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1. Passenger Focus

Passenger Focus welcomes the opportunity to provide an initial analysis and recommendations for the forthcoming Thameslink re-franchise process. This submission provides evidence of passenger perspectives and priorities drawn from research conducted with over five thousand passengers on routes potentially included within the new franchise, together with recent National Passenger Survey (NPS) responses.

Passenger Focus is the independent public body set up by the Government to protect the interests of Britain's rail passengers, England's bus and tram passengers outside London and coach passengers in England on scheduled domestic services. We are funded by the Department for Transport (DfT) but operate independently.

Our mission is to get the best deal for passengers. With a strong emphasis on evidence based campaigning and research, we ensure that we know what is happening on the ground.

We use our knowledge to influence decisions on behalf of passengers and we work with the industry, passenger groups and government to secure journey improvements.

2. Introduction

Revised franchise policy indicates the Government intends to let longer franchises where possible and also issue less central specification, giving bidders greater flexibility in how they specify/develop the service offered to passengers.

Passenger Focus believes that when the requirements of the franchise are established, it is vital that the needs of passengers who use and pay for rail services are placed squarely at the heart of the contract. We are pleased to have engaged with the Department for Transport from an early stage in the Thameslink franchise replacement process. We have used discussions to highlight key passenger issues and the findings of our research on a range of subjects.

In advance of the consultation Passenger Focus is now making a formal contribution to the development of the franchise. This document sets out our initial analysis of the principal factors the franchise should address and our high level recommendations for the specification. We will make a further detailed contribution during the consultation period.

A core principle should be that the specification must build on the existing framework of services and seek progressive improvements in all areas of performance. It is important that the franchise ensures that existing demands are adequately addressed and, that at appropriate stages, franchise reviews can respond to any changes or inaccuracies in planning assumptions.

It is equally important that, throughout its duration, the franchise remains responsive to changing passenger needs. This means that not only must there be a clear understanding of passenger requirements at the outset but that there is an ongoing emphasis on consultation and engagement

with stakeholders and a set of output measures that reflect passenger satisfaction. The National Passenger Survey should be included within the franchise monitoring mechanisms.

All franchises require firm commitments to be met by the operator on given dates and these must be transparent, clearly defined and monitored. The franchise should focus on outcomes for passengers and ensure that there are sanctions available to reflect any failure in delivery. The ultimate sanction should be termination.

Over the coming months we will vigorously promote the passenger agenda and will work closely with DfT and short-listed bidders to ensure passenger requirements are evidenced and addressed by the franchise specification, during the franchise competition and at all stages of the ensuing contract term.

3. Overview of the franchise

The future Thameslink franchise will cover a substantial part of southern England. The existing First Capital Connect (FCC) network already comprises two distinct service groups: Thameslink (TL) and Great Northern (GN). During the lifetime of the new franchise this is proposed to be expanded to include at least some services from Southeastern (SER) and all of Southern (SN).

The resulting franchise will be large, complex and geographically diverse. There will be many different service groups, all catering at varying levels for commuter, business and leisure markets. There will be a need to respond effectively to the needs of passengers making a range of journeys including those on metro services within London, longer distance commuting and also suburban, rural and local travel.

The challenge of melding three different organisational cultures, motivating staff and developing cohesive working practices will be considerable and at the same time the operator must ensure all staff focus on providing a high quality, punctual and reliable rail service.

The backdrop to the organisational and cultural transformations and the requirements of day to day service delivery will be the tremendous changes associated with the Thameslink programme. This will include significant infrastructure works, the deployment of new rolling stock, commissioning of new train control systems and introduction of a comprehensive new timetable. The challenges of working within the constraints of such major works will be considerable and there will inevitably be impacts upon passengers.

The scale of change that will occur during the seven-to-nine year life of the franchise is immense. The future operator must demonstrate excellent skills in planning and project management and in collaborative working. The ability to build strong and effective relationships with Network Rail will be particularly important to ensure that passenger needs are considered as infrastructure works are undertaken and there is accurate and timely information available so that passengers can plan their journeys.

4. Passenger research and implications for the franchise

This submission is informed by two specific strands of research, both of which evidence passenger perspectives and priorities. These form the basis for our top level recommendations for the franchise.

The National Passenger Survey (NPS), together with an analysis of the drivers of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, is a comprehensive source of information about passenger perceptions. Scores on a wide range of factors are available for each of the three existing franchises¹ and these can also be broken down to show variations across the main service groups within them.

Further insight into passenger views, priorities and aspirations is drawn from the initial findings of detailed route based research with passengers. In preparation for the franchise consultation we have conducted a large-scale study involving 5520 passengers on existing FCC and SER routes². With fieldwork conducted between February and March 2012, this research has just reported.

The decision to survey passengers across many SER routes was based on the Department's intention to consider "some further current Southeastern services which may be transferred to enable the implementation of the full Thameslink service operation."³ As the Thameslink service pattern is expected to be subject to further consultation before being finalised, and with the re-franchise of SER also on the horizon, we felt that this was the appropriate time to take a more rounded picture of passenger needs across the SER network.

Passenger Focus conducted extensive research with passengers on eight Southern routes in November 2007 to inform the specification for the current franchise⁴. Although there have been changes we believe that many of the findings from this work remain applicable. It was decided, therefore, that our new research should focus on developing knowledge of passengers' needs on routes we have not previously studied and that will be included in, or potentially considered for, the initial stages of the new Thameslink franchise.

Further analysis of the route based research and NPS will be fed into our response to the franchise consultation.

