

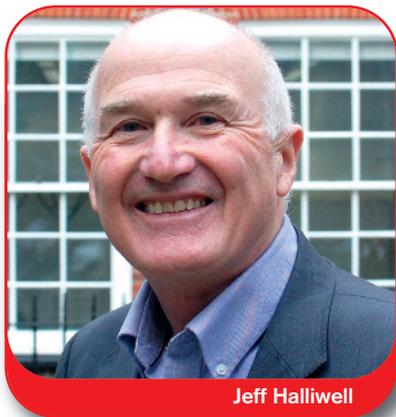


High Speed Two: putting the passenger at the heart of design

June 2015

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Jeff Halliwell

Transport Focus

Foreword

Transport Focus has a wealth of research on how passengers would like to see today's railway improved. There are some clear priorities for passengers across the rail network: providing better value for money, being able to get a seat on the train and more frequent services¹.

But what if you were building a railway from scratch? What would passengers want it to look and feel like, what type of service would they expect? This report will supplement our existing rail research and attempt to answer those questions in respect of High Speed Two (HS2).

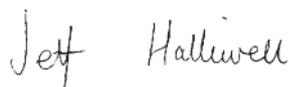
Our research on trust² demonstrates the importance passengers attach to engagement with operators and those involved in determining the future of services.

Some passengers believe that operators are not 'on their side' or do not have their interests at heart; for many, operators cannot be trusted to deliver anything more than a service that gets them from A to B in a reasonable amount of time. HS2 has the potential to transform the travel experience between some of Great Britain's largest cities, and stand out from regular services, but if it does not place the views of passengers at the heart of its investment

there is a danger it will become just 'another train operator' and fail to deliver on the vision it has started to create.

Transport Focus was therefore excited to be given the opportunity by HS2 to try and capture passengers' needs and aspirations at the outset of what will be a brand new railway – something that has never been done before.

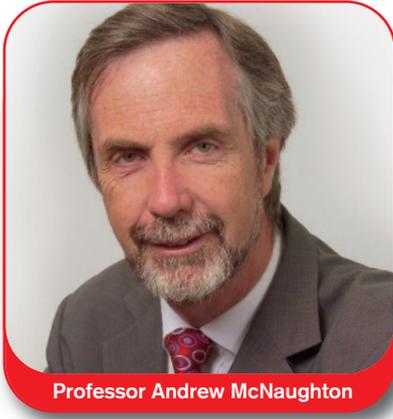
To view the full set of findings from the research visit: www.transportfocus.org.uk/research/high-speed-two-hs2-passenger-panel-insights

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeff Halliwell".

Jeff Halliwell
Chair
Transport Focus

¹Rail passengers' priorities for improvements, Passenger Focus, October 2014

²Passengers' relationship with the rail industry, Passenger Focus, August 2014



Professor Andrew McNaughton

High Speed Two

Foreword

Working with Transport Focus has been highly rewarding. The voice of the passenger is important to us and to the development of HS2.

Understanding insights and expectations of people who travel using public transport, through the work of Transport Focus, has already been valuable. It is informing our thinking about what is important in terms of the physical design of the HS2 network, trains and services. Beyond the functional considerations it has helped us think afresh about the expectations in terms of the emotional experience – how people feel as they embark on a journey.

Views on stations, trains, technology, their fit with environment, and views on inclusivity, have provided a rich vein of intelligence that is informing and reforming thinking about the design of the HS2 system. These views have established a challenge of achieving something ambitious. A HS2 network that is not just good but something great.

The essence of the insights have already been embedded in our Design Vision and the key principles of 'People, Time and Place'. Our expectation is over the next period the voice of the passenger will continue to inform our thinking.

