

1. Foreword

Like many other industries the railway is constantly being challenged to look at how it can be more efficient and make best use of its resources; one of its biggest resources being its staff. In many of our research projects passengers have described the positive contribution staff can have in making their journey experience a positive one. They are the human face of the railway. For those operators keen to improve passenger satisfaction, it is important to understand at what stages of the journey passengers value staff the most and the contribution they want them to make to their experience.

This report gives the passenger perspective. While it is right that the rail industry considers how it uses front-line staff, it would be wrong to do so without first considering the impact on the end user.

2. An overview

Transport Focus has carried out a raft of research into passenger aspirations and expectations. Throughout this there is a consistent message coming through about staff: passengers like and value having staff around.

For example, in a series of focus groups carried out with Northern passengers there were frequent references to the varied assistance staff could provide, and the enhancement of feelings about personal security when there was a visible staff presence - particularly at smaller rural stations. Subsequently many of the aspects of service Northern passengers wanted improved involved a staff presence.

Passengers were also quick to point out the benefit to the operator of having a presence at stations as it deterred fare evasion. It was felt that even having one member of staff present for part of the day would make a genuine and positive difference¹.

Looking at our research as a whole we can identify the following core areas where the presence and assistance provided by customer-facing staff is seen to be an essential part of the service passengers expect to receive:

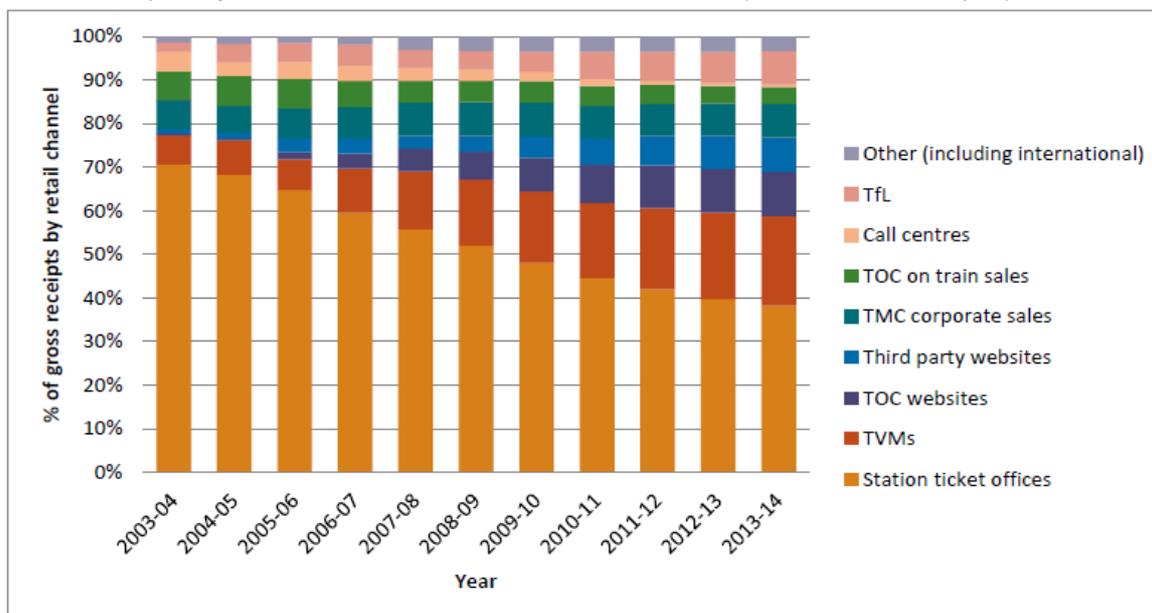
- ticket retailing
- revenue protection
- accessibility
- information provision, especially during disruption
- assistance, especially during disruption
- personal security.

¹ *Northern and Transpennine franchises – passenger research*, Passenger Focus, November 2012

3. Ticket retailing

Train tickets are sold through a number of different sales channels. In recent years there has been growth in the number of ‘self-serve’ channels, but at present station ticket offices remain the most popular method of purchasing a ticket. Just under 40 per cent of the total revenue to the industry comes from ticket office sales. The next biggest are the internet and ticket vending machines (TVMs) which both account for around 20 per cent of revenue.

Gross receipts by retail channel, 2003/04 to 2013/14 (% of total receipts)²



Source: LENNON

While the proportion of sales may be decreasing, there is still a clear need for staffed ticket offices at stations. Indeed, many passengers prefer to buy tickets from the ticket office rather than from a ticket machine.

In the course of our research for the Thameslink³ and Southeastern⁴ franchises we asked passengers what their preferred method of ticket purchase would be. With both operators a slightly higher proportion of passengers wanted to be able to purchase tickets online than currently do. However, the most preferred method was still the ticket office. 45 per cent of Thameslink and 55 per cent of Southeastern passengers preferred to use the ticket office. This was more than double the number, in both instances, of those that preferred ticket vending machines.

² Retail Market Review Consultation, ORR, September 2014

³ What passengers want from the Thameslink franchise, Passenger Focus, 2010

⁴ What passengers want from the Southeastern franchise, Passenger Focus, 2012

So why do passengers prefer face to face contact with ticket office staff over self-service ticket machines?

- **Confidence**

In 2008 we carried out a joint project with South West Trains (SWT) to understand why passengers were choosing to queue at ticket office windows rather than use self-service ticket machines⁵. The research revealed that the majority of those in ticket office queues could have bought their ticket from a ticket vending machine (TVM) and had actually done so in the past. Nine out of ten of those in ticket office queues were aware of TVMs at the station and 78 per cent had used them in the past. The results demonstrated that the conscious decision to purchase at ticket offices was often driven by:

- the purchaser's lack of confidence in using the machines
- the purchaser's lack of confidence in their ability to select a ticket at the appropriate price with the necessary validity or relevant route (as specified on the ticket and reflected in the price)
- a preference for face-to-face transactions for reassurance.

While for many customers there was little objection to using TVMs in theory, any doubts about the details of which tickets are available, or the functionality of the machines, meant people reverted to the 'tried and tested' ticket office.

- **Complexity**

The proportion of passengers satisfied with the value for money for the price of their ticket was just 46 per cent in autumn 2014. The score was lower still in London and the south east, where it was just 41 per cent⁶.