¹ First Capital Connect, Southeastern and Southern

² See Appendix 2 for details of routes and sample sizes

³ OJEU notice, Department for Transport, 19/12/11

⁴ A passenger focused franchise? What passengers want from South Central, April 2008

4.1 Passenger Priorities

Tables 1 and 2 show the passenger priorities for improvement across different routes on the First Capital Connect and Southeastern franchises, with the top factor ranked at 100 and the value of other factors indicating the relative strength of importance⁵. The significance of punctuality and reliability and value for money is clearly demonstrated.

Table 1 – First Capital Connect passenger priorities by route⁶

Factor	Overall Rank	TOTAL	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Punctuality / reliability of the train	1	100	100	96	100	100	100	100	94
Value for money for price of ticket	2	80	47	100	92	90	65	73	100
Frequency of trains for this route	3	63	73	54	76	46	46	70	62
Being able to get a seat on the train	4	49	30	59	41	65	29	42	58
Length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed)	5	32	22	36	28	40	21	32	43
Provision of information during times of disruption	6	27	23	23	28	26	32	28	32
Upkeep/ repair and cleanliness of the train	7	25	18	22	21	28	26	24	38
Ease of buying a ticket	8	16	9	17	20	18	14	15	26
Provision of information during the journey	9	16	13	15	22	16	17	17	18
Connections with other train services	10	15	13	12	16	19	15	15	16
Availability of staff	11	11	8	11	14	9	13	13	15
Quality of facilities and services at the station (e.g. toilets/shops/cafes)	12	11	6	10	12	11	11	10	19
Ease of getting to and from the station	13	9	5	10	11	9	10	9	12
Facilities and services on board the train	14	7	4	6	7	9	6	6	11

⁵ Green indicates the top three factors on each route and paler green the next most important.

⁶ Key to sub routes at Table 1:

A – Thameslink Loop,

B – Blackfriars/Kentish Town to Luton/Bedford,

C – Blackfriars/Kentish Town to Harpenden,

D – St Pancras/London Bridge to Three Bridges and Brighton,

E – St Pancras/London Bridge to Denmark Hill/Sevenoaks,

F – Kings Cross/Moorgate to Hertford North and

G – Kings Cross/Finsbury Park to Arslay/Peterborough

Table 2 – Southeastern passenger priorities by service group

<i>Factor</i>	Overall rank	Total*	Highspeed	mainline	metro
Value for money for price of ticket	1	100	100	100	81
Punctuality / reliability of the train	2	98	71	87	100
Frequency of trains for this route	3	62	48	53	71
Being able to get a seat on the train	4	59	45	52	59
Length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed)	5	42	38	47	31
Provision of information during times of disruption	6	31	27	29	29
Upkeep/ repair and cleanliness of the train	7	29	24	29	26
Ease of buying a ticket	8	20	22	17	17
Provision of information during the journey	9	19	16	18	17
Connections with other train services	10	16	17	14	14
Availability of staff	11	15	16	15	13
Quality of facilities and services at the station	12	14	17	14	11
Ease of getting to and from the station	13	13	15	12	9
Facilities and services on board the train	14	10	12	11	6

* NB-Total shown as illustration only. Sampling across the different routes mean that these figures are not representative of the franchise as a whole.

4.1.1 Core priorities for the Thameslink franchise

Recommendation: The core priorities the Thameslink franchise must address are the fundamentals for all passengers. These are:

- providing a punctual and reliable service
- delivering value for money
- provision of sufficient capacity, both in terms of frequency of service and sufficient seating on the train
- effective management of any disruption, especially through information to passengers.

The relatively high priority (fifth overall) for improvements to the length of time the journey was scheduled to take suggests that improving the speed of journeys will merit further consideration in the new franchise.

4.2 National Passenger Survey and drivers of satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

Evidence from the National Passenger Survey (NPS) reinforces the importance of some of the highest priorities identified for the franchise.

4.2.1 Drivers of satisfaction

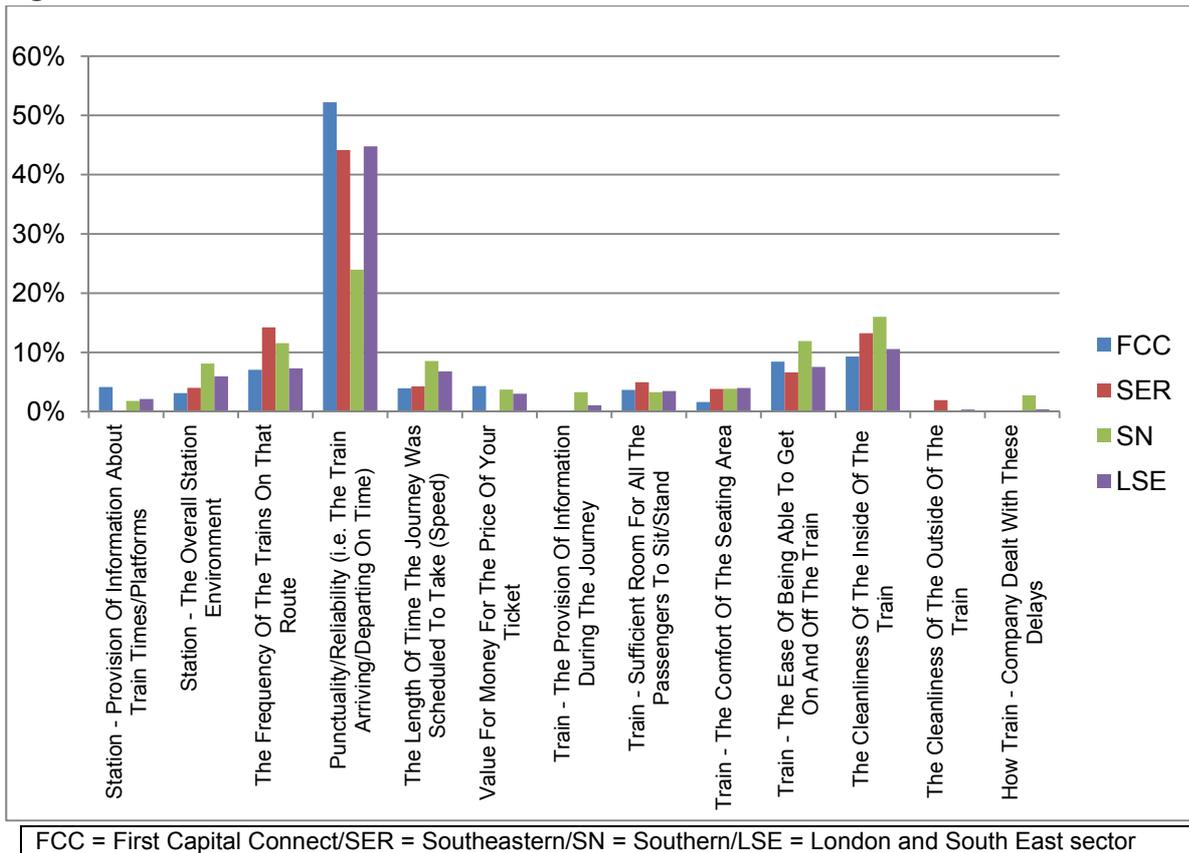
Figure 1 shows the dominance of punctuality and reliability as a driver of satisfaction for passengers on all three franchises. It is a particularly strong factor for satisfaction with FCC and, at 52%, is higher than the London and South East (LSE) sector average of 45%. The Southeastern score of 44% is in line with the sector. The strength of punctuality and reliability on Southern is

