

# TransPennine Express and Northern rail franchise consultations – Passenger Focus response

August 2014



## Contents

1 Passenger Focus .....	6
2 Introduction and key points .....	6
2.1 Franchise consultation response .....	7
3 Passenger research and implications for the franchise .....	8
3.1 The Passenger Focus evidence base .....	8
3.1.1 Rail passengers' priorities for improvement 2014 .....	8
3.1.2 Drivers of passenger satisfaction .....	12
3.1.3 Drivers of passenger dissatisfaction.....	13
3.1.4 Satisfaction with value for money and the overall journey.....	14
3.1.5 Passenger trust in the rail industry .....	15
3.2 Assessment of top level priorities for the franchise.....	16
4. Addressing key passenger requirements .....	17
4.1 Capacity.....	17
4.1.2 Making better use of capacity.....	18
4.1.3 Off-peak capacity .....	21
4.2 Reliability and performance .....	21
4.2.1 Resilience.....	22
4.3 Managing disruption .....	23
4.3.1 Managing service disruption – engineering works.....	23
4.3.2 Managing service disruption – unplanned.....	24
4.4 Rail value for money .....	25
5. Initial consultation questions .....	27
5.1 Trade-offs .....	27
5.1.1 TO1: What are your views on increasing below-average fares over time	27
5.1.2 TO2: What are your views on giving priority to improving the quality of the Northern rolling stock .....	29
5.1.2.1 Rolling stock options .....	33
5.1.3 TO3 – What are your views on allowing some reduction in the hours ticket offices are open and staffed.....	33
5.2 Community rail and other partnerships .....	35
COM1: How can local communities, local businesses and other organisations be further stimulated to play an active part .....	35
COM2: What opportunities are there for Community Rail Partnerships to expand their role and range of activities? .....	35
5.2.1 Northern England partnerships .....	35

5.2.2 The value of Community Rail Partnerships .....	36
5.2.3 Passenger growth .....	36
5.2.4 Recommendations on data and passenger counts .....	36
5.2.5 Local community and business involvement .....	37
5.2.6 Development and expansion opportunities .....	38
5.2.7 Recommendation – Community Rail Partnership development .....	39
5.3 Third party funded changes .....	39
5.3.1 TPF1: Are you aware of any proposals for third-party funded changes not already indicated? .....	39
5.4 Future impacts on demand .....	40
5.4.1 FID1: What factors may impact on demand for travel on the new Northern and TPE franchises?.....	40
5.5 Door-to-door journeys .....	40
DTD1: What are your proposals for providing passengers better and safer access to different modes of transport at stations (including bus, tram, cycling and walking?) .....	40
DTD2: How do you suggest your proposals to improve the door-to-door journey experience might be funded? .....	40
5.5.1 Improving station access .....	40
6. TransPennine service specification and service options .....	42
6.1 Passenger Priorities and perceptions relating to the service specification.....	42
6.2 Determining the service specification and service options.....	45
TPE1: What are your views on the degree of flexibility proposed for the train service specification for the new TPE franchise? .....	45
The comments and principles below are also applicable to the following questions: NTP1 - 6, STP1- 5 and NW1 - 3 .....	45
6.3 Potential franchise remapping .....	46
6.3.1 Principles relating to potential franchise remapping .....	46
6.4 Comments on options for routes, re-mapping and connectivity .....	47
6.4.1 NTP2: Are there other options for any additional North TransPennine (NTP) services that you would put forward for consideration? .....	47
6.4.2 NTP5: Are there other options for Hull, Middlesbrough or Scarborough services that you would put forward for consideration.....	47
6.4.3 STP1: What factors do you consider should be taken into account in the assessment of the option to specify one additional train per hour on the South TransPennine route.....	47
6.4.4 STP2: What factors do you consider should be taken into account in the assessment of the remapping and South Humberside connectivity options .....	48

6.4.5 STP 3: Are there other options that you would put forward for consideration? .....	48
6.4.6 STP5: If the ITT were to specify a third South TransPennine service via Stockport, or remapping of the EMT service to TPE, do you consider that it should specify which of these services should terminate at Manchester Airport or Liverpool .....	48
6.4.7 What factors do you consider should be taken into account in the assessment of the North West remapping options.....	49
6.4.8 What factors do you consider should be taken into account in the assessment of the Barrow and Windermere connectivity options? .....	49
6.4.9 What factors do you consider should be taken into account in the assessment of the options for Anglo-Scottish services? .....	49
6.5 Changes to first, last and weekend trains .....	49
7. Northern train service specification .....	51
7.1 Passenger Priorities and perceptions relating to the service specification.....	51
7.2 Determining the service specification and service options.....	52
7.2.1 NTSR1: Please indicate with evidence where available where passengers would be better served and revenue increased .....	54
7.2.2 NTSR2: Please set out, with evidence where available, any other approaches that might improve route utilisation and make better use of existing resources on the Northern franchise .....	55
7.2.3 NTSR3: Please indicate, with evidence where available, where services should be improved on weekends, resources permitting .....	56
7.2.4 NTSR4: Please indicate, with evidence where available, where weekend services provide poor value for the subsidy required to operate them. ....	56
7.2.5 NTSR5: What are your views on retaining the route from Cleethorpes and Grimsby to Barton-on-Humber within the Northern franchise?.....	56
8. Delivering improvements for passengers .....	56
8.1 Improvements to service quality .....	56
8.2 Better railway stations.....	57
8.2.1 Station investment should focus on passenger needs .....	57
8.3 The importance of staffing and information.....	59
8.3.1 Passenger information .....	59
8.3.2 Staffing.....	60
8.3.3 Security and safety .....	61
8.4 Better on-train experiences.....	62
8.5 Specification of service quality, targets and transparency .....	63
8.5.1 National Rail Passenger Survey.....	64

8.5.2 Key Performance Indicators .....	64
8.5.3 Performance targets.....	65
8.5.4 Input vs. output measures .....	66
8.6 Passenger and stakeholder communication and engagement .....	66
8.7 Fares and Ticketing .....	67
8.7.1 Fares regulation .....	69
8.8 Revenue Protection .....	69
8.9 Compensation policies.....	71
8.10 Complaints handling .....	72
8.10.1.1 Legacy complaints .....	73
8.11 Accessibility, the Equality Act 2010 and minor works fund .....	73
9. Further information .....	74
Appendix 1 Northern and TPE NRPS building block route definitions.....	75
Appendix 2 Drivers of passenger satisfaction .....	76
2a Drivers of passenger satisfaction - Northern building blocks .....	76
2b Drivers of passenger dissatisfaction - Northern compared to regional sector..	77
2c Drivers of satisfaction - TPE building blocks .....	78
2d Drivers of dissatisfaction - TPE compared to long distance sector .....	79
Appendix 3 Southern bus replacement sign – an example of good practice .....	80
Appendix 4 Passenger Focus’s PIDD recommendations .....	80
Appendix 5 Passenger priorities for station requirements and improvements according to station footfall.....	87
Appendix 6 Information used at different stages of the journey.....	88
Appendix 7 Personal security concerns on stations .....	89
A – Northern and regional operators .....	89
B - TPE and long distance operators .....	89
Appendix 8 Personal security concerns on train .....	90
A – Northern and regional operators .....	90
B - TPE and long distance operators .....	90

## 1 Passenger Focus

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 an independent non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Transport (DfT).

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 and key points

Passenger Focus welcomes the opportunity to provide a rail passengers' perspective as the specifications for the next Northern and TransPennine franchises are developed. When the requirements of the new franchises are established it is vital that the needs of the passengers using and paying for the rail services are placed squarely at the heart of the contract.

