



Rail Franchise Customer Reports: Govia Thameslink Railway Research Debrief

Prepared for: Passenger Focus

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PREPARED BY ILLUMINAS
a global team based in London, New York and Austin

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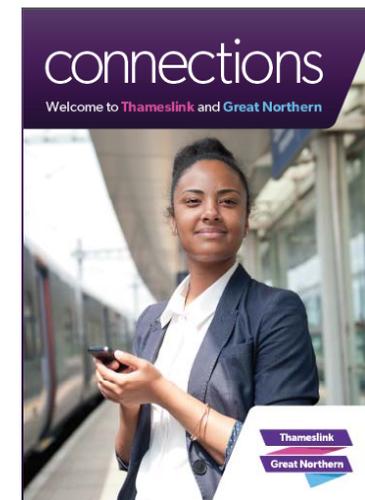
T +44 (0)20 7909 0929 F +44 (0)20 7909 0921 E info@illuminas-global.com

www.illuminas-global.com



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Background, Objectives and Methodology



Background

- A new rail franchise - Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) – launched on 14th September to operate the service provided on the Thameslink and Great Northern routes. GTR will also start to operate the Southern route from July 2015
- Part of Passenger Focus's role is to establish customer aspirations for franchises and to assess if Train Operating Companies (TOCs) are adhering to best practice. Previous research projects including *Passenger Power!* have highlighted that consumers want to be better informed about the franchise process and specifically, how successful bidders perform on the promises they make when bidding
- New franchises (or franchise renewals) are now required to issue a Customer Report upon commencement of their contract and provide updates on this on at least an annual basis. GTR was the first new franchise required to issue such a report
- Given the above, Passenger Focus wanted to undertake research to obtain passenger feedback on the Customer Report issued by GTR in order to establish the extent to which these reports meet passengers' expectations in terms of both content and format
- The research into experiences of travelling on GTR and feedback on their Customer Report was the first part of a two stage project. Similar research will be conducted with c2c who operate the line from Fenchurch street out to Southend and Essex.





Objectives

- The overall aim of the research was to collect passenger feedback on the Customer Report issued by new franchisees, to assess if the reports were in line with expectations and as such, help establish what constitutes best practice in terms of Customer Reports for other TOCs in the future

- The specific objectives of the research were as follows:
 - Understand passengers' use and experience of the railways under the existing franchises, their frustrations and their aspirations for the future
 - Explore passengers' awareness of the franchising process and its outcomes in their area
 - Assess passengers' exposure to any communications regarding the new franchisees and their commitments under the new franchises
 - Obtain passengers' feedback on the new Customer Reports including their availability, presentation, content and credibility
 - Obtain passengers' reactions to the franchisees' commitments and the extent to which these meet passengers' expectations
 - Explore how passengers wish to be updated regarding the franchisees' progress in fulfilling their commitments and how they should be held to account for any shortcomings
 - Gauge the potential impact of Customer Reports and the franchisees' commitments on passengers' perceptions of their relationship with and trust in the operators.



Methodology

- Qualitative focus groups were conducted amongst Great Northern, Thameslink and Southern passengers

Great Northern & Thameslink

- 6 x 2 hour focus groups
 - 2 x Great Northern
 - 2 x Thameslink South
 - 2 x Thameslink North
- Amongst commuters and business/leisure passengers
- 5 of the focus groups took place in London and one in Stevenage, in order to sample the Great Northern passengers using the route from King's Lynn/Peterborough to Stevenage
- Great Northern, Thameslink and Southern passengers were asked to read the Customer Report issued by GTR and complete a task exercise on it. This was to ensure that respondents read the report in sufficient detail that they were able to critique it and suggest improvements.

Southern

- 2 x 2.5 hour focus groups
- Amongst commuters and business/leisure passengers
- One focus group took place in London (Commuters) in order to sample passengers using the Brighton Mainline into London Victoria. The other took place in Brighton to sample business/leisure passengers using the Coastway lines



Research Schedule

- The complete, detailed schedule of focus groups:

GROUP NO.	TOC USED	GROUP LOCATION	CONSUMER TYPE	DEMOGRAPHICS	DATE
1	Thameslink North	London	Commuter	Older, ABC1	23/10
2		London	Business/Leisure	Younger, C1C2D	16/10
3	Thameslink South	London	Commuter	Younger, ABC1	29/10
4		London	Business/Leisure	Older, C1C2D	23/10
5	Great Northern	Stevenage	Business/Leisure	Younger, C1C2D	29/10
6		London	Commuter	Older, ABC1	16/10
7	Southern	London	Commuter	Younger, ABC1	30/10
8		Brighton	Business/Leisure	Older, C1C2D	30/10

- It is important to note the date of when the groups took place; very soon after GTR took control of the network. This meant that passengers had limited time to become aware of GTR, and GTR themselves had little time to make any significant changes to the rolling stock, infrastructure etc.

Experiences of using First Capital Connect (FCC)/Southern and aspirations for GTR





Experiences of travelling in line with previous research

- Usual frustrations are voiced when passengers are asked about travelling on the railways
 - For commuters cost, overcrowding and disruption are most cited
 - For business/leisure passengers also a focus on the lack of facilities and staff, at the station and on-board the train
 - As expected, travelling during peak-hours is considered significantly more trying
 - High cost to travel not matched by a reliable or comfortable service
- Frustrations consistent across operator, albeit some variation in level
 - In particular, Southern and Thameslink South commuters into London feel that they receive a 'raw deal'
 - Disruption and over-crowding more prevalent compared to northern counterparts.

*"Inflation and prices, it's just completely above inflation. You may get a small 3% pay rise, but then your train ticket increases more than that."
Southern, Commuter, Younger*

*"But if you go to a small station there is nothing. The train at Sutton Common where I go from, if you get off the train, you're the only person getting off and it's dark, it's not very safe."
Thameslink South, Business/Leisure, Older*





Experiences relatively consistent across lines

- Commuters suffer significant disruption and delays during peak hours
- Business/Leisure point to lack of staff at the station and on-board the train
- Lack of facilities e.g. ticket purchasing, food and drink outlets

- Business/Leisure passengers largely content with service
- Commuters significantly more disgruntled due to overcrowding and a lack of seating during peak hours
- Feeling of insecurity, particularly at night
- Stations particularly spartan – no food/drink outlets

Thameslink

South

SOUTHERN

ISSUES EXPERIENCED BY ALL

- Disruption and delays
- Cost to travel not reflected by service received
 - Overcrowding
- Lack of facilities at station and on-board the train
- Lack of staff at station and on board the train to ask for assistance