A fundamental principle that allows passengers to judge whether they have value for money or not is knowing whether they have bought the right ticket for their journey, at the cheapest price possible. There is, however, consistent evidence to suggest that the complicated fare structure is still a barrier to passengers obtaining the correct tickets and the best deals. Recent attempts by the industry to simplify the system have not yet addressed some of the underlying problems⁷.

In short, there is still a lack of understanding of the fares structure. As an example, passengers find it hard to understand why:

- a return fare may only be £1 more than a single
- it can cost less to get off at a station further down the line
- a combination of tickets can cost less than the through fare.

⁵ *Buying a ticket at the station*, Passenger Focus, October 2008

⁶ *National Rail Passenger Survey, Autumn 2014*, Passenger Focus

⁷ *Passenger perceptions of fares and ticket options*, Passenger Focus, Published as part of the response to the Government's rail fares and ticketing review, June 2012

In addition, many ticket machines are also unable to offer the following products:

- ticket extensions
- railcards
- GroupSave
- tickets for future rail travel⁸
- season tickets
- seat reservations.

Nor are some TVMs very good at providing basic information on the restrictions attached to some tickets. This can include a lack of detail on restrictions – for example which route or train company you can use, or what times you can travel on off-peak tickets. Research⁹ by the Office of Rail Regulation in June 2012 found that nearly three quarters of all those interviewed were not confident what ‘off-peak’ times were.

Given these complexities it is natural that many passengers choose to speak to, and make a purchase from, ticket office staff rather than attempt to use the ticket vending machines at stations. These TVMs are often unable to provide the precise information on ticket terms and conditions that passengers need.

At ticket offices, staff will usually ask some basic questions such as destination, day and time of travel, and where appropriate route/operator, and then offer a narrowed-down range of options¹⁰. In essence the ticket clerk navigates the passenger through the decision-making process, instead of passengers having to work things out for themselves at the machine.

This concern is reflected in passenger reactions to proposals to change ticket-office opening hours at stations. In recent years South West Trains and London Midland have attempted to make major reductions to ticket office opening hours at some of their stations, and on each occasion Transport Focus received many representations from passengers opposing the proposals.

In August 2008, when South West Trains proposed a significant number of cuts to its ticket office opening hours, we received 3100 postcards and more than 360 letters objecting to the proposals. Written objections were also received from county, district and parish councils, regional groups, members of both Houses of Parliament, and individual passenger/rail user groups.

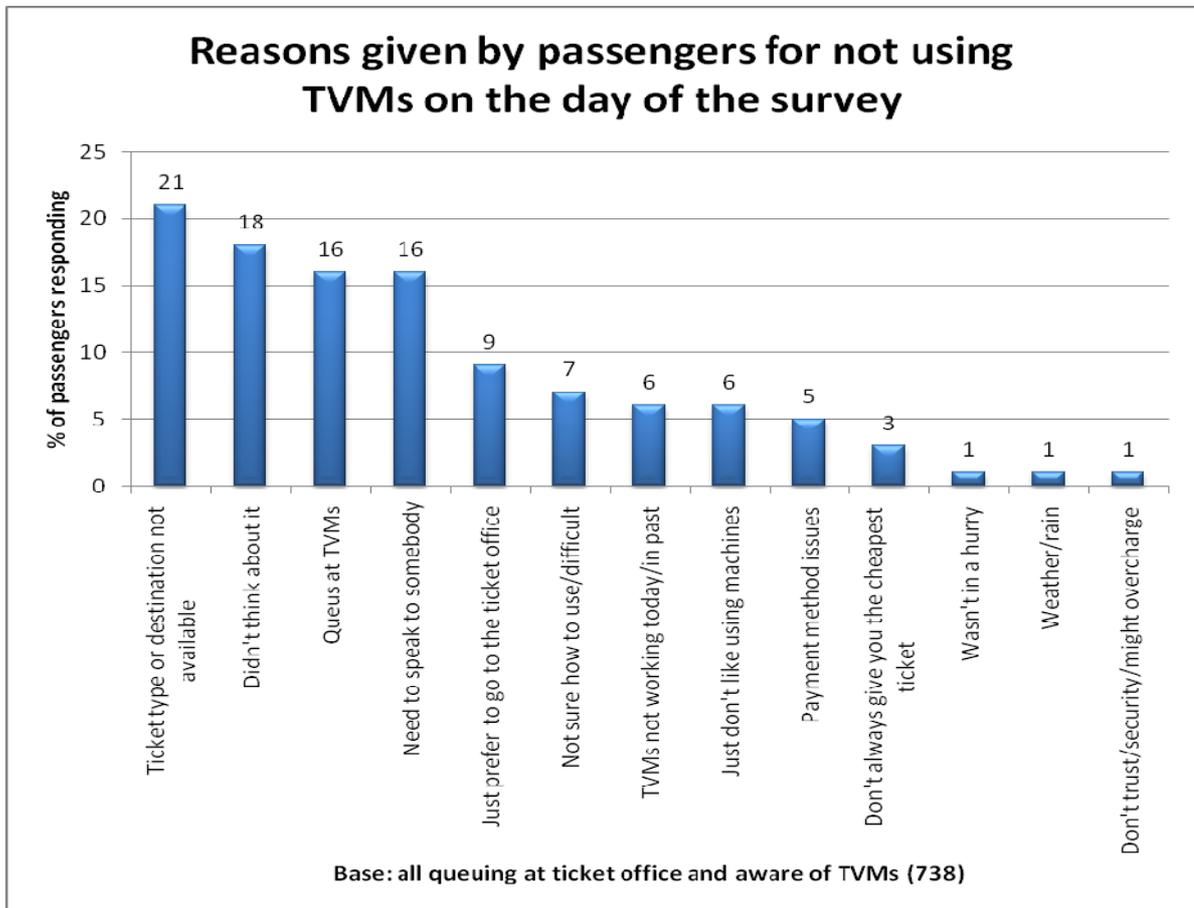
In the case of London Midland (April 2011), Transport Focus received 17,999 consultation responses that objected to the reductions, and just one that was in favour. Concerns were raised about the range of tickets available from a TVM, the lack of explanations on routes and validities and the reliability of the machines.