lower, at 24% but, nevertheless, this still remains the most significant factor influencing passenger satisfaction.

Other notable drivers of passenger satisfaction are cleanliness of the inside of the train, frequency of trains and ease of being able to get on and off the train. This latter factor can relate both to the impact of crowding on ability to board heavily loaded trains and difficulties with physical access.

For Southern the length of journey and overall station environment are also notable drivers of satisfaction.

Figure 1 Drivers of satisfaction NPS Autumn 2011

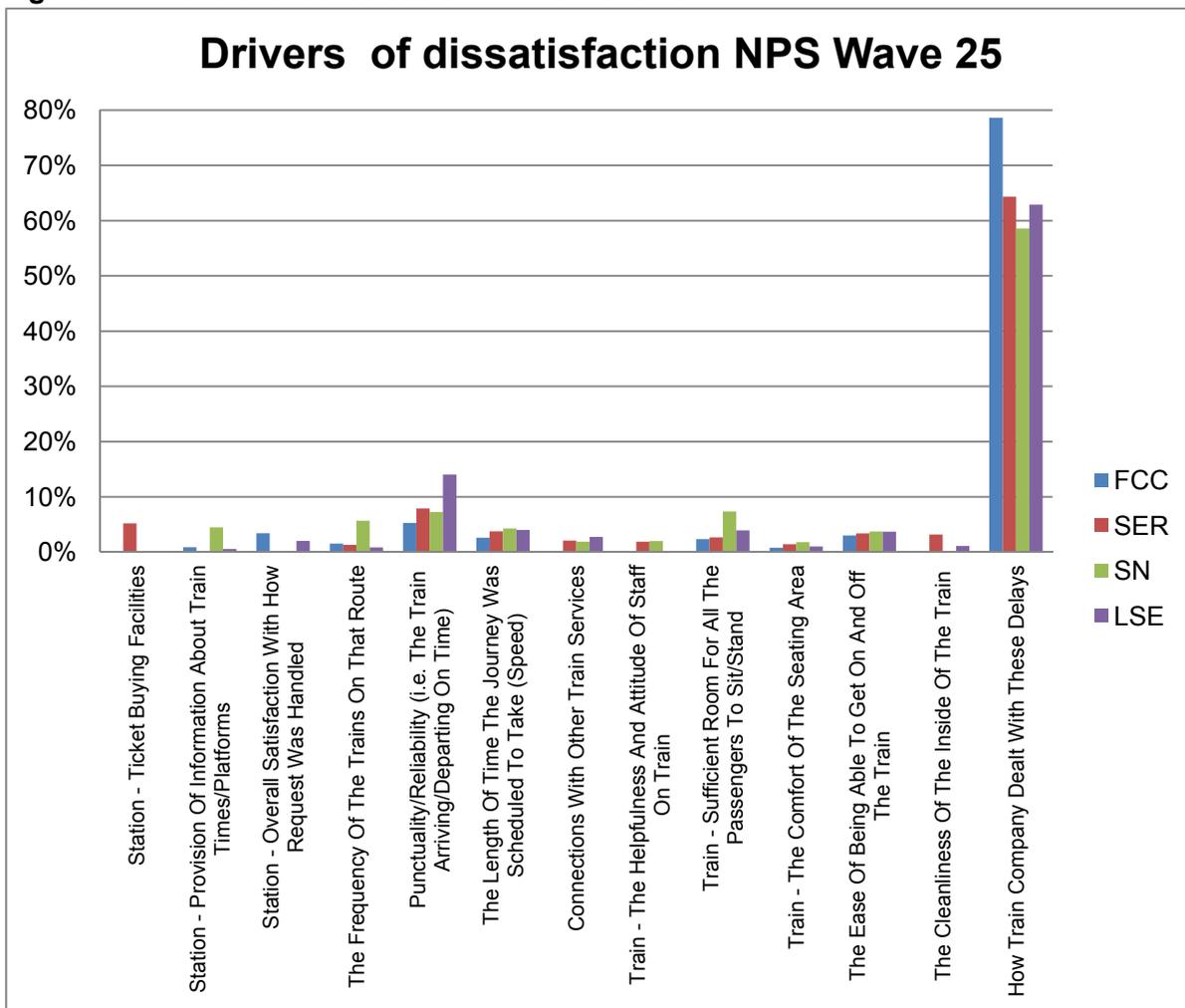


4.2.2 Drivers of dissatisfaction

An analysis of the factors that drive passenger dissatisfaction (shown in Figure 2) also echoes the importance of passengers' key priorities. How the train company dealt with delays is, by far and away, the main driver of dissatisfaction. This factor scores 79, 64 and 59% for FCC, SER and SN respectively. It is clear that where delays are not dealt with well, passengers will be dissatisfied.