Great Northern

Thameslink

North

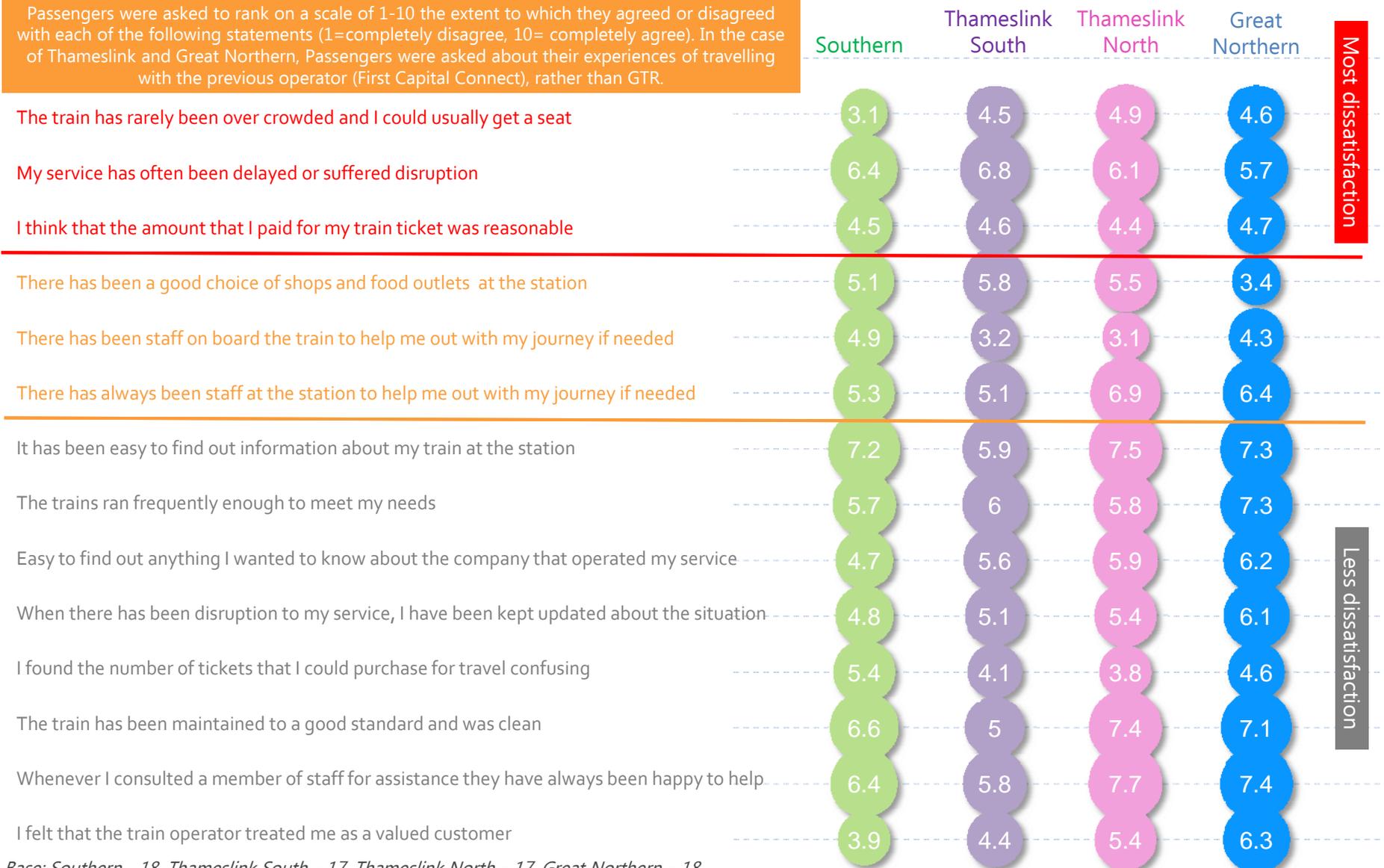
- Southern passengers particularly dissatisfied with the service
- Disruption almost a daily issue
- Chances of getting a seat "non-existent"
- Service feels like it is "getting worse year on year"
- Passengers feel the service is substandard compared to other operators they use in the region (First Great Western and Thameslink)

- Overcrowding and lack of seating, even when boarding further up the line e.g. St. Albans
- Lack of information during off-peak times (because of a lack of staff).



Overcrowding, disruption and cost of travel causes most dissatisfaction. Southern and Thameslink South score lowest

Passengers were asked to rank on a scale of 1-10 the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each of the following statements (1=completely disagree, 10= completely agree). In the case of Thameslink and Great Northern, Passengers were asked about their experiences of travelling with the previous operator (First Capital Connect), rather than GTR.



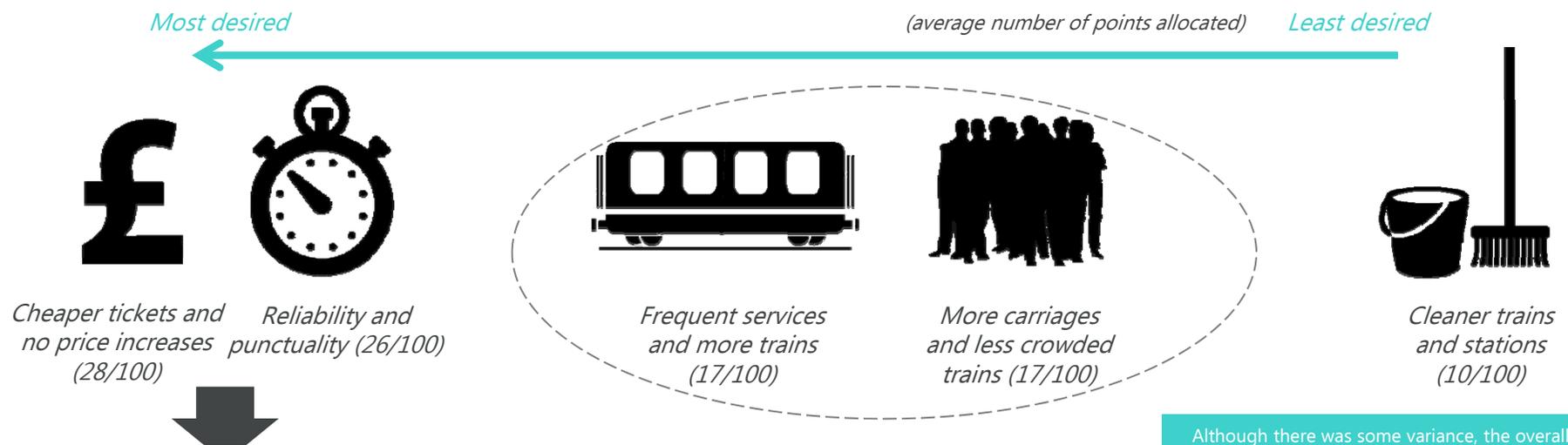
Base: Southern - 18, Thameslink South - 17, Thameslink North - 17, Great Northern - 18
These figures should not be taken literally, but used only as an indication, due to the low base sizes



Cheaper ticket prices and better reliability most desired

- Given passengers' feedback on experiences, there is little surprise what they desire most in terms of improvements

Passengers were asked to allocate 100 points across five key areas for improvement. They were required to award the highest number of points to the area which they felt needed most improvement



- Cost of travel considered:
 - Disproportionate against wages
 - Disproportionate compared to other countries
 - Yearly increases above inflation
- Reliable and punctual service considered the minimum requirement to achieving value for money
 - In addition, dissatisfaction with how disruption is communicated.

Although there was some variance, the overall trend that passengers desired in terms of priorities was consistent across Commuters, Business & Leisure passengers.

"The money is going up, but the service is going down, but they've kind of got us because how else can you get to work? And it's like they know that, so they just think oh we will just keep charging."
Southern, Commuter, Younger

Awareness of Franchise Process



What do passengers know about rail franchising?

- Knowledge of the rail franchise process is vague and often confused
- Any understanding is informed by:
 - The media (particularly the Virgin trains West Coast route 'debacle' in 2012)
 - Other industries that run franchise models e.g. fast-food chains

<i>What passengers know</i>	<i>What passengers don't know</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Different train companies operate different parts of the network• Different operators of infrastructure and trains• TOCs have to bid against other TOCs to run the service on the line• Government are involved "in some way"• TOCs have some kind of criteria to meet	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Criteria for winning• Who decides who wins the bid• Length of contract• Names of TOCs (other than the one they use)• How many franchise contracts are available• That passengers have some input in franchise process• TOCs receive subsidy from the government to run the franchise/or pay them.

"I think I just read about it in the paper, I didn't know much about it, I was just aware that things were going to change at that time. It certainly wasn't well publicised."

Great Northern, Business/Leisure, Older

"I know there's a contract and there's service levels and there's milestones where they are reassessed, and the contract can be pulled. But I don't know the criteria for getting the contract, whether it is just the lowest bid, or if it is value for money."