⁸ There is a limited ability to purchase tickets for the next day from some machines

⁹ *Fares and ticketing – information and complexity*, ORR, 2012

¹⁰ *Ticket vending machine usability*, Passenger Focus, 2010

For TVMs to be an acceptable alternative they must be able to sell all the tickets from that station, present information to passengers in a way that guides the unfamiliar to the best fare for their journey, and give passengers a means to speak to an appropriately-trained person if they need assistance with their transaction, especially for high-value or complicated journeys. The reality is that TVMS are not currently up to this task.



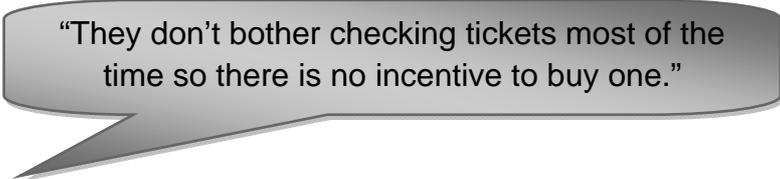
Source: *Buying a ticket at the station – research on ticket machine use*, Passenger Focus, October 2008.

4. Revenue protection

Fare evasion was something raised spontaneously in our research with passengers on the Northern franchise. There was a belief that it had become common on some services¹¹. Passengers attributed this to the fact that many of the stations were unstaffed, making it easy to avoid buying a ticket, particularly so if the ticket machines were not working.

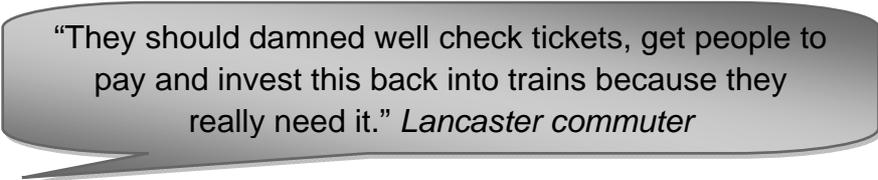
Passengers reported that they commonly needed to purchase a ticket on board, but that this was often not possible due to a lack of staff. They further explained that overcrowding often prevented those ticket inspectors and conductors who were on board from moving through the train, and/or that the frequent stopping nature of many Northern services meant that the turnover of passengers during the journey was often too great for the inspector/conductor to reach all passengers.

Some Northern passengers felt that fare evasion was so commonplace that a proportion of their fellow travellers had learnt how 'to play the system', by alighting from the train at a stop when the inspector/guard was seen to be moving down the train. Most participants in the research had witnessed this and some even admitted doing it themselves, which in itself is a sign of how 'normal' and accepted fare evasion had become.



"They don't bother checking tickets most of the time so there is no incentive to buy one."

Fare evasion is incredibly frustrating for the majority of passengers. There is a strong sense of injustice amongst those who have paid and a belief that this prevents 'much-needed' investment into improving the service.



"They should damned well check tickets, get people to pay and invest this back into trains because they really need it." *Lancaster commuter*

The passengers we surveyed firmly believed that the best solution would be to make better provision for the purchase of tickets at stations and on board, and have better checking procedures. They also wanted a fair enforcement policy¹² whereby passengers who had made an innocent mistake were not treated as if they were 'dodging' the fare. For this, they felt more staff would be required. Although passengers recognised there would be a cost to this they felt that this would be more than covered by ensuring that revenue was not lost. They also felt increasing the

¹¹ *Northern and TransPennine franchises – passenger research*, Passenger Focus, November 2012

¹² Our *Ticket to Ride* publication sets out a number of concerns about how revenue protection often penalises those who make an innocent mistake alongside those who set out to defraud.

number of staff would have additional benefits such as the opportunity to ask for help and information, security and deterring/controlling anti-social behaviour.

5. Accessibility - access to the station and its facilities and services

At many stations the ticket office staff are the only members of staff present. So proposals to remove ticket office staff would effectively mean de-staffing the station. This is of particular concern for those passengers with impaired mobility. While passengers with a disability can book assistance 24 hours in advance, this is often considered impractical for short and frequent journeys.

In addition, while on-train staff can use the boarding/alighting ramp, some passengers also require assistance on the platform. Passengers travelling with buggies are also unlikely to consider booking help an option. These passengers rely on staff at the station for assistance.

At some stations, access to facilities is often dependent on a member of staff being on the station. This can include access to lifts, toilets, waiting rooms and information leaflets and timetables.

6. Information provision

When analysing the different factors that contribute to passenger dissatisfaction across the country the main driver is, consistently, the way in which train operating companies handle delays. A key part of this is keeping passengers adequately informed about delays – indeed, such is the importance of this that it is ranked by passengers as the fifth highest priority for improvement for the railway overall¹³.

- **Information at the station**

Our research¹⁴ shows that the majority of passengers learnt about delays to their journey once they had arrived at the station. While customer information boards/screens are the first port of call for passengers seeking service-running information, live audio announcements made by staff are felt to override any information displayed on them¹⁵. Passengers assume that any 'live' announcements are going to be more up to date. An example might be when there is a late change of platform, where the information boards show one platform but announcements tell passengers something different.

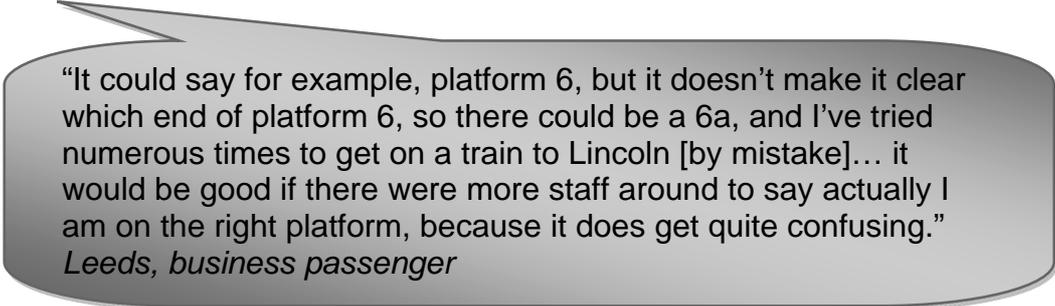
¹³ *Passenger priorities for improvements in rail services*, Passenger Focus, October 2014

