

## Draft Work Plan 2016-17 08/03/2016

### **A. Making a difference for all transport users**

#### **Boosting the voice of transport users**

The time has come to boost the influence of transport users over the major decisions that affect their services and roads. Transport Focus is going to help make it happen. Our respected insight, policy and advocacy work is based around producing useful intelligence which guides government and industry decision making. The comparative benchmarking provided by the National Rail Passenger Survey, the Bus Passenger Survey and other major tracker surveys drive real change on the ground. This year we will add a new survey of road user satisfaction to this stable, massively boosting the voice of users of England's motorways and major 'A' roads.

Major reviews and changes are underway into the way rail, bus and road services are financed, planned and delivered. Transport Focus is uniquely well placed to ensure that the user voice is heard at the heart of these debates: our brand of advocacy is well respected. We must exploit this position to really help users. We will strive to ensure every debate in the transport industry starts with the question 'what do users want and how do we know...?' Transport Focus can answer many of those questions and soon will be able to answer even more. All of our insight work is published.

Since our involvement increased, passengers are now better represented in the rail 'direct award' and competitive tender franchise replacement processes. However, to date our involvement with HS2 has been relatively low-key. We now want to increase that involvement.

#### **Who are Transport Focus?**

We are the independent, statutory, consumer watchdog for Britain's rail passengers, bus, coach and tram passengers in England (outside London) and, since April 2015, all users (including freight, pedestrians, cyclists and other users) of England's motorways and major 'A' roads – the Strategic Road Network ('SRN').

We have offices in London and Manchester and we have peripatetic workers and Board members spread across Great Britain. This includes three members appointed by devolved government in London, Scotland and Wales.

#### **Three main principles guide our work:**

- Transport Focus is a consumer organisation. We strive to give all transport users as powerful a voice as those that provide transport services and we listen to those users in a variety of ways
- We aim to be useful and to influence major decisions, using evidence to back up our arguments
- We make a difference, we get things changed, we make things better

## **Devolution**

All of our work is of use to governments and the transport industry across Great Britain to help shape services. However, continued devolution to Scotland and Wales, the rise of Transport for the North and the potential takeover of more rail services by Transport for London will exert a growing effect on where and how we work. Attached to this report are letters written to the transport ministers in both Scotland and Wales setting out what specific work we intend to carry out in those countries

## **Focus on performance**

All of our research indicates, unsurprisingly, that transport users' main need is for reliable, consistent performance from the train, bus, coach and tram companies and roads they use. Predictability is key.

We all base our lives around choices and assumptions about the transport we rely on. When that predictability is present we almost don't notice the journey. When it is not, it causes real problems. So, it is proper that our work focuses on areas where transport users are facing problems. The longer-term strategies and decisions that should improve reliability, boost capacity and improve resilience. We also focus on our more detailed Work Plan, set out later in this document.

## **Rail passengers: main aims**

It now seems clear that the on-going rebuilding and engineering works at and around London Bridge are going to cause issues for passengers for some time. The problems caused have thrown up issues around performance, information during disruption and compensation.

Our ambition is to see better information during planned and unplanned disruption and adequate compensation for passengers.

In addition, lessons learned from the works at Glasgow Queen Street, Reading, Bath and other major projects need to be built into (in partnership with London TravelWatch) the forthcoming Waterloo and Euston works.

In addition, we will continue to mediate in some 2,500 ‘appeal’ complaints where passengers and train companies have become deadlocked. Our ambition is to achieve at least 70% passenger satisfaction with the way we have dealt with their issue.

Longer term, the government and rail industry planning processes for the 2019-24 spending period need to be radically re-focused on passengers – now the main overall funders of the day-to-day railway in England.

Our ambition is that any planning process is judged by those passengers involved as being successful in understanding and listening to the passenger voice. We will also pursue and develop the welcome boost to the passenger voice in the franchise replacement process – a key moment to build in improvements.

### **Bus passengers: main aims**

We aim to establish close working relationships in all the six major conurbations outside London which replicates our membership of and work with the West Midlands Bus Alliance. Our ambition is to help boost the number of passengers choosing bus and to improve satisfaction with current services. This is in the context of the overall size of the bus network shrinking, mainly as a result of reductions in local authority support for services. In addition, we aim to focus in depth on at least two major locations where bus passenger satisfaction is under stress from poor performance. We will understand why these problems have occurred and spread the lessons learned from the root causes and the information issued during disruption.

We will make a major input based on our recent work on trust, priorities for improvement and non-users to the forthcoming Buses Bill. This bill could make the most significant changes for 30 years to the framework of the funding and delivery of bus services outside London: bus-service franchising and other new arrangements.

Our ambition is to ensure that any new legislative arrangements for franchising or improved partnerships have user needs at their core, including the effective measurement of satisfaction.

