



***National Rail Passenger Survey
(NRPS)***

**Consultation on proposed changes
July 2015**

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Electronic copies of this document may be found on our web-site at:

<http://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research/national-passenger-survey-introduction/national-rail-passenger-survey-consultation>.

Foreword

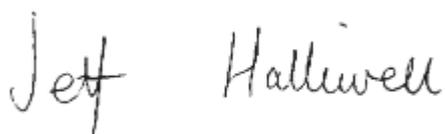
The *National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS)* is a well-established and well-respected tool used by the rail industry and governments to monitor passenger satisfaction and train companies' performance on this key dimension.

The survey has been in existence for fifteen years during which time it has evolved in line with changes in the industry, passenger behaviour and stakeholder expectations. It is no longer the survey that was initially conceived and, following both technical and stakeholder reviews, we at *Transport Focus* believe the time has come to update *NRPS* to better reflect today's railway and the varied needs of both passengers and stakeholders.

Given the importance of *NRPS* to the industry – and to its passengers – any changes need careful consideration and management. A key concern has to be to maintain, so far as is practicable, comparability with a significant time series of benchmark data. At the same time, there is general agreement that the survey needs 'refreshing' and, in particular that the current questionnaire length and presentation is potentially off-putting to passengers who are asked to complete it – and on whose continuing co-operation we all rely.

Accordingly we are consulting with key industry stakeholders regarding the potential changes so as to inform our final decision. I urge you to carefully consider our proposals and to provide feedback as input to the consultation. We shall take care to balance the needs of the varied users of *NRPS* and the imposition on passengers to achieve what we intend to be a better survey for passengers and stakeholders in the future. We are also proposing to set up a *Stakeholder Advisory Group* to work with us for the two years that it is expected to take to successfully implement the planned changes.

Transport Focus looks forward to working with the industry to revitalise the *National Rail Passenger Survey* and ensure it continues to meet stakeholders' needs for the foreseeable future. We also welcome the support of the *Rail Executive* for our endeavours (see over).



Jeff Halliwell
Chair
Transport Focus

Department for Transport statement

The Department's Rail Executive puts passengers' interests first and foremost. Passengers increasingly fund the operation of their train services. They are why the passenger rail industry is in business, they **are** the passenger rail industry's business. Rail Executive stands fully behind Transport Focus as the fiercely independent voice of passengers. In designing and making the case for investment in passenger rail franchise services, we attach as much importance to what passengers tell us through the National Rail Passenger Survey, as we do to things like GDP, Regional and Central London Employment. We need a modern, relevant, robust and thoroughly comprehensive NRPS that is the core rationale for designing and measuring future franchise services. Please take this consultation as seriously as we do.

Peter Wilkinson

Managing Director
Rail Executive | Passenger Services

Department for Transport

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1. Background to the *National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS)*

- Established in 1999, originally as the *National Passenger Survey (NPS)*
- Managed by *Transport Focus* (previously *Passenger Focus*) since 2005
- Fieldwork and analysis currently contracted to *BDRC Continental* (due for retendering in 2015 with a new contract to begin in 2016)
- Designated as an *Official Statistic*
- Primarily funded by the *Department for Transport (DfT)* on behalf of the rail industry

- Key objectives as originally set:
 - To measure, on a consistent basis, passengers' satisfaction with their rail journeys so that the performance of individual, franchised Train Operating Companies (TOCs) can be compared over time
 - *NRPS* data for the individual TOCs can be amalgamated so as to be able to measure rail passengers' satisfaction over time for Great Britain overall

- Methodology:
 - Self-completion questionnaires handed out at selected stations and on trains
 - Two waves per year designated 'Spring' and 'Autumn'.

- Snapshot of Wave 32 (Spring 2015):
 - 1574 fieldwork shifts (of which, 242 conducted on train)
 - 98714 questionnaires handed out (of which, 14376 on train)
 - 31332 valid questionnaires returned = 31.7% response rate.

2. Consultation

Transport Focus is consulting with rail industry stakeholders regarding a number of changes it proposes to make to the *National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS)*.

The proposed changes result from:

- A periodic Technical Review of *NRPS* conducted by *Roberts-Miller Associates (RMA)* to ascertain whether *NRPS* remains fit for purpose and will remain so for the foreseeable future – see: <http://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research/publications/technical-review>
- A Stakeholder Review undertaken by *Transport Focus* to gather details of how *NRPS* is currently being used by stakeholders, its perceived limitations and any aspirations for the future – see: <http://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research/publications/nrps-stakeholder-review>
- Growing interest from governments, franchise holders and bidders in having more frequent monitoring of TOC and *Network Rail* performance on key metrics
- A background of evolving research methodologies, increasing use of digital technologies in society and changing consumer engagement in survey research.

It is inevitable that the proposed changes will impact different stakeholders to differing extents. We recognise that it will be challenging to achieve consensus on certain points but shall use our best endeavours to achieve an outcome that is of benefit to the majority of users of *NRPS* and which also recognises the importance of the passenger's survey experience. The ultimate decision as to whether and how to implement these changes rests with *Transport Focus* although certain changes may need ratification by the *Office for National Statistics (ONS)*.

