

May 13 BM 12.0

# Passenger Power!

Workplan 2013-14

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## 1. Introduction

### *Passenger Power!*

The time has come for Passenger Power and Passenger Focus is going to make it happen. Passenger Focus is the statutory, independent, watchdog for Britain's rail passengers and, except for those in London, bus, coach and tram passengers in England. Using research and evidence to drive change we aim to be useful to those who make the major decisions about transport services. Passenger Focus is uniquely well placed to drive this change: our brand of evidence-based passenger advocacy is respected and we must exploit this position to really help passengers.

### *Rail franchising*

Significant changes to the rail franchising system are in the offing. This represents a unique opportunity to radically boost the influence passengers have in the process which underpins the services they rely on. Passenger Focus will ensure that this major opportunity is seized, acted on and long-term changes built in.

Significant changes are likely to the way Government contracts with train companies to provide rail services. The Government response to the Brown Review on the future of rail franchising is likely to lead to changes both in the way that train services are franchised and to the pace of the franchise replacement programme. The outcome of that review will spark new streams of work for Passenger Focus and also set the timetable for our input, on behalf of passengers, to the process of replacing individual franchises. So it is likely this workplan will itself need significant review in the course of the year.

The opportunity for passengers is, however, great. There seems to be a common consensus in Government, the transport industry and commentators generally that rail franchising needs to be re-focused on the needs of passengers. Boosting the passenger voice in the debates about the structure of franchises, individual franchise replacements and their performance will be a key objective for us.

### *Passenger Focus and making a difference*

Passenger Focus is starting from a strong position. Our widely-respected business model is based around producing useful research which can help guide Government and industry decision-making. The comparative benchmarking provided by the rail National Passenger Survey (NPS) and the Bus Passenger Survey drives change by itself on the ground.

Building on this, we research aspects where more attention is needed and push for improvements. Change in the transport industry can take a long time. For example, we have been working on rail fares and ticketing issues for over five years, yet it is only now that significant change is in the offing. So this workplan is part of a longer-term programme. One year's work may only start to establish the evidence base on a particular issue.

Our work has focused on these key issues:

- information during disruption
- complaints handling
- fares and ticketing
- performance and
- boosting the passenger voice in discussion about industry structures

The Bus Passenger Survey is only two years old but is already established as a key part of industry decision-making. Every pound spent on it by us is matched by bus companies and local government – they fund it because they recognise that it is useful and can drive change on the ground. In the past, the bus passenger's experience was much less understood than the rail passenger's. We are now starting to put that right with a strong bedrock of research on value for money, disruption, fares and ticketing and the experience of disabled passengers. We will continue to build up this research base until we understand the needs and preferences of bus passengers as well as we understand those of rail passengers.

We will also start to produce research on the needs and preferences of tram and coach passengers. This is part of our drive to understand the benefits and challenges of integrated transport within local areas.

Our funding is roughly divided two thirds on rail and one third on bus/tram/coach issues. This reflects the extent of our remit for the various methods of transport. The passenger dividend from this work is clear: the decision-makers in the industry make better decisions leading to better services for passengers.

### *This year*

Seven objectives will feature large in our work this year:

- ensuring that the passenger voice in rail franchising is radically boosted
- dealing with some 3,000 rail 'appeal' complaints where train companies and passengers are deadlocked. We will achieve at least 70% passenger satisfaction with the way we handle passenger complaints
- increasing the size and usefulness of the Bus Passenger Survey
- using our Bus Punctuality Project to refocus the bus industry, local government and the Traffic Commissioners on that key passenger need: improving bus punctuality

- making sure that rail passengers who have made an innocent mistake and do not have a 'valid' ticket will no longer be treated like criminals
- carrying out a Tram Passenger Survey
- publishing research on the experiences of younger passengers (drawn from our existing work)

Major changes are underway to rail franchising and the way partnerships between local authorities and bus companies are put together. Big decisions will soon be made about rail industry plans from 2014 to 2019. We will make sure our work complements (where it can) the activities planned by the Department for Transport, the Office of Rail Regulation, the Traffic Commissioners, local authorities and the transport industry itself.

However, we are not content to rest here. We will continue to build Passenger Focus's brand of evidence-based, professional, trusted, energetic and useful passenger advocacy. Our aim is to make sure that every debate in the transport industry starts with the question 'what do passengers want and how do we know.?' Passenger Focus can already answer many of those questions and soon will be able to answer even more.