Great Northern, Business/Leisure, Older



Little knowledge about the new GTR franchise



- In late October, few claimed to have noticed the change in operator
 - A few had picked up from local media
 - One or two from
 - Purchasing tickets from TVMs
 - Via the website
 - None could recall any change to the service, appearance of trains/staff or seeing any communication about the change at the station e.g. customer report, posters, announcements
- However, the timing of the research has to be taken into account here



- One or two business/leisure with some recollection of hearing about change
- Commuters had no knowledge
- Nor did they have any knowledge of Govia or GTR
 - Passengers are aware of Thameslink

*"I was trying to find out train times, or ticket price, I can't remember which one it was, and it said that from the 14th September, it would no longer be run by First Capital Connect, I think that was all it said, there wasn't much more information than that."
Thameslink North, Commuter, Older*

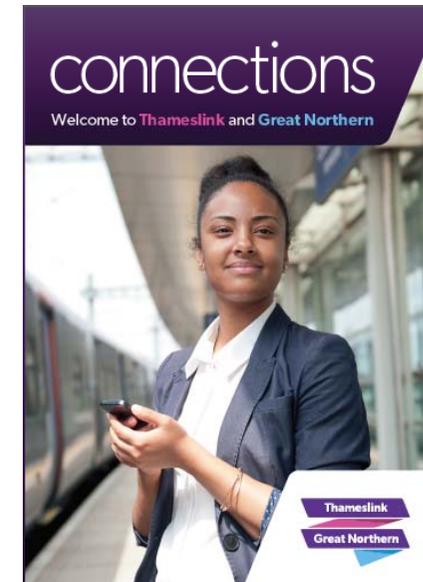
- Commuters unsurprised that they had not heard about the franchise change
 - Repeating the same journey ten times a week, surroundings become a blur
 - And indifferent towards the change – travelling is a means to an end
- Business/Leisure passengers more interested in knowing about the change
 - More information could help in building a relationship.

Reactions towards
connections – the GTR
Customer Report



Initial reactions towards *connections*

- Passengers approve of the notion of Customer Reports
 - Increase in transparency considered predominant benefit
- However, an element of surprise that it has been produced in the first place
 - Passengers unaccustomed to the train companies being transparent about their plans
 - Albeit an assumption that they will have been 'made' to produce it as part of the terms of the franchise
- Surprise about the content, substance and delivery of the report
 - GTR seen as very open and honest about what they plan to do to tackle issues
 - Passengers impressed by the degree of effort that has gone into producing, and ensuring customer friendliness
- *connections*, on the whole, is viewed as a good first attempt
 - GTR praised for what they have produced
- However, because of its overall presentation and delivery, passengers suggest that they would be unlikely to 'pick it up' and read it
- They also remain sceptical and need to see results before any change in level of trust felt towards GTR occurs.





Good content on the whole, presentation needs some work

Content

- Informative and interesting to read
- Addresses key issues
- Comprehensible in the most part, some areas where language is a little technical
- Too much detail in places – ‘less is better’ e.g. ‘Welcome to Thameslink...’ page
- Desire for localisation – reports specific to area
- Some irrelevant information/pages could be taken out to reduce length
- Tone of voice appropriate

Presentation

- Colours, imagery and layout, overall, good
- Text overly dense in places; bullet-points wherever possible
- Front cover is irrelevant, misassociated and not eye-catching
 - *Connections* title irrelevant
 - Nor would passengers be likely to pick it up
- Summary/detail approach; condensed version for easy-reading, detail available if required

Availability

- Producing the report considered futile unless availability is enhanced:
- Utilise several platforms e.g.
 - Availability electronically through app or e-mail
 - Key points produced in poster format at stations and on trains
 - Available on the train/left on seats for passengers to read

Credibility

- Messages are positive, but scepticism still exists
- Passengers will need to see evidence of promised improvements being met
- Desire for ‘someone’ to monitor progress against commitments.

*“It seemed to me all the way through that it was well intentioned and well written but it really needed a good editing and shaping out. And so much of it is woolly.”
Great Northern, Business/Leisure, Older*



Key priorities in line with passengers' aspirations

- Commitments set out by GTR are, on the whole, in line with passengers' desires
 - Passengers are unable to suggest any other improvements over and above those already mentioned in *connections*
 - (Some comments in Brighton specifically about a lack of information on staff and training)
- For the most part, passengers are content with how GTR plan to achieve each commitment
 - Albeit some areas for improvement exist:

	<i>More carriages and less crowded trains</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improvements not due until 2018 – need something sooner• By 2018 even more capacity will be needed to deal with increased demand between now and then• Difficult to interpret '10,000 more seats' – could perhaps be expressed in percentages?
	<i>Reliability and punctuality</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commitments appear vague and lacking specificity• Terms used are somewhat technical and not passenger friendly
	<i>Cheaper tickets and no price increase</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More transparency with regards to 'no price increases'• Introduction of new tickets has potential to further complicate the choice available• Commitments appear to benefit Business/Leisure passengers most
	<i>Frequent services and more trains</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Routes listed are very specific – what about the rest of the network?• Routes mentioned are Northern-centric with little/no coverage of the South• More detail needed on increases to services in peak times
	<i>Cleaner trains and stations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More detail desired as current commitments appear vague.



Scepticism as to whether commitments can be met

- GTR are promising a lot through the commitments
 - Some scepticism about whether they will be able to keep to promises
 - Particularly as passengers feel regularly let down by TOCs
- Passengers feel "someone" (but not necessarily sure who) should monitor the situation to ensure that targets are met and GTR are held to account if they are not
 - Punishment by fine considered as ineffective
 - Something to benefit the passenger desired
 - Franchise put back up for tender?
- Passengers do not expect *connections* to be re-published every six months
 - A summary version is desired:
 - In-station or electronic (e-mail/on app) communication about commitments that have been met
 - Using 'Our commitments' page as a template.

"You mentioned the passenger watchdog organisation. I suppose one is relying on them to keep much more of an eye on it than individual people like ourselves."
Southern, Commuter, Younger

For example: use of 'ticks' to signal completion

Deadline date	Commitment	Route/station	
Sept 2014	Introduce a new customer app	All	
Nov 2014	Make information on the number of passenger on trains available on app and station posters	All	✓
From 30 Nov 2014	Hold Meet the Manager events every four weeks	London terminals and other major stations	✓
21 Dec 2014	Successfully manage the integration of some Southeastern services and seven stations into the new franchise	Thameslink (Kent route)	✓
Dec 2014	Successfully manage the major timetable change caused by the partial closure of London Bridge station	Thameslink	✓
31 Mar 2015	Introduce YourVoice on our website	All	✓
26 July 2015	Successfully manage the integration of Southern and Gatwick Express services and stations into the franchise	Southern & Gatwick Express	
July 2015	Start Keep Trains Tidy marketing campaign	All	
July 2015	Start an online passenger panel of at least 1,000 passengers	All	
July 2015	Start Priority Seat awareness campaign	All	
By Sept 2015	Introduce all day staffing at 25 more stations: Alexandra Palace, City Thameslink, Cricklawn Wood, Elephant & Castle, Epsom & Bonshamwood, Enfield Chase, Finsbury Park, Gordon Hill, Harpenden, Harringway, Hatfield, Hitchin, Hornsey, Huntingdon, Leagrave, Leitchworth Garden City, Loughborough Junction, Mill Hill Broadway, New Barnet, Palmers Green, Ponders Bar, Radlett, Tooting, West Hampstead Thameslink and Winchmore Hill	Thameslink and Great Northern	
From Sept 2015	Hold an annual conference with local stakeholders	All	

"We're always let down, aren't we? Generally people don't meet their high standards, but if they do, and I'm sure they'll genuinely try to meet their objectives, then I'll be delighted."
Southern, Commuter, Younger



Detailed review: front cover

- Based on the front cover, few would be likely to pick it up and read it
 - Little to communicate what the booklet is about