We shall present details of our proposed changes to invited stakeholders at a consultation event in London on Thursday 16th July 2015. The consultation period will run until 25th September 2015. Please see section 5, below, for how to respond to the consultation. The outcome of the consultation will be published in November 2015 following further discussion with the *Transport Focus Statistics Governance Group (SGG)*.

3. The need for change

Over its fifteen years' existence a number of changes have been made to the original design and objectives of the *National Rail Passenger Survey*. It is now used by more stakeholders and for more purposes than originally envisaged and *NRPS* metrics are included as targets in many recent rail franchise awards.

In particular, *NRPS* is used for sub-TOC level analysis and monitoring by, for example, route (commonly referred to as a 'Building Block') or major *Network Rail* station, in a way which stretches the original design methodology. Various solutions have been adopted over the years which have left *NRPS* with a sample design that has evolved somewhat from the original, theoretically 'pure' design. A fundamental Technical Review of the sampling approach has concluded it should be reviewed and potentially revised.

Since *NRPS* was first established there have been extensive societal and technological changes which impact on consumer behaviour and expectations and, indeed, their propensity to engage in survey research. These days the majority of rail passengers carry a mobile phone with many accessing the internet and engaging in social media dialogue while on their journey. At the same time, many would argue that people's attention spans are reducing and the survey research industry is suffering from falling response rates (that said, *NRPS* at 31.7% in Spring 2015 is viewed as a good achievement although this has also been slowly decreasing over time).

The *NRPS* self-completion questionnaire looks increasingly incongruous and, at 12 sides of paper, potentially daunting to respondents used to 160-character text messages, 'tweet-speak' and emoticons tapped into a mobile device functioning in a virtual world. While the Technical Review endorses the continuing use of a paper, self-completion questionnaire to ensure coverage of a broad spectrum of passengers, it has also proposed a reduction in questionnaire length both to maintain response rates and facilitate a potential transition to on line data collection.

Transport Focus has trialled a four page version of the *NRPS* questionnaire in parallel with the latest (Spring 2015) fieldwork wave. This has shown that a shorter questionnaire is appreciated by both fieldworkers and respondents and has retained or improved the quality of passengers' responses, although it resulted in only a small increase in response rates. Nevertheless we are minded to proceed to a shorter questionnaire in the interest of retaining respondent goodwill and for the potential of transitioning to an overtly mixed mode data collection approach (ie both paper and on line). Our experience with the *Tram Passenger Survey (TPS)* has shown the viability and potential benefits of offering passengers a choice of data collection modes.

Additionally, stakeholders have commented on a number of current *NRPS* questions (or lack of questions) asking for potential alterations to meet current needs. *Transport Focus* is also conscious that the survey examines key touch-points/transactional issues but does not consider what might be described as the 'emotional' aspects of passengers' journeys. Our research *Passengers' relationship with the rail industry*¹ shows how important this relationship is in generating trust in train operators. (We should not need to point out that

¹ <http://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research/publications/passengers-relationship-with-the-rail-industry>

the temptation to add new questions is at odds with the desire to shorten the questionnaire length.)

Finally, we are seeing a growing interest in more regular updating of *NRPS* data and potentially in greater sensitivity in the measures used. As governments look to monitor operators' franchise performance by reference to *NRPS*, the *DfT* and *Transport Scotland* as well as operators (and bidders for new franchises) have been asking how passenger satisfaction might be monitored on an a more frequent or even an on-going basis. And with the best-performing TOCs delivering combined scores for fairly satisfied/very satisfied in excess of 90 per cent there is also concern as to whether the existing metrics provide sufficient granularity to monitor any further improvement in performance.

We attempt to address these various issues with our proposed changes, documented below, which we believe will leave *NRPS* fit for many more years' valuable service to the rail industry in Britain along with its passengers.

4. Proposals

Transport Focus proposes to make various changes to the *National Rail Passenger Survey* over the next two to three years. These changes can be considered under five broad headings:

- the questionnaire
- data collection
- immediate technical changes to sampling/weighting
- medium term technical changes
- governance.

While we might have liked to make all technical changes as soon as practicable, those designated 'medium term' are dependent on the completion and publication of an update to the *National Rail Travel Survey (NRTS)*² by the *DfT*. Much of the current *NRTS* data-set is at least ten years old and we can see little point in implementing any changes utilising *NRTS* inputs before fresh data becomes available.

The specific proposals are as follows:

1 The questionnaire

- 1.1 Reduce the 'core' questionnaire length, by focussing on core metrics, and improve its presentation
- 1.2 Review and update the core questionnaire including station and train factors
- 1.3 Introduce a short supplementary questionnaire (or questionnaires) to be offered to selected participants to complete after the core questionnaire, if willing
- 1.4 Explore options for separate additional surveys to 'fill the gaps' where questions are displaced from the 'core' questionnaire

2 Data collection

- 2.1 Pilot the offer of a refreshed on line option for completion of the questionnaire (while retaining the paper option for those preferring that mode)
- 2.2 Increase the number of waves of fieldwork or move to continuous data collection and monthly reporting

3 Immediate technical changes

- 3.1 Generally move to a standardised definition of routes ('Building Blocks') based on train origin and destination rather than groups of stations

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-rail-travel-survey-overview-report>

- 3.2 Provide a more representative GB sample by moving to a more equitable sample distribution by TOC
- 3.3 Provide greater sensitivity in the data by highlighting 'very satisfied'/'very dissatisfied' ratings (rather than amalgamating 'very'/'fairly' as at present)

4 Medium term technical changes

- 4.1 Two stage sampling:
 - Random sample at stations to provide representative sample of GB passengers
 - Top-up (boost) samples at stations and on train to achieve TOC and route ('Building Block') targets
- 4.2 Sample and weight journeys by time of day and adjust distribution of fieldwork shifts across the day
- 4.3 Separate design and non-response weighting processes and weight by ticket type rather than journey purpose as currently

5 Governance

- 5.1 Establish a *Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG)* for an initial period of two years
- 5.2 Review and reduce the list of stakeholders with pre-release access to *NRPS* results.