Our response draws on two rich seams of franchise specific data. It combines knowledge and understanding drawn from passenger reports on their current journeys on Northern and TransPennine services with new information on passengers' priorities for improvement. Read together these complementary studies provide a unique perspective on passenger needs from the franchises and provide hard evidence to inform the decisions to be made for the future.

We also refer to a qualitative study into the views of Northern and TransPennine passengers undertaken in 2012<sup>1</sup> and draw on findings from our wider research into a range of issues that are important to passengers.

Our research, which will be detailed in further sections of this response, highlights the central importance to passengers of value for money, capacity and punctuality. These core needs must be the top requirements in the specification for both of the next franchises.

The ongoing capacity pressures on both franchises are well-documented and it is imperative that the future arrangements make effective provision for both current and future demand for rail travel. The extensive programme to deliver new infrastructure that is underway must transform rail travel opportunities in the North. The franchise

---

<sup>1</sup><http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/media/9c579370077fbf55766b11f099e10072a529627c/Northern%20TPE%20franchise%20FINAL%20DOC.pdf>



specifications must drive a step-change in the provision of rail services, and progressive improvements in all areas of performance.

The hallmark of the next period in the North will be the delivery of complex infrastructure upgrades and the introduction of new rolling stock, particularly on electrified routes. It is vital that the delivery of the new trains proceeds along with the infrastructure improvements, as these are integral to unlocking the long-awaited capacity and service improvements on these franchises. Alongside such substantial change, however, there will inevitably be disruption. It is critical that comprehensive, passenger-centric plans are carefully developed and implemented throughout this period of change.

Our research into passenger understanding of, and desire for involvement in, the franchise process led to our *Passenger Power!* campaign and a call for more recognition of the passenger within the franchising system. Recent announcements of franchise policy have made welcome commitments to a greater emphasis on the quality of the passenger experience and enhanced arrangements for engagement and communication with customers. It is important these promises are brought to life in the specification for the next franchises and that passengers can see these ideals manifest in the services they receive. There is an important role for the National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) in providing direct feedback from passengers using the services.

Passenger Focus is committed to the promotion of passenger interests in the future decisions on the Northern and TransPennine franchises. We will continue to work closely with DfT, and with potential bidders for the two operations, to ensure that services address both current and evolving needs throughout the contract term.

## **2.1 Franchise consultation response**

In this response we consider consultation questions for which we have relevant information and appropriate evidence of passenger needs and aspirations. We also provide a commentary on other significant issues which we believe should be addressed within the Northern and TransPennine franchise specifications and final contract.

Passenger Focus is adopting a strategic approach to this response, which focuses largely on higher level issues. Passengers and stakeholders will all have their own experiences and specific aspirations which they will want considered in future plans.

It is important that the DfT and the franchise bidders listen carefully to the views expressed by those whose lives are impacted by decisions about the future of the franchises and the day-to-day operations which result from this.

For brevity, we refer to the DfT when commenting on issues and consultation responses that need to be considered. However, we fully recognise the partnership established with Rail North and their role in the development of the franchise

specifications, along with the important perspective they will bring to the assessment of the needs of the region within the next franchises. Their long-term strategic interest and potential to develop regional transport plans that bolster economic growth, combined with the potential to exploit additional funding opportunities and create linkages with wider transport schemes, should bring benefits to the planning and delivery of rail services and the communities of the region.

## **3 Passenger research and implications for the franchise**

### **3.1 The Passenger Focus evidence base**

Passenger Focus is committed to evidence-based influencing and has a considerable body of research on matters that are important to passengers. Much of this is directly relevant to the specifications for the next Northern and TransPennine Express franchises.

In this section we highlight the findings of our latest investigations into passengers' priorities for improvement and trust in the rail industry and some of the core information about the current experience on the franchises, drawing on National Rail Passenger Survey data. Read together these complementary studies provide a unique perspective on passenger needs from the franchise and provide hard evidence to inform the decisions to be made for the future.

Other research is cited as applicable within following sections.

#### **3.1.1 Rail passengers' priorities for improvement 2014**

To calculate passengers' priorities, we used a statistical approach called 'Max-Diff' (Maximum Scaling Difference). This is a way of evaluating the relative importance of a large number of issues. Passengers were presented with lists of five priorities and they had to indicate their highest and lowest priority for improvement. 15 questions were asked in total which covered all 31 priorities. We used this approach because it is easier for the passenger to fill out the questionnaire, and it minimises the number of invalid questionnaires returned.

We previously carried out passenger priorities research in 2009; however the results from 2009 are not directly comparable with this survey. This is because we enhanced the survey by using the Max-Diff methodology (a ranking exercise was used in 2009) and we refreshed the priorities for improvement statements to make them clearer and more focussed, as well as replacing some priorities with new ones.



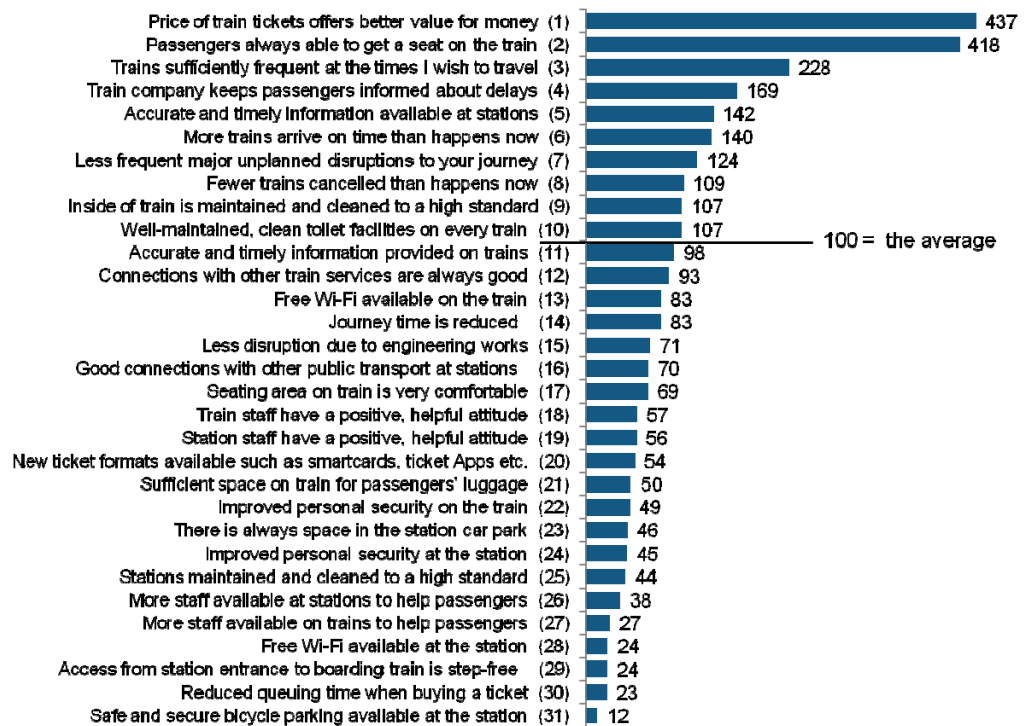
**Table 1 Passenger priorities for improvement: Great Britain, Northern and TPE**