¹⁴ *Passenger information when trains are disrupted*, Passenger Focus, May 2014

¹⁵ *Information: Rail passengers' needs during unplanned disruption*, Passenger Focus and Southern Railway, 2011

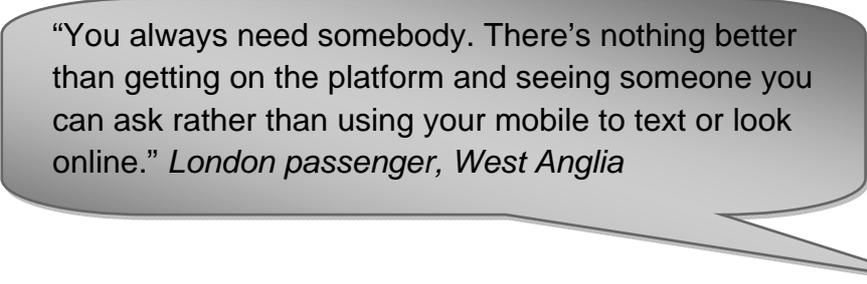
Live audio announcements are also more likely to be tailored to fit the exact situation at the station, while information provided via machines is presumed to have less flexibility. The flexibility of staff to provide tailored messages reinforces the perception that live audio announcements are going to be more relevant¹⁶.

When asked what aspect of station staffing they would like the railway to concentrate on, 52 per cent of Thameslink passengers said that they wanted improvements to the availability of staff during times of disruption, while for on-train this figure rose to 61 per cent¹⁷. Similarly, our research on the Northern franchise found that passengers wanted better information about platforms.¹⁸



“It could say for example, platform 6, but it doesn’t make it clear which end of platform 6, so there could be a 6a, and I’ve tried numerous times to get on a train to Lincoln [by mistake]... it would be good if there were more staff around to say actually I am on the right platform, because it does get quite confusing.”
Leeds, business passenger

This was also echoed in research on the East Anglia franchise where, after providing assistance with ticketing issues, provision of information and assistance during times of disruption was seen as the main role for staff¹⁹.



“You always need somebody. There’s nothing better than getting on the platform and seeing someone you can ask rather than using your mobile to text or look online.” *London passenger, West Anglia*

- **Information on the train**

On trains, most ad hoc announcements, particularly those concerning service disruption are made by on-train staff (the driver or the guard), making their role during service disruption vital. Research by Transport Focus has confirmed that passengers believe delays should be acknowledged by on-train staff within two minutes of an unscheduled stop²⁰.

The industry has adopted this principle as part of its good practice guide on providing passenger information during disruption. After this initial announcement passengers want to hear subsequent announcements, either

¹⁶ *Information: Rail passengers’ needs during unplanned disruption*, Passenger Focus and Southern Railway, 2011

¹⁷ *What passengers want from the Thameslink franchise*, Passenger Focus, March 2012,

¹⁸ *Northern and Transpennine franchises – passenger research*, Passenger Focus, November 2012

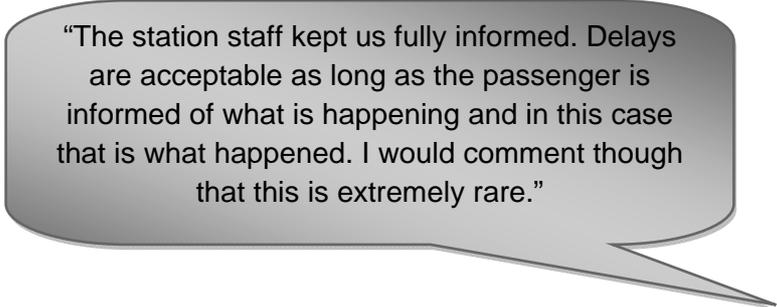
¹⁹ *Rail passengers’ expectations of the East Anglia franchise*, Passenger Focus, December 2015

²⁰ *Passenger information when trains are disrupted*, Passenger Focus, May 2014

when there is new information available or at a regular frequency, to reassure them that staff are seeking fresh updates.

It is clear that passengers' experiences of unplanned disruption are heavily driven by the interaction with, and information provided by, staff.²¹

When train companies behave considerately, particularly when accurate information is shared in a proactive, timely way, passengers are often quite forgiving, even when the delay is lengthy.



“The station staff kept us fully informed. Delays are acceptable as long as the passenger is informed of what is happening and in this case that is what happened. I would comment though that this is extremely rare.”

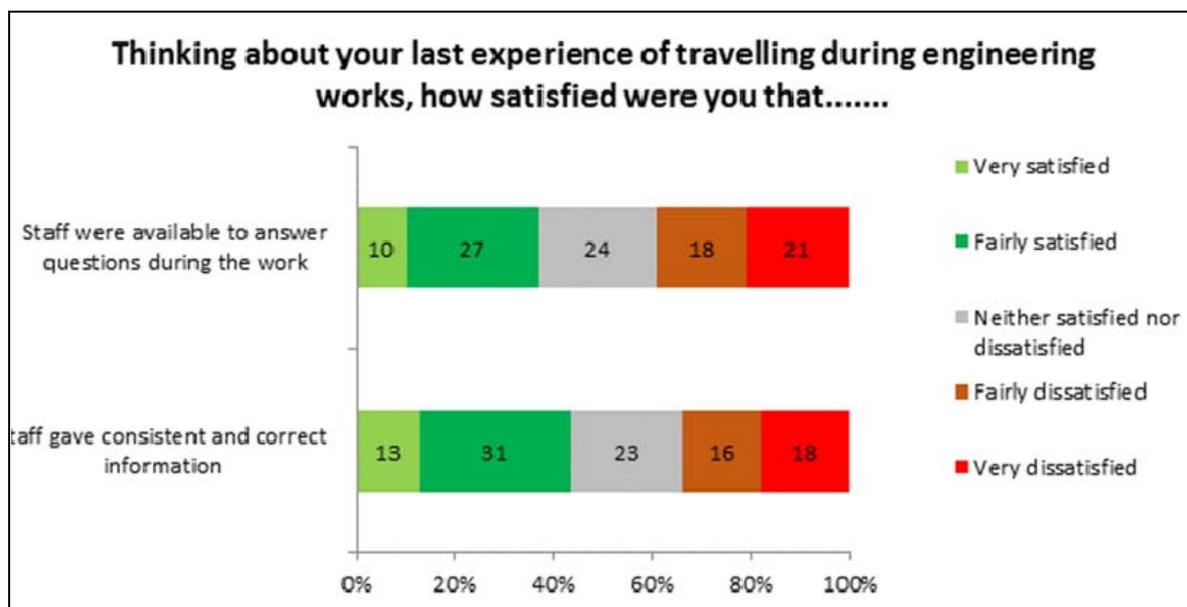
The reverse is also true. Being told nothing, or when there is no acknowledgement of the problem, arouses strong negative reactions from passengers. Transport Focus's report *Delays and disruption – Rail passengers have their say*²² identifies the type of issues that passengers face during times of disruption on the rail network, some of which touch heavily on the important role that staff play.