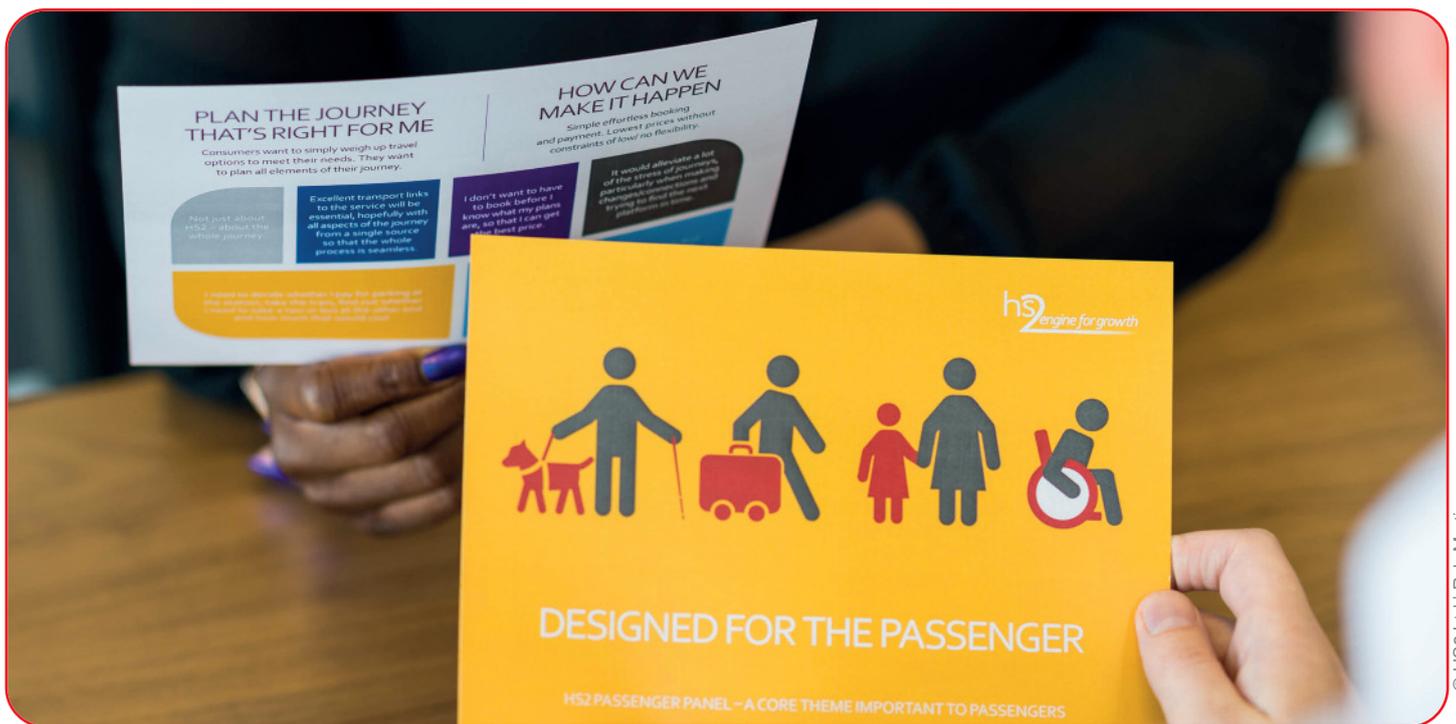
Transport Focus have created a forum where the voice of the passenger can be clearly heard. Our challenge is to listen, learn and create a great network that is for now and the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew McNaughton', written over a light grey background.

Professor Andrew McNaughton
HS2 Technical Director
High Speed Two

Key findings

- The panel (see box below) want to be treated as valued 'customers' who have needs beyond simply getting from A to B alone.
- They are pleased HS2 wants to understand their needs and listen to their 'blue sky' ideas and incorporate the essence of these into the overall HS2 experience.
- They expect HS2 to design world-class stations, trains and services that are a source of pride throughout Great Britain; a national asset from which the whole country can benefit.
- HS2 should consider how customers feel, in addition to understanding their practical needs. Music, design and culture could help create an uplifting setting for all to enjoy, not just rail passengers.
- The role and approach of staff alongside proactive, accurate communication is crucial for customers to feel valued.
- Customers want to be able to tailor their experience to their specific needs. Commuters, leisure and business travellers all have different needs, which they want HS2 to meet.
- HS2 needs to be affordable and offer value for money, by providing a reliably good service. The panel also had ambitious ideas on how HS2 can offer value by means of technology and innovation.
- Journey planning needs to be door-to-door with joined-up information on all transport options provided throughout the whole journey.
- The panel expect new technology to transform their rail travel experience, including the end of paper ticketing – although some would still like this option to be available on request.



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The panel

A panel of 40 rail passengers gave their views and ideas via workshops and an online community over one year. There was an equal gender split and a wide geographical spread. Passengers with disabilities, commuters, leisure and business travellers were also included.

Understanding what customers want from HS2

Transport Focus covered all aspects of the journey to understand what passengers would want from HS2.

The panel started with neutral opinions about HS2

Prospective panellists were screened for a neutral position on HS2, unaware that the research was about HS2 but asked to offer opinions on it. We selected participants who did not have a particularly strong positive or negative opinion. Prior to the first workshop, the panel had very little knowledge of HS2 beyond press coverage and had heard little about who would benefit.

HS2 Technical Director Professor McNaughton shared his vision for the new high speed railway at the workshop. The panel responded positively to their involvement at this early stage.

“People can start believing in the vision that we have seen today, and that HS2 is ‘ours.’”

“It would make me use trains rather than avoid them.”

“This all sounds 300 per cent better than my current experiences!”

Understanding customer needs

The panel were told to disregard practicality in these early stages to try and ensure they proposed ideas that would meet their needs, without having to justify how they would work in practice. This allowed the fullest sense of customer needs and possible solutions to emerge.