**Anthony Smith**  
**Chief Executive**  
**March 2013**



## 2. Rail passengers

### National Passenger Survey

The rail National Passenger Survey (NPS) provides a powerful network-wide picture of customers' satisfaction with rail travel. Passenger opinions of the journey they are making are collected each spring and autumn from a representative sample of journeys. Passengers' overall satisfaction and their satisfaction with 30 specific aspects of service can therefore be compared over time. The research contains passenger ratings of their journey for each individual train operating company. Ratings are also provided for each journey type (i.e. commuter, leisure or business). The data can be analysed in a huge variety of ways.

Results for routes are also published. National results by journey purpose, age, gender and how passengers spend their time on train journeys are now also included. Over 65,000 rail passengers participate in the NPS every year.

The NPS has been running for over 13 years and is the world's largest piece of published passenger research. It has a multitude of uses including: targets in franchises; industry remuneration schemes; judging passenger satisfaction with Network Rail-managed stations; driving change in the industry and as a baseline for drawing up new franchise specifications.

We will once again carry out two waves of the NPS in 2013-14. The NPS contains a wealth of information about passengers which we want to use it to better understand passenger needs. We will set up a separate online panel looking at late-night rail travel, an aspect not covered by the NPS. This will involve re-contacting passengers who have already taken part in the NPS and said they are willing to help further. We will produce initial short reports on passenger satisfaction in these areas: passengers travelling later at night; personal security; passengers who commute at weekends for work; and passenger attitudes to compensation. The fresh research will be combined with a deeper analysis of the NPS to give a fuller and more rounded picture. The primary use of this research is to inform our input to the rail franchise/concession processes but it will also be useful in work with individual companies.

### Complaints handling

Passenger Focus has a statutory duty to deal with 'representations' from passengers. Over time this role has settled into mediating in complaints when rail passengers and train companies have become deadlocked. As well as resolving issues for individual passengers, our complaints work also informs us about the quality of TOC complaint-handling processes, and it can throw up significant issues and highlight (worrying) trends that we can then decide to investigate further-our focus on how passengers without 'valid' tickets are treated stemmed from this work.

We will continue to devote significant resource to this work and help train companies to improve their processes. Complainants often come to us frustrated and irritated. So we measure how those passengers rate our handling of their issues.

This year we will:

- handle some 15,000 enquiries from passengers and intervene in some 6,000 issues raised in 3,000 rail appeal complaints
- achieve at least 70% passenger satisfaction with how we handled appeal complaints
- engage proactively with train companies to help improve first-time complaints resolution by train companies and, as a consequence, reduce the number of appeal complaints made to Passenger Focus
- conduct in-depth complaints audits with up to four train companies resulting in action plans to drive improvement
- engage actively with the industry to ensure the results of these audits are understood and action taken to drive improvements

### **Passenger trust**

The NPS measures passenger satisfaction with various aspects of a passenger's most recent journey. Another important dimension of passenger satisfaction is trust. Do passengers trust train companies and the rail industry? Do they trust the fares system and information during disruption? If yes, why? If not, why not? We can then start to work out the drivers of mistrust, helping the industry and government to do something about it.

This year we will:

- examine the importance of trust and consumer confidence in forming passengers' perceptions of rail, especially when it comes to the provision of information to them and buying tickets
- monitor how well train companies perform in key areas – e.g. displaying ticket validities or the accuracy of information given to passengers
- continue to work on improving levels of transparency on rail performance data including publishing more route-based NPS data
- do further work to establish the format in which passengers want data on train punctuality to be published

## Franchising and other industry long-term planning

There is a number of rail franchise renewals that could re-commence during 2013-14 that may require fresh research or a refresh of our previous research. This could require significant resource and we may need to revisit our priorities during the year.

This year we will:

- work with bidders and the Department for Transport to improve franchise specification and bids based on passenger research including surveying non- and ex-users
- boost the passenger voice in rail franchising. The measures we would like to see include; of increasing the size of the NPS to allow each route to be analysed – thereby boosting accountability and allowing us to, radically improve passenger consultation and input on franchise replacement and extension
- provide passenger input to the industry's long-term planning processes with particular attention paid to boosting capacity
- test the rail industry's promise to assist passengers who book assistance - 'PassengerAssist'. The complexity of this research means it will require match-funding
- comment on proposed Disabled People's Protection Policies from new operators
- continue to monitor safety and European Union developments that may have an impact on passengers

## Disruption

We know from the NPS that the way delays are dealt with is one of the biggest drivers of passenger dissatisfaction. So over the years we have done much work on how passengers feel disruption is dealt with and how train companies and Network Rail can improve. This has led to significant improvements, mirrored in the NPS, but there is still more work to be done.