It is a similar situation when it comes to planned engineering work²³. Just 22 per cent of passengers who experienced planned engineering works (over a 12-month period) reported that they had received any information about such works. In many instances this was because they had not checked in advance of their journey. In these circumstances a large proportion of passengers will arrive at the station to find that their journey is not going to go as they had planned. This makes the role of staff all the more important in terms of reducing the anxiety, uncertainty and inconvenience that will result.

²¹ *Information: Rail Passengers' needs during unplanned disruption*, Passenger Focus, July 2011

²² *Delays and disruption – Rail passengers have their say*, Passenger Focus, December 2010

²³ *Rail Passengers' experiences and priorities during engineering works*, Passenger Focus, 2012



Source: *Rail Passengers' experiences and priorities during engineering works, Passenger Focus, 2012*

Even if information is provided in advance, some passengers will always need confirmation and reassurance, or will have specific questions about how disruption affects them individually. It is therefore crucial for all passengers that knowledgeable and helpful staff are available at stations throughout the duration of any works.

Why is it so important for passengers to hear from a human being?

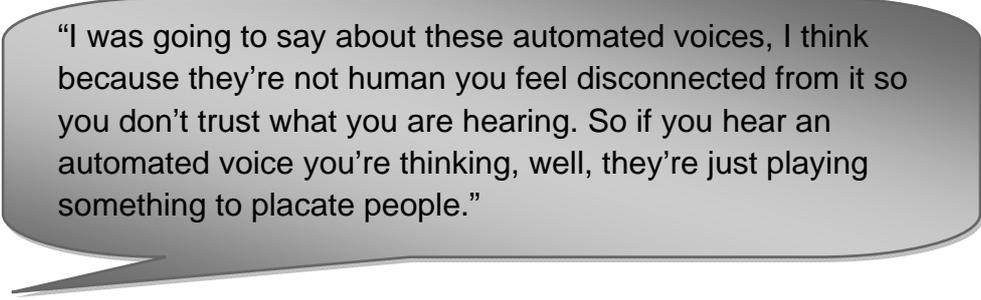
Hearing information directly from a member of staff is preferred by passengers, and where possible they encourage operators to avoid the use of 'impersonal pre-recorded' messages. This is particularly apparent where passengers have had the opportunity to draw comparisons with other transport systems. For example, passengers cited experiences of live announcements being made by London Underground staff who are visible on the platforms, rather than hearing 'a voice from above'²⁴.

"Because you can actually see them and they make the announcements... you can go up to them and find out exactly what happened because they are receiving the information then and there. So I think at train stations that would be a really, really helpful point instead of having someone hidden away in the clouds talking to you."

Passengers are reassured by the fact that the person making the announcement is visible and available to assist with any queries that they may result from unplanned

²⁴ Information: *Rail passengers' needs during unplanned disruption, Passenger Focus, August 2011*

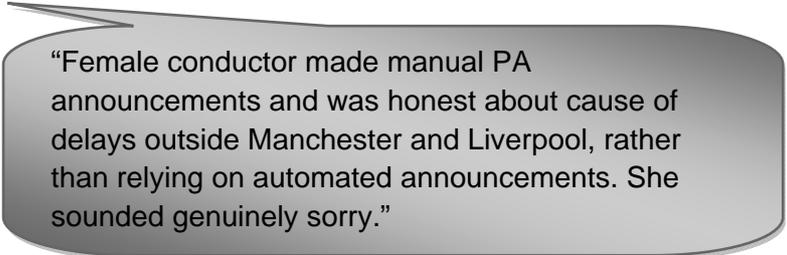
disruption. This reassurance cannot be provided by automated messages alone. The same is true of passengers on-board trains when they are delayed.



“I was going to say about these automated voices, I think because they’re not human you feel disconnected from it so you don’t trust what you are hearing. So if you hear an automated voice you’re thinking, well, they’re just playing something to placate people.”

Many passengers use the following words to describe the style and tone that they want for disruption announcements²⁵.

- genuine
- engaged
- alive
- caring
- apologetic.



“Female conductor made manual PA announcements and was honest about cause of delays outside Manchester and Liverpool, rather than relying on automated announcements. She sounded genuinely sorry.”

Passengers want messages to be made by someone who sounds engaged, who is clear and who uses a conversational tone, as this helps prevent messages appearing scripted and robotic. It is a difficult balance to strike, as some passengers prefer announcements to be ‘neutral’ and ‘factual’ and do not want ‘over-the-top empathy’. In some instances scripted announcements give operators a greater ability to ensure that the information provided is consistent. The importance, to passengers, of the tone in which messages are delivered is easily overlooked. The focus of the person making the announcement is often, quite naturally, on getting the facts across.

The use of humour by staff attracts mixed views from passengers, but it is commonly felt that there is greater potential for on-train staff, such as the guard or driver, to be able to neutralise the situation for those passengers stranded on trains, by adopting a more caring and humorous tone.

Once it becomes clear that problems on the railway will significantly delay journeys passengers may want information on alternative train services, other modes of transport such as buses, or whether they could travel to another station and change trains in order to get to their destination via a different route.