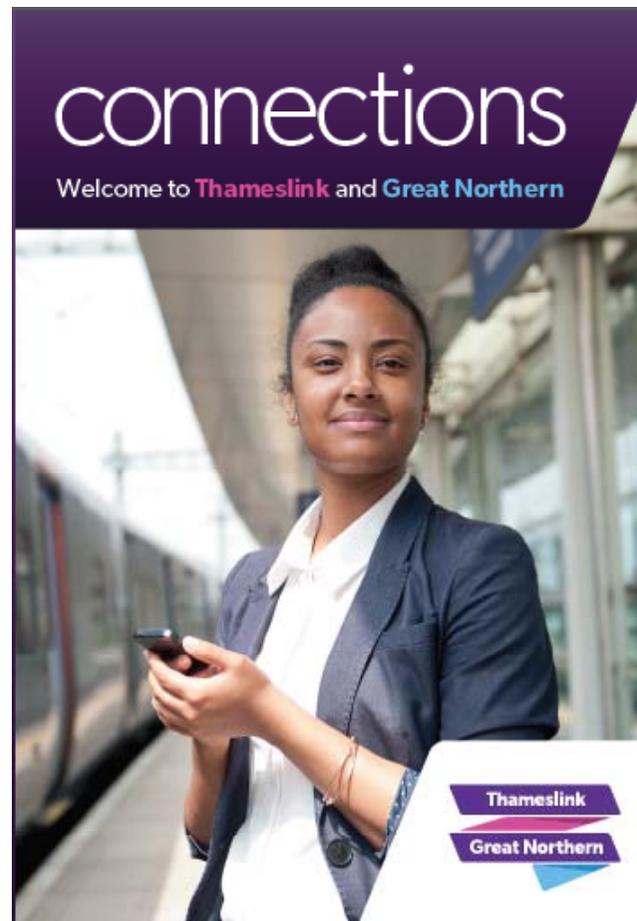
Little indication to suggest what will be communicated inside

The imagery and wording does not reflect that this is a report communicating about the future of the network

Confusion as to the name – *connections* - seems irrelevant

Passengers also familiar with the name from other sectors e.g. student organisation

"I'm pretty sure connections is some student organisation. What has that name got anything to do with trains?"
Great Northern, Commuter, Older



Who is that on the front cover?
Why is she on her way to school?

"Why have they put a school girl on the front?"
Thameslink North, Commuter, Older

Passengers believe imagery should do more to reflect GTR e.g. picture of one of the trains

Passengers unlikely to pick up *connections* based on the front cover



Detailed review: Welcome to Thameslink and Great Northern

- Many admitted 'skipping' this page due to the amount of information and the presentation of it
 - But those that do read it find parts informative and important, e.g:
 - Size of franchise, committed to improvement, ease of communication/feedback
 - Size of Charles Horton's picture considered overly intense - could be condensed

Too much text – should be more concise, possibly bullet pointed in places, in order to make more engaging

Causes passengers to 'turn-off' and less likely to read

"I think the whole thing looks boring, he looks boring, the format is boring, and I just thought if I wasn't doing this market research, I wouldn't in a million years read that."
Great Northern, Commuter, Older

Welcome to Thameslink and Great Northern

Govia Thameslink Railway is the new company running your trains. But the names that you'll quickly become familiar with are local ones: Thameslink, Great Northern and, from next year, Southern and Gatwick Express.

You're in experienced hands, as our parent company Govia is already responsible for nearly 30% of all UK passenger rail journeys through our Southern, Southeastern and London Midland franchises.

However, I know your main concern is not who we are, it is what your journeys are going to be like, and whether we will listen to your concerns and opinions so that we can improve the service we are offering you.

From our customer research we've heard very clearly that your main priorities are less crowded trains, reliability, value for money, frequency of services, and cleaner trains and stations. I can assure you that we're committed to improving all of these over the course of this franchise, including significant investment in our stations and three new fleets of trains.

And even though we already have some definite messages about the improvements you want to see, we also know how important it is to continue talking to you and taking your opinions on board.

So we have a number of ways that you can get relevant information from us, give us your opinions, or get directly involved in how we run your service. And we've made communication with us even easier through our app, email, Twitter, website or phone.

This is a large franchise. From July 2015 it will be the largest franchise area in the UK, with 22% of the UK's passenger rail services. So we are structuring our organisation to reflect our network's routes. We will have passenger service directors for each one, who will make sure our services meet your local needs, and will listen to and act on your concerns.

The franchise starts on 14 September 2014 and runs through to 19 September 2021, and it will evolve considerably throughout that period. We're committed to managing all major changes as smoothly as possible, and letting you know about any developments and how they may affect you.

At this point the franchise consists of the Thameslink and Great Northern routes, connecting communities such as Peterborough, Bedford, Brighton and London. Then, on 26 July 2015, the Southern and Gatwick Express services will join us, drawing in places like Southampton, Hastings and Horsham. This will be followed by significant timetable improvements in December 2015.

Finally, the Thameslink Programme, which is already underway, will be completed in December 2018. This will give you up to 24 trains an hour through central London, and more north to south services such as Cambridge to Brighton with a stop at Gatwick Airport.

I can't guarantee that everything will always run smoothly, but I do assure you that we will be working very hard to improve our services. I also promise that we will tell you what's happening, listen to you, and give you the best possible service during a period of unprecedented change and investment in this part of the railway network.

Charles Horton – Chief Executive

Good to see the 'face' behind the company

But, picture could be smaller

Likened to Executive Summaries that are present at the beginning of company annual reports

Confusion with differentiating between Great Northern, Thameslink, Govia and GTR

More information on the history of GTR and who they are

"I quite like to see the face behind the organisation, you know, who do I contact."
Great Northern, Commuter, Older



Detailed review: Your key priorities

- Referred to as the most significant and interesting section of the report

Occurs at the right point within the report

Most important, interesting and significant part of the report

Could be more localised – meaning that it is more specific to the route/line, station or sub-brand in question

This would involve having different reports (or at least sections of the report), for different areas of the network

Your key priorities

So that we have a clear idea of your key priorities for changes to your services, we carried out our own market research and took on board Passenger Focus' findings. To improve your experience, we have a programme of initiatives in each area. Some we will be able to do quickly, while others will take longer and involve other partners.

What you asked for	What we are going to do
More carriages and less crowded trains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 26% more carriages for services arriving in central London in the morning peak, from December 2018, providing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10,000 more seats Capacity for 50% more passengers
Reliability and punctuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restructure the timetable for more reliable services Improve the time depots take to sort out train faults Improve our control centre's operations to resolve problems faster
Cheaper tickets and no price increases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce single-leg pricing, reducing the price of journeys that are peak one way and off-peak the other from 2016 Make super off-peak fares available throughout the week in the northern part of the franchise from 2018 Trial flexible season tickets for part-time workers from September 2015 Sell advance tickets based on time slots rather than specific trains from 2016
Frequent services and more trains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two overnight trains an hour from London to St Albans, Harpenden and Luton Airport from December 2015 Moorgate services at evenings and weekends from December 2015 Two trains an hour from Kings Lynn to Kings Cross from May 2017 More trains between Moorgate and Hertford and Welwyn Garden City from 2018 Up to 24 trains an hour between St Pancras and Blackfriars from December 2018
Cleaner trains and stations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new cleaning regime with rigorous standards New trains that are easier to clean

Good use of block text and bullet points

Bullet-points convey the messages clearly

"This is the best place for it, right at the front as any further back and people probably won't make it there."
Southern, Commuter, Younger

"This is the one page that you want to read."
Southern, Commuter, Younger



Detailed review: New trains and Station improvements

- Positive messages communicated, but not entirely successful in delivery
 - Lacks context as to scale of improvements for new trains
 - [Station improvements] Paragraphs used where bullet points would be more appropriate

More pictures of the new trains desired – particularly the interior

"It would be good to actually see a picture of the inside of the train!"
Southern, Commuter, Younger

Station improvements considered more beneficial by Business/Leisure passengers than Commuters

CCTV gives the impression of improved safety at the station

New trains

You'll be pleased to hear that we will introduce three brand new train fleets. They will be designed for the specific needs of each service, and will increase capacity. All of them will have air conditioning and passenger information systems that can be remotely updated with the latest travel information. They will also be fully accessible.