The panel were recruited as ‘passengers’ and were asked many questions about the ‘passenger journey’. It became clear though that the panel wanted to be treated as valued HS2 ‘customers’, who had needs beyond that of being taken between point A and point B.

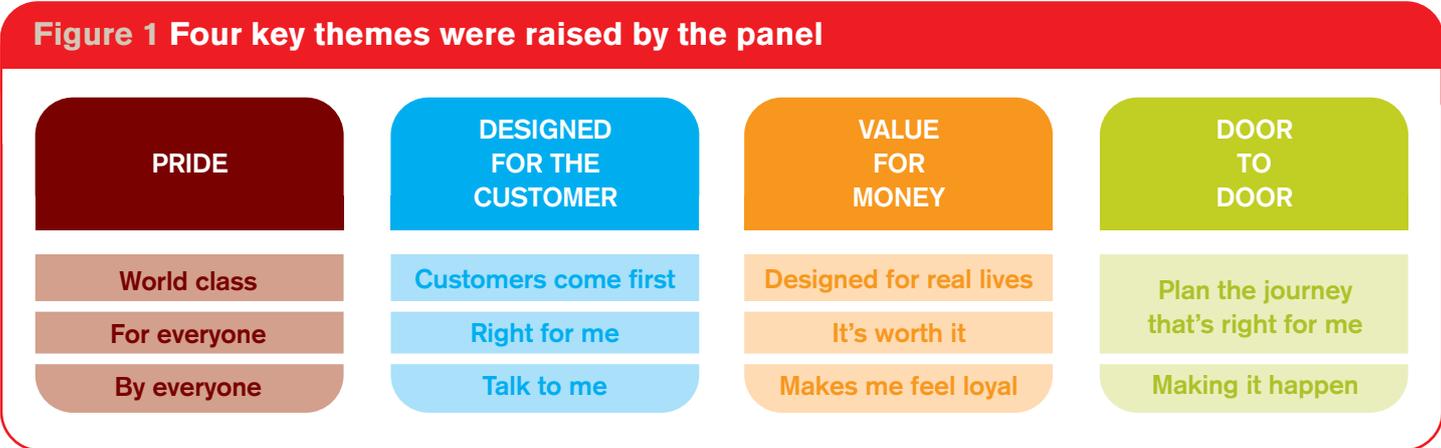
The panel also recognised that ‘customers’ other than train travellers would use HS2 facilities, such as local residents and workers.

This report therefore uses the term ‘customers’ when discussing how HS2 could make passengers and users feel valued – the term covers a wider range of potential users (not just rail passengers).

Customer needs for HS2

Four fundamental needs emerged from the online community which, for them, will be intrinsic to defining HS2 as a success: pride, designed for the customer, value for money, and ‘door-to-door’ (figure 1).

These core themes appear throughout the passenger journey. In this report we explore them in depth and highlight key touchpoints for each during the journey.



Pride

There was a strong desire to feel proud of HS2 and in being proud the panel would feel more valued and like a 'customer' rather than a 'passenger'. The panel was keen for HS2 to incorporate the principles in figure 2 in all areas.

Figure 2 Pride

WORLD-CLASS

Customers want HS2 to be a world-class development they are proud of.

Give us a bit of pride back in just what our British nations can achieve when we try!

HS2 could have the same effect that the Olympics had – where we all came together and we were so proud of what we'd achieved.

FOR EVERYONE

HS2 should be designed as a national asset from which we can all benefit.

St Pancras station is busy, but somehow the sense of space as well as a brilliant blend of beautiful old gothic with modern functionality really works – when thought goes into design, it transforms our experience.

There shouldn't even be classes – instead there should be choices.

BY EVERYONE

The benefits of HS2 should be enjoyed by everyone, even if they're not taking the train.

People can start believing in the vision that we have seen today, and that HS2 is 'ours'.

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World class

HS2 should be a 'world-class' service, which uses the latest innovative designs and technology to deliver a superior experience. It should be a source of national pride; the panel likened the challenge and opportunity to the London 2012 Olympics.

World class design

The design of HS2 stations and trains should be world-class – offering spaces that would be enjoyed by more than simply those taking the train. The panel praised London St Pancras International, New York Grand Central Station and Amsterdam Schiphol Airport for their uplifting designs.

"You don't feel like you are being 'herded' anywhere or that you are just a number on a ticket at Schiphol."

[St Pancras] *"The place was amazing during the Olympics, really buzzing."*

"Blackfriars really made me look forward to my daily commute to the City."

Panellists' ideas for world-class designs are highlighted in figure 3.

Figure 3 Panellists' ideas for a world class station

Key elements:

- **Comfortable**
- **Choices / options**
- **Visible staff**
- **Sleek design**
- **Stress-free**
- **Communication enabled by technology**

World-class technology

The panel expect HS2 to incorporate the latest technologies (such as wearable technology, GPS location or retina scanning) and new, innovative, tools brought to the market over the next 10 years. The fact that HS2 has asked the panel to consider customer needs, more than ten years in advance, meant the panel believed in HS2's commitment to offering a world-class travel experience.