Passengers look to train operators and their staff for help to plan their journeys again. Passengers want someone to ‘own’ their problem, and be proactive in giving

²⁵ *Information: Rail passengers’ needs during unplanned disruption*, Passenger Focus, August 2011

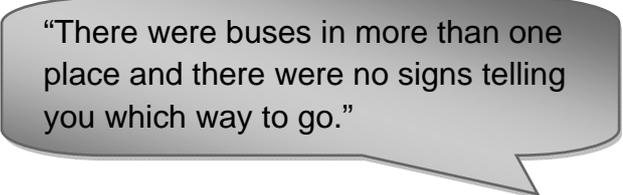
out information, but when communication is poor they are left with the impression that operators are neither willing nor capable of doing so²⁶.

7. Assistance

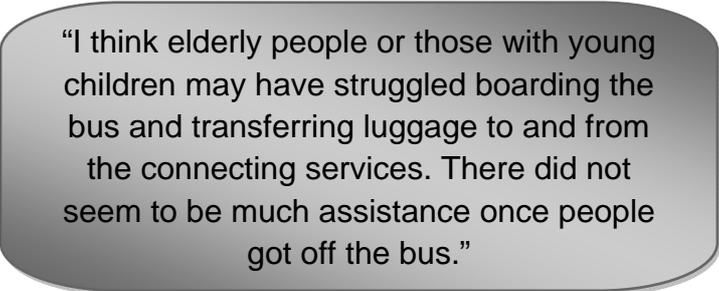
Engineering work causes problems for passengers because it can result in wasted time, hassle, confusion and inconvenience. When normal train services cannot run as planned then bus replacement services are often put on.

While many of the reasons for passengers disliking replacement buses centre on added time to the journey, a significant number concern the 'on-the-ground' management:

- passengers worry about, or have experienced, difficulty in finding the right bus, especially if it is not immediately outside the station
- where there is more than one replacement service operating, via different routes, the possibility of taking the wrong bus
- personal security fears when waiting for a bus in an isolated station car park, especially when travelling in the late evening or at night
- some passengers find it difficult to transfer between trains and buses, particularly if they have heavy luggage, children, or some form of disability. For some disabled passengers buses are simply inaccessible.

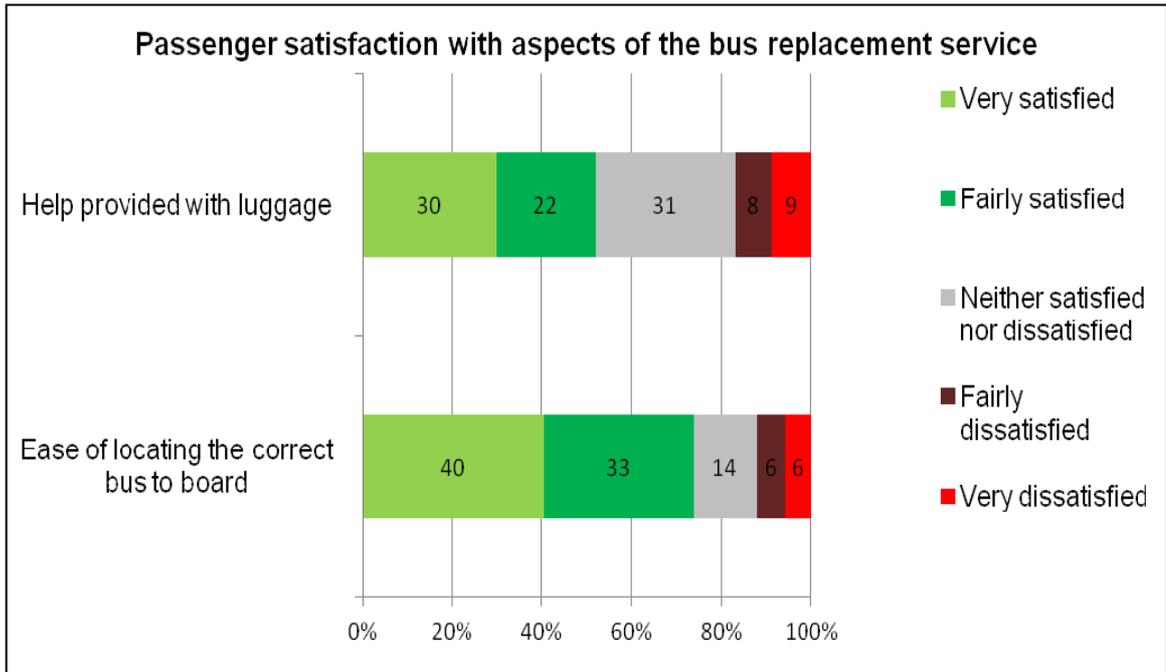


“There were buses in more than one place and there were no signs telling you which way to go.”



“I think elderly people or those with young children may have struggled boarding the bus and transferring luggage to and from the connecting services. There did not seem to be much assistance once people got off the bus.”

²⁶ *Information: Rail passengers' needs during unplanned disruption*, Passenger Focus, August 2011



Source: Rail passengers' experiences and priorities during engineering works, Transport Focus, 2012