Poor perception of punctuality and reliability is the secondary factor driving dissatisfaction. For Southern, sufficient room for passengers also ranks alongside this as a driver.

Figure 2 Drivers of dissatisfaction – NPS wave 25



4.2.3 NPS scores by train operator and building block

Table 3 below shows autumn 2011 NPS scores for FCC, SER and SN, together with their performance compared to the London and South East sector index. It illustrates some variation in passenger satisfaction across different factors on each operator and also reinforces the very low satisfaction with value for money and the handling of delays.

NPS can also be disaggregated into route groups for each operator. Known as ‘building blocks’ these show how passenger satisfaction varies across each network and highlight differences that would otherwise be masked by the overall averages for the train operator.

Appendix 3 shows a further breakdown of NPS scores by the building blocks for each operator and Appendix 4 shows how the drivers of satisfaction also vary by building block.

Recommendation: Given the variation in scores by TOC and building block Passenger Focus recommends that the specification requires proposals for a route-based management approach to ensure sufficient attention is directed to important aspects of service at appropriate levels within the new franchise.

Table 3 NPS Autumn 2011 scores for FCC, SER, SN and comparison with London and South East sector scores, % satisfied

	LSE	FCC	TOC index	SER	TOC index	SN	TOC index
Overall Satisfaction	83	80	96	83	99	83	99
Station Factors							
Overall satisfaction	77	76	98	78	101	78	102
Ticket buying facilities	72	68	96	66	92	73	102
Provision of information about train times/platforms	80	77	96	80	100	81	101
The upkeep/repair of station buildings/platforms	65	63	97	64	98	67	103
Cleanliness	71	70	99	72	102	72	102
The facilities and services	49	50	101	51	103	50	102
The attitudes and helpfulness of the staff	69	66	96	69	100	70	101
Connections with other forms of public transport	74	73	99	75	102	73	99
Facilities for car parking	49	45	93	47	96	44	91
Overall environment	67	64	96	68	101	69	103
Your personal security whilst using	66	65	99	63	95	68	104
The availability of staff	57	55	97	56	99	58	103
How request to station staff was handled	85	85	100	80	94	85	100
Train Factors							
The frequency of the trains on that route	77	76	99	75	98	76	98
Punctuality/reliability (i.e. the train arriving/departing on time)	80	77	95	80	100	78	97
The length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed)	83	83	99	81	97	84	101
Connections with other train services	75	76	100	71	94	76	101
The value for money for the price of your ticket	42	38	92	36	86	42	102
Cleanliness Of The Train	74	65	87	70	95	72	97
Up keep and repair of the train	75	63	84	72	96	71	95
Provision of information during the journey	69	47	68	66	96	72	105
Helpfulness and attitude of staff on train	57	32	56	52	91	61	105
Space for luggage	52	44	84	48	93	48	93
Toilet facilities	35	25	73	32	90	36	102
Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand	67	60	90	63	94	66	98
Comfort of the seating area	71	62	86	67	93	72	100
Ease of being able to get on and off	80	74	93	79	99	76	95
Personal security whilst on board	75	68	91	71	95	76	101
Cleanliness of the inside	75	65	87	72	96	72	97
Cleanliness of the outside	74	60	81	70	94	74	100
Availability of staff	39	14	37	33	84	40	102
How well train company deals with delays	36	33	91	26	72	35	97

LSE = London and South East sector
TOC = Train operating company

The TOC index figure shows whether (and the extent to which) the individual train operator scores are above or below the average for the sector. Scores above 100 % indicate a higher than average score whilst those below 100 show a lower than average performance.

5. Key issues for the franchise specification

5.1 Giving passengers a voice in the new franchise

The ultimate measure of whether a train company is performing well is whether passengers are happy with the quality of service provided. This is good from a commercial perspective as well as a customer service one as recent conclusions on passenger demand forecasting⁷ suggest that service quality does have an impact on levels of demand.

The DfT's specification for the new franchise must stretch the successful bidder to take Thameslink passenger satisfaction to higher levels. As we can see from the analysis above (and in Appendix 3) this should apply both for the franchise as a whole and at a building block level where there is a need to bring the worst areas up to the performance of the best.

The National Passenger Survey (NPS) is ideally suited to capture this information. NPS has a large sample size covering over 5000 passengers across the existing three TOCs each wave. The sampling plan ensures that it is representative of day of travel, journey purpose (commuter, business and leisure), train company and, of course, by a range of demographic attributes (age, sex, ethnicity etc). In line with existing DfT policy, bidders for the new franchise should be asked to submit bids that include plans on how to improve NPS scores.

Recommendation: Passenger Focus recommends the setting of NPS targets for stations, trains and customer service for each of the identified service groups. Doing so simply at a global level risks masking the poorer performing areas.

5.2 Value for money

Passengers are paying an increasingly high proportion of the costs of the railway and this makes the delivery of value for money a significant challenge. The Passenger Focus fares and ticketing study⁸ investigated the influences on passenger perceptions of value for money. It found that whilst intrinsically linked to the price of the ticket, value for money is also influenced by several other significant factors. These link directly to the findings of priorities research and NPS drivers and are:

- punctuality and reliability
- being able to get a seat
- passenger information during service disruption.