HS2 should be developed for everyone

The panel felt HS2 should be a national asset, designed for the British population as a whole and of benefit to all regions and nations.

"Having visited the Olympics and seeing how well the transport of people to and from the event was done, it has shown what can be done here in the UK, and what HS2 could do for all of us in the country."

This 'democratic' perspective challenged conventional thinking on ticket types and the 'class system'. The panel felt strongly that passengers should be allowed the opportunity to choose the services and environment on the train which suits them the best.

"There should be a choice of different levels of comfort for different prices."

There was a strong plea for affordable ticket pricing so that HS2 is truly accessible for all.

"It needs to be affordable to the masses, not just the London and Birmingham business people."

HS2 should be enjoyed by everyone

Staff, local people, visitors and passengers should all be able to use station facilities. Enjoyment by the wider community would make the panel proud of HS2. Stations should contain

uplifting spaces with an enjoyable ambiance enhanced by music, design, culture and food and drink. The panel had many examples to share on this.

Music, design and culture

Music provided by the pianos at St Pancras and station buskers were highlighted as 'good for the soul', creating an uplifting station experience that can be enjoyed by all.

"I encountered a band playing boogie-woogie music and the joy was so infectious, the grey-faced commuters and travellers were transformed into smiling at each other, tapping feet and dancing – it was wicked!"

"This is the kind of touch that can make an ordinary place extraordinary and take you out of your everyday, mundane life even for just a while."

Design and culture is particularly important for establishing the station within its local environment and community, to enhance the world inside and around the station and to encourage participation and enjoyment from a broad audience of customers.

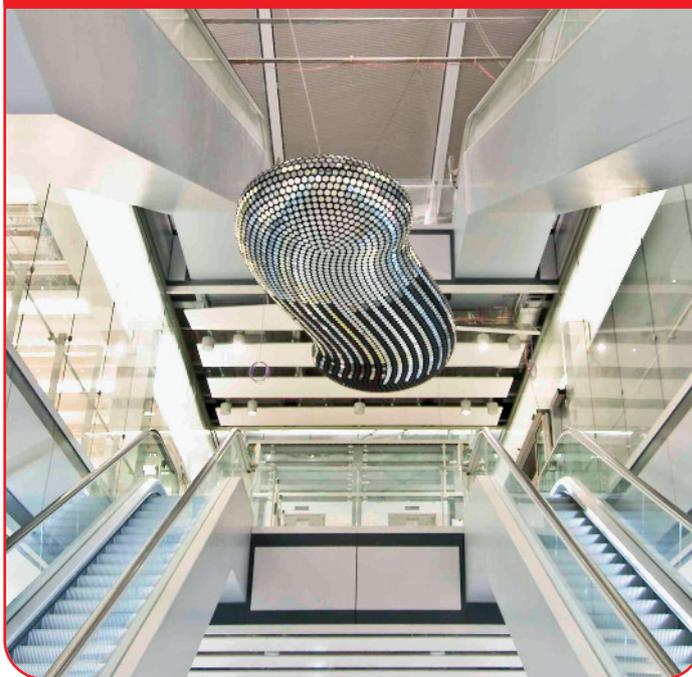
"I like the way Liverpool Lime St takes part in the city's culture programme. It played host to a large mechanical spider 'La Machine' which started off on the side of the train station and then through the streets of Liverpool. It was amazing to watch!"

Picture 2 'La Machine' at Liverpool Lime St station



© Paul White

Picture 1 Troika Cloud for British Airways



Troika Cloud commissioned by British Airways at Heathrow Terminal 5

Food and Drink

High-quality, enjoyable food and drink in stations and on trains are part of creating a world-class service. Like music and culture, it can promote a feel-good factor.

Panellists' provided examples of refreshments in stations and on trains enjoyed in other countries:

[Dresden Hauptbahnhof] "The best bit is the 'Dresdenoite' restaurant with mini-restaurants making hot/cold FRESH local produce for the customer, like hot bread and cakes."

"Just walking past the freshly-baked cakes and breads every day was amazing. Anywhere with a window full of cakes always draws me in!"

Many panellists would feel proud to see high-quality local food being sold in stations.

"I was thinking that it would be great to have a station where the shops and facilities inside were local to the area, with produce from the area such as local cheeses and meat from local farmers etc. That would be a great boost for the area it's in and would showcase British business and it is great for tourists visiting the area."

Designed for the customer

The panel felt the rail industry could improve its customer service to match service levels found in other sectors such as retail, technology and on airlines. HS2 should prioritise customer needs to ensure its experience is 'designed for the customer'.



Customers come first

It is important to consider how customers *feel* not just think of their practical needs.