This year we will:

- help the industry understand the passenger perspective on disruption management through presentations to at least six train companies
- reduce the impact on passengers during planned disruption



## **Fares, ticketing and value for money**

Previous research has shown that some passengers find the fares system difficult to understand and sometimes worry they might not have the right ticket even if they do. Passengers do not trust the system. We have also done much work on passenger trust of ticket-vending machines which has led the industry to introduce, in 2013, clearer layout of the wording and detail shown on tickets and improvements to ticket machines. It has also led the Government to review the whole fares system – the conclusions will be published in spring 2013. We will be monitoring the introduction and impact of these changes.

This year we will:

- provide on-going input to the Fares and Ticketing Review and its implementation
- include more consistent application of Unpaid Fare Notice rules, comment on ticket-office closure proposals and press for improvements to retailing
- bring about improvements to retailing – including work on smartcard developments. (See section 6 of this plan for more details)

### 3 Bus passengers

#### **Bus Passenger Survey**

Passenger Focus has developed the Bus Passenger Survey (BPS) to deliver a robust measure of bus passenger satisfaction – to provide detail at local-government level and for each bus operator within that area. Over 28,000 bus passengers participate every year.

The main objectives of the survey are (a) to measure satisfaction with a range of factors associated with bus travel – bus-stop factors; bus-boarding factors; on-bus factors; and bus-driver factors; (b) to measure the availability of facilities at the bus stop; and (c) to identify what drives overall satisfaction based on the range of factors in the survey. Passengers rate their satisfaction with a wide range of aspects of their bus journey as well as their overall satisfaction with that bus journey, and they also rate of value for money.

The BPS has been running for two years and has rapidly established itself as the standard industry measurement of satisfaction. We will again run the Bus Passenger Survey in 2013-14. Significant match-funding from industry and local government will be sought to boost the size and usefulness of the sample. The survey is widely used to benchmark improvements, such as new buses, updated passenger information and new bus-priority measures. It is increasingly cited in bids for central government funding as a way of measuring progress. Active engagement with industry and local government ensures results are understood and action taken to drive improvements.

#### **Punctuality**

The BPS and previous work on passenger priorities has shown that improvement in bus punctuality is a key passenger priority. So we have started a wide-ranging and detailed project looking at the causes of bus disruption – focusing on bus punctuality data. This work has involved local authorities, bus companies and the Senior Traffic Commissioner. We will publish this work and start via a series of regional workshops.

This year we will:

- publish and use the findings from the Bus Punctuality Project
- push operators to publish punctuality data
- present findings to local bus operators and transport authorities through a series of workshops and events

## **Disruption**

We know relatively little about how bus passengers are affected by disruption. Our extensive research on this issue for rail passengers has helped drive significant change and improvements. We want to drive similar improvements for bus passengers.

This year we will:

- conduct further research to understand the bus passenger experience of disruption as well as their needs in terms of information (both content and means of access)
- publish the results of that research
- help the industry understand the passenger perspective on disruption management

## **Fares, ticketing and value for money**

Much attention is rightfully focused on rail fares. Bus fares, in a de-regulated industry, are much more opaque. It can often be hard to find basic fare information – ‘exact fare only’ signs are still found! However, the widespread capability to handle smartcards on buses will present a significant opportunity for change.

This year we will:

- further research perceptions of value for money among bus passengers, probing issues such as ticketing, trust and transparency.
- bring about improvements to retailing – including work on smartcard developments.
- monitor a sample of fares in selected parts of England to determine how they are publicised to passengers and how the fare levels change over time

## **Industry long-term planning**

Much heated debate takes place about the best way to organise bus services; allow the private sector to get on with it; partnerships between operators and local authorities; or more formal franchise-type arrangements. Passenger Focus (and probably passengers) do not take a view on structures – we focus on the outputs. However, given the potential impact of some of these structural changes we will, as we do with rail franchising, put forward the passenger view.

This year we will:

- work with Passenger Transport Executives and urban local authorities on plans to improve bus passenger services including through Better Bus Areas, partnerships or quality contracts
- survey bus non-users to understand what would need to change to help them choose bus as a means of transport

### **Service changes**

Changes to government funding have left local authorities with difficult spending choices. These choices clearly have an impact on passengers which we will monitor. Also, it is clear that the quality of consultation about service changes differs widely around the country. To this end we have drawn up a toolkit for best practice on consultation which has already been widely used.