Improving passenger satisfaction with these core elements of the train service must be a high priority for the Thameslink franchise.

Another important factor to assist in delivering value for money is to ensure that fares and ticketing processes are fair, impartial and clear, enabling passengers to purchase the cheapest appropriate ticket for their journey. Recommendations relating to fares and ticketing are addressed in section 5.7.

⁷ Revisiting the elasticity based framework. DfT, April 2012

⁸ Fares and Ticketing Study Final report, February 2009

5.3. Punctuality and reliability

Table 4 NPS punctuality and reliability autumn 2011, % satisfied

First Capital Connect		Southeastern		Southern	
Great Northern	79	High Speed	93	Gatwick Express	93
Thameslink Loop	77	Mainline	76	Sussex Coast	77
Thameslink North	77	Metro	81	Metro	78
Thameslink South	68				
Peak	68	Peak	70	Peak	68
Off-Peak	80	Off-Peak	86	Off-Peak	81

Table 4 shows considerable variations in satisfaction between and within the three franchises, with peak services and the Thameslink South building block scoring worst. Only the premium fare High Speed and Gatwick Express services achieve more than 90% passenger satisfaction. With the exception of SER metro, all other building blocks are below the London and South East sector average of 80%.

Improving performance is a high passenger priority for improvement and the next franchise should address this significant issue.

Research by Passenger Focus⁹ found that commuters appear to notice lateness from the first minute, not just after the five or ten minutes allowed by Public Performance Measure (PPM). It was also found that the average passenger lateness in the evening peak was worse than the average train lateness. This was because of the effect of cancellations and because many trains were late arriving at intermediate stations even if on time at their destination.

Passenger Focus's principal conclusion from the research is that Britain's railway must in future focus on 'right time' arrival at all stops. We recommend that this is carried into the new Thameslink franchise.

Recommendation: Passenger Focus recommends that DfT includes the following punctuality requirements in the specification for the new franchise:

- **Challenging but achievable PPM targets for the franchise as a whole and key service groups.**
- **Punctuality should be disaggregated to the maximum extent possible to be meaningful to passengers. This should include (as a minimum) reporting on all identifiable routes and service groups – ultimately we see no reason why passengers ought not to be able to identify performance of individual trains.**
- **Challenging but achievable targets for reductions in the number of trains reaching their destination more than 20 minutes late, but without resorting to extended journey times.**
- **Moves towards a 'right-time' railway – possibly involving the reduction of the current five minutes allowance and/or publication of right-time performance.**
- **A requirement to report performance of trains arriving at key intermediate stations which for simplicity could also function as stations against which 'right-time' performance is published.**

⁹ Towards a 'right time' East Anglian railway, March 2010

5.4 Capacity and frequency

The severe crowding on certain London commuter services is well-documented and, even with the planned interventions on infrastructure and enhancements to the train fleet, provision of sufficient capacity will remain an ongoing challenge.

Table 5 shows current passenger satisfaction levels with frequency of service and room for passengers to sit and stand. The low level of peak passenger satisfaction with sufficient room to sit and stand on all services bar the premium High speed and Gatwick Express illustrates the scale of the capacity challenge. The lower levels of satisfaction with peak frequency should also be addressed on the Thameslink Loop, Thameslink South and Southeastern main line.

Table 5 NPS Peak and off-peak satisfaction with frequency and capacity by building block¹⁰

Factor	FCC				SER			SN		
	GN	Loop	TL N	TL S	HS	ML	Metro	GEx	SC	Metro
The frequency of the trains on that route PEAK	79	59	71	59	82	62	71	98	74	69
The frequency of the trains on that route OFF-PEAK	75	67	83	77	85	78	79	97	78	74
Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand PEAK	35	53	42	33	84	46	36	83	36	45
Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand OFF-PEAK	67	77	68	64	91	77	74	84	70	76

The specification for the future franchise should provide a framework to ensure that service provision is based on passenger needs and priorities and is linked to key measures of passenger satisfaction. This should require the operator to plan, resource and deliver a passenger focused, optimised service pattern.

Whilst acknowledging the need for some flexibility to adapt the train service to changing demands, Passenger Focus is clear that there must be sufficient detail in the specification to protect key journey opportunities. These must include journeys to/from school and work and, at key locations, retain or improve connection opportunities.

Recommendation: It is imperative that provision of an effective response to capacity needs throughout the term of the contract is made a core requirement of the new franchise. This will need to extend to services expected to be outside the scope of the Thameslink programme.

Recommendation: As a minimum Passenger Focus would expect the specification to give a broad outline of the core service to be provided: frequency, first and last trains, basic service patterns, and key journey times.

¹⁰ Spring and autumn 2011 combined. Please see Appendix 2 for route abbreviation definitions.

Recommendation: The franchise should also consider passenger aspirations in planning future service provision. There must be a requirement to consult fully and meaningfully with the range of stakeholder groups and demonstrate that the needs of differing groups of passengers have been considered when timetable proposals are brought forward.

5.5 Dealing with disruption and provision of information

Effective management of disruption and keeping passengers informed must be a key requirement for the next franchise. Table 5 sets out NPS scores for dealing with delays on FCC, SER and SN. Despite an increased focus on these issues over recent years, even the highest scores indicate still only about a third of passengers are satisfied with the way delays are dealt with. There must be significant improvement in this critical factor driving passenger dissatisfaction.