As a minimum, customers need to feel secure. Currently, this is not always the case, particularly late at night, if others are drunk or rowdy or when there are few people around. There should be a visible staff presence backed up by security or transport police.

The panel accept personal responsibility for their belongings but would like HS2 to provide secure luggage facilities on the train. This would free them from watching



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over their bags and give peace of mind if they need to leave their seat for a comfort break. This could be a 'check in' service for larger items at the start of their journey (transferred between connecting trains) or lockable storage under seats for smaller items.

Feeling valued

Front line staff will be crucial to passengers feeling valued. Being the 'human' face of HS2, they should proactively provide assistance, be helpful and polite.

It is expected that automation and technology will reduce the numbers of staff needed, but the panel believe it will still be important for some staff to be available to help, at all stages of the journey.

"While technology will be at the forefront of HS2, the human touch is still hugely important and wanted by the public, myself included. If technology at HS2 is at the expense of the human touch then this would certainly be a negative to me."

At the moment, it feels like rail staff spend more time collecting and checking tickets than helping. HS2 staff should be like the 2012 London Olympics volunteers who made a positive impact on passenger's journey experience and set a standard for customer-facing organisations to follow.

"[At] bigger stations, huddles of staff are all positioned on the same barrier at peak times; it would make more sense for them to have less staff there and [more staff] scattered around the platforms to aid passengers like tourists or newbie train users."

"I would like to see staff on HS2 be like the volunteers at the Olympics, helpful and friendly with the ability to answer questions with authority."

To do this, frontline staff will need to be well trained and given the freedom to help.

Right for me

Providing flexible choices

The panel want more choice and a customisable experience from HS2. When booking, there should be a clear set of options to help them tailor their journey to their needs, for example by choosing a direction of travel, booking storage, or ordering food and drink.

They would like the flexibility to change these options without financial penalty should they need to take a different train or change a food order for example.

"Sometimes I want to go the night before, sometimes the next morning – I want to decide at the time, not a few weeks before when I get the best fare."

Tailoring the journey

To fully customise their journey, passengers will need a variety of facilities in stations and on the train. Free Wi-Fi was a must for all. It would allow commuters to fill the time in a productive way, leisure travellers to access entertainment and business people to work. Some longer-distance commuters suggested being able to take a shower or sleep (with a personalised wake-up call prior to destination). Leisure travellers want to relax and enjoy the journey so would value a café bar and access to entertainment (via their own devices or potentially seat-back screens). Business travellers want to work so free Wi-Fi access and charging points are essential. Privacy screens and meeting pods were also suggested.

Passengers tend to enjoy the journey more when sitting with those with similar needs. The panel wanted designated spaces for commuters or for families.

Accessible for all

HS2 should be fully and effortlessly inclusive, removing current boarding and navigating challenges, especially for disabled people, older people and those with young children and luggage. Currently, train doors and walkways are too narrow and there are large gaps and steps to navigate around the station and between the platform and train.

The panel expect HS2 to be step-free with wider doors and

walkways. They would like space to store buggies, wheelchairs and bicycles – ideally bookable in advance. Staff should be on hand to assist boarding. Being able to book pushchairs, trolleys and mobility scooters would also be helpful.

“It might be useful for pushchairs to be available to borrow in order to walk the length of the concourse and platform. You could book support in advance (no charge) and receive a text telling you the name of your assistant and where they can be located.”

Talk to me

HS2 needs to communicate proactively with passengers throughout the journey. Information should be clear and helpful. The panel wanted to receive personalised information for *their* journey, potentially through a mobile app but for the service to remain inclusive, HS2 will also need printed station maps, clear signage and audible announcements.

Here again, the panel believe staff will be a crucial source of information, advice and reassurance, particularly if there are delays or cancellations.

The panel highlighted current poor and sometimes misleading communication about delays. They want to be proactively informed of the extent of delays, expected resolution times and alternative transport so they can make informed decisions.

“If we know the true situation we can work with it. Being kept in the dark does not help matters.”

Value for money

Many of the panel feel today's rail network is poor value for money, particularly for commuters who spend a large proportion of their income on season tickets.

Figure 5 Value for money



Value for money means both that the service is affordable and worth the money spent.

Designed for real lives

The panel want HS2 to provide an experience that makes their lives easier. Increased choice, driven by the internet, has raised consumer expectations. HS2 should learn from other businesses and industries now offering innovative products and services that help consumers manage their increasingly complex, busy lives.

As a minimum the HS2 service should not cause inconvenience or hassle. It could in fact provide useful and innovative solutions to everyday challenges. This would



© HS2 Ltd, Bob Martin

change the journey from a necessary task to an experience that benefits them.

Enabling travel that suits everyday life

Travel options will need to reflect changing working patterns and pace of modern life. More people work part-time or from home. Season tickets, for example, could reflect this with '100 journey' tickets rather than fixed time periods.