	GB		N'n		TPE	
Price of train tickets offers better value for money	494	1	437	1	499	2
Passengers always able to get a seat on the train	367	2	418	2	513	1
Trains sufficiently frequent at the times I wish to travel	264	3	228	3	236	3
More trains arrive on time than happens now	178	4	140	6	131	5
Train company keeps passengers informed about delays	163	5	169	4	153	4
Less frequent major unplanned disruptions to your journey	161	6	124	7	112	8
Fewer trains cancelled than happens now	136	7	109	8	99	13
Accurate and timely information available at stations	132	8	142	5	129	6
Journey time is reduced	105	9	83	14	103	10
Free Wi-Fi available on the train	97	10	83	13	120	7
Inside of train is maintained and cleaned to a high standard	93	11	107	9	100	11
Accurate and timely information provided on trains	92	12	98	11	87	14
Less disruption due to engineering works	90	13	71	15	65	17
Well-maintained, clean toilet facilities on every train	89	14	107	10	108	9
Connections with other train services are always good	84	15	93	12	99	12
Good connections with other public transport at stations	62	16	70	16	72	16
Seating area on train is very comfortable	59	17	69	17	75	15
Train staff have a positive, helpful attitude	47	18	57	18	48	19
Station staff have a positive, helpful attitude	46	19	56	19	47	20
New ticket formats available such as smartcards, ticket Apps etc	45	20	54	20	31	22
Improved personal security on the train	41	21	49	22	22	27
Improved personal security at the station	38	22	45	24	22	26
Sufficient space on train for passengers' luggage	37	23	50	21	55	18
Stations maintained and cleaned to a high standard	36	24	44	25	36	21
More staff available at stations to help passengers	29	25	38	26	26	24
There is always space in the station car park	27	26	46	23	23	25
Free Wi-Fi available at the station	24	27	24	28	26	23
More staff available on trains to help passengers	20	28	27	27	17	29
Reduced queuing time when buying a ticket	20	29	23	30	20	28
Access from station entrance to boarding train is step-free	15	30	24	29	13	30
Safe and secure bicycle parking available at the station	10	31	12	31	13	31
sample size	3,559		279		69	

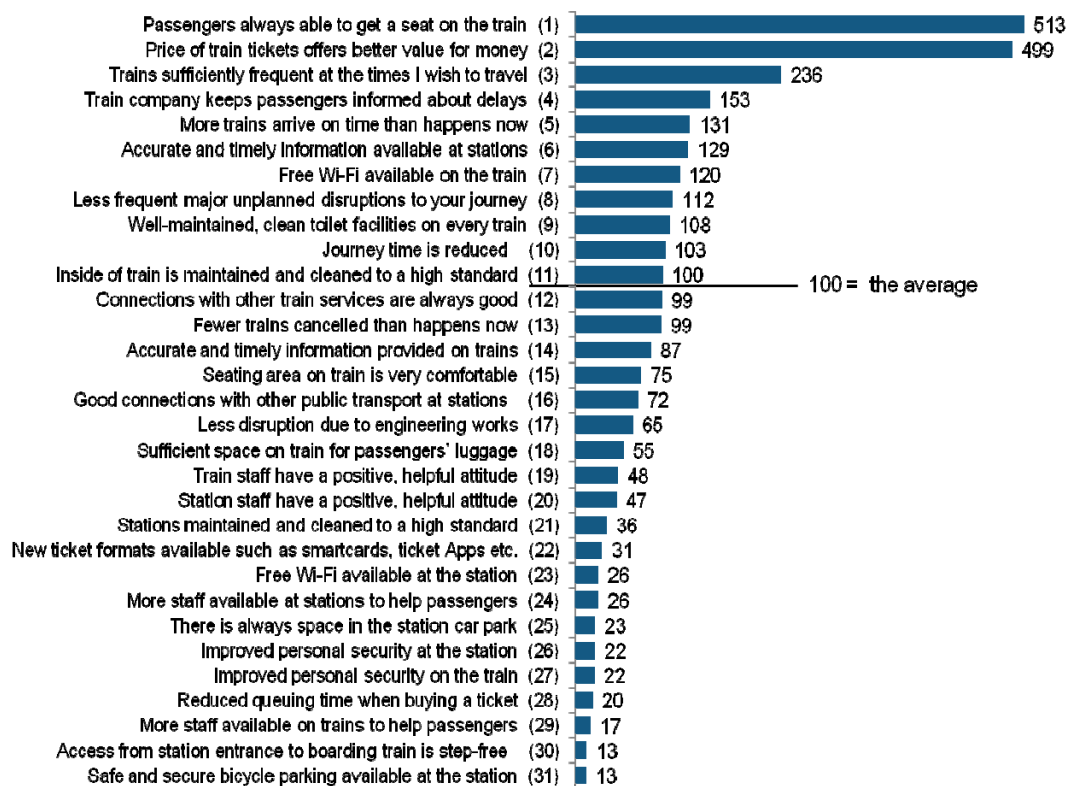
The priorities in table 1 above are shown as an index averaged on 100. An index of 300 is three times as important as the average and an index score of 50 is half as important as average. So in table 1 we can see that, for Northern passengers, the top priorities of 'the price of train tickets offers better value for money' and 'passengers always able to get a seat on the train' are both more than 4 times as important as the average. For TPE the top priority is 'passengers always able to get a seat on the train' and this is more than five times as important as the average.

This information can also be shown graphically to illustrate just how much the relative importance varies between the factors. See figures 1 and 2 below.

**Figure 1 Northern passengers' priorities for improvement – relative importance**



**Figure 2 TPE passengers' priorities for improvement – relative importance**



This 2014 research provides a very clear picture of passengers' priorities for improvement on the two franchises. The top two priorities, by some considerable

margin, are 'passengers always able to get a seat on the train' and 'price of train tickets offers better value for money'.

The importance of being able to get a seat on the train is notably stronger on these two franchises than it is for GB. It is the standout priority for TPE, with an index of 513. On Northern the score is 418, which is also higher than the GB index of 367. This emphasises the need for capacity improvements on both the new franchises.

The top priority for Northern passengers, as it is for GB as a whole, is 'price of train tickets offers better value for money'. On TPE this is a very close second priority.

The strong third priority for improvement is 'trains sufficiently frequent at the times I wish to travel', indexed at 228 for Northern and 236 for TPE.

The next group of important priority factors also feature what can be regarded as core elements of service. Passengers want good information about their services, improvements in punctuality and reliability and fewer disruptions. Reductions in journey time appears to have a somewhat lower order of importance being ranked 10<sup>th</sup> for TPE (index 103) and 14<sup>th</sup> for Northern (index 83). It is worth noting, though, that this is the view of existing passengers, for whom the current journey time is sufficiently acceptable for them to be travelling; non users may have a different view.

Passengers in the North also place a high priority on two important train facility factors. 'Well maintained, clean toilet facilities on every train' ranks 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> for TPE and Northern respectively. With indices of over 100 for both franchises, this is a higher priority than average. This also applies to 'inside of train is maintained and cleaned to a high standard' for Northern.

Also, notable is the importance of 'free wi-fi on the train' for passengers on TPE. This ranks 7<sup>th</sup> with an index of 120. The fact that this is ranked high on the list of priorities for improvement confirms increasing recognition that connectivity is now an important element of the rail offer. It has been referred to as likely to become a hygiene factor and this indicates that aspirations for this provision are increasing. On Northern this ranks 13<sup>th</sup> with an index of 83.

Summarising the findings, it is clear that the top priorities for improvement largely focus on the basic elements of the rail service – value for money, getting a seat, frequency, punctuality, delays and information. This is not to say the remaining priorities are not important to the passenger experience, it is just that they are not as important to improve as the top ranking.

The research has sample sizes of 279 for Northern and 69 for TPE. The database contains a wealth of information which can be cut in many ways to explore how priorities vary by demographic and journey purpose, amongst other things. It will be provided to the DfT and potential bidders to enable a detailed understanding of the aspirations of passengers across the Northern and TransPennine networks.