- 115 new Siemens Class 700 trains (1,140 carriages in total) for Thameslink routes between 2016 and 2018, many will be 12 carriages long
- 25 new Metro trains (six carriages each) for Moorgate services in 2018, replacing 40-year-old trains
- 27 new trains (four carriages each) for Gatwick Express by 2016 that will be easier to get on and off, with free wi-fi

In addition, we will run newer, air-conditioned Class 377 trains on the Cambridge and Kings Lynn route by 2017.



Station improvements

We will be investing £50 million over the course of the franchise on improvements at every station. These will include new shops and cafes, information screens, new and upgraded toilets, and additional CCTV. And by 2016, 104 of our stations will have free wi-fi.

Every station will have a ticket machine, as well as customer information facilities, help points and shelter; and from next September, 25 more stations will be staffed from first to last train. From 2016 we will have a ring-fenced annual fund for local communities to spend on improvements at small stations. We'll ask you how you'd prefer us to use the money at your local station.

We will work with our partners to make significant improvements at St Albans station by 2016 and Luton station by 2017, and to develop plans for improving Stevenage station.

5

Language used to describe make and model of trains considered overly technical. Unnecessary information

More information desired on the benefits of the new trains e.g. WiFi, seating etc

Move from bullet-points back to block text - bullet points would allow easier reading

"A diagram cut away, so it's showing how many seats you've got and if there is a toilet, or a disabled access, that kind of thing."
Thameslink North, Commuter, Older



Detailed review: Stay on track with our app

- Presents the app in a positive, enticing way
 - Positive messages presented clearly, succinctly and are easily digestible
- However, app branded as Thameslink. Confusion as to whether this can be used for other GTR routes

Clearly communicates the key features

Many said they'd be likely to download and try the app off the back of this

*"I downloaded the app after reading that page to take a look at it."
Thameslink South, Business/Leisure, Older*

Stay on track with our app

Our free Thameslink On Track app gives you instant access to personalised real-time information. Innovative features include:

- Customised dashboard with live information on your regular journeys
- Your journeys saved as favourites
- Easy-to-use journey planner
- Your route on a live interactive map
- Live information on London Underground services
- Ticket sales
- Station and train facilities, including station accessibility information
- Our Twitter feed
- Direct contact with Customer Services
- Delay Repay claims

In the future we'll be introducing more functions:

- From November, the average number of passengers for each service, helping you to avoid the busiest trains.
- In 2016: door-to-door journey planning and car park availability

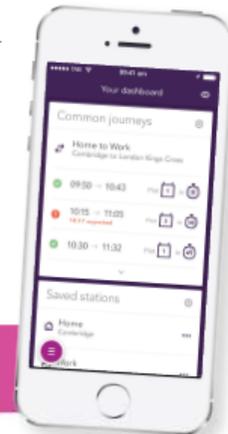
And later on we'll develop:

- Assisted travel booking for disabled passengers
- Live airline departures and arrivals at Gatwick and Luton Airports
- Live Eurostar departures and arrivals

Please tell us what you think of the app and what features you'd like us to add.



Get going with Thameslink On Track. Download it free from the App Store or Google Play.



Confusion as to the name of the app – 'Thameslink' – what about Great Northern?

Good use of imagery - picture of the app

Progressive – forward thinking

App should not replace 'enquiries' line – for those without smartphones



Detailed review: Working with your community

- Passengers either happy GTR are doing this or wholly uninterested in it

'Nice to know' rather than important information

Irrelevant for many as does not directly influence them and their rail travel

"I didn't actually read this page because I just thought what has it got to do with my train journey. It should be about trains not this.. It's very irrelevant."
Southern, Commuter, Younger

Considered only as PR for GTR

Working with your community

It is vital to us to be at the heart of your communities. Transport is a very localised business, and we're committed to contributing to, and supporting your neighbourhoods.



We'll be running a number of community initiatives throughout our network, over the course of the franchise, including:

- Support for local community rail partnerships
- Support for community station partnerships
- Supporting local charities
- Working with the Prince's Trust to give young people work experience
- Working with schools using Go-Learn educational material
- Giving young people work through our apprenticeship and graduate trainee schemes
- Our Community Investment Programme, including projects such as:
 - Sponsoring local projects for young people
 - Exhibition space at our stations for local art colleges
 - Making space in stations available to local groups
 - Supporting staff-nominated charities
 - Using stations as places of refuge for young people in danger
 - Try the Train days for people with learning and mobility impairments
 - Working with partners to identify new local suppliers

We will publish a detailed summary of our social and community activity every year in our sustainability report, which you'll find on our website.

"You can see that some of these things will really benefit the community."
Southern, Commuter, Younger

Step in the right direction to forming a relationship with the community

Important for companies to display this social responsibility



Detailed review: Passenger feedback

- Positive messages, but some pessimism as to the eventual outcomes
 - Will they listen to my views? Will they act on my views?
- Pessimism likely to exist until passengers see evidence of feedback being incorporated.

Positive that communication with train company is becoming more straightforward and Twitter being utilised



Currently, feels archaic – pen and paper style feedback/complaints system

We want to know your opinions

Every journey you take with Thameslink and Great Northern is important to us and we value the feedback you give us about our services and facilities, whether good or bad. That way we can work to constantly improve the service we give you.

Over the course of the franchise we will set up a variety of ways in which you can give us feedback:

- Send us comments, report problems or ask questions on our Twitter feeds
- Report any safety or security worries immediately through our Eyewitness scheme
- Talk to our Customer Services team
- Talk to our managers at our regular Meet the Manager events at key stations from December 2014
- At our roadshows in your community at shopping centres, universities and airports from 2015
- Vote on what you would like us to improve on the Your Vote section of our website from 2015
- Tell us how you'd prefer us to invest in improvements at your local station from 2016

Online Passenger Panel

We're inviting all customers to apply to join our Online Passenger Panel. It will be a place for you to voice your opinions, and have a direct influence on how we run our services and facilities.

You will have access to a password protected section of the website, which will include:

- Monthly surveys on issues that we know need action
- Web chats with senior managers
- Results of surveys, transcripts of web chats and progress reports

The panel will start up in 2015.



How we act on your feedback

Once we receive your comments, our customer relations manager reviews them, and passes any that need action to the relevant manager. He or she also reports on your feedback to our new Customer Satisfaction Board.

This board, which is made up of our senior management team, considers the feedback and draws up plans to improve our services and facilities. Each plan has an executive sponsor who's responsible for making sure it happens.

We take any complaints we receive seriously. We investigate the cause, and do what we can to remedy the problem.

Our customer relations manager will let you know how we've acted on your feedback through Connections and our website.

Customer Cabinets

If you have more time and want to get really involved, we're setting up two small face-to-face forums of customers who will meet every two months. They will put issues they've discussed to us for action, giving them a direct influence on our business strategy.

The cabinets will work independently but have regular contact with our staff and senior management. We'll give them support and a budget for self-generated projects.

We're setting up one cabinet to cover the north part of Thameslink and Great Northern. Later we'll create another for Southern, Gatwick Express and the south part of Thameslink. We'll give you details of our recruitment process shortly.

The cabinets will start working in 2015.