This year we will:

- following the 2012 publication of Passenger Focus guidelines on service change consultation, work with local councils and the Confederation of Passenger Transport to improve the quality of consultation and notification with passengers when major changes to the bus network are planned

### **Complaints handling**

Passenger Focus does not have a statutory responsibility for bus complaints. However, drawing on our rail industry knowledge, we will help the bus industry improve complaints handling.

This year we will:

- continue our work with the Bus Appeals Body aimed at improving the quality of the handling of bus appeal complaints by the BAB and bus companies

## 4. Tram passengers

Very little comparative research is published about tram passengers. The ability to compare the various tram networks and contrast that experience with bus passenger journeys would provide useful data to help us understand how the bus and tram passenger experiences compares and the choices passenger have in terms of means of transport in different areas.

This year we will:

- carry out a Tram Passenger Survey, working with Passenger Transport Executives and tram operators. This builds on a 2013 pilot. Carried out on the West Midlands system this involved interviewing tram passengers about their satisfaction with various aspects of their journeys

## 5. Coach passengers

Our initial focus group work with coach passengers indicated high levels of satisfaction. Some issues around personal security, luggage and information were raised but these were in the context of very positive comments overall. However, in order to form a baseline and to aid comparison with long-distance rail services we would like to carry out a cross-industry coach passenger satisfaction survey.

This year we will:

- carry out a new pilot survey of coach passenger satisfaction. This will cover satisfaction with various aspects of the journey passengers are completing

## 6. Smarter ticketing

Smart ticket products, delivered in a variety of ways, have the potential to significantly improve the passenger experience. London and the Oyster card have shown what can be done. However, the way forward for smarter ticketing outside London is not so straight-forward. We have been keen to ensure debates about future improvements are centered on passengers. The Department for Transport agreed with us and is providing us with additional funding to carry out a substantial programme of research on passengers and smart ticketing.

This year we will:

- explore rail passenger attitudes to various potential smart ticket 'products', with the first output from this programme of research being our focus group work on passenger responses to the smart ticketing products being developed as part of DfT/ATOC's 'South East FlexibleTicketing' programme
- publish research exploring the bus passenger experience of the Oxford smartzone project
- publish research rating passenger experiences of various transport smart phone applications – what works?
- publish research benchmarking the introduction of smart ticketing in Norfolk
- publish a market study of current smart ticketing initiatives
- continue to explore passenger general attitudes to smarter ticket products and ways of delivering them to passengers



## 7. Scottish and Welsh passenger issues

Rail passenger issues are dealt with in different ways in Scotland and Wales. The devolution of government means that the Scottish Government lets the franchise/concession for ScotRail. The Welsh Government will have an increasing say on these processes in Wales. Cross-border services, specified by the Westminster Government, will continue to be important.

However, retaining the ability to compare the performance of the railway in those countries will remain crucial. Also many of the issues facing passengers in those two countries are similar elsewhere. We will ensure our research and advocacy continue to benefit passengers across Great Britain.

### Scottish passenger issues



This year we will:

- continue to carry out rail National Passenger Survey on ScotRail and cross-border services and use the results to drive change for passengers
- explore with government and the industry the possibility of Bus Passenger Surveys being carried out in Scotland
- work on at least one specific Scottish passenger issue in conjunction with government and industry
- ensure that most rail research projects have a distinct Scottish element
- hold a Board meeting in public in Edinburgh

### Welsh passenger issues



This year we will:

- continue to carry out rail National Passenger Survey on Arriva Trains Wales and cross-border services and use the results to drive change for passengers
- explore with government and the industry the possibility of Bus Passenger Surveys being carried out in Wales
- work on at least one specific Welsh passenger issue in conjunction with government and industry
- ensure that most rail research projects have a distinct Welsh element
- hold a Board meeting in public in Cardiff

## 8. Transparency – being more visible, and measuring and reporting our performance

**This year Passenger Focus will:**

*Report:*

- report five times this year in public at Board meetings in London, Scotland, Bristol, Manchester and Wales on our delivery. The Board will also receive reports from meetings of the Audit Committee, which supervises Passenger Focus's internal audit programme and management of risk, including information risk
- use financial and key performance indicator data to manage the underlying performance of the business, compiled and reviewed monthly
- publish an annual report on performance, activities and expenditure
- explore how to gather and publish more information regarding our performance and effectiveness
- maintain a useful, easy-to-use website as a key 'entry point' into Passenger Focus, and seek and publish feedback on its usefulness.
- publish a monthly E-Newsletter
- maintain a 24-hour proactive and useful press office
- publish on our website proceedings and decisions of our Board and management team

*We will track:*

- the number of passengers that we engage through research and consultation
- major policy decisions within the rail, bus and coach industries and across local and central government that we have influenced
- staff attitudes through an annual staff attitude survey
- Stakeholder's views of us through a stakeholder survey

## 9. Staff and Board

While independent, Passenger Focus is sponsored and substantially funded by the DfT.