### 3.1.2 Drivers of passenger satisfaction

Figure 3a Drivers of satisfaction Northern – NRPS Spring 2014

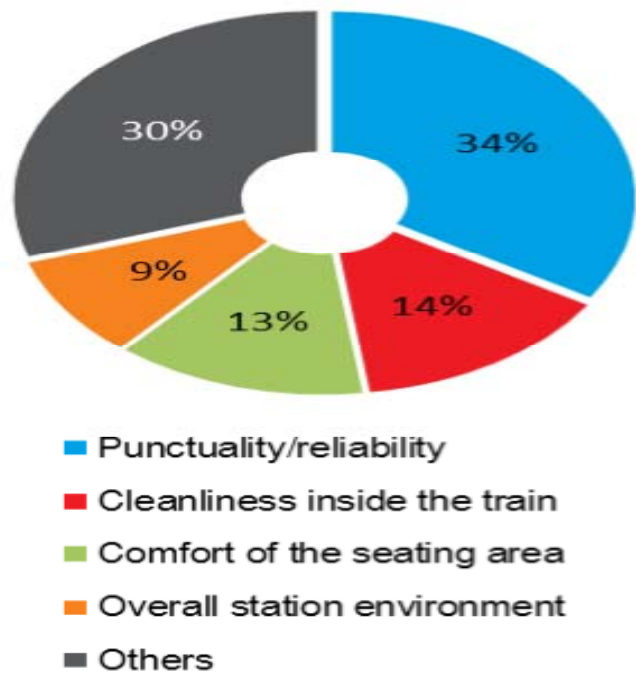
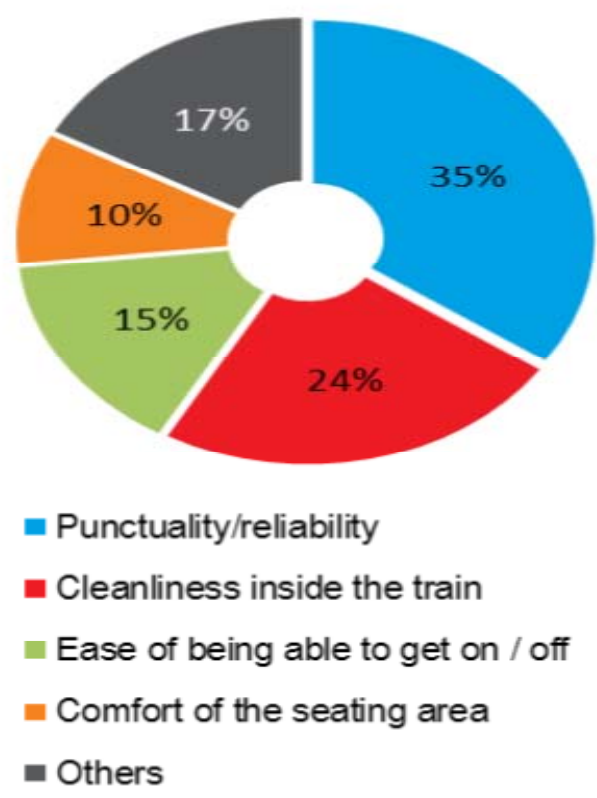


Figure 3b Drivers of satisfaction TPE - NRPS Spring 2014



Figures 3a and 3b, above, show that punctuality and reliability is the prime driver of satisfaction for passengers on both Northern and TPE franchises (34 per cent for Northern and 35 per cent for TPE). The other notable drivers are cleanliness of the inside of the train (24 per cent TPE and 14 per cent Northern) and comfort of the seating area (13 per cent Northern and 10 per cent TPE). On TPE the ease of being able to get on/off the train is also relevant at 15 per cent, whilst, at 9 per cent, the overall station environment is also important to Northern passengers.

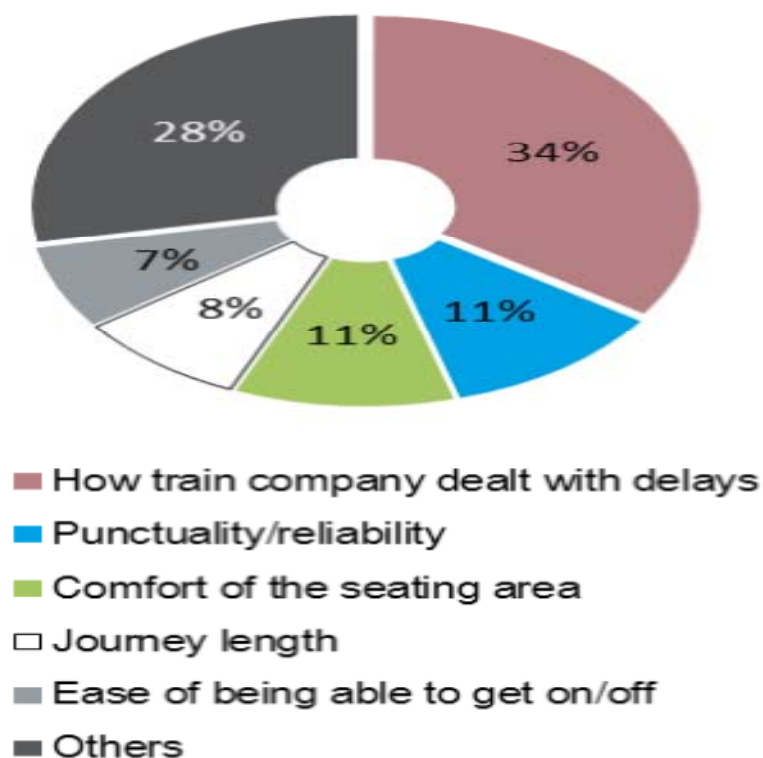
The drivers of passenger satisfaction can also be examined at building block level<sup>2</sup>, to show how these differ between the main service groups on Northern and TPE. This information is shown in Appendix 2a and 2c.

### 3.1.3 Drivers of passenger dissatisfaction

Figures 4a and 4b, below, show that how the train company dealt with delays is the most significant driver of dissatisfaction (at 34 per cent on both franchises). On Northern, this is followed by punctuality and reliability and comfort of the seating area, both at 11 per cent. The second ranking factors on TPE are ease of being able to get on /off the train (20 per cent) and cleanliness of the inside of the train (13 per cent).

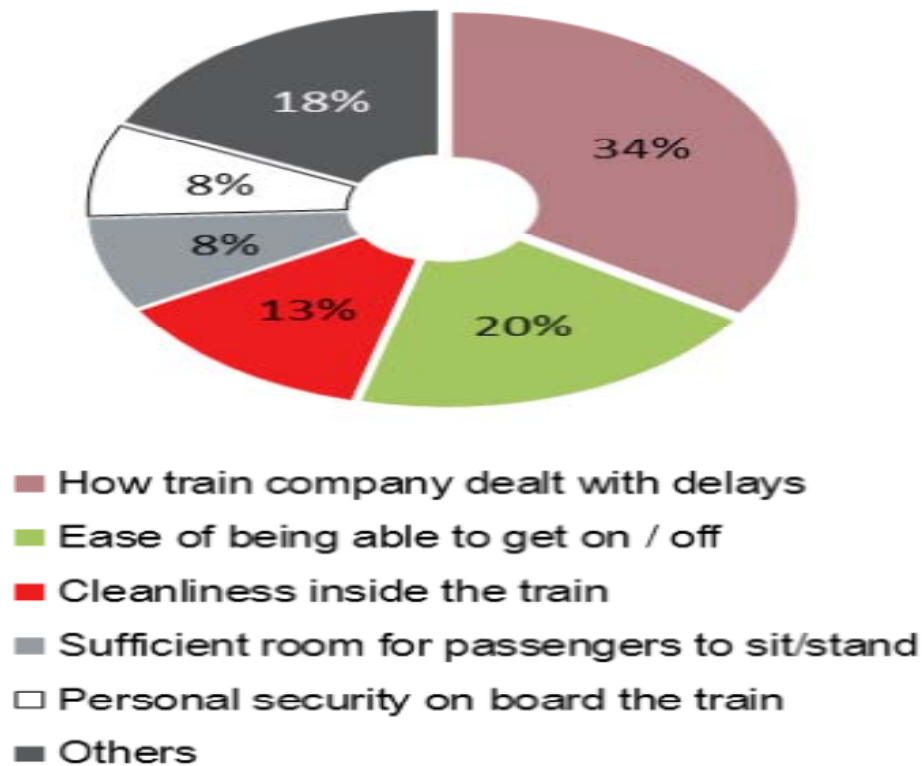
The drivers of dissatisfaction on Northern and TPE can also be compared to those for the comparable sectors. This information is shown in Appendix 2b and 2d.