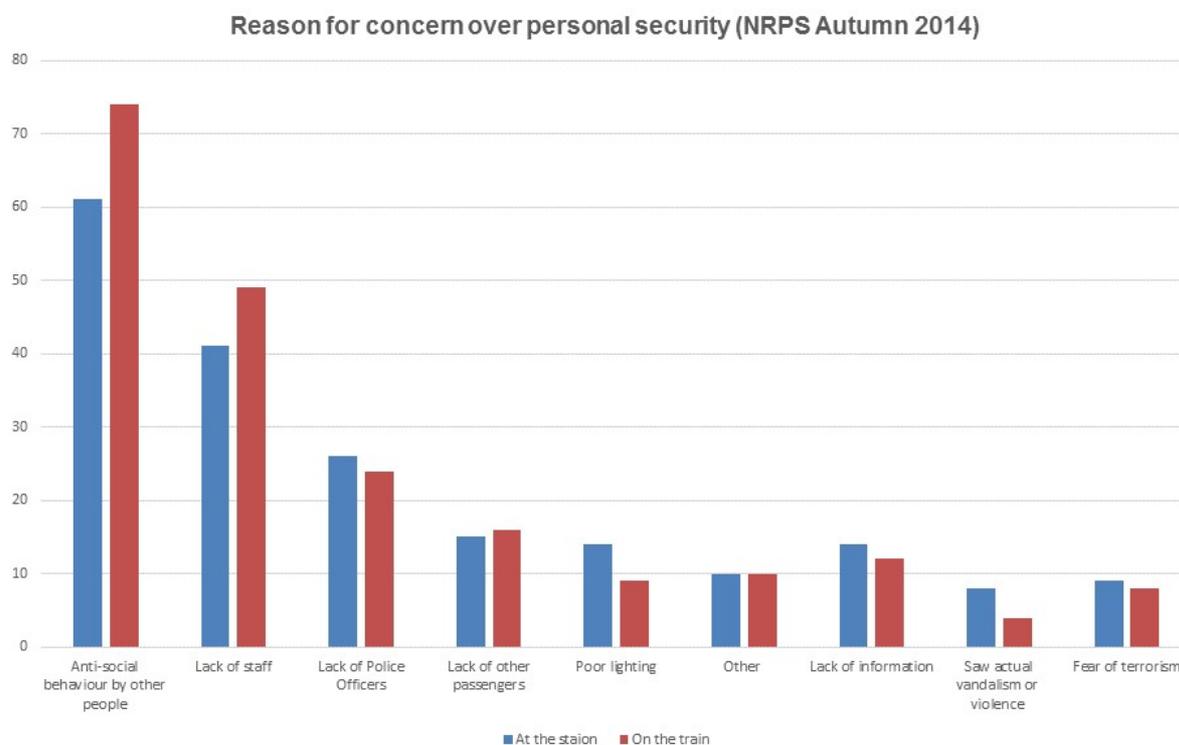
All of the above could be avoided, or at least mitigated, through the effective deployment of staff. Staff need to be available at each station served by a replacement bus service. They should direct passengers to the appropriate bus stop and assist with luggage. This is particularly relevant to those who are older or have a mobility impairment.

“When stopping to get the transfer to a bus it seemed like a rush for everyone to get off to find a seat. No one helped to put heavy bags on the coach and no one at the start even knew what bus we were getting on. I must say that journey was hideous.”

8. Personal security

Although the trend in recent years has been one of steady improvement in passengers' satisfaction with security, the latest (Autumn 2014) results from the National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) reveal that there is still room for improvement. 77 per cent of passengers were satisfied with their personal security on trains, while 71 per cent were satisfied with security at the station. These figures are lower among commuters in London and the south east and for those travelling after dark.

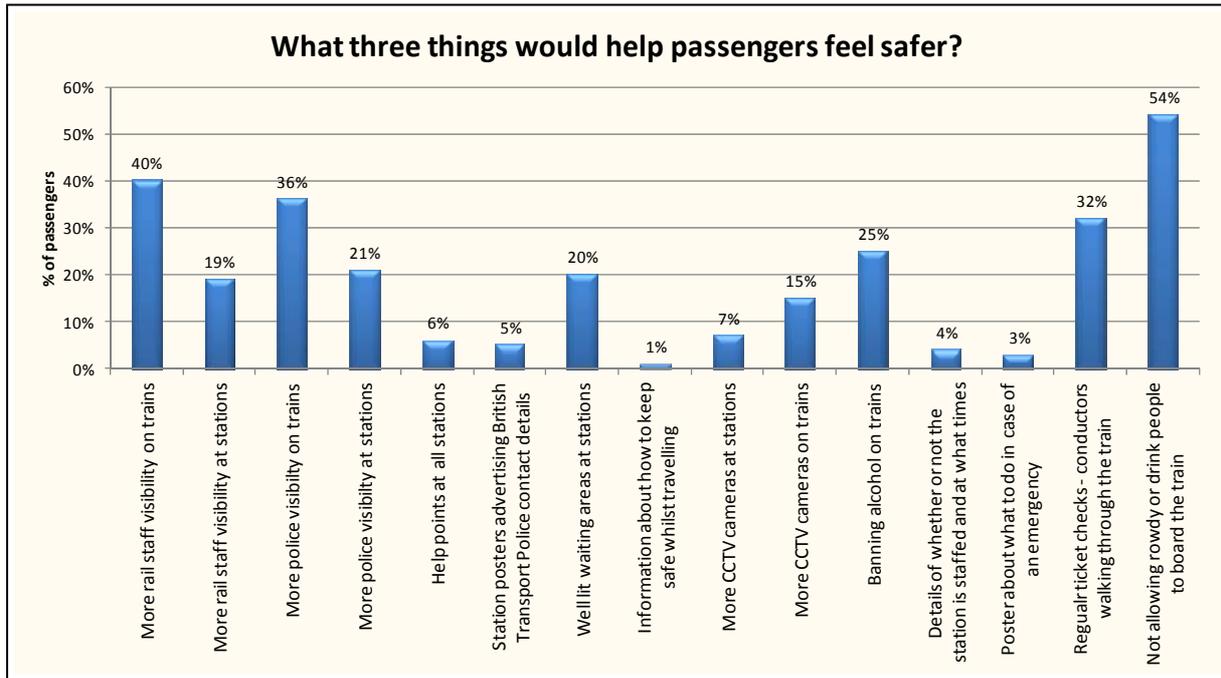
Overall, when asked whether they had cause to worry about their personal security during a rail journey in the previous six months, one in ten passengers said that they had. The main causes were due to the anti-social behaviour (ASB) of other passengers and the lack of staff²⁷.



Source: National Rail Passenger Survey, Transport Focus, Autumn 2014

In trying to define which types of ASB particularly concerned passengers, Transport Focus carried out joint research with the British Transport Police in 2010. It revealed the top three types of ASB that worried passengers: abusive or threatening behaviour; theft of belongings; and people under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

²⁷ National Rail Passenger Survey, Autumn 2014, Passenger Focus



Source: *Anti-social behaviour report – rail passenger views, Passenger Focus, 2010*

When asked what could allay some of those concerns, passengers consistently identified staff presence as the key²⁸.