Few (especially commuters) would be willing to partake and doubt the views and motivations of those who do want to take part

Perception that this may be a requirement of winning the franchise

2015 start-up dates adds to pessimism – more precise date desired

*"As a commuter, I know I'd find it difficult to find the time."
Great Northern, Commuter, Older*

*"They've said it will start up in 2015, is it December 2015, January 2015? It needs to be more specific as to when it starts."
Southern, Commuter, Younger*



Detailed review: Our service performance targets

- The premise of detailing targets is appreciated, however the execution needs some work...
 - Considered confusing, incomprehensible
 - Has it been set out in this way to deliberately confuse?
 - Lack of context and comparable benchmarks across measures.

Allows for targets to be monitored in future years

Language and measures used cause confusion e.g. PPM

*"These measures don't make any sense to me, they could be communicating anything."
Thameslink North, Commuter, Older*

Asterisk (*) use suggests complication/secretcy

Short formations – why does this need to be communicated if no change?

Our service performance targets

As a rail traveller, one of your top priorities is a reliable train service. We have set performance targets for the whole franchise that commit us to providing a service you can depend on. You can find these in full on our website.

Year starting September	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Public Performance Measure*	89.1%	89.0%	89.8%	90.1%	91.2%	91.6%	91.5%
Delay minutes per thousand train miles**	11.08	14.50	14.10	13.35	12.43	11.95	11.84
Cancellations	1.38%	1.02%	0.99%	0.97%	0.95%	0.91%	0.90%
Short formations***	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

*Trains that arrive at their destination within five minutes of scheduled time
Minutes delay caused by GTR *Trains run with fewer carriages than scheduled during peak hours

We will keep to these targets by:

- Restructuring the timetable
- Working more efficiently at the depots so faults are sorted out quickly
- Introducing a central reporting system for drivers so we can deploy them efficiently
- Replacing old stock with new, state-of-the-art trains
- Our staff working beside Network Rail staff so we can promptly adjust services if there are problems

We will report on our performance against these targets in each edition of Connections. You can find detailed information on how we perform on your route and principal stations on our website and posters at stations.

Targets should be specific to line e.g. individual targets for T/L North & South, Southern and Great Northern. Also specific to route

Some suggest 3 year projection would suffice (rather than 7 years)

Minimal increases over a long period of time – expectation that performance should increase further

*"It's best to look at something on a year by year basis rather than trying to look at it in seven years time."
Great Northern, Commuter, Older*

Independent validation from 'outside' body required



Detailed review: Our customer satisfaction targets

- Visual presentation of figures considered an improvement to previous page
 - But little understanding of what they are communicating.

Incomparable – nothing to measure against

Unsure as to the purpose of NRPS – What is it? Can it be trusted? How many people take part?

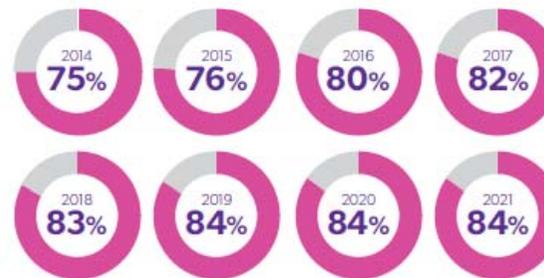
Targets should be specific to line e.g. individual targets for Thameslink North & South, Southern and Great Northern

"This way they can hide, like if Southern is doing really bad, they could kind of merge it together, so it would be good to know each line."
Great Northern, Commuter, Older

Our customer satisfaction targets

We have set yearly Passenger Experience Metric (PEM) targets for customer satisfaction. We measure our performance by combining our scores from the independent, twice-yearly National Rail Passenger Survey and our audit, Quality Experience on Stations and Trains (QuEST).

Our annual PEM targets are:



We will keep to these targets by:

- Redeveloping Luton and St Albans stations
- Staffing 101 of our larger stations from first to last train
- Improving shops and cafes on stations
- Upgrading CCTV
- Installing wi-fi at 104 stations
- Introducing new train fleets
- Improving cleaning on trains and stations
- Acting on customer feedback

We will report on how we are performing against our customer satisfaction targets in each edition of Connections.

Presentation of targets clearer than previous page – visual illustration of percentages

Why are targets not closer to 100%?

"Even 84% still means that 16% of people aren't happy with the service? I'm not sure that would stand up in any other industry."
Great Northern, Commuter, Older

Confusion as to the measure used – PEM



Detailed review: Our ticketless travel targets

- Passengers not overly sure of what is being communicated
 - Sounds reassuring, but numbered targets fail to inspire

Some confusion as to what is actually being communicated



Some misinterpreting 'ticketless' as the removal of paper tickets and introduction of smart card/mobile ticket travel

Text is reassuring and bullet-points back-up commitments

Very little improvement in terms of numbered targets – perhaps better expressed in actuals i.e. 20,000 people?

Our ticketless travel targets

All train operators have to deal with the problem of people traveling without paying – ticketless travel. We intend to drive down the amount of ticketless travel on our franchise.

Reducing the number of passengers who don't pay for their tickets is fairer for our honest customers, the vast majority of you, and will save the taxpayer money. It will also help us to decrease crime and antisocial behaviour on the network, as the British Transport Police has established a proven link between ticketless travel and crime.

Our targets for ticketless travel

September 2014 to September 2015 2.8%

September 2015 to September 2016 2.6%

September 2016 to September 2017 2.5%

September 2017 to September 2018 2.5%

September 2018 to September 2019 2.5%

September 2019 to September 2020 2.5%

September 2020 to September 2021 2.5%

We will do this by:

- Staffing ticket gates for longer
- Installing new automatic gates at 21 stations across the whole franchise
- Having ticket sales facilities at all stations
- Extending penalty fares to the entire franchise
- Reducing fraud through smartcard technology

We will report on how we are performing against our ticketless travel targets in each edition of Connections.

No need to dedicate this much space to it. Could be condensed into a paragraph

Half a page utilised to communicate a change of 0.3%

*"I'm glad they are doing this because why should I pay for my travel when others illegally get it for free."
Southern, Commuter, Younger*

*"You don't need the stats - it's like .3% that they're going to reduce by the end of it and you think well, it's not a huge amount of difference."
Southern, Commuter, Younger*



Detailed review: Thameslink Programme

- Presents little interest for many and struggle to understand the relevance of the information for their journeys

Little attention paid – ‘glossed’ over

Most unaware of the programme as do not believe they use the stations in question

Great Northern passengers confused as to the relevance



Thameslink Programme

The Thameslink Programme will transform your experience by increasing train capacity on one of Europe's busiest stretches of railway – the Thameslink route through central London.

We're working with Network Rail and other partners to complete it by the end of 2018. Farringdon and Blackfriars stations are already finished, and the rolling programme of works at London Bridge will create a world-class station.

We know that you've put up with disruption to some services, and there is more to come, but please bear with us, as you'll see many benefits in the future.

There'll be more direct services between places north and south of London, to St Pancras International and Gatwick airport, and links to Crossrail.

We'll have a new fleet of trains, many of them with more carriages. Your services will also be more reliable as we're reconfiguring the tracks and platforms at London Bridge so that there will be far fewer delays.

Changes to your services

Such large-scale developments inevitably involve disruption. We'll do all we can to let you know you about any alterations, and tell you about any major service changes in Connections.

From December 2014 until January 2018, Bedford to Brighton services can't run between London Bridge and Blackfriars. During this time trains will run via Elephant and Castle.

Our Passenger's Charter has information on how we deal with disruption. You can find more details at thameslinkprogramme.co.uk where you can sign up for email alerts and free texts.