### **Strategic Road Network users: main aims**

The welcome investment in the SRN over the next few years is going to involve major roadworks. We aim to ensure that users’ need and priorities are put at the forefront of how these works are planned, communicated, delivered and assessed. Any measurement of satisfaction with the SRN must be done with awareness of what is happening on local roads. In the course of collecting satisfaction data on the

SRN we will also garner information on local roads which we will, in due course, make available in some form.

Our ambition is to show that during major projects users know about reasons for works, timescales, the level of disruption and are satisfied with the handling of the works.

On unplanned disruption we want to see fewer incidents, quicker clear-up times and better information. Pressing for the publication of more data on these areas by Highways England and ORR will form part of this work.

Planning for 2020-25 is underway. We will work to provide effective user input to the development of the Government investment plans for the SRN.

Our ambition is that any planning process is judged by those users involved as being successful in understanding and listening to the user voice.

## **New insights**

Insight and research into the experiences, needs and priorities of transport users is the keystone of our work. Transport Focus is an evidence-based organisation. This year we will talk to over 140,000 transport users in the course of our insight and rail complaints handling work.

Much of our work this year will be focused on new, more digital ways of gathering insight into transport users' views. We aim to gradually boost our social-media engagement with users to help boost their voice and provide us with further evidence and insight. We will also start to look in depth at 'emotional tracking' (how users feel about their journeys) and placing Transport Focus portals onto others' apps and information sources. (We are trialling this with Abellio Greater Anglia and a bus operator at present.)

In addition we are going to build up and use a large-scale panel of transport users – allowing fast, cost-effective feedback on particular issues. It should help improve the value for money of taxpayer and industry spend on insight overall.

We will continue to strengthen and modernise the National Rail Passenger Survey the Bus and Tram Passenger Surveys and build the new Strategic Road Users Satisfaction Survey. We aim to ensure that any industry-wide duplication of insight work that exists (including versions of NRPS commissioned by rail companies) is reduced. We will look at developing lower-cost, online, 'always on' versions of all our tracker work – this will spread the reach and boost the usefulness of such work.

The NRPS, as an Official Statistic, also benefits from the input of our NRPS Stakeholder Forum which provides an opportunity for dialogue with the industry during the planned changes to NRPS over the next two years. An NRPS Experts Group is advising us on technical aspects of the updated methodology.

We aim to weave together all our insight work to provide a better understanding of the end-to-end journey and what drives choice.

The way we measure satisfaction among road users will be truly innovative. We are going to gather user views on their experiences of the SRN as close as possible to their actual journeys. We aim to build a panel of over 20,000 car, van and HGV drivers and passengers. Using online maps we will steer panel members towards the SRN part of their journey and provide regular feedback to Highways England and other stakeholders. The survey will be extensively trialled this year prior to becoming a regulatory measure in due course.

## **Accessibility**

We also plan to make more use of our existing work to provide extra, in-depth insight into particular areas such as accessibility, personal security and other issues. We plan some three such reports this year.

Accessibility is a key issue for some users. Many other organisations work in this area and we should only get involved where we can add value. We will continue the work of our Accessibility Panel this year but will have to review this in the light of long-term funding changes.

However, we do hold the only large-scale quantitative research into the needs of transport users with disabilities or impairments – nearly one in four of the respondents to our Bus Passenger Survey classifies themselves as disabled. Nearly one rail passenger in ten does the same. We do not yet know the figures for car use – we suspect the voice of disabled motorists has not really been heard clearly enough. We aim to use this data to inform debates and decisions in these areas.

## **Funding shifts**

Transport Focus is sponsored by the Department for Transport ('DfT'), although operationally independent. The majority of our funding comes from DfT in the form of either 'core' year-to-year funding for a basic level of activities plus funding for additional work, such as additional input to franchise replacements.

The drive in public sector funding is to improve and modernise services as well as boosting digital delivery – we are looking hard at how we can do this. In addition, our core funding (along with that of many other public-sector organisations) following the Spending Review 2015, has been significantly reduced.

We are already building our income from other sources, boosting our ability to make a difference as well as improving value for money for the taxpayer. For example, the BPS is currently funded one third by bus operators, local authorities and us

respectively. As we secure more funding, additional projects will be added to this Work Plan.

If you would like to discuss working with us please do get in touch. The majority of the work detailed in this Work Plan is covered by DfT core funding. Additional funding for specific work funded by DfT or others is indicated as such.