**Figure 4a Drivers of dissatisfaction Northern - NRPS Spring 2014**



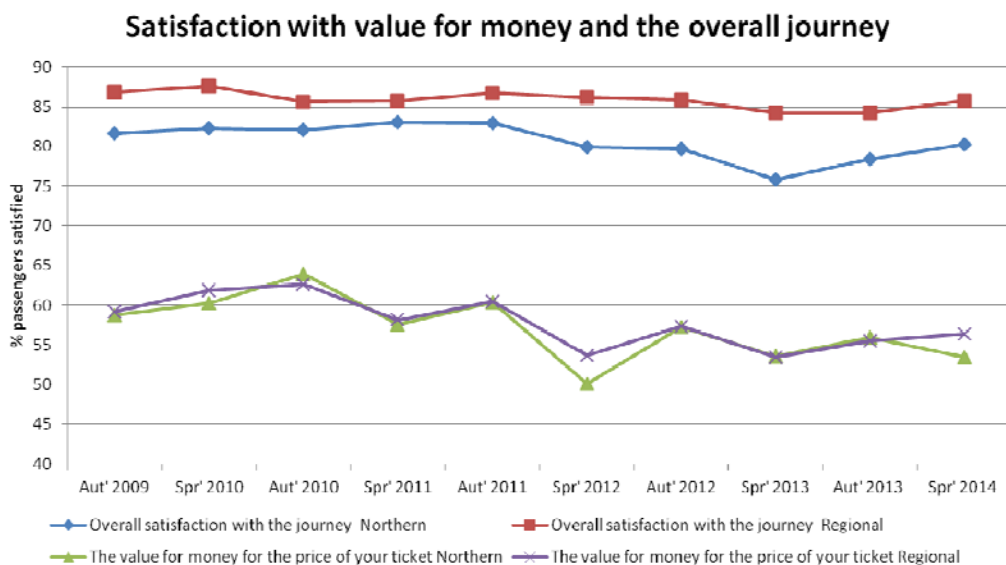
<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 1 for details

Figure 4b Drivers of dissatisfaction TPE - NRPS Spring 2014



### 3.1.4 Satisfaction with value for money and the overall journey

Figure 5a Northern and regional sector trends for value for money and overall journey



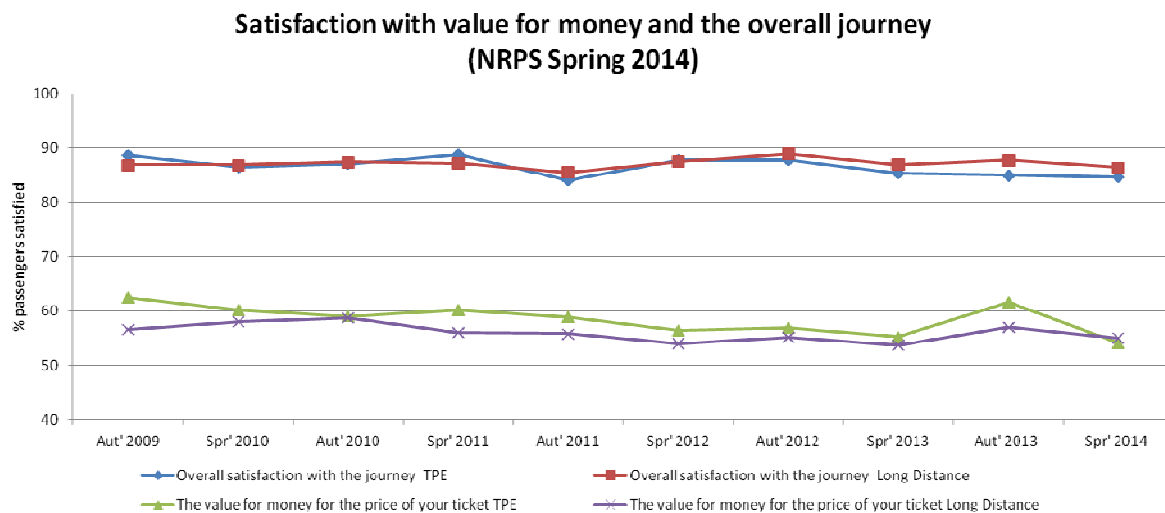
A comparison of overall satisfaction with the journey between Northern and the regional sector shows that Northern consistently scores lower than the sector



average. In spring 2014 the Northern score of 80 per cent is 6 points lower than that for the sector as a whole.

The scores for value for money are more closely linked. However, for both Northern and the sector as a whole, the trend is broadly downward. In spring 2014 Northern scored 54 against a sector average of 56.

**Figure 5b TPE and long distance sector trends for value for money and overall journey**



A comparison of overall satisfaction with the journey between TPE and the long distance sector shows that TPE has recently dropped slightly below the sector average. In spring 2014 the TPE score of 85 per cent was 1 point lower than that for the sector as a whole.

Satisfaction with value for money is much lower than for the overall journey. In spring 2014 TPE scored 54 per cent against a sector average of 55 per cent.

### 3.1.5 Passenger trust in the rail industry

Passenger Focus has recently completed a study to explore passengers' relationship with the rail industry<sup>3</sup>. The main finding is that to improve passengers' trust in the rail industry, train companies not only need to get the basic service right day-to-day, they need to put effort into building long-term relationships with their passengers.

Trust consists of three elements: service, relationship and judgement. Service elements affect day-to-day issues such as punctuality, reliability, helpfulness of staff and value for money. They are the foundations for building passengers' trust.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/publications/passengers-relationship-with-the-rail-industry>

Relationship factors are important to focus on to build trust once the service elements are in place. Some train companies have developed good relationships with their passengers. Communicating directly and proactively with passengers goes down well with them. Particular problem areas for communication identified by the research are confusion over ticketing options and when there are delays or cancellations. Communicating honestly, and with integrity and transparency can inspire trust.

Many train companies score well on the third trust element – judgement. They are seen to have high principles, a good reputation and show leadership. However, judgement does not contribute as much to trust as service and relationship.

For the next Northern and TPE franchises to build greater trust with passengers it is important to get the basic service right ahead of everything else. Then building on closer relationships with their passengers is important. One way is through high quality communication. Passengers should feel that train companies are ‘on their side’.

### **3.2 Assessment of top level priorities for the franchise**

Analysis of the passenger priorities for improvement and drivers of satisfaction/dissatisfaction highlight a number of factors that should be top level priorities for the next Northern and TPE franchises to address. These are:

- value for money
- capacity and frequency
- punctuality and reliability
- minimising and improving the handling of disruption

Attention should also be given to provision of accurate and timely information, cleanliness inside of trains, the comfort of the seating areas and, to build trust further, clear and open communication.

## 4. Addressing key passenger requirements

### 4.1 Capacity

Passengers regard provision of capacity as a fundamental requirement of the rail service. After years of passenger growth resulting in increasing capacity pressures on both franchises the situation has become critical in many places, particularly on routes that are reliant on diesel trains. It is vital that the needs for substantially augmented capacity to accommodate the continuing increases in passengers are addressed in the next franchises.