Table 6 Satisfaction with how well the train company dealt with delay autumn 2007 -2011

% satisfied	FCC	SER	SN
Autumn 2007	25	34	34
Autumn 2008	31	32	33
Autumn 2009	32	25	33
Autumn 2010	34	34	35
Autumn 2011	33	26	35

Passenger Focus supports efforts by the industry to tackle the challenge of improving the management of disruption and also to raise standards of information provision. Research into a number of aspects of disruption and passenger needs for information¹¹ has identified the problems to be addressed and shown how solutions may be found.

Recommendations: Passenger Focus recommends the following requirements are incorporated into the key objectives for the Thameslink franchise to improve the management of service disruption and provision of information to passengers:

- **contractual targets to improve NPS satisfaction with the provision of information during the journey, and that a strategy be developed and implemented to improve NPS scores for “how well train company dealt with delay” and “usefulness of information during a delay”**
- **a facility for passengers to receive email or SMS text alerts free of charge warning them if disruption will, or is likely to, affect their journey – with an associated requirement to achieve a strong level of uptake through marketing of the service**
- **full adoption of the Association of Train Operators (ATOC) *Approved Code of Practice - passenger information during disruption* and compliance with the Good Practice Guides on provision of passenger information, together with a programme of audit and mystery shopping to assess delivery on the ground**
- **that active co-operation be required with the programme to feed station customer information systems directly from Darwin, the national real time train running database.**

The next franchisee must also be required to show what practical steps they will take to improve how passengers are looked after during service disruption, particularly demonstrating their focus on people rather than simply processes.

¹¹ Delays and Disruption – Rail passenger have their say, Passenger Focus, December 2010

Reading station engineering works – what passengers want, Passenger Focus, May 2011

Information: Rail passengers’ needs during unplanned disruption, Passenger Focus and Southern, August 2011

5.6 Length of time of journey

Improvements to the speed of the journey ranks fifth in passengers' priorities and it appears as a driver of satisfaction on Southern. A new forecasting model has also suggested a higher sensitivity to journey times than previously thought and a potential increase in passenger demand from speeding up rail journeys¹².

Table 6 shows NPS satisfaction scores for the length of time the journey was scheduled to take. Whilst these scores are not as low as those for capacity factors, peak satisfaction is notably lower than off-peak. SER mainline scores are also below those for metro and substantially lower than High speed, possibly because these traditional services are seen in a stark contrast to the journey times on the latter.

Table 7 NPS satisfaction with length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed), autumn 2011, % satisfied

First Capital Connect		Southeastern		Southern	
Great Northern	85	High Speed	94	Gatwick Express	95
Thameslink Loop	78	Mainline	74	Sussex Coast	83
Thameslink North	83	Metro	83	Metro	84
Thameslink South	78				
Peak	75	Peak	74	Peak	76
Off-Peak	86	Off-Peak	85	Off-Peak	86

Recommendation: We recommend that the franchise specification encourages bidders to explore where and how journey times can be reduced. In addition to examining opportunities to improve peak service journey times there should also be a requirement to consider the needs of local markets and to work with passenger groups to identify particular areas where these improvements should be targeted.

Joint working with Network Rail should ensure the delivery of journey time improvements is given due consideration when infrastructure works are planned.

5.7 Fares and ticket retailing

Passengers have experienced years of above inflation fare increases. The recent Fares and Ticketing review talked of an end to such increases but only once the impact of cost saving measures and improvement in the wider economic situation permits. Passenger Focus supports the concept of fares regulation as it provides some degree of protection to passengers, many of whom are captive consumers.

Recommendations: Passenger Focus recommends that the next Thameslink franchise incorporates these recommendations on ticket retailing within the requirements:

- the level of flexibility that can be applied to increases in individual fares should be restricted to a maximum of +/- 2% which will allow the train operator to correct any anomalies between fares and address market issues where appropriate but will limit the ability to drive large differences between fares relating to specific routes/stations
- increases to unregulated fares should be capped at the same level applied to regulated fares

¹² Revisiting the elasticity-based framework, DfT, 2012

- **the journey opportunities of off-peak passengers should be protected and there should be no further dilution of periods of validity of off-peak tickets.**

The next Thameslink franchise must make ticket purchase easier for passengers, many of whom are confused by the complexity of the fares system. Clear information about the validity of tickets and any applicable restrictions must be readily available. Passengers should be able to buy the most appropriate ticket for their intended journey, regardless of whether this is purchased at a ticket office, on-line, at a ticket machine or through any other method. Research has identified a number of issues with both ticket vending machines (TVMs) and websites and these problems are set out, with recommendations about how to improve retailing through these channels, in:

Recommendation: The next Thameslink franchise should incorporate recommendations on ticket retailing from the following Passenger Focus publications:

- **Ticket vending machine usability, Passenger Focus, June 2010**
- **Ticket retailing: website usability, Passenger Focus, June 2011**

The new franchise should provide a wider range of tickets for passengers. Developments in ticketing such as smart-cards and mobile telephone products should be incorporated into the franchise. The franchise should also require the introduction of innovative new products such as carnet style tickets that will enable passengers who cannot benefit from season ticket discounts to achieve some economies from repeat travel. Schemes to spread the cost of annual season tickets should also be available.

Recommendation: Ticket purchase for passengers must be made easier and the franchise should provide a wider range of tickets including innovative new products.

6. Equity and access

The new franchise must incorporate requirements to ensure that the needs of all potential passengers are recognised and addressed. The specific needs of passengers who are disabled or who have other access needs must be considered and appropriate adjustments made to ensure stations and trains can be utilised safely at all stages of the journey, with necessary assistance provided when required.

7. Conclusion

This initial submission on the next Thameslink franchise considers the key requirements of passengers and sets out our high level recommendations on core elements of the service.