Heavy amount of text to read on an issue considered superfluous by many

Preference for bullet points, as per the previous pages

*"It's gone back to paragraphs after several pages of bullet points. Too much information there, I prefer bullets."
Great Northern, Commuter, Older*



Detailed review: Part of GTR

- Relevant information that should be mentioned further up in the brochure
 - Doesn't require a whole page

Information seems to be played down



Should be more prominent within the report e.g. on the front page

Thameslink and Great Northern are part of Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR)

Key facts about GTR

Franchise operator: Govia Thameslink Railway Limited

Owning company: Govia (Go-Ahead Group 65% share, Keolis 35% share)

Term of Franchise: 14 September 2014 to 19 September 2021

Date of integration of Southern and Gawwick Express with Thameslink and Great Northern: 26 July 2015

Number of stations now: 77

Number of stations from 26 July 2015: 239

Number of trains now: 221

Number of trains from 26 July 2015: 545

Connections

We will publish Connections twice a year. You'll be able to keep track of whether we have met our targets and commitments, and read about our plans for the future. We will also report on what improvements you said you'd like to see, and how we are responding to your feedback.

Connections is available on our website, or as a printed copy from larger stations or customer services.

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Provides information on who GTR are and the inter-relationship between them, Thameslink and Great Northern

Provides information on the size and significance of GTR – this is reassuring



Detailed review: Map

- Map considered useful, but too small to be usable
 - Could be placed in the middle of the booklet across two pages?

Made specific to the area where the report is provided i.e. South/North divide

Thameslink and Great Northern routes

Map legend:

- High speed rail
- Cross-London
- Northern
- Midland
- Midland
- East coast
- East coast
- East coast
- East coast

Contact us
 Email: customerservices@thameslinkrailway.com or customerservices@greatnorthernrail.com
 Twitter: @TLRailUK or @GNRailUK
 Our app Thameslink On Track. Download it free from the App Store or Google Play
 Website: thameslinkrailway.com or greatnorthernrail.com
 Customer Service: 0345 026 4700, 07:00 to 22:00 every day except Christmas Day
 Telephone 0800 975 1052
 Freeport RRB,REE,KTKY
 Thameslink and Great Northern
 Customer Services Department
 PO Box 443
 PLYMOUTH, PL4 8WP
 Thameslink and Great Northern
 Hertford House
 1 Cranwood Street
 London EC2V 9GS

Desire for timetable to accompany map information



Detailed review: Our commitments

- Considered an important section of the report
 - But appears too late and many have lost interest or stopped reading by this point
 - Should appear sooner in the booklet, closer to the 'Key Priorities' section
 - This would also help resolve calls for more transparency at the 'Key Priorities' section.

Dates and deadlines attributed to commitments – can keep check on whether targets are being achieved

Should be more prominent within the booklet and not 'hidden away'

*"To be honest when I got to this section I really had lost interest. And I wouldn't normally read something like this cover to cover. I just pick up points."
Thameslink South, Business/Leisure, Older*

Our commitments

Here are our customer commitments for the next 15 months, and some of the major commitments for the remainder of the franchise term. We'll report on our progress in Connections.

Deadline date	Commitment	Route/station
Sept 2014	Introduce a new customer app	All
Nov 2014	Make information on the number of passenger on trains available on app and station posters	All
From 30 Nov 2014	Hold Meet the Manager events every four weeks	London terminals and other major stations
21 Dec 2014	Successfully manage the integration of some Southeastern services and seven stations into the new franchise	Thameslink (Kent route)
Dec 2014	Successfully manage the major timetable change caused by the partial closure of London Bridge station	Thameslink
31 Mar 2015	Introduce YourVoice on our website	All
26 July 2015	Successfully manage the integration of Southern and Gatwick Express services and stations into the franchise	Southern & Gatwick Express
July 2015	Start Keep Trains Tidy marketing campaign	All
July 2015	Start an online passenger panel of at least 1,000 passengers	All
July 2015	Start Priority Seat awareness campaign	All
By Sept 2015	Introduce all day staffing at 25 more stations: Alexandra Palace, City Thameslink, Cricklewood, Elephant & Castle, Epsom & Boshamwood, Enfield Chase, Flixton, Gordon Hill, Harpenden, Haringay, Hatfield, Hitchin, Horsham, Hursley, Leagrave, Leathworth Garden City, Loughborough Junction, Mill Hill Broadway, New Barnet, Palmers Green, Potters Bar, Radlett, Tooting, West Hampstead Thameslink and Winchmore Hill	Thameslink and Great Northern
From Sept 2015	Hold an annual conference with local stakeholders	All

Deadline date	Commitment	Route/station
Sept 2015	Introduce a ticket sales function on the app	All
30 Sept 2015	Establish two Customer Cabinets, meeting at least every two months	All
30 Sept 2015	Introduce the facility to book seats when booking tickets on the app	All
Dec 2015	Open the Moorgate branch in the evenings and weekends	Great Northern
Dec 2015	Increase the frequency of the overnight service from London to St Albans, Harpenden and Luton Airport to every half hour	Thameslink
Dec 2015	Target date for 108 new carriages on the Gatwick Express	Gatwick Express
Dec 2015	Introduce all day staffing at Denmark Hill and Nunhead	Thameslink (Kent route)
16 April 2016	Start programme of introducing new Class 700 trains on Thameslink	Thameslink
By July 2016	Introduce all day staffing at 16 Southern stations	Southern
May 2017	Kings Lynn service becomes half hourly	Great Northern
January 2018	Manage the successful re-opening of London Bridge station	Thameslink, Southern
June 2018	Completion of programme of introducing new Class 700 trains on Thameslink	Thameslink
Dec 2018	Full Thameslink service through the core, with 24 trains per hour in each direction during the peak	Thameslink
Dec 2018	Target date for introduction of 150 new carriages on the Moorgate route	Great Northern

Deadlines appear very close together in places – any reason they are not more spread-out? i.e. a lot happening in July/December 2015

*"I suppose you put it on your fridge don't you and tick them off when it happens."
Thameslink North, Commuter, Older*



Improving the customer report (1)

<i>Section</i>	<i>Content</i>	<i>Presentation</i>	<i>Improvements</i>	<i>Stay or go</i>
Front cover			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More enticing for passengers to pick-up• More indication as to what the booklet is about and what is inside e.g. 'a guide as to what you can expect from your train company'• Imagery that is more impactful	Stay
Welcome to Thameslink...			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fewer words to make the task of reading not so daunting – use of bullet-points where possible• Better explanation as to the history of Govia and the inter-relationship between Great Northern, Thameslink, Southern and GTR• Perhaps a smaller picture of Charles Horton to reduce the level of dominance on page	Stay
Your key priorities			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More detail needed against achieving some of the commitments• Supported by 'our commitments' on final page	Stay
New trains			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Further imagery needed of the train interior• Soften (or remove) information regarding make and model of trains• More context information will improve customer experience	Stay
Station improvements			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bullet-pointed text• More information about local stations	Stay
Stay on track with our app			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Better clarity on the routes that the app gives information about – is it only Thameslink?• Information on other ways to contact e.g. enquiries line	Stay



Improving the customer report (2)

<i>Section</i>	<i>Content</i>	<i>Presentation</i>	<i>Improvements</i>	<i>Stay or go</i>
Working with your community	?	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unnecessary information that is not going to impact upon the journey being made 	?
We want to know your opinions	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None – useful, but non-critical information 	?
How we act on your feedback	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None – useful, but non-critical information 	?
Online passenger panel	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More precise date on the start-up of panel 	?
Customer Cabinets	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More precise date on the start-up of cabinets 	?
Our service performance targets	?	✗	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make information easier to interpret – less jargon and better description of each measure • More visual way to display information • Removal of irrelevant measures e.g. Short formations • More context – guidance as to how these measures match up against the rest of the industry • Operator specific i.e. split out Thameslink South and North from Great Northern 	Stay

Non-critical information that could be discarded or shortened. Middle page location could be better utilised



Improving the customer report (3)