After value for money, the ability to get a seat is the second-most and highly significant priority for improvement on Northern. It is the top priority for TPE. Availability of seating is also influenced by frequency of trains (thus increasing the overall total of seats available by running more services), the third highest priority for improvement on both franchises. Importantly, capacity also has a strong influence on passenger perceptions of value for money so has a further role in passenger satisfaction<sup>4</sup>.

Quotes from our qualitative research with Northern and TPE passengers reflect the impact and feelings:

*You shouldn't have passengers standing on a train...why should you pay the same amount to stand*  
(Manchester Airport - Leisure)

*It's 'down-time', you can't get your laptop out if you haven't got a lap*  
(Manchester/Leeds-Glasgow – Business)

*The other galling thing is that it's more expensive to travel at busy times, when they are ram jam full*  
(Manchester Airport - Leisure)

The severe crowding on commuter – and at times other services – on both franchises is well documented and, even with the planned interventions on infrastructure, increasing the size of the train fleets to provide sufficient capacity will be an ongoing challenge. It is also important to note that capacity perceptions – and thus needs – will differ on different types of route and according to journey purpose. The needs of families travelling on longer journeys and wishing to sit in close proximity will, for example, be different to those of the lone commuter.

**Table 2 Satisfaction with frequency and capacity by journey purpose<sup>5</sup>**

% satisfied	Northern Rail				TPE			
	All	Commute	Business	Leisure	All	Commute	Business	Leisure
Sufficient Room	67	53	66	76	55	41	51	62
Frequency	73	64	68	81	83	73	81	87

<sup>4</sup> Passenger Focus response to the Government's rail fares and ticketing review, June 2012  
<http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/publications/passenger-focus-response-to-the-governments-rail-fares-and-ticketing-review>

<sup>5</sup> NRPS, Spring 2014

Table 2 shows how current passenger satisfaction with the capacity-related factors of 'sufficient room for passengers to sit and stand' and 'frequency of service' varies across Northern and TPE by journey purpose. There are notably low levels of satisfaction with sufficient room across all TPE journey types, with the 41% satisfaction amongst commuters illustrating the scale of the capacity challenge. Northern commuters and business passengers also report quite low levels of satisfaction with this factor. Commuters on both franchises are least satisfied with frequency of services.

We have undertaken a detailed analysis of passenger satisfaction with frequency of service by day of week and time of day on each of the building blocks and have also examined satisfaction with capacity at the building block level. A complex picture emerges with the following points most evident:

- On TPE satisfaction with frequency is particularly low on the North West building block. This is most marked in scores for weekday peak services and also for weekends.
- On Northern satisfaction with frequency is particularly low on Tyne Tees and Wear building block. There are also low levels of satisfaction on Manchester & Liverpool routes, with lower satisfaction with weekday peak times and on Wednesday and Fridays.
- The lowest satisfaction with room to sit/stand on Northern is reported at 46 per cent by commuters on Manchester & Liverpool routes
- TPE North Commuters are the least satisfied with TPE capacity reporting 38 per cent satisfaction with room to sit/stand.

We will make the data from the capacity and frequency analysis available in spreadsheet format and will be focusing on the implications, particularly those for future capacity, in our discussions with DfT and bidders.

#### **4.1.2 Making better use of capacity**

Passenger Focus believes that the franchise specifications should require the bidders to take all reasonable steps to provide sufficient capacity across all services throughout the life of the franchise. We recognise this will present some significant challenges, especially in relation to the availability and suitability of diesel trains. However, this issue is too important to passengers to be ignored. This also means that, in virtually all circumstances where this is feasible, there should be requirements to operate electric trains on all those routes where this is possible.

It is imperative that effective responses to capacity needs throughout the terms of the contracts are made core requirements of the new franchises. Targets should be for crowding levels to be lower than currently exist, with a requirement to plan to stay ahead of growth in demand.

To effectively manage crowding, a train company needs high quality loadings data with the ability to analyse individual trains, different days of the week and seasonal impacts. The available capacity must then be carefully allocated to optimise the response to demand pressures across the network.

We welcome the Government's procurement of a rail passenger counts database which is intended to provide accurate data on train loadings and crowding levels. The future operators must be required to adopt and publish appropriate crowding measures across the range of routes and services to make it more representative of an individual passenger's experience and use this information to improve capacity where it is inadequate. Published data should make the crowding levels on different services easily comparable so that decisions about allocation of resources can be scrutinised.

NRPS satisfaction measures for relevant factors, including overall satisfaction and room to sit and stand, should be published alongside capacity data to demonstrate the impact this has on passengers.

A careful review of all timetables must be undertaken to explore how services can best be matched to passenger needs. There may well be opportunities to adapt frequencies and stopping patterns to provide a better match of capacity with demand, whilst still ensuring the needs of all passengers are balanced appropriately. Where this is the case, Passenger Focus would expect clear evidence to be produced and comprehensive consultation to be carried out with passengers prior to any changes being made. Bidders should be required to demonstrate their plans to ensure resources within the franchise to enable a sophisticated and responsive approach to train service development, combined with a positive strategy of stakeholder engagement to explain the rationale for service proposals.

The service specifications and service options developed for the franchises must give full consideration to the capacity implications of all proposals. Monitoring and publishing the extent and frequency of short-formations should also be a requirement.

Passenger Focus welcomes and agrees with the statement in the consultation document (paragraph 7.24) that 'it is reasonable for passengers to expect to get a seat for journeys of more than twenty minutes, and to have sufficient space even if they are standing for shorter journeys.' This should be the benchmark for capacity provision.

The future operators should be incentivised to ensure that available rolling stock is never sitting in sidings when there is evidence of need for additional capacity on services where it could be deployed. In addition, the franchise specifications should require that the particular needs for additional capacity for special events must also be planned for and managed within the overall framework of train availability.

Other approaches to management of capacity should also be implemented. Transparent information about the loadings of specific trains provides passengers with the knowledge that may enable them to make an informed decision. Recent research<sup>6</sup> found that over two thirds of passengers who had seen information about the levels of crowding on specific train services had found it useful and just over a fifth of these people had made a regular or occasional change to the trains they used as a result of the information. Similarly, fares incentives for passengers to sometimes swap peak journeys with travel in the shoulder or off-peak, or perhaps work closer to home on some days, may also make a contribution to capacity pressures. A traffic-light system of information should be made available to passengers to help them understand the likelihood of getting a seat, or even getting onto, a particular train. This allows passengers who have more flexibility to make an informed choice about their travel options and, even where there are more defined patterns of travel, some passengers may appreciate the option of being able to make small adjustments or trade-offs to have a comfortable journey.

Technological solutions should also be adopted. Crowding can now be monitored in real time and information systems and apps are becoming available to indicate where available seats on trains are located.<sup>7</sup>

Where further investment in additional rolling stock would provide the necessary capacity to meet identified requirements during the life of the franchise, the onus should be on the operator to build a business case to enable this to happen. If there is a commercial case then there should be prompt action to deliver the necessary vehicles. Where additional subsidy will or may be required, Passenger Focus expects the operator and the DfT to work together with regional partners to seek an affordable solution. Where required, assessments should look beyond the immediate franchise into the longer term to create a viable mechanism to respond to identified demand.

Over the lifetime of the franchises the operators must be required to work with Network Rail and within the wider industry processes to develop proposals to further increase capacity to meet the expected rise in demand and ensure this information is available to inform future High Level Output Specification (HLOS) plans and investment cycles.

Additional efforts should be made to respond to passengers who have physical difficulties in standing for any length of time. Initiatives such as priority seating and cards that the holder can show to identify a proven need should be part of the overall plan for improving accessibility within the franchise.