"For four weeks of the year (and any days I work from home), I'm not getting the value of my ticket. I know it's discounted compared to individual tickets, but it would be better if I could buy a block of tickets and allocate them. I mean it's a chunk of guaranteed money I'm giving them."

Fewer people have a rigid 'nine to five' schedule so their travel requirements may differ day-to-day or change at the

last minute. The panel suggested 'smart ticketing' where seat reservations are flexible and can be transferred to a different train (using a mobile app) if plans change, without incurring an extra cost. Season ticket seats would be automatically booked each day but could be flexible and altered for free.

Ticket purchasing should be simplified so that passengers can make choices quickly and easily. Currently ticketing is seen as confusing. Too many options and unclear rules make it a difficult and time consuming transaction.

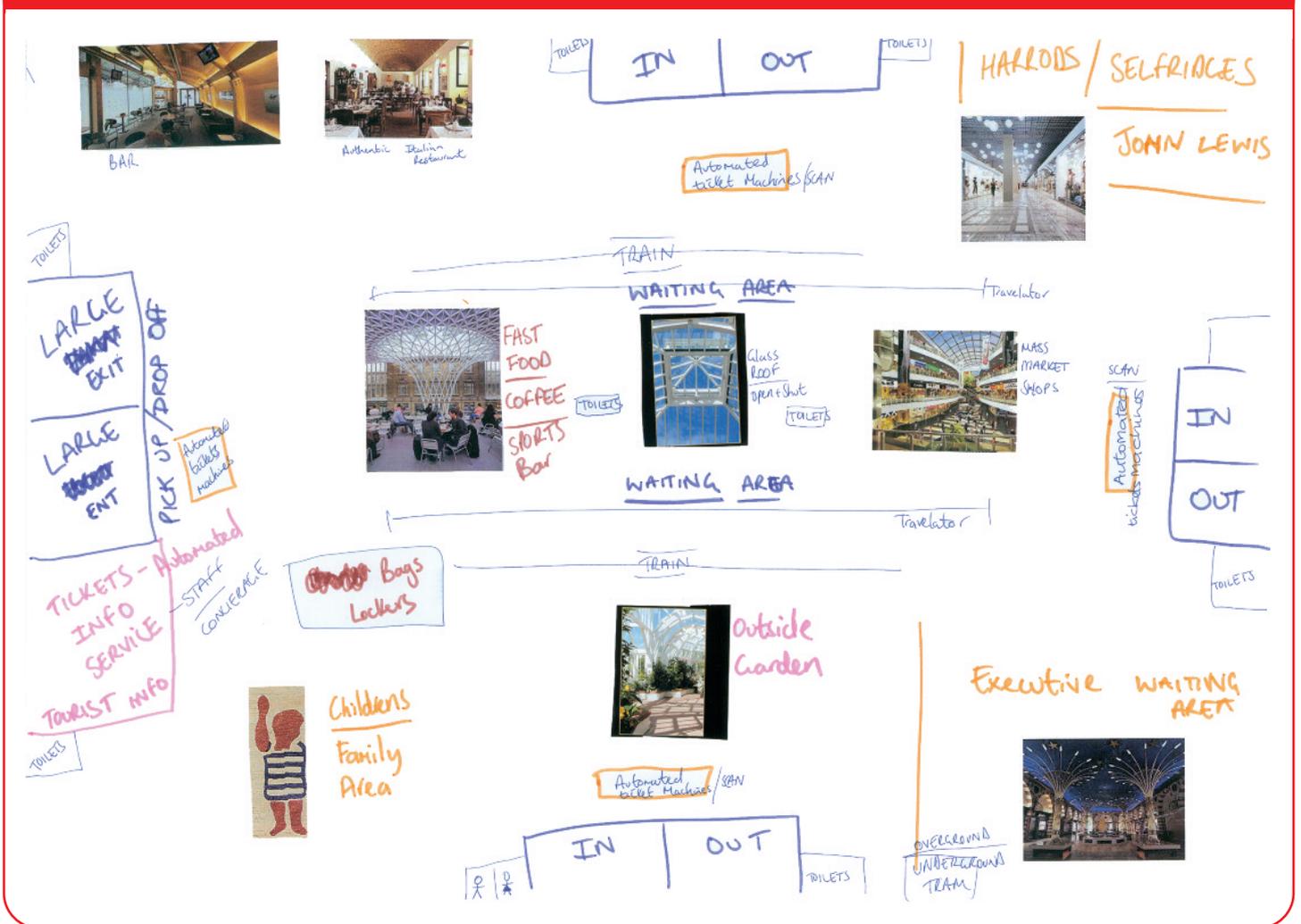
It's worth it

Affordability is important but value for money is not simply about price, it is also about the service received. Customers may be willing to pay more for a better service.

Reliably good service

Many panellists view today's rail service as unreliable, with

Figure 6 Panellists' designs for the ideal station





© HS2 Ltd, Bob Martin



© HS2 Ltd, Bob Martin

frequent delays and cancellations. They want HS2 to be completely reliable with minimal disruption.