The rationale, proposed implementation date, recognised implications and some comments as to how these might be mitigated are set out on the following pages.

Some changes are proposed for implementation in Spring 2016. Others may need piloting or are dependent on external factors, notably the publication of an updated *National Rail Travel Survey (NRTS)* meaning they are unlikely to be implemented before 2017. Such changes will be specified when the Invitation to Tender for the next *NRPS* contract is issued in November 2015.

Section 1:	Questionnaire
Proposal 1.1:	Reduce the 'core' questionnaire length, by focussing on core metrics, and improve its presentation Current questionnaire (please see the latest (Spring 2015) version here: http://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research/publications/spring-2015-nrps-questionnaire) runs to 12 pages (12 sides of paper)
Rationale:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responds to concerns raised in the Technical and Stakeholder Reviews that questionnaire is too long • Makes on line questionnaire completion easier • Reduces perceived burden on respondents and has the potential to draw in passengers previously deterred by the length and appearance of the current questionnaire • Less daunting and quicker to complete • Reduced fatigue may improve completeness/accuracy of answers • Potential to increase take-up rate resulting in larger sample/lower cost • Maintains time series data for core questions
Implementation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring 2016
Implication(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intention is to focus on core questions relating to overall satisfaction, value for money and station/train factors plus demographics and journey data for analysis • Secondary questions including those asked in alternate waves or on an occasional basis cannot be accommodated (but see proposals 1.3 and 1.4 below) • Time series data on secondary questions will potentially be lost
Comments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim will be to reduce questionnaire length (ie number of questions) by a half to two-thirds • Please see note following proposal 1.4 below for details of and link to an example questionnaire • At the same time we shall look at an alternative, more attractive layout and design potentially including greater use of visual elements • Transport Focus will also look to explore alternative ways of obtaining answers for the questions dropped from the core questionnaire (see proposals 1.3 and 1.4 below) • Our Spring 2015 four page questionnaire trial indicates that in fact this has had minimal effect on achieved response rates, although data quality appears to have benefitted slightly through more questions being answered more completely
Question 1.1 (1):	What are your views on the proposal to reduce the 'core' questionnaire length focusing on overall satisfaction, value for money, and station and train factors? Please provide your rationale having regard to potential impacts on your/your organisation's use of NRPS.

Question 1.1 (2):	What is the impact to you of dropping the non-core questions from NRPS?
Question 1.1 (3):	In what way(s) do you see that loss being mitigated through measures proposed in this consultation, or otherwise?

Section 1:	Questionnaire
Proposal 1.2:	Review and update the core questionnaire including station and train factors Questionnaire has grown over time and is now seen as too long
Rationale:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some questions are of questionable value and/or are not used (to the best of our knowledge) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ eg: unclear whether 'The ease of being able to get on and off the train' relates to crowding or passenger mobility issues • Several requests for additional question areas, eg: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ physical ticket type (paper [industry issued/print-at-home], smartcard, mobile, etc) and where/how acquired ○ availability and use of wi-fi ○ door-to-door journey/overall journey time • Current questionnaire focuses on rational factors and omits the emotional element <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ eg: <i>trust</i> in the train operator
Implementation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring 2016
Implication(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of data for any questions that are dropped • Any additional questions may require the omission of other questions to provide the required space on the questionnaire
Comments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please see note following proposal 1.4 below for details of and link to an example questionnaire • Consideration to be given to including a number of 'hook' questions that could be the cue to offering a supplementary questionnaire (eg experience of delay, claiming compensation, interaction with BTP) • Potential to ask omitted questions/desired additional questions in optional, short, supplementary questionnaire or on other complementary surveys (see proposals 1.3 and 1.4 below)
Question 1.2 (1):	What are your views on the proposal to review and update the core questionnaire? Please provide your rationale having regard to potential impacts on your/your organisation's use of NRPS
Question 1.2 (2):	Please indicate any questions you feel might be dropped from the proposed core questionnaire