The industry needs to consider how it can best deploy staff across the rail network to meet this need. Cutting the number of staff, either at stations or on the train, runs counter to what passengers actually want and could jeopardise their confidence in their ability to get to their destination safely.

In an attempt to increase staff visibility and provide the reassurance passengers seek, some train operators have contracted security staff to compliment the role of more traditional transport staff. Efforts were particularly noticeable on local services within Greater London and other cities.

South West Trains appointed 'Travel safe officers' (renamed rail community officers) to improve levels of customer service and sense of personal security for passengers and staff on trains and at stations. They were trained to communicate with the public, enforce Railway Byelaws and offer support/reassurance to passengers in difficult situations.

Passengers recognised and welcomed this, but some suggested they were often unsure 'who was who' and what powers they had. Some staff have also indicated

²⁸ *Experiences and perceptions of crime and anti-social behaviour on public transport*, Nat Cen Omnibus for the Department for Transport, September 2006

their dismay at what they perceive to be a lack of powers to carry out their job effectively²⁹.

Staff can find themselves working in difficult circumstances; this is something that passengers recognise. However, passengers think that staff should be trained so that they proactively approach passengers and provide visual and verbal contact to demonstrate that 'they are there for them'³⁰. If staff fail to do this, and cannot easily be recognised because they need to be clearly identified by their uniform, then their role in providing reassurance will be undermined.

9. Conclusions

Transport Focus firmly believes that there is a huge advantage in having a visible staff presence on the railway, be that at the ticket office, on the platforms or trains.

Ticketing

While the proportion of tickets sales made at ticket office windows is declining, it is clear from what passengers tell us that they place great value on the guidance and reassurance that staff are able to offer when making a ticket selection.

In some cases the rail products passengers want are simply not available from TVMs. Even where the ticket is theoretically available, the complexity of the fares structure means that it can sometimes be extremely difficult to get the cheapest fare without advice. We do not want to see a situation where off-peak travellers find it increasingly difficult to purchase the right ticket and either find themselves spending more than they should, or choosing to travel by other means.

It is important in these challenging financial times that government and private companies make the best use of resources and this has to include staffing. However, more ticket machines and new forms of retailing must not mean de-staffing stations, but rather a rebalancing of staff at stations. Staff can still provide ticketing assistance in front of the window rather than behind it – the key point is that they are there to provide it.

Information

The industry is taking a number of steps to improve the accuracy and timeliness of passenger information. Although staff may not be the first port of call for basic information about straightforward delays, passengers do turn to staff when the information screens and recorded announcements prove to be inaccurate or if more tailored/detailed information is required.

²⁹ *Experiences and perceptions of crime and anti-social behaviour on public transport*, Nat Cen Omnibus for the Department for Transport, September 2006

³⁰ *Evaluation of different staffing options for personal security over the whole journey using public transport*, Stafford and Peterson, 2005

Staff are, however, more than just a source of information to passengers - they are the human face of the railway. The way staff interact with and empathise with passengers can help to improve operator satisfaction scores for the way in which operators handle delays. It is important that staff are aware of the positive impact that they can have and that improvements to culture are planned alongside changes to processes and technology. This applies equally when passenger journeys are disrupted by planned engineering works.

Transport Focus has challenged the industry to ensure that when services are disrupted train companies are in a position to deliver a 'core message' to passengers waiting at stations. Key to this is the need to ensure that front-line staff are kept well informed and that they know how best to disseminate information to passengers.

In order to assist those passengers who are stranded at stations, train operating companies should develop comprehensive advice about how to get to key destinations by alternative routes and/or modes. This should be for every station and be accompanied by plans to make sure the information is actively provided to passengers by staff. As an example, if a route is closed but there is an unaffected station a short journey away, or a scheduled bus service to the same destination, passengers should be provided with these details.

On the train, the industry needs to ensure that train crew acknowledge a delay within two minutes of coming to an unscheduled halt and acknowledge delays resulting from slow running. Good, clear information can allow passengers to minimise disruption to their day – for example by rearranging meetings – and this can reduce some of the frustration felt at such times.

Help and reassurance – especially during disruption

Train operators and the rail industry, more widely, need to do more to ensure that passengers know that they are going to experience a different level of service than normal when engineering works impact on their intended journey. This is both at the point of purchase for new passengers and subsequently for those who have already purchased tickets, but who may be travelling on affected services.

Failing to give passengers the opportunity to make an informed choice about whether to travel or not, when their journey will be affected, is unacceptable. However, train companies must also deliver better customer service to the passengers who decide to travel, particularly when that means a replacement bus service is in operation. Specifically operators should consider what they can do to improve the transfer from train to bus and vice versa.

If a replacement service involves a change from a train to a bus, or an additional change, we would suggest that on the train journey to the interchange station, staff should be available to give passengers the information and reassurance they need. Empathy from staff goes a long way to demonstrating to passengers that they are valued by the operator concerned. It is possible that train crew may not perceive the

journey to be disrupted. They are doing what they have been rostered to do and they are on time. However, passengers will have a different view.

Similarly at the stations where passengers join, or interchange with, the altered service there also needs to be sufficient staff to be able to respond to journey-related questions that passengers may have. That means staff need to be properly briefed about the extent and impact of the works and the likely effect this will have on the journeys being made. It is unrealistic to expect staff to have a complete knowledge of the Great Britain rail network. However, it is reasonable for a passenger to assume that staff will know what services and connecting services are affected by the works. Where appropriate, staff should have access to journey planning information to help with queries from passengers. Staff should be available until the last replacement bus service has left the key points of interchange.

Passengers should not feel that they are being 'left to get on with it' or that their needs have not been thought about.

Personal security

Transport Focus is a firm believer that staffing at stations can help provide a reassuring human presence. This can positively impact passenger perceptions of security and act as a deterrent to crime and disorder.

Regardless of their job title, all customer-facing staff should be trained in the skills required to demonstrate through their presence that the railway is a managed environment at all times. Providing reassurance to passengers would then become part of the 'day job' for railway staff. Passengers are not unrealistic about the world in which we live and quite rightly accept that staff cannot be expected to risk their own safety. However, a proactive approach with not just dealing with anti-social behaviour, but to everyday passenger needs, would have a beneficial impact on passengers' perceptions.

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