<i>Section</i>	<i>Content</i>	<i>Presentation</i>	<i>Improvements</i>	<i>Stay or go</i>
Our customer satisfaction targets	?	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More clarity needed on how these figures are arrived at • More context – guidance as to how these measures match up against the rest of the industry • Operator specific i.e. split out Thameslink South and North from Great Northern 	Stay
Our ticketless travel targets	✗	✗	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce amount of space the section occupies • No need for 'targets' particularly as very little change 	Go
Thameslink programme	✗	✗	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasise relevance to Thameslink passengers and better clarity on the impact the programme will have • Reduce and bullet-point text 	Stay
...are part of GTR	✓	✗	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information should be made more prominent within the booklet 	Stay
Thameslink and GN routes	✓	✗	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map needs to be larger • Display across two pages to achieve this 	Stay
Our commitments	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be made more prominent within the booklet • Moved forward to support the 'key priorities' section 	Stay

Enhance availability:

- Increase distribution of Customer Report e.g. more prominent in station and available on-board the train
- Condensed version with key messages/commitments
- Available through other formats/media e.g. Posters in station, on the App/website, via email

Change in attitude towards TOC as a result of Customer Report



Lack of relationship felt towards TOC

- Passengers felt no real relationship towards their previous operator - FCC
 - Particularly true amongst commuters
 - Train is seen as a 'means to an end'
 - (At smaller stations) Staff seen as the only route to building a relationship
- This is echoed by Southern passengers
- Any relationship is one-sided, with the operator 'taking' but not 'giving back'
 - Evident by increasing costs for declining service
- Virgin Trains mentioned spontaneously as an operator that does initiate a form of relationship
 - 'Virgin' is a recognised brand
 - Knowledgeable about the history/heritage of the company
 - Aware of and can connect with the owner.

*"They get an awful lot of money, like £3,000 a year out of our hard earned money, they should be giving us, you know they should be making us feel a bit warm and fuzzy really."
Great Northern, Commuter, Older*

*"I used to travel up north a lot and Virgin trains, I do feel as though there is a connection. I see that as a kind of you know proper brand, whereas I don't really with these trains."
Thameslink North, Commuter, Older*



Customer report unlikely to change anything in the short term

- Despite the relative praise that GTR receives for producing the Customer Report...
 - ...it does little to change passenger perceptions towards GTR
- Passengers do acknowledge that GTR may be trying to form some kind of relationship:
 - Time and effort has gone into producing the report
 - Openness and transparency throughout
 - Charles Horton putting his face to the brand
 - Research already taking place that informed the Key Priorities
 - Two pages detailing how to provide feedback
- Producing *connections* does start to initiate a form of relationship, but keeping to the commitments will be the true test
- Notwithstanding scepticism, passengers' final comments were positive and endorsed the approach.

*"They're all great promises, but the proof is in the pudding."
Thameslink North, Commuter, Older*





Passengers' messages to Charles Horton overwhelmingly positive

Great plans! I hope you will be the one to make a huge difference in my commute.

Good report – all the information customers need to know!

There are more positives than negatives and it is very informative.

Good on you. Hope you can deliver!

It sounds very exciting. Your leaflet raised my expectations and now I can't wait to see it happen.

You've got a very busy 10 years ahead – good luck!

Very brave and bold and I hope you can deliver!

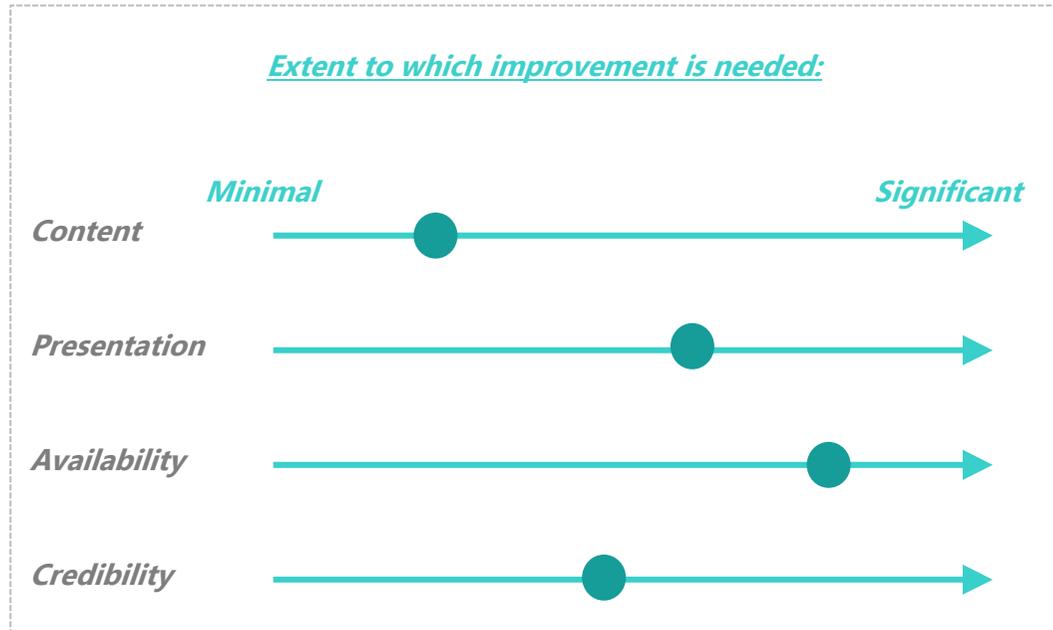
Nice Photo!

Summary and Conclusions



A good first attempt at producing a Customer Report

- Overall, passengers approve of the notion of Customer Reports
 - Viewed as a positive that TOCs are required to produce them
- connections* meets (and in places exceeds) passenger expectations for what a Customer Report should deliver
- However, because of its overall presentation and delivery, passengers suggest that they would be unlikely to 'pick it up' and read it



In a select number of stations, and after the discussion groups had taken place, poster/leaflet displays were erected by GTR.

This meets calls from passengers to increase publicity of the reports as well as provide an indication as to what is contained within the report.





Considerable work still needed in terms of presentation and distribution

Content:

- ✓ Transparent, open and honest
- ✓ Informative and interesting, in the most part
- ✓ Commitments in line with passengers' desired improvements
- ✓ Little else that passengers would like to see included
- ✗ Too much detail in places



- Summary/detail approach; condensed version for easy-reading, detail available if required
- Localisation: area or line specific reports

Presentation:

- ✓ Order of sections is succinct and logical
- ✓ Colours and imagery used relevant
- ✗ Range of specific (but important) areas executed poorly that cause the report to fall down:
 - ✗ Front cover
 - ✗ Text overly dense – use of bullet points where possible
 - ✗ Presentation (and aggregation) of performance targets
 - ✗ Length of the report



- Re-design front cover and performance targets for comprehension
- Summary/detail approach (as above)

Distribution:

- ✗ Passengers unaware of the Report's existence
- ✗ Limited channels it is available through



- Increase publicity about the existence of the report
- Available through more channels e.g. multi-media
- Straightforward navigation to the medium desired

Credibility:

- ✓ Publication signals an attempt to develop the provider/customer relationship
- ✗ Passengers sceptical based on previous experiences of TOCs
- ✗ Need for 'someone' to monitor GTR progress



- Time will be the determining factor



Contact Details



JOHN CONNAUGHTON
Global CEO

john.connaughton@illumina.com
0207 909 0935

ADAM BLOWER
Research Manager

adam.blower@illumina.com
0207 909 0469

KEITH BAILEY
Passenger Focus

keith.bailey@passengerfocus.org.uk
0300 123 0822

ADDRESS DETAILS

Illumina, 183-203 Eversholt Street, London, NW1 1BU
020 7909 0929

www.illumina-global.com

SHARON HEDGES
Passenger Focus

sharon.hedges@passengerfocus.org.uk
07918 626 126