Question 1.2 (3):	Please detail any questions/topics you would be particularly keen to have reinstated/added to the core questionnaire and why
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Section 1:	Questionnaire
Proposal 1.3:	Introduce a short supplementary questionnaire (or questionnaires) to be handed to selected participants to complete after the core questionnaire, if willing
Rationale:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One potential way of ‘filling the gaps’ created by moving to a shorter questionnaire • Can be positioned as optional, focussing attention on the core questionnaire which should be completed as a priority • Can potentially utilise a split sample such that if offered to half the sample, two or more versions of the short questionnaire could cover different topics • May not need to be offered to every respondent depending on sample size required • Questions could vary between waves, be asked on alternate waves or be asked as a one-off to meet a specific information need
Implementation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring 2016
Implication(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a possible means of collecting data dropped from the core questionnaire but with a risk that sample sizes will be smaller
Comments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplementary questionnaire(s) should probably be no more than a single sheet (or could be optional final page(s) in a booklet with core questions) • Please see note following proposal 1.4 below for details of and link to an example questionnaire • Technical Review has identified several question areas that may not need to be asked of the full representative sample to generate a sufficiently robust base for analysis
Question 1.3 (1):	What are your views on the proposal to introduce a short supplementary questionnaire(s)? Please provide your rationale having regard to potential impacts on your/your organisation’s use of NRPS
Question 1.3 (2):	Please indicate the questions/topics you would be keen to have included in any supplementary questionnaire. Please indicate whether they would relate to the specific journey on which the passenger is approached or to passengers’ general experiences of any recent journeys

Section 1:	Questionnaire
Proposal 1.4:	Explore options for separate additional surveys to ‘fill the gaps’ where questions are displaced from the ‘core’ questionnaire
Rationale:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To meet growing requests for additional questions on <i>NRPS</i>, more frequent data collection and speedier data reporting • To replace data lost by reducing questionnaire length through alternative surveys/from alternative sources • To expand measures of the emotional experience of a journey to complement the rational measures in <i>NRPS</i>
Implementation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As and when alternative surveys/methodologies are identified and funding sources assured
Implication(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential step change in data set for any questions transferred from main <i>NRPS</i> survey • Raises issues of data comparability, need for journey or passenger based sampling and optimum sample sizes • Funding to be secured
Comments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please see note following this proposal below for details of and link to an example questionnaire • Might include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Re-contacting previous <i>NRPS</i> respondents to take part in further surveys ○ Social media analysis/sentiment tracking ○ Optional, additional questionnaire pages on occasional basis/with reduced sample sizes (see proposal 1.3 above) ○ ‘Continuous’ satisfaction/sentiment monitor. • Open to other suggestions
Question 1.4 (1):	What are your views on the proposal to explore options for separate, additional surveys to ‘fill the gaps’ where questions are displaced from the ‘core’ questionnaire? Please provide your rationale having regard to potential impacts on your/your organisation’s use of <i>NRPS</i>
Question 1.4 (2):	What suggestions, if any, do you have for the format of any additional survey? Do you undertake/are you aware of any existing surveys that might be useful to the industry at large if potentially offered on a syndicated basis through <i>Transport Focus</i>?
Question 1.4 (3):	Would you be in a position to provide customer contact data to facilitate a good quality sample while reducing costs (assuming confidentiality of shared details can be assured)?

Note regarding all proposed questionnaire changes above

We acknowledge that this group of questionnaire changes (1.1 to 1.4) will likely need detailed consideration of the individual questions. For the present we have categorised the questions from the Spring 2015 and Autumn 2014 *NRPS* questionnaires into four colour-coded groups as follows:

Green – questions to remain in the ‘core’ questionnaire

Yellow – questions to be asked in the proposed supplementary questionnaires

Orange – proposed deletions from *NRPS* but for which we plan to seek alternative sources for the information

Red – proposed deletions

The questionnaire may be downloaded from:

<http://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research/publications/nrps-proposed-questionnaire-changes>.

The following detailed changes (indicated in the questionnaire with a **blue highlight**) are proposed. Question numbers below refer to the Spring questionnaire. Example questionnaire is from East Croydon but changes will be applied nationally.

- Survey introduction and closing wording to be reviewed
- Q1c – please note this question is used to reject ineligible returns, not for analysis
- Q8a – we propose moving this towards the end of the questionnaire
- Q15 – addition of “Gold Card” as a code
- Q16 – the code “The facilities and services at the station (e.g toilets, shops, cafes, etc.)” is too amorphous to be of value. (A separate code has been added in recent years for “The choice of shops/eating/drinking facilities available”). We propose to change the present code to be more focussed and actionable: “The toilet facilities at the station”
- Q23a – (i) drop the current code “Cleanliness” and replacing it with the two variables currently asked separately at Q24 and which duplicate it: “The cleanliness of the inside of the train” and “The cleanliness of the outside of the train”
- Q23a – (ii) drop the ambiguous code “The ease of being able to get on and off the train” as it is unclear whether this refers to crowding levels on the train or a passenger’s mobility issues
- Q24 – we see no reason for these two codes to stand alone and propose including them in the battery in Q23a (where they will replace the duplicated “Cleanliness” code)
- Q25 – replace the current single “Yes” code with two options that provide more detail: “Yes, and I used the facility” and “Yes, but I did not use the facility”
- Q30 – replace the respondent-defined assessment of “minor” and “major delay” with pre-coded delay durations of: “Up to 5 minutes; 6-10 mins; 11-20 mins; 21-30 mins; 31-60 mins; Over 60 minutes”
- Q32 – replace this question with the pre-coded delay durations proposed for Q30
- Q35 – renumber as part a) and insert a new question as part b) to measure passengers’ emotional experience of the journey (potentially using ‘smiley’ faces or some other non-verbal measure)
- Q67 – condense the answer codes to just the four categories (as shown in bold) plus “Other”
- Recontact details – drop telephone number.