---

<sup>6</sup> The impact of publishing more information on seat availability: South West Trains case study, ORR July 2012

<sup>7</sup> For example, Dutch Railways - iNStApp: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rc6R3qt6SXI>



### 4.1.3 Off-peak capacity

There are two distinct issues relating to making better use of capacity in the off-peak. On certain routes at various times of day there is insufficient capacity for the off-peak demand meaning that passengers experience crowding. Bidders should be required show plans for adapting service provision and train availability to meet off-peak capacity shortfalls where these are identified.

Secondly, to improve the financial performance of the franchises and maximise use of the rolling stock, the bidders should have clear proposals for promoting usage in the off-peak. Marketing strategies and ticket offers will have a role to play here, as will the delivery of high quality services that passengers will find an attractive travel option, especially if their journey or modal choice is discretionary. As noted below there are parts of the franchise where joint initiatives with Community Rail Partnerships should be further developed, or established, to extend the reach into wider communities and promote off-peak travel.

## 4.2 Reliability and performance

In NRPS, the most significant 'driver' of passenger satisfaction on Northern and TPE, as it is nationally, is punctuality and reliability of the train.

We recommend that the specifications set out a requirement for a strong focus on delivering excellent operational performance and ensuring a culture of genuine transparency about how well things are going. As well as helping engender trust among passengers and stakeholders, we believe transparency will of itself increase the incentive on the operator to drive up performance.

Specifically, we feel there should be:

- Targets to improve PPM, 'on time'/'right time' and cancellations across all routes. Reliance on a service group average, let alone a whole TOC average, risks exposing passengers on individual routes to poor performance.
- Targets for PPM and 'on time'/'right time' at key intermediate stations in addition to at the train destinations. Measuring performance at the destination station alone runs the risk that a large number of passengers are late even though the train does not show as such. This is a particular problem on longer distance routes with numerous sub-markets and relatively few end-to-end passengers. But even on shorter routes, including commuter routes, punctuality based on measurement at destination can be markedly at odds with the experience of passengers using intermediate stations. The impact of late running at intermediate stations can be dramatic when passengers are making connections with other trains or with buses.

Take Warrington Central arrivals from Liverpool Lime Street, an example of the situation at numerous intermediate stations – and by no means only on the Northern and TPE network. In the 12 weeks to 12/08/14 Network Rail data show 31 Northern Rail trains per day arriving at Warrington Central from Liverpool Lime

Street Mondays to Fridays, a journey of 18 miles. Of those just four trains achieved an 'on time'/'right time' score of 40 per cent or more and 13 trains were 'on time'/'right time' on fewer than 20% of occasions. In the same period the Network Rail data show 17 TransPennine Express trains per day arriving at Warrington Central from Liverpool Lime Street Mondays to Fridays. Of those all but one have 'on time'/'right time' records of under 25 per cent and eight trains were 'on time'/'right time' on fewer than 15% of occasions.

In comparison, nine out of 15 East Midlands Trains arrivals at Warrington Central from Liverpool Lime Street have an 'on time'/'right time' score of over 55 per cent, including two trains with a score over 90 per cent.

- A requirement to make historic train performance information easy to obtain and understand. Passengers should be able to view the performance of individual trains they catch (or a group of trains) between the stations they use. When journey planning, the performance record of individual trains should be one of the elements presented to assist passenger decision-making.
- A requirement to report publicly the number of trains each period that appear in the public timetable, but are excluded from the 'plan of the day' and therefore do not count officially as cancellations. The fact that any cancellation – if declared by 2200 the day before – does not appear in performance statistics fuels many passengers' underlying suspicion and mistrust of the industry. Being open about what is going on would help.

#### **4.2.1 Resilience**

Passengers Focus recommends that the new franchises are let with a strong emphasis on service resilience, including in the face of severe weather. Specifically, we feel the bidders:

- should be required to consider how to improve the resilience of services over sections of route known to be vulnerable to severe weather disruption (e.g. the Cumbrian Coast route)
- should be required to set out the extent to which they will be reliant on overtime and rest day working to deliver the train service, including on Sundays.
- should be required to show that their rolling stock availability assumptions are achievable for each class of train and do not put passengers at continual risk of short-formation and cancellation. Areas to ensure there are credible plans include:
  - Capacity to release rolling stock for periodic heavy maintenance, refurbishment, PRMTIS adaptations etc. without compromising service delivery
  - That tyre-turning capability is sufficient to ensure fleet availability remains high throughout the autumn and winter
  - Contingency arrangements if incidents result in lengthy repairs to rolling stock (for example striking road vehicles, collisions with livestock, etc.),

including that key components are held in stock rather than manufactured to order

### **4.3 Managing disruption**

#### **4.3.1 Managing service disruption – engineering works**

Although it describes the infrastructure improvements that will be taking place, the consultation document is relatively silent on some of the challenges and implications for passenger services. Passenger Focus believes that the specifications should require the bidders to set out how they will work with Network Rail to minimise the use of ‘all line’ engineering blocks, especially during the coming infrastructure upgrades. Culturally, the default assumption must be that routes remain open while maintenance, renewal and enhancement takes place, with exceptions made where this is impractical. Too often, across the railway, it appears to be the other way round. Recognising that 55 per cent of passengers say they would not travel at all if a replacement bus is involved<sup>8</sup>, we encourage DfT to secure a joint, public commitment from the future operators and Network Rail that wherever practically possible they will keep passengers on trains and transfer them to buses only as a last resort. Use of diversionary routes is an important way to minimise the number of passengers using replacement buses.

In addition to these overarching cultural points, Passenger Focus encourages DfT to ensure that the bidders have credible proposals in the following areas:

- for regularly submitting a high quality bid to Network Rail at T-18 so accurate amended timetables are in the public domain and reservations open at T-12. We recommend that the operator should be required to report, period by period, on the level of post T-12 change to the train plan.
- for working with Network Rail to minimise the risk of possession over-run, and for communicating information about alternative arrangements to passengers in the event that it does happen.
- for ensuring a route is available at all times between Sheffield & Leeds to/from Manchester, even if journeys take a little longer than usual
- for managing the transfer of passengers seamlessly from train to bus and vice versa (and from train to train where a normally-direct journey involves a change of trains), recognising the key role to be played by well-informed, people-orientated staff at interchanges.

---

<sup>8</sup> Rail passengers experiences and priorities during engineering works - [http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/media/f20ebdf252a73e3f61c63c3b76d335f84c155829/Rail passengers experiences and priorities during engineering works - September 2012 %28normal res%29.pdf](http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/media/f20ebdf252a73e3f61c63c3b76d335f84c155829/Rail_passengers_experiences_and_priorities_during_engineering_works_-_September_2012_%28normal_res%29.pdf)

An excellent reputation in this area was achieved by First Great Western with the Reading blockades and we recommend that this good practice is examined and similar approaches adopted by other operators.

- For ensuring it is clear to passengers where they should wait for replacement buses and clear to bus drivers where they should stop, in particular where replacement buses do not drive up to the station itself. In terms of physical infrastructure, we regard Southern's use of permanent, high quality signage as best practice (see picture in Appendix 3). The operator must also ensure that passengers making online enquiries or ticket purchases are specifically told the replacement bus will, for example, "depart from outside the White Swan P.H. in the centre of the village" and not from the station.
- For ensuring that the needs of passengers with disabilities are met when travelling during engineering works, including but not limited to those who have booked through the Passenger Assist service. Arrangements for those encumbered with buggies/cycles/luggage etc should also be made clear to passengers in advance.
- For ensuring that passengers making journeys involving a replacement bus, or a diverted train taking significantly longer than usual, are aware of that before they purchase a ticket – whether buying online, from a Ticket Vending Machine (TVM) or at a ticket office.
- For tracking the location of replacement buses in real time and feeding that information automatically to Darwin for onward distribution to station information systems (CIS), passengers (and railway staff) via National Rail Enquiries channels and any outlet using Darwin as its data source.
- For recognising that passengers travelling by replacement bus expect a discount on the rail fare they would normally have paid.
- For giving passengers answers to the questions "what is being done?" and "how do I benefit?" Passengers tell us that knowing what is happening helps sugar the replacement bus pill, yet it is commonplace to see nothing more informative than "Engineering work is taking place between Reading and Westbury / Basingstoke with all lines closed."