We currently have 42 staff, most of whom are based in offices in London and Manchester. Seven of them are peripatetic.

At present, Passenger Focus has motivated, energetic and capable staff. We want to keep it that way, as we can only be as good as the people who work for us. We will continue to ensure that we have staff who want to work at Passenger Focus by:

- working with staff to ensure they continue to get the coaching, development and management they need to do their jobs and to progress
- ensuring staff clearly see how their work fits into Passenger Focus's overall aims and objectives
- ensuring all staff are supported by responsive, engaged and capable line managers
- continuing to have a small training budget for external training courses
- 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

Passenger Focus's Board is crucial to ensuring proper, proportionate governance for the organisation is in place. Passenger Focus currently has nine Board members, appointed by the Secretary of State for Transport. The Greater London Assembly and the devolved government in Scotland and Wales each also appoints one member, making a total of 12 members.

The Secretary of State has recently appointed a number of new members. The Board's key roles, supported by staff within Passenger Focus, will remain:

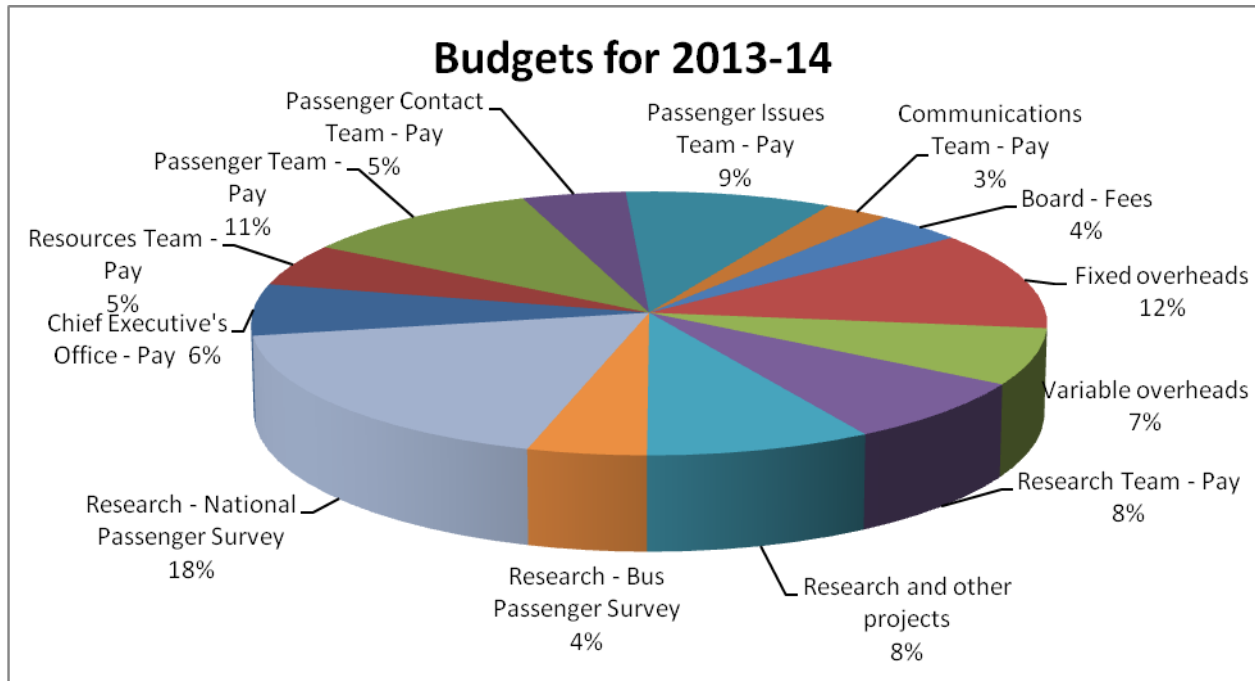
- overseeing the corporate governance of the organisation - this involves oversight of financial affairs, risk and remuneration
- challenging staff in a constructive way on the operation of the organisation
- setting objectives and providing oversight of progress against them
- setting important policy lines the organisation takes on behalf of passengers

## 10. Budget 2013-14

Passenger Focus's budget for 2013-14 will be £4 million plus National Passenger Survey funding of £0.9 million. The main changes in costs from 2012-13 to 2013-14 are in fixed pay costs because some services are now delivered more flexibly through external support and in fixed overheads due to the savings in office rent as a result of the office relocation.

