and the rest (36%) travel less than once per week
- 67% of respondents regularly travel in the morning peak (up to 09:30), 56% in the evening peak (1630 to 1901), 47% between 09:30 and 16:30, and 28% regularly travel after 19:01
- in terms of the ticket used for their journey; 31% used a season ticket, 36% had a full price single/return, and 33% had some form of cheap price ticket
- approximately one in four (27%) say the trains are more crowded than in spring 2006, 10% say they are less crowded, and over half say it's much the same (54%). 9% said crowding levels vary or replied 'don't know'
- commuters are more likely to say the trains are more crowded (32%), as are frequent travellers (35%), compared to the 27% of passengers overall. Frequent travellers are those who travel on the route at least two days a week
- of those saying trains are more crowded; 76% say this is in the morning peak, while 64% say this is in the evening peak
- 31% of respondents said their ticket was poorer value for money than spring 2006 (with 5% saying it was better value, and 65% said it was the same)
- of the 158 passengers who said their ticket was poorer value for money, the main reasons given were:
 - Price gone up (51% - 81 respondents)
 - Overcrowding (34% - 53 respondents)
 - Restrictions on off peak travel (19% - 30 respondents). The percentage saying it was because of the restrictions was higher for some groups. It was 26% for business travellers, 25% for leisure travellers, 29% for those travelling 0930 to 1630, and 28% for those travelling after 1901.
- about half (47%) of respondents were aware of changes to validity of certain tickets on their route. Awareness was higher at Cambridge (54% of respondents) and Bedford (65% of respondents)
- 31% of respondents (162) supported the changes in ticket validity, while 41% (214) opposed the changes. Opposition was higher among leisure travellers (53%). Amongst commuters support was 36%, whilst opposition was 37%.

Non season ticket holders

- there appears to be no real net change in frequency of travel compared to spring 2006. 12% travel more (44 passengers), 11% travel less (39 passengers), and 77% say their frequency of travel is unchanged (272 passengers)
- of the 39 passengers who said they were making fewer trips, only five said this was mainly as a result of ticket restrictions and just four said it was mainly as a result of price increases
- 19% (69 passengers) of non season ticket holders say at least some of their trips are at different times of the day compared to spring 2006. Of these 10 respondents said it was (at least partly) as a result of ticket restrictions, and nine respondents said it was (at least partly) as a result of fare increases
- 39% of non season ticket holders said tickets are more expensive compared to spring 2006 (9% said they are significantly more expensive)
- of non season ticket holders just 9 (3%) have changed the station at which they started their journey as a result of the changes.

Annex A

List of stations

SHOWCARD A1-KINGS CROSS MAINLINE PLATFORM 8-11 ONLY

Arlesey

Ashwell & Morden

Baldock

Biggleswade

Cambridge

Foxton

Hitchin

Huntington

Meldreth

Peterborough

Royston

St Neots

Sandy

Shepreth

Stevenage

Waterbeach

SHOWCARD A2- KINGS CROSS THAMESLINK ONLY

Bedford

Flitwick

Harlington

Leagrave

Luton

Luton Airport Parkway

Harpenden

St Albans



© 2006 Passenger Focus

Freepost WA1521
Warrington
WA4 6GP

08453 022 022
www.passengerfocus.org.uk
info@passengerfocus.org.uk

Passenger Focus is the operating
name of the Rail Passengers Council