Section 2:	Data collection
Proposal 2.1:	Pilot the offer of a refreshed on line option for completion of the questionnaire (while retaining the paper option for those preferring that mode) Minimal take-up of existing on line offer. Refresh should modernise the way the survey is offered and update the 'feel' of the survey which may improve representativeness of responses
Rationale:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boost overall sample size • Boost representation of younger cohorts, in particular males (and potentially ethnic minorities) • Improve weighting efficiency (eg by reducing the weights required for young males) • Shorter questionnaire may be a more viable option for on line implementation • To be designed for completion on smartphone, tablet or PC • Provides passengers with choice and should improve take-up • Gives the survey a more modern 'feel' • Potential saving on print and data entry but balanced against programming/hosting costs
Implementation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot in Spring 2016 with a view to adopting in Spring 2017 along with other major changes
Implication(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On line completion may result in some passengers giving different responses to what is seen with the paper questionnaire • On line completions may take place some time after the journey although steps can be taken to encourage a quick return and to focus attention on the journey when the passenger was approached (as with <i>TPS</i> – see below) • Some risk that passengers provide spurious e-mail addresses or do not (fully) complete the subsequent on line questionnaire (but not seen as an issue with <i>TPS</i>)
Comments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A previous pilot of an on line option for NRPS resulted in only minimal take-up but this used the full twelve-page questionnaire • The <i>Tram Passenger Survey</i> trialled a number of approaches and now successfully offers passengers the choice of paper or on line questionnaires; its methodology (passengers providing their e-mail address to fieldworkers on the station so that they can subsequently be e-mailed a one-time survey link) would be the basis for a new <i>NRPS</i> pilot
Question 2.1 (1):	What are your views on the proposal to pilot a refreshed on line option for completion of the questionnaire? Please provide your rationale having regard to potential impacts on your/your organisation's use of <i>NRPS</i>
Question 2.1 (2):	Do you have any specific experience of transitioning from paper to on line, including benefits achievable and pitfalls to be avoided, that we might benefit from?

Section 2:	Data collection
Proposal 2.2:	Increase the number of waves of fieldwork or move to continuous data collection and monthly reporting To allow more frequent reporting and monitoring of performance than with the current two unevenly-spaced waves
Rationale:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>NRPS</i> currently offers two waves of fieldwork designated 'Spring' and 'Autumn' (although the Spring wave might more accurately be called 'Winter') • The waves are not evenly spaced across the year and while fieldworks date vary (particularly according to the timing of Easter) the two waves may be less than ten weeks apart • Two waves fail to provide sufficient opportunities to react to and take remedial action where improvements are shown to be desirable • Several TOCs already undertake supplementary surveys/waves to provide more frequent data
Implementation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependent on stakeholder interest and funding
Implication(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased costs • We have to either work within the constraint of the current 'unbalanced' timing of the existing waves, or risk impacting data continuity by moving away from the current timings • Continuous data collection
Comments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Options could be for four waves per year each with similar sample sizes at present or for continuous data collection with monthly reporting of a moving annual total (eg previous twelve months)
Question 2.2 (1):	What interest, if any, do you have in moving to four waves of fieldwork per year? Please provide your rationale having regard to potential impacts on your/your organisation's use of <i>NRPS</i> (where appropriate)
Question 2.2 (2):	If interested in additional waves of fieldwork, how many waves in total each year would you consider appropriate?
Question 2.2 (3):	In what circumstances, if at all, would you be prepared to consider transitioning the timing of the current two waves of fieldwork to a more even spacing across the year?
Question 2.2 (4):	What interest, if any, do you have in moving to continuous data collection with monthly reporting? Please provide your rationale having regard to potential impacts on your/your organisation's use of <i>NRPS</i> (where appropriate)
Question 2.2 (5):	In what circumstances would your organisation be prepared to consider contributing to the funding of additional waves or continuous data collection?

Section 3:	Immediate technical change
Proposal 3.1:	Generally move to a standardised definition of routes ('Building Blocks') based on train origin and destination rather than groups of stations (‘Building Blocks’ are routes, or series of routes, regarded as an entity for management purposes by a TOC)
Rationale:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide consistency in sampling across the survey/all TOCs • Improve comparability of results across TOCs
Implementation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring 2016
Implication(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of time series data consistency for those TOCs not using origin/destination (but see comment below)
Comments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Stansted Express</i> may need to remain as currently defined • It should still be possible to provide comparable reporting for TOCs using station groupings
Question 3.1 (1):	What are your views on the proposal to generally move to a standardised definition of routes ('Building Blocks') based on train origin and destination? Please provide your rationale having regard to potential impacts on your/your organisation's use of NRPS (where appropriate)

Section 3:	Immediate technical change
Proposal 3.2:	Provide a more representative GB sample by moving to a more equitable sample distribution by TOC
Rationale:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current TOC samples are based on historical rationale that no longer reflect current TOC territories and results in an inequitable distribution by current TOC (eg <i>FGW</i> based on old GW main line, Thames Valley commuter and Wessex franchise territories) • Will provide a more representative sample at GB level in line with best practice • Sampling error would be more consistent across TOCs • Will provide a more equitable distribution of resource by TOC • See table below for suggested new sample distribution by TOC
Implementation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From Spring 2016
Implication(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced sample sizes for some territories; more equitable samples for others without the need to boost the sample
Comments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please see suggested sample distribution below • The option would remain to commission additional interviews to generate more robust samples across the board and in particular where the core sample is reduced
Question 3.2 (1):	What are your views on the proposal to provide a more representative GB sample by moving to a more equitable sample distribution by TOC? Please provide your rationale having regard to potential impacts on your/your organisation's use of <i>NRPS</i> (where appropriate)
Question 3.2 (2):	Would you expect to fund (or continue to fund) a boost sample to generate a more robust sample for any territory you have an interest in?