7.1 Further research and analysis

Passenger Focus will be undertaking additional analysis of the passenger research on FCC and SER routes and further examination of NPS scores for all three franchises. This will provide further, more detailed information about specific issues to address on different parts of the network. We will provide this information at the earliest opportunity to DfT and bidders and will also utilise the findings in our more detailed response to the franchise consultation.

8. Contact for further information

For further information about this submission or other aspects of Passenger Focus work on the Thameslink franchise please contact:

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Appendix 1

Passenger Focus recommendations

1. A core principle should be that the specification must build on the existing framework of services and seek progressive improvements in all areas of performance. It is important that the franchise ensures that existing demands are adequately addressed and, that at appropriate stages, franchise reviews can respond to any changes or inaccuracies in planning assumptions. (2.Introduction)
2. The core priorities the Thameslink franchise must address are the fundamentals for all passengers. These are:
 - providing a punctual and reliable service
 - delivering value for money
 - provision of sufficient capacity, both in terms of frequency of service and sufficient seating on the train
 - effective management of any disruption, especially through information to passengers. (Para 4.1.1)
3. Given the variation in scores by TOC and building block Passenger Focus recommends that the specification requires proposals for a route-based management approach to ensure sufficient attention is directed to important aspects of service at appropriate levels within the new franchise. (Para 4.2.3)
4. Passenger Focus recommends the setting of NPS targets for stations, trains and customer service for each of the identified service groups. Doing so simply at a global level risks masking the poorer performing areas. (Para 5.1)
5. Passenger Focus recommends that DfT includes the following punctuality requirements in the specification for the new franchise:
 - Challenging but achievable PPM targets for the franchise as a whole and key service groups.
 - Punctuality should be disaggregated to the maximum extent possible to be meaningful to passengers. This should include (as a minimum) reporting on all identifiable routes and service groups – ultimately we see no reason why passengers ought not to be able to identify performance of individual trains.
 - Challenging but achievable targets for reductions in the number of trains reaching their destination more than 20 minutes late, but without resorting to extended journey times.
 - Moves towards a 'right-time' railway – possibly involving the reduction of the current five minutes allowance and/or publication of right-time performance.
 - A requirement to report performance of trains arriving at key intermediate stations which for simplicity could also function as stations against which 'right-time' performance is published.(Para 5.3)
6. It is imperative that provision of an effective response to capacity needs throughout the term of the contract is made a core requirement of the new franchise. This will need to extend to services expected to be outside the scope of the Thameslink programme. (Para 5.4)
7. As a minimum Passenger Focus would expect the specification to give a broad outline of the core service to be provided: frequency, first and last trains, basic service patterns, and key journey times. (Para 5.4)
8. The franchise should also consider passenger aspirations in planning future service provision. There must be a requirement to consult fully and meaningfully with the range of stakeholder

groups and demonstrate that the needs of differing groups of passengers have been considered when timetable proposals are brought forward. (Para 5.4)

9. Passenger Focus recommends the following requirements are incorporated into the key objectives for the Thameslink franchise to improve the management of service disruption and provision of information to passengers:
 - contractual targets to improve NPS satisfaction with the provision of information during the journey, and that a strategy be developed and implemented to improve NPS scores for 'how well train company dealt with delay' and 'usefulness of information during a delay'
 - a facility for passengers to receive email or SMS text alerts free of charge warning them if disruption will, or is likely to, affect their journey – with an associated requirement to achieve a strong level of uptake through marketing of the service
 - full adoption of the Association of Train Operators (*ATOC*) *Approved Code of Practice - passenger information during disruption* and compliance with the Good Practice Guides on provision of passenger information, together with a programme of audit and mystery shopping to assess delivery on the ground
 - that active co-operation be required with the programme to feed station customer information systems directly from Darwin, the national real time train running database. (Para 5.5)
10. We recommend that the franchise specification encourages bidders to explore where and how journey times can be reduced. In addition to examining opportunities to improve peak service journey times there should also be a requirement to consider the needs of local markets and to work with passenger groups to identify particular areas where these improvements should be targeted.

Joint working with Network Rail should ensure the delivery of journey time improvements is given due consideration when infrastructure works are planned. (5.6)

11. Passenger Focus recommends that the next Thameslink franchise incorporates these recommendations on ticket retailing within the requirements.
 - the level of flexibility that can be applied to increases in individual fares should be restricted to a maximum of +/- 2% which will allow the train operator to correct any anomalies between fares and address market issues where appropriate but will limit the ability to drive large differences between fares relating to specific routes/stations
 - increases to unregulated fares should be capped at the same level applied to regulated fares
 - the journey opportunities of off-peak passengers should be protected and there should be no further dilution of periods of validity of off-peak tickets.(5.7)
12. The next Thameslink franchise should incorporate recommendations on ticket retailing from the following Passenger Focus publications:
 - Ticket vending machine usability, Passenger Focus, June 2010
 - Ticket retailing: website usability, Passenger Focus, June 2011 (5.7)
13. Ticket purchases for passengers must be made easier and the franchise should provide a wider range of tickets including innovative new products. (Para 5.7)

Appendix 2 Route based research on First Capital Connect and Southeastern

First Capital Connect route definitions and sample sizes

Loop:

Stations within the FCC Thameslink loop (498)

FCC North (TL N):

Blackfriars/Kentish Town to Luton/Bedford (500)

Blackfriars/Kentish Town to Harpenden (300)

FCC South (TL S):

St Pancras/London Bridge to Three Bridges/Brighton (557)

St Pancras/London Bridge to Denmark Hill/Sevenoaks (210)

Great Northern (GN):

Kings Cross/Moorgate to Hertford North (462)

Kings Cross/Finsbury Park to Welwyn North /Foxton (119)

Kings Cross/Finsbury Park to Cambridge/Kings Lynn (87)