£000's	2013-14 Budget		2012-13 Forecast Outturn
Fixed pay	2,466		2,464
Fixed overheads			
Rent, rates and utilities	243		363
IT infrastructure and support	298		271
Audit and legal services	52		41
Variable overheads	593		675
Travel and subsistence	119		121
Training, development and conferences	43		57
Publications, media and reporting	51		42
Telephones, postage and stationery	80		78
External payroll and HR services	45		26
	338		323
Total running costs	3,397		3,462
Projects			
Research and other projects (net cost)	418		303
Bus Passenger Survey (net cost)	220		235
Total projects	638		538
Net operating costs	4,035		4,000
National Passenger Survey	865		865
Total net operating costs	4,900		4,865
Additional projects:			
Funded by the Department for Transport			
Office relocation	-		280
Smart ticketing project	400		200

## Breakdown of costs by team and type



## 11. Key milestones and indicative research costs

### April to June 2013

#### *Rail passengers*

- Conduct spring 2013 wave of Rail National Passenger Survey
- Publish research into passenger views on 'on time' rail data
- Provide and publish input to at least one franchise replacement process (subject to DfT's refranchising timetable)
- Run a seminar for Government, industry and other passenger representatives on boosting the passenger voice in rail franchising – London

#### *Tram passengers*

- Publish results of the pilot Tram Passenger Survey

#### *Bus passengers*

- Publish new research on bus passengers and value for money
- Publish new research on bus passenger attitudes to information during disruption
- Publish Bus Punctuality Project summary – commence regional seminars

#### *Cross-cutting work, including smarter ticketing*

- Launch improved web access to our National Passenger Survey, Bus Passenger Survey and rail complaints data
- Develop proposals for increased monitoring of industry promises and obligations
- Publish results of work on the passenger experience of the Oxford Smartzone bus ticketing initiative – new research
- Publish results of work on passenger responses to the smart ticketing products being developed as part of DfT/ATOC's 'South East Flexible Ticketing' programme – new research
- Hold Board meeting in public in Manchester

### July to September 2013

#### *Rail passengers*

- Produce short reports on rail passenger satisfaction in these areas: passengers travelling later at night; personal security; passengers who commute at weekends for work; and attitudes to compensation. This will be drawn from existing research.



*Bus passengers*

- Publish passenger satisfaction survey results on Go-Ahead bus services

*Cross-cutting work*

- Publish research on the experience of younger passengers – drawn from our existing work
- Hold Board meetings in public in Bristol and Edinburgh

**October to December 2013**

*Cross-cutting work*

- Publish a new market survey of smarter ticketing products in use
- Publish passenger ratings of transport smart phone applications – new research
- Hold a Board meeting in public in Cardiff

**January 2014 to March 2014**

*Rail passengers*

- Publish autumn 2013 National Passenger Survey wave
- Publish new research on the passenger experience of the rail industry's 'PassengerAssist' booked help service; (subject to external match-funding being secured to carry out this research)

*Bus passengers*

- Publish autumn 2013 wave of Bus Passenger Survey

*Tram passengers*

- Publish findings of first Tram Passenger Survey

*Coach passengers*

- Publish findings of first Coach Passenger Survey

*Cross-cutting work, including smarter ticketing*

- Publish results of first stage of evaluation of Norfolk smart ticketing project
- Hold a Board meeting in public in London
- Publish passenger trust of rail and bus industries study

**Indicative table of research costs incurred in 2013-14**

Rail National Passenger Survey	£865,000
Bus Passenger Survey	£220,000 *
Tram Passenger Survey	£100,000
Coach Passenger Survey (pilot)	£30,000
Do you trust your train/bus company and the rail/bus industries?	£20,000
Franchise/concession replacement passenger research	£30,000
Testing PassengerAssist	(not budgeted yet)
Survey bus non-users	£25,000
Survey rail non-users	£25,000
Evaluation of Norfolk smart ticketing project	£30,000

\*Plus approximately £200,000 of match funding