If problems occur, the panel expect an alternative service to be made available at no cost. Smart ticketing could automatically allocate them a seat on another service.

Guaranteed seating

One of the biggest complaints is not being able to get a seat on crowded trains. Commuters find it extremely frustrating when seats are reserved but empty.

The panel expect HS2 to have enough seats for all passengers, even in peak hours. Smart ticketing could be used to guarantee a reserved seat in a flexible way.

For a lower cost, some short-distance commuters would be willing to stand in a designated, safe 'standing area', with plenty of bars or straps to hold.

Added-value services

'Added-value' facilities help customers feel the money spent was worth it. Stations should be enjoyable spaces with comfortable seats, quality shops, restaurants, outside gardens, play areas for children and more.

The panel would like on-board facilities that help them make the most of the journey. As a minimum, they expect free Wi-Fi and plug points. Others suggested 'blue-sky' ideas such as on-board GPs, shops and gyms.

The value for money (quality, choice and price) of products and services purchased in stations and on trains was important to the panel, especially for food and drink.

"It winds me up something rotten when you get overcharged for food in a station or train when the exact same sandwich is half the price 200 yards away outside the station. Pricing in most stations and trains is based on how much they can get away with as a captive audience; it leaves you feeling exploited."

Makes me feel loyal

Consistently providing good value for money will increase loyal customers. There were mentions of having an incentive or loyalty scheme, especially for regular users and commuters but most would prefer a consistently good service and affordable prices.

"I'm a commuter and I pay about £4k a year – I want to feel loyal, but I also want to be rewarded for giving them so much money!"

Door to door

Passengers want to go from 'door to door' in a seamless and hassle-free way.

Figure 7 Door to door

PLAN THE JOURNEY THAT'S RIGHT FOR ME

Passengers want to simply weigh up travel options to meet their needs. They want to plan all elements of their journey.

Not just about HS2 – about the whole journey.

Excellent transport links to the service will be essential, hopefully with all aspects of the journey from a single source so that the whole process is seamless.

I don't really want to walk more than a minute to my connecting train.

It would alleviate a lot of the stress of journeys, particularly when making changes/connections and trying to find the next platform in time.

I need to decide whether I pay for parking at the station, take the train, find out whether I need to take a taxi or bus at the other end and how much that would cost.

I hate having to go to the ticket machine, find the email with the long reservation code on it, find the right credit card I used for booking and get literally a handful of tickets.

© HS2 Ltd

Plan the journey that's right for me

Customers want to plan their complete route, including any additional transport, as for most people the train is only one of a number of different stages.

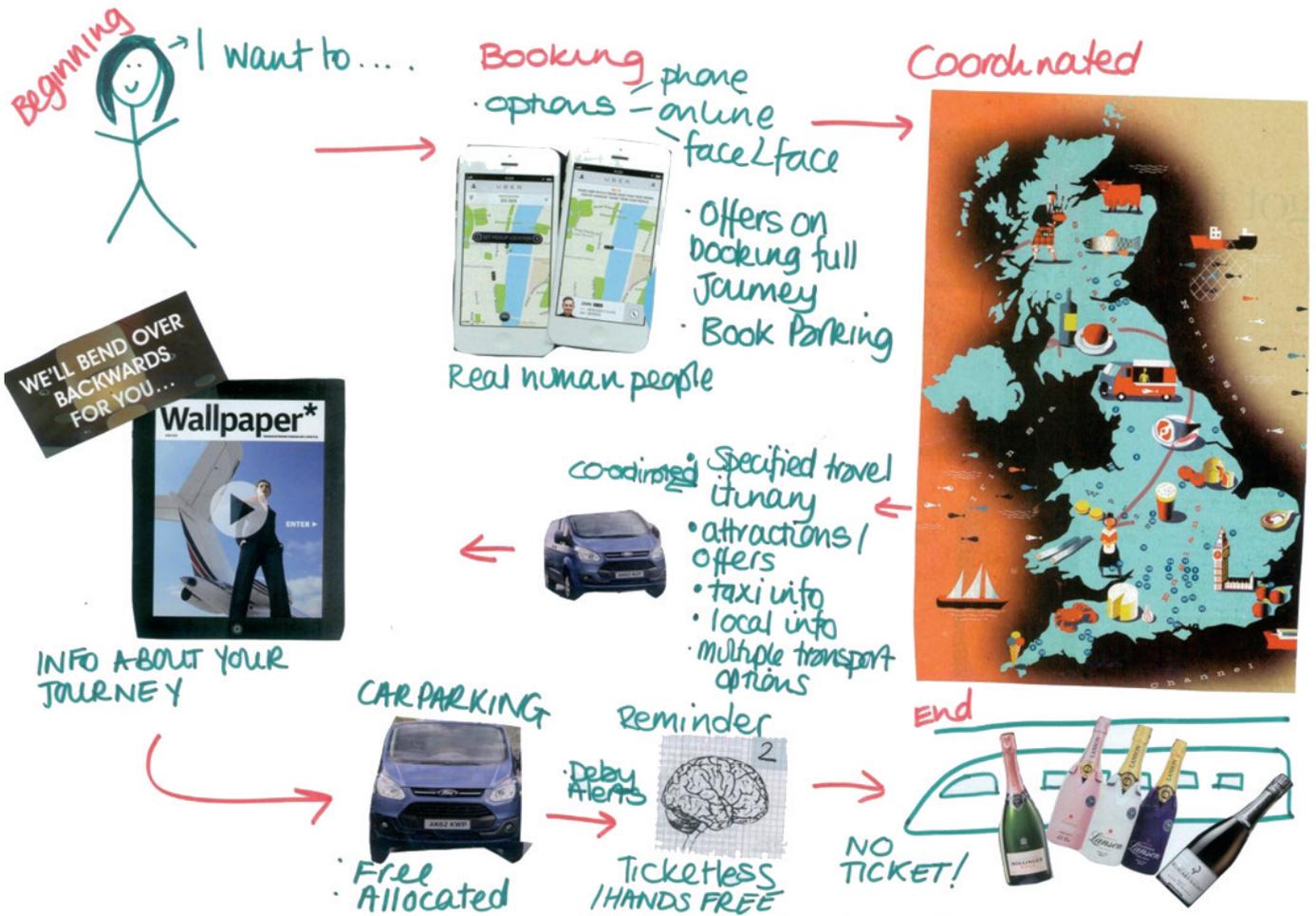
Customers will consider the whole journey when deciding to go by public transport or to drive. The two main factors are a trade-off between cost and convenience.