Suggested new NRPS sample distribution by TOC					
TOC	% share of passenger volumes	No of building blocks	Current sample	Suggested sample	% of total
Abellio Greater Anglia	4.8	5	1600	1300	5
Arriva Trains Wales	1.9	5	1000	1000	4
c2c	2.3	2	1000	1000	4
Chiltern Railways	1.4	2	1000	1000	4
CrossCountry Trains	2.9	6	1000	1200	5
East Midlands Trains	1.5	3	1000	1000	4
First Great Western	6.2	3	2750	1500	6
First Transpennine Express	1.8	3	1000	1000	4
Govia Thameslink Railway	18.7	7	3500	3300	13
Grand Central	0.1	2	500	500	2
Heathrow Connect	0.2	1	500	500	2
Heathrow Express	0.4	1	500	500	2
Hull Trains	0	1	500	500	2
London Midland	4	3	1000	1000	4
London Overground	9.9	5	1200	1600	6
Merseyrail	2.7	2	500	700	3
Northern	5.9	5	1000	1400	5
Scotrail	5.4	4	1000	1300	5
Southeastern	10.5	3	1500	1500	6
South West Trains	13.9	4	1750	2000	8
TfL Rail	2.3	1	200	200	1
Virgin East Coast	1.2	4	1000	1000	4
Virgin Trains	2.0	6	1000	1000	4
TOTAL	100	78	26000	26000	100

Colours indicate increase, decrease or no change.

Section 3:	Immediate technical change
Proposal 3.3:	Provide greater sensitivity in the data by highlighting ‘very satisfied’/‘very dissatisfied’ ratings (rather than amalgamating ‘very’/‘fairly’ as at present) Potential to provide increased sensitivity where scores are close to the maximum
Rationale:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will provide greater sensitivity to changes in passenger satisfaction and associated target-setting • Current amalgam of ‘very satisfied’ and ‘fairly satisfied’ provides insufficient sensitivity for TOCs/metrics with scores approaching 100%; same can be expected to apply to ‘bottom box’ • Is more readily understood than adopting a mean score • Is less disruptive than potentially moving to a 10-point scale (in place of the current 5-point) with its associated challenge of labelling those points/using a numeric scale and loss of time series data
Implementation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of Autumn 2015 data as a first step
Implication(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step change in data set, but can still be reported at amalgamated level as well
Comments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Back data can be re-analysed to provide up-dated time series • Key driver analysis to be run on top box scores for comparison
Question 3.3 (1):	What are your views on the proposal to provide greater sensitivity in the data by highlighting ‘very satisfied’/‘very dissatisfied’ ratings? Please provide your rationale having regard to potential impacts on your/your organisation’s use of NRPS (where appropriate)

Note regarding all proposed medium term technical changes below

We acknowledge that this group of technical changes (4.1 to 4.3) has the potential for substantial impact on time series data comparability. While this is a consideration, we believe that it is time to restore some of the principles of the sample as originally conceived and that it is better to accept a 'clean break' and move to a refreshed design in one step rather than making gradual changes over time.

It is intended that many of these changes will make use of updated data from specific questions to be asked by the *DfT* on the *National Rail Travel Survey (NRTS)*³ and we see no value in implementing them until that data is available for sampling/weighting purposes. As a result we see these as medium term changes likely to be implemented in 2017. Use of updated *NRTS* data should of itself improve the robustness of the *NRPS* sample design.

We shall look to explore various means to mitigate the impact of any changes and the scale of loss in terms of comparability. As an example of the potential impact of changes like these, it has previously been estimated that moving to weighting by ticket type rather than journey purpose could result in a one percentage point drop in overall satisfaction.

Mitigation might include 'parallel running' (ie using both old and new methodologies in parallel) to compare and calibrate the old and new approaches, and retrospective re-analysis (where possible) of existing data using any new approach.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-rail-travel-survey-overview-report>

Section 4:	Medium term technical change
Proposal 4.1:	<p>Two stage sampling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Random sample at stations to provide representative sample of GB passengers • Top-up (boost) samples at stations and on train to achieve TOC and route ('Building Block') targets <p>Current practice attempts to generate increased sample sizes by adding to the original design with potential for conflict between design considerations and practicality</p>
Rationale:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a core survey that is fully representative of the railway • Overcomes current challenge of balancing sample sizes required to give desired representation of TOCs and Building Blocks at certain stations • Facilitates boost sampling (including on train) without compromising quality of core survey • Simplifies fieldwork/shift allocation process • Both samples can be rolled up to provide a comparable sample to that currently provided
Implementation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring 2017 once data from an updated <i>National Rail Travel Survey (NRTS)</i> are available (current data set is over ten years old) • Current sample of c. 30000 completed questionnaires likely to be split two thirds from core sample and one third through boosts
Implication(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential loss of time series data consistency although the authors of the Technical Report regard this as inconsequential
Comments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please see note, above, regarding all proposed medium term technical changes
Question 4.1 (1):	<p>What are your views on the proposal for two stage sampling? Please provide your rationale having regard to potential impacts on your/your organisation's use of NRPS (where appropriate)</p>