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## B. Improving today's transport user's experience

### Bus users

- Work with bus operators and local authorities to use the results of the Bus Passenger Survey as an important measure of their success and of their customers' feedback
- Take the results from our 2016 report *Bus passengers have their say: Trust, what to improve and using buses more* and work with the industry and local authorities to help boost use of buses alongside increased satisfaction
- Work in two areas with operators, Traffic Commissioners and local authorities to develop improvement action plans where poor performance is causing issues
- Develop better working relationships with local authorities, bus operators and Traffic Commissioners in the six largest conurbations outside London to jointly improve BPS scores in those areas
- Focus on the changing shape of transport in two or three particular areas (probably more rural locations) where reductions in local-authority support to bus services have significantly altered the choices facing people. Map the changes and extent of transport provision across scheduled bus services, 'on demand' transport, school transport, rail services (if any), patient transport and other generally accessible forms of transport. Use this work to advocate more joined-up and passenger-focused provision of transport services

### Tram passengers

- Carry out and publish the 2016 Tram Passenger Survey. Use the results to pursue and boost passenger satisfaction

### Road users

- Publish the research into SRN user needs and experiences during incidents and roadworks, including information provision. Use that research to help re-shape planning, operations and communication before, during and after major roadworks
- Complete and publish research into users' priorities for improvement to road surfaces. Use the results of that research to drive changes in understanding user needs, planning and maintaining road surfaces
- Publish research about HGV drivers' views on the preferred site and facilities available at the proposed permanent Operation Stack lorry park in Kent.
- Continue to monitor proposed developments in the implementation of Operation Stack, including views on drivers' experiences of both Stack and the more frequently used Traffic Assessment Project ('TAP') queuing system.

- Publish work on the user experience of roadside facilities, including motorway service areas. Use that work to both improve the current experience and change thinking about longer-term planning of such facilities
- Review how Highways England manages user contacts and complaints – we aim to help improve complaints handling satisfaction
- Understanding and publishing the views of pedestrians, cyclists and other users of the SRN. Use this work to focus Highways England and others on the needs of these users

### Rail users

- Secure improved information during disruption and better compensation arrangements for passengers affected by rebuilding works at London Bridge and other parts of the country (for example, works on the Northern Hub and Glasgow Queen Street). Publish new research on compensation
- Mediate in some 2,500 'appeal' complaints achieving at least 70% satisfaction with the way we dealt with the complaint
- Identify and develop ways of boosting engagement with the new Northern and Trans Pennine Express franchises and promoting passenger interests in the transition to new franchise agreements (work funded via the new franchisees)
- Continue in-depth work with Great Western Railway ('GWR') and Network Rail on current passenger issues and engineering works in particular (work funded via the GWR franchise 'direct award')
- Work with the Rail Delivery Group ('RDG') to improve the quality of passenger information, in particular during disruption (RDG funded)
- Initial work with the RDG to improve ticket retailing, including smartcards building on the extensive series of research done since 2012 (further work potentially funded by RDG)

## C. Making a long-term difference for transport users

### Road

- As set out in the introduction make sure user views on priorities for improvement drive the overall thrust and route strategies of the investment plans set out in the second Road Investment Strategy (2020-24). This will include a user assessment as to the suitability and usefulness of the measures deployed to track and measure the effect of the first Road Investment Strategy
- Complete and publish work to identify road users' priorities for input to development of Highways England's 18 route strategies – work funded by Highways England
- Complete and publish research into road users' experiences of using smart motorways, including sections of 'all lane running'
- Complete and publish research into driver behaviours and attitudes, including their impact on journey satisfaction and safety

### Rail

- Boost the passenger voice in government and industry 2019-24 planning processes (some initial work plus additional input potentially funded by ORR and the industry)
- Help revolutionise and modernise rail ticketing (initial work with further possible funding from Rail Delivery Group)
- Continue to provide insight and input to the upcoming South Western, West Midlands, West Coast, East Midlands, South Eastern and Wales and Borders rail franchise replacement processes plus the Cross Country direct award (additional work funded by DfT)
- Develop the HS2 Passenger Panel, producing regular reports funded by HS2
- Ensure the passenger voice is heard in any changes arising from the Shaw/Hendy/Bowe reviews of Network Rail
- Work to ensure that the passenger voice is heard in the design of new rolling stock (work funded by train leasing companies, local authorities, manufacturers and, potentially, HS2)

### Bus

- Work to ensure the forthcoming Buses Bill places user needs at its heart – The Bill represents the biggest opportunity for 30 years to shape how bus services outside London are financed, structured and controlled. The implications for bus passengers, present and future, could be far-reaching. While not taking a view on the effectiveness of various structural proposals we are determined that passenger views on what constitutes a good service, trust in service provision and that most basic of requirement – better punctuality – run through discussions on the Bill

- Work with local authorities and operators on any changes arising from the Bill: proposed new franchising or enhanced partnership arrangements, for example.
- Help spread the use of passenger-focused smart ticketing for bus passengers (initial work plus additional funding possibly from DfT, local authorities and operators)

#### Coach passengers

- Use knowledge gleaned from our road user and bus passenger work to help improve the quality of coach services

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## **D. Understanding the needs of transport users – insight and research**