Kings Cross/Finsbury Park to Arsley/Peterborough (259)

Stations between Cambridge and Kings Lynn (108)

Southeastern route definitions and sample sizes

Highspeed (400) (HS):

Mainline (1104) (ML):

Hastings/Tonbridge to London (440)

Rochester/Ramsgate to London (244)

Ashford to London via Maidstone East (254)

Other Mainline routes (166)

Metro (916):

Gravesend/Dartford to London (404)

Metro: Sevenoaks to London (512)

Appendix 3

NPS autumn 2011 - scores by building block, % satisfied

	LSE	Grt N	TL Loop	TL North	TL South	FCC	High Speed	Mainline	Metro	SER	GEX	Metro	Sx Coast	SN
Overall Satisfaction	83	82	84	80	72	80	94	79	83	83	89	84	81	83
Station Factors														
Overall satisfaction	77	78	71	74	76	76	89	76	78	78	77	80	77	78
Ticket buying facilities	72	68	63	68	73	68	80	67	64	66	73	73	73	73
Information provision - train times/platforms	80	77	73	76	80	77	82	79	81	80	80	80	82	81
Upkeep/repair - station buildings/platforms	65	63	60	67	59	63	84	66	62	64	67	67	68	67
Cleanliness of the station	71	70	68	74	65	70	87	72	71	72	64	73	73	72
Facilities and services	49	50	37	52	50	50	83	53	47	51	65	45	55	50
Attitudes/helpfulness of staff	69	68	66	63	66	66	82	68	68	69	69	70	69	70
Connections with other public transport	74	70	64	75	82	73	76	67	78	75	84	76	69	73
Facilities for car parking	49	49	19	49	38	45	64	63	37	47	35	34	55	44
Overall environment	67	63	56	68	64	64	83	69	66	68	67	67	71	69
Personal security whilst using	66	64	59	67	65	65	83	63	61	63	65	69	68	68
Availability of staff	57	51	48	56	68	55	77	58	54	56	54	58	59	58
How request to station staff was handled	85	85	79	85	90	85	89	81	78	80	89	80	90	85
Train Factors														
Frequency of trains on route	77	77	69	80	74	76	84	73	76	75	96	73	78	76
Punctuality/reliability (arriving/departing on time)	80	79	77	77	68	77	93	76	81	80	93	78	77	78
Time journey scheduled to take (speed)	83	85	78	83	78	83	94	74	83	81	95	83	84	84
Connections with other train services	75	78	77	73	73	76	82	64	73	71	83	78	74	76
Value for money for price of your ticket	42	37	42	37	41	38	37	39	34	36	34	42	43	42
Cleanliness of the train	74	66	63	65	62	65	97	70	68	70	80	67	76	72
Up-keep and repair of train	75	64	62	62	61	63	98	73	70	72	78	68	75	71
Provision of information during journey	69	48	43	45	48	47	92	70	63	66	77	70	75	72
Helpfulness/attitude of staff on train	57	35	35	26	34	32	91	63	33	52	80	44	69	61
Space for luggage	52	45	52	41	41	44	78	41	50	48	59	46	49	48
Toilet facilities	35	22	36	26	30	25	79	35	24	32	48	27	42	36
Room for all passengers to sit/stand	67	61	73	58	53	60	91	70	58	63	83	65	65	66
Comfort of the seating area	71	61	66	62	59	62	95	66	65	67	84	68	74	72
Ease of being able to get on/off	80	78	70	74	68	74	96	83	76	79	75	75	76	76
Personal security whilst on board	75	69	67	68	63	68	92	76	68	71	88	71	80	76
Cleanliness of inside	75	65	64	66	63	65	98	75	68	72	82	69	75	72
Cleanliness of outside	74	67	57	51	57	60	89	68	69	70	79	72	75	74
Availability of staff	39	16	12	12	16	14	82	46	17	33	75	22	52	40
How well train company deals with delay	36	32	38	33	31	33	40	31	23	26	26	35	36	35

Appendix 4

Multivariate analysis of drivers of satisfaction Spring/Autumn 2011, % impact

	FCC - Grt Northern	FCC - TL Loop	FCC - TL North	FCC - TL South	SER - High Speed	SER - Mainline	SER - Metro	SN - GEX	SN - Metro	SN - Sx Coast
Station Factors										
Ticket buying facilities										
Information provision - train times/platforms	4	5		4				8	7	
The upkeep/repair - station buildings/platforms										
Cleanliness of the station										
Facilities/services at station			5							
Attitudes/helpfulness of staff							4			
Connections with other public transport										
Facilities for car parking										
Availability of staff at station				5						
Overall station environment	2		10				8	8	9	8
Personal security whilst using station										2
How request to station staff was handled			4				2			
Train Factors										
Frequency of trains on route	10	6	16		8	17	12	7	12	13
Punctuality/reliability (train arriving/departing on time)	44	44	29	65	54	48	33	34	16	27
Time journey scheduled to take (Speed)	6					5	3		7	9
Connections with other train services										
The value for money for the price of your ticket			10			3			3	5
Up-keep and repair of train			4					7	2	2
The provision of Information during journey			3		6				5	
Helpfulness/attitude of staff										
Space for luggage								6		
Toilet facilities										
Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand	9	6		5	11	7	3		4	4
Comfort of the seating area					9	4	3	8		9
Ease of being able to get on/off	13	10	15			5	12	8	13	11
Personal security on board				9	5			7		
Availability of staff on train										
Cleanliness of inside train	12	28	5	7		11	18	6	16	9
Cleanliness outside of train				6	7		2			
How well train company dealt with delays									6	
TOTAL VARIANCE	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
NUMBER OF FACTORS	8	6	10	7	7	8	11	10	12	11

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