Section 4:	Medium term technical change
Proposal 4.2:	Sample and weight journeys by time of day and adjust distribution of fieldwork shifts across the day Current allocation of shifts is based on historical data and experience
Rationale:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This will update the current methodology to provide a better spread of shifts and interviews across the day • It should improve weighting efficiency • It might further improve balance of outbound and return journeys
Implementation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring 2017 once data from an updated <i>National Rail Travel Survey (NRTS)</i> are available (current data set is over ten years old)
Implication(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential loss of time series data consistency
Comments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please see note preceding 4.1, above, regarding all proposed medium term technical changes • It should be possible to model the effects of this change on historical data to understand the likely impact, otherwise it may be necessary to run a pilot exercise to ascertain this
Question 4.2 (1):	What are your views on the proposal to sample and weight journeys by time of day and to adjust distribution of fieldwork shifts across the day? Please provide your rationale having regard to potential impacts on your/your organisation's use of NRPS (where appropriate)

Section 4:	Medium term technical change
Proposal 4.3:	<p>Separate design and non-response weighting processes and weight by ticket type rather than journey purpose as currently</p> <p>Current practice does not differentiate design weighting (which corrects for systematic differences in the probability of being sampled) and non-response weighting (eg correcting for differential response rates by age and sex)</p>
Rationale:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current process does not follow best practice • Weighting for non-response would aim to correct for different response rates by age and gender (assumes a source of reliable demographic data such as <i>NRTS</i>) • Separating the weighting processes should improve weighting efficiency and accuracy • While nominally weighting by journey purpose, purpose is inferred from ticket type; it will be more accurate to calculate the weighting by ticket type
Implementation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring 2017
Implication(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential loss of time series data consistency
Comments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please see note preceding 4.1, above, regarding all proposed medium term technical changes • It should be possible to model the effects of this change on historical data to understand the likely impact, otherwise it may be necessary to run a pilot exercise to ascertain this
Question 4.3 (1):	What are your views on the proposal to separate the design and non-response weighting processes? Please provide your rationale having regard to potential impacts on your/your organisation's use of <i>NRPS</i> (where appropriate)
Question 4.3 (2):	What are your views on the proposal to weight for non-response? Please provide your rationale having regard to potential impacts on your/your organisation's use of <i>NRPS</i> (where appropriate)
Question 4.3 (3):	What are your views on the proposal to weight by ticket type rather than journey purpose? Please provide your rationale having regard to potential impacts on your/your organisation's use of <i>NRPS</i> (where appropriate)

Section 5:	Governance
Proposal 5.1:	Establish a <i>Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG)</i> for an initial period of two years
Rationale:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the first instance, to advise us when implementing the proposed changes and in considering issues raised during the consultation process • To monitor and discuss the impact of the currently proposed changes and others that may arise during this time • Potentially to provide a forum for on-going discussion of <i>NRPS</i> matters amongst the survey's user base
Implementation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial input as part of the consultation process • Group then to meet around February 2016 (following publication of Autumn 2015 results), then as required but potentially twice-yearly for circa two years while the changes are implemented
Implication(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The <i>SAG</i> is an advisory body and final decisions rest with <i>Transport Focus</i>
Comments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Transport Focus</i> will invite around twenty key stakeholders to provide a representative on the <i>SAG</i> • Potential <i>SAG</i> members might be drawn from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Department for Transport (DfT)</i> ○ <i>Office of National Statistics (ONS)</i> ○ <i>Office of Rail and Road (ORR)</i> ○ <i>Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC)</i> (as representative of all TOCs) – or potentially the <i>Rail Delivery Group (RDG)</i> as representative of all TOCs and <i>NR</i> ○ <i>Network Rail</i> (unless represented by <i>RDG</i>) ○ <i>British Transport Police (BTP)</i> ○ <i>Transport Scotland</i> ○ <i>Welsh Government</i> ○ <i>Transport for London (TfL)</i> ○ <i>London Assembly</i> ○ <i>Rail North</i> ○ <i>Passenger Transport Executive Group (PTEG)</i> ○ <i>London TravelWatch</i> ○ <i>Which?</i> ○ <i>Railfuture</i> ○ Potentially, key professors/universities (eg: <i>University of the West of England (UWE)</i>, <i>Imperial College</i>, <i>University College London (UCL)</i>, <i>University of Leeds – Institute for Transport Studies (ITS)</i>).

Question 5.1 (1):	What are your views on the proposal to establish a <i>Stakeholder Advisory Group</i>? Please provide your rationale having regard to potential impacts on your/your organisation's use of <i>NRPS</i> (where appropriate)
Question 5.1 (2):	What are your views on the proposed composition of the <i>SAG</i>?