"I need to decide whether I pay for parking at the station, take the train, find out whether I need to take a taxi or bus at the other end and how much that would cost – or whether it's just easier to drive with petrol and parking to factor in."



© HS2 Ltd, Bob Martin

Figure 8 Panellists' ideas for the passenger journey



To help them decide, the panel would like a 'door-to-door' journey planner, which offers all transport options for the complete journey and the total cost. It should factor in all issues that affect convenience and cost, from parking to food options for the train.

The panel would like to personalise their online booking with a profile and preferences (frequent journeys, preferred seat), which would be remembered for future bookings (see Figure 8).

Making it happen

Integrating services

Connections are a source of stress for passengers. The panel would like HS2 to design changes between trains or transport that are quick and close by.

Stations and schedules should be organised with

connecting passengers in mind. Popular train changes should be facilitated by those trains being adjacent or on nearby platforms. If not, routes need to be clearly marked by signs or lights.

“The layout of the station really needs to be well thought out, where there are common connecting trains why not automatically be on the other side of the platform? I don’t really want to walk more than a minute to my connecting train.”

Ideally, other transport should be close to platforms with clear directions and speedy access via moving walkways or escalators. Schedules of onward services should be synchronised with HS2 and their capacity changed according to demand, for example the number of available taxis could be increased based on customer arrivals.

Seamlessly navigating throughout the journey

Given the length of HS2 trains, stations will need to be carefully designed to help customers reach their seats quickly and easily. HS2 could also use personalised technology such as GPS-enabled mobile app directions, personalised arrows projected onto the floor and light-up colour coded routes.

“I would like a digital image of the train to appear on a screen and highlight the carriage my seat is in. Once I enter the specific carriage I should be able to call out my name and the system should recognise this and direct me to my seat.”

Managing customer ‘flow’ will be key to stress-free navigation and boarding. Many see separate entrances and routes for customers going in different directions as a good way of dealing with current high levels of congestion, particularly in peak times.

User-friendly ticketing and payment

Most of the panel believe that physical tickets are old-fashioned and time-consuming to collect and use – particularly cumbersome when multiple tickets are required.

Ideally, the panel would like to have just one ticket for their whole journey, which includes all modes of transport (trains, buses, taxis and car parking).

The majority would prefer this ticket to be electronic, purchased and stored on their smart phone. New technologies may further streamline the process via simply ‘tapping in’ with their mobile, using a HS2 “Oyster” card, or even retina and fingerprint scanning.

However, some did caution being too dependent on technology and would feel more secure with a paper ticket.

What next?



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The ideas, views and feedback generated by the HS2 passenger panel have provided a rich source of information on different aspects of the service. We are assured by HS2 that feedback provided has already started to shape its thinking. So keen is HS2 to ensure that passenger aspirations are kept at the heart of the project, it has asked Transport Focus to continue running the passenger panel for another year with the intention of delving deeper into the detail of some of the issues raised. Transport Focus is keen to take advantage of this further opportunity on behalf of passengers and looks forward to working with both HS2 and members of the panel.



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