### Bus users

- Amplify the voice of bus passengers, through bus passenger priorities research, trust research and the views of non-users. Reaching at least 50,000 passengers via the Bus Passenger Survey (funded by us along with local authorities and bus companies)
- Re-develop a BPS proposal for the Scottish and Welsh Governments and operators for further consideration (funded by government and bus companies)

### Tram passengers

- Carry out and publish the 2016 Tram Passenger Survey (funded by us, operators and local authorities)

### Road users

- Promote the voice of road users, developing, trialling and publishing the first wave of the new SRN road user survey. We aim to involve some 5,000 road users this year
- Run the existing National Road User Satisfaction Survey from April 2016, in parallel with its above-mentioned replacement
- Published HGV drivers' views on the proposed new Kent lorry park
- Conduct research into HGV drivers' experiences of Operation Stack (when next invoked)
- Publish work on the non-motorised users of the SRN
- Publish work on the views of users on roadworks, road surfaces, rest facilities and Highways England comment and complaints handling
- Publish work on the 18 Highways England route strategies, smart motorways and driver behaviour

### Rail passengers

- Carry out and publish two waves of National Rail Passenger Survey, engaging over 60,000 passengers in the process (DfT funded)
- Publish research to inform franchise specifications (DfT funded)
- Publish new work on passenger views on compensation in collaboration with ORR (funded by DfT)

### Smart ticketing

- Publish research on transport users and smart ticketing in the North of England (funded by Transport for the North)
- Carry out and publish additional work on passengers and smart ticketing (funding by DfT, national governments and transport operators)

### New insights

- Develop low-cost, online, 'always on' versions of our main tracker surveys (rail, bus and tram - including the measurement of emotional reactions to journeys). (This will include funding from third parties.)
- Set up and pilot the use of our Transport User Panel (this will include users recruited to the new road-user panel)
- Placing Transport Focus portals into others' apps and information sources (rail, coach, tram and bus operators and infrastructure providers) for easier access

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## **E. Transparency – being more visible, measuring and reporting performance**

### Communicate

- Continue to provide a useful and proactive 24-hour press office
- Publish some 12 major reports and 24 monthly e-newsletters for passengers and road users
- Gradually expand social-media usage, and use technology to better boost the user voice – for example, reconfiguring our website; webinars; interactive websites; and instant messaging
- Increase access to and the usefulness of our research data and explore new digital/media channels

### Track

- The number of transport users we engage with through consultation, research and our contact team
- Staff attitudes
- Stakeholder views of the effectiveness of Transport Focus

### Report

- Three times a year in public at Board Meetings
- Update our online data tool each quarter
- Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and Remuneration report to the Board
- Monthly performance and financial reports
- Annual published report on performance, activity and expenditure

## F. Staff and board

Transport Focus can only be as good as the people that work for us. Transport Focus currently has 10 Board members and 55 staff. The majority of our staff are based in offices in London and Manchester. Six of these staff are peripatetic. Transport Focus has staff who are motivated, energetic and capable, with low turnover rates.

Transport Focus's board is crucial to ensuring proper, proportionate governance for organisation is in place. Its ten members include three appointed by devolved government in London, Scotland and Wales. All other appointments are made by the Secretary of State for Transport.

The board's key roles, supported by staff within Transport Focus, are to:

- Provide oversight of progress against objectives and setting those objectives in the first place
- Oversee the corporate governance of the organisation - this involves oversight of financial affairs, risk and remuneration
- Challenge staff in a constructive way on the operation of the organisation
- Discuss and set important media and policy lines the organisation takes on behalf of transport users

We'll continue to ensure that we have staff who want to work at Transport Focus by:

- Working with staff to ensure they continue to get the coaching, development and leadership they need to do their jobs and to progress
- Staff clearly seeing how their work fits into Transport Focus's overall aims and objectives
- Ensuring all staff are supported by responsive, engaged and capable line managers
- Promoting diversity and equality in recruiting, retaining and developing staff to maintain broad access to opportunities across the organisation
- Continuing to have a staff training and development budget
- Making sure staff have the equipment they need to do their jobs
- Making sure the organisation's processes support staff in their roles
- Making sure we have clear, visible leadership for the organisation

## **G. Priorities**

We have decided on the contents of this Plan by asking these questions:

**1** Is the issue of direct concern to transport users?

- Do we have evidence of how it matters to them now or in the future?
- Is there proof of need/detriment?
- How many users are affected?

**2** Is it of direct concern to stakeholders?

- Do we have evidence it matters to them now or in the future?

**3** Does it add value to past, present or future work streams?

**4** Would the organisation lose credibility by not doing this?

**5** Is it timely?

- Do we only get one chance?
- Have we already missed the opportunity to change or influence anything?

## **H. Budget and funders in 2016-2017**

*(Content to be inserted by Nigel Holden)*

List of third party funders we are working with

(to be added)

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