Section 5:	Governance
Proposal 5.2:	Review and reduce list of stakeholders with pre-release access to <i>NRPS</i> results
Rationale:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The list of stakeholders with pre-release access to <i>NRPS</i> results three weeks in advance of publication has grown over time and is now viewed as excessive for an Official Statistic • We propose that there should be no more than two nominated recipients per TOC who must have a genuine need to see the data for quality assurance and operational planning purposes • We do not propose any change to the list of stakeholders with 24 hour pre-release access for media purposes
Implementation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring 2016 results
Implication(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders may feel this limits their ability to digest the results and prepare comments for when the report is published
Comments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List is longer than for many comparable organisations/official statistics • Unless we make this change it is felt likely to be imposed by the <i>Office for National Statistics (ONS)</i>
Question 5.2 (1):	What are your views on the proposal to review and reduce the list of stakeholders with pre-release access to <i>NRPS</i> results? Please provide your rationale having regard to potential impacts on your/your organisation's use of <i>NRPS</i> (where appropriate)
Question 5.2 (2):	If your organisation currently has staff on the pre-release access list, who (if anyone) should remain on the list? (Do not include anyone with 24 hour pre-release access for media purposes)

5. How to respond to this consultation

Responses to this consultation should be submitted **in writing**, either by post or by e-mail. **Responses should be received by midnight on Friday 25th September 2015** for them to be considered. Copies of this consultation document are available on our web-site via this link: <http://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research/national-passenger-survey-introduction/national-rail-passenger-survey-consultation>).

Please respond to the specific questions posed in this consultation. You are welcome to include additional comments/observations on points not specifically covered by our questions.

Please state the capacity in which you are responding, be that as an individual or as a representative of an organisation. Please be sure to give details of your/your organisation's interest in and use of *NRPS*.

Responses should be provided on line using the questionnaire available at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NRPSconsultation>. To assist in canvassing the opinion of colleagues in your organisation a summary list of the questions is available on our website. This is provided as a *Word* document and you are welcome to use this to draft your responses before pasting them into the on line questionnaire.

Please note that individual stakeholders' responses to the consultation will be published by *Transport Focus*. Any specific points that are regarded as commercially sensitive should be marked as such and clearly differentiated from the remainder of any response. Any information provided to *Transport Focus* may be subject to disclosure under Freedom of Information legislation.

Questions regarding the consultation or clarification of the proposed changes may be sent to the authors of this document as detailed on the front cover. Please note that we may not be able to answer points of detail regarding individual changes where these are commercially sensitive, have yet to be decided or are deemed irrelevant to the aims of the consultation.

While *Transport Focus* is keen to understand and take account of stakeholders' views as part of the consultation process, the final decision regarding any changes will rest with *Transport Focus*.

6. Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

With our answers to the questions below we intend to provide further background to *NRPS* for those who may not be familiar with the survey.

i **What is the scope of *NRPS*?**

NRPS covers all scheduled passenger train services running on the national network in Great Britain operated by both franchised and non-franchised Train Operating Companies (TOCs); it does not cover international services (eg *Eurostar*), heritage or miniature railways, light rail (tram) or underground services, charter or heritage steam trains.

ii **Why are the two annual waves of *NRPS* not more evenly distributed across the year?**

This is partly because it was originally designed to cover two much shorter fieldwork periods and to be uninterrupted by significant holiday periods. *NRPS* has always sought to cover a 'normal' pattern of service and avoid school and summer holidays. The two waves consciously reflect different weather conditions and daylight hours, albeit fieldwork is spread over several weeks to minimize the effects of particularly poor weather, engineering works, sporting events, etc.

iii **Why do the *NRPS* sample sizes (ie the number of questionnaires collected) vary by Train Operating Company (TOC)?**

Each TOC should have a sample of sufficient size for robust analysis. If questionnaires were issued in line with passenger numbers, the smaller TOCs (eg *Merseyrail*) would not receive sufficient returns. It is also because the sample size for some TOCs has evolved from those set for previous, generally smaller franchise territories and have not been adjusted when new franchises were created.

Where there is a desire for larger sample sizes, possibly to be able to compare a number of routes or 'building blocks' within a franchise area, these can potentially be generated by 'boost', or top-up, questionnaires that can be generated in a targeted fashion and do not have to rely on the primary, representative sample of journeys. This may be more cost-effective for stakeholders wanting to commission larger samples for their own purposes.

iv **Why did *NRPS* originally adopt a self-completion questionnaire?**

This was seen to be the most efficient (and therefore cost-effective) way of generating the required number of completed questionnaires. The questionnaire aims to cover the whole journey and the self-completion questionnaire allows passengers to fill it out once they end their journey. Passengers arriving at their destination station are far less likely to engage with an interviewer than at their originating station. Additionally, the interview would take several minutes to complete if the questions were read out and answers recorded by an interviewer; during the same period of time the same interviewer can approach a number of passengers.

On line interviewing and hand-held computers/smartphones were not available at the time the survey was originally conceived.

v What is the significance of *NRPS* being classed as an ‘Official Statistic’?

With the government having designated *NRPS* as an Official Statistic, this places specific obligations on us with regard to the way the survey data is collected, processed and published. The results can be seen only by a selected few, named individuals prior to publication and cannot be commented or acted upon prior to formal publication.

A document listing a more comprehensive selection of FAQs may be found on our web-site at: <http://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research/publications/nrps-frequently-asked-questions-july-2015>.