#### **4.3.2 Managing service disruption – unplanned**

In NRPS, the most significant 'driver' of passenger dissatisfaction with Northern and TPE, as it is nationally, is how the train operator handles delays.

Later in 2014 Passenger Focus will publish new research looking at passengers' needs and experiences during unplanned disruption, including around the provision of information. We have made a number of recommendations, included as Appendix

4, and which we would encourage DfT to ensure that the bidders address. However there are two key points to emphasise from our conclusions which it is vital are tackled early on in the next franchise periods:

- The cultural issue, across the industry, that deficiencies in passenger information at times of disruption persist in a way that would not be tolerated if they were operational or safety failures.
- That the operator must measure the quality of information provided during disruption on a robust and ongoing basis, in terms both of 'factory gate' quality and the ultimate test of passenger opinion.

In addition to the recommendations in Appendix 3, we encourage DfT to secure as part of the new franchises two important prerequisites for providing effective passenger information during disruption.

- Visual and audible information at all stations served by Northern and TPE; and
- Train movement data sufficiently granular to deliver accurate live departure predictions for all stations (fitment of GPS devices to all trains, allowing positional data to be fed to Darwin via the under-construction "GPS gateway", being – presumably – the most effective means).

#### **4.4 Rail value for money**

Passenger Focus recognises the importance of delivering value for money for taxpayers and passengers and the need to increase the efficiency of the rail industry. We made a detailed response<sup>9</sup> to Sir Roy McNulty's rail value for money study, highlighting the important issues from a passenger perspective.

We are supportive of those strategies which enhance efficiency and create closer collaboration, reduce duplication and overlap and generate further income by increasing the attractiveness of rail.

However, there are also some legitimate anxieties expressed by passengers surrounding cost-cutting. These are particularly around the availability of staff and ensuring that station facilities are available whilst trains are in service. Reducing costs through genuine improvements to efficiency will be welcomed, but there will be negative impacts if this simply results in wholesale cutbacks that do not deliver on reasonable passenger expectations and a quality of experience that makes the railway a viable and safe environment in which to travel.

---

<sup>9</sup> *The Rail Value for Money Study, A Passenger Perspective: Comments by Passenger Focus*, July 2011  
<http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/publications/the-rail-value-for-money-study-a-passenger-perspective-comments-by-passenger-focus>

Partnership working between Network Rail (NR) and the new operator should form part of the arrangements for the franchise. It is particularly relevant given the scale and complexity involved in the delivery of the various aspects of the Northern Hub programme. This will require all parties to work cohesively and constructively together to manage the challenges of significant infrastructure works, deployment of new rolling stock, commissioning new train control systems and the introduction of a comprehensive new timetable.

Application of whole-life costing would significantly improve the chances of resilience projects. The bidders should set out plans for how they will start planning with all the relevant partners, firstly deciding where and what needs doing, then ranking in order of costs and time to implement, quickest benefits and greatest benefits.

Beyond the demands of the Northern Hub programme there are further operational challenges associated with such large scale franchises stretching across a wide geographical territory and a number of different NR routes. This will require an overarching approach to partnership and service delivery across each of the franchises, with formal structures providing a joint mechanism at senior level for strategic planning and co-ordination and setting a coherent framework for a consistent development of alliance-style engagement at the route level.

Aligning incentives and working more closely together can certainly help improve efficiency. We know from our research that passengers want a sense of someone being in charge when it comes to the delivery of services, especially during times of disruption. But it cannot just be a case of aligning NR and train company processes to achieve cost savings; such processes must also be aligned with passengers' priorities.

If the end-game is better services for passengers then internal processes and systems must work towards this, rather than vice versa. Two particular areas stand out: increasing punctuality and reducing service disruption. Any approach must be mindful of the consequences for passengers when considering how to manage restoration of services following disruption.

Closer working may provide the opportunity to revisit previously successful practice and have the operator's staff, especially those on stations, trained as first responders to minor local operational incidents (e.g. signal and point failures or road vehicles hitting bridges) to get trains moving without having to wait for the arrival of a Network Rail staff member who may be some distance away.

A further opportunity presented by closer partnership is the achievement of a step-change in transparency. The open data agenda is driving the industry towards higher levels of information being in the public domain. We know from our research with the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR)<sup>10</sup> that passengers want access to more tailored

---

<sup>10</sup> *Putting rail information in the public domain*, Passenger Focus and Office of Rail Regulation, May 2011



information (i.e. data that is relevant to their route/journey). A new, more responsive, alliance could make a very public commitment towards accountability by promising greater transparency from the outset.

## 5. Initial consultation questions

### 5.1 Trade-offs

#### 5.1.1 TO1: What are your views on increasing below-average fares over time to levels typical on the rest of the network in order to improve the frequency, capacity and quality of local services?

Our research continually emphasises the importance of value for money to passengers. In research looking at priorities we asked passengers to rank a series of train and station based criteria in order of their priority for improvement.

Table 1 above shows the ranking for Great Britain overall and for Northern and TPE passengers. We can see that improving value for money is the top priority for Northern and a close second priority for TPE.

The importance becomes even more apparent when looking at the relative importance of each attribute (i.e. by how much is one attribute more important than another) rather than just the rank order. Figures 1 and 2 above show the relative importance of rankings for both Northern and TPE passengers respectively.

Both use an index where a score of 100 represents 'average importance'. If all attributes were of equal importance then each would score 100, so a score above 100 is higher than average and vice versa. So, for example a score of 300 would indicate the attribute was three times more important than average, and 50, that it was half as important as average.

In both instances we see that value for money is a significant priority for improvement: for Northern it is 4.37 times higher than the average and for TPE it is 4.99 times higher. This research firmly establishes value for money as a key issue for passengers on the Northern and TPE franchises.

Clearly value for money is not just a function of the price of tickets but represents a balance between 'what you pay' and 'what you get'. We know from our 2009 Fares and Ticketing study<sup>11</sup>, however, that price plays a very big part. Aspects of service delivery can have an impact – particularly punctuality and crowding – but the price of the ticket is fundamental to perceptions of value. Currently on parts of the network in

---

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/media/4dcc94dc8efd22f32700f4c97db16f137363e951/fares\\_ticketing\\_study\\_2\\_app\\_a.pdf](http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/media/4dcc94dc8efd22f32700f4c97db16f137363e951/fares_ticketing_study_2_app_a.pdf)

the North there are aspects of rail service, particularly aged and over-crowded trains, which are relatively low quality and provide weak value for money.

Therefore any attempt to increase fares carries the risk of damaging value for money perceptions. A proportion of this (but certainly not all) might be offset by investing increased revenues in more seats and more reliable services (the two aspects of service identified in the above research as having the most impact). However, even then it would be important to provide the improved service/investment **before** asking passengers to pay more. To have passengers paying in advance for something they may not even use is unlikely to lead to an increased sense of satisfaction.

This is particularly relevant to the commuter sector. Analysis of spring 2014 NRPS shows that satisfaction with value for money is at 54 per cent for both the TPE and Northern franchises as a whole. However, when we just look at commuters we see the percentage of passengers satisfied with the value for money of their last journey dropping to just over one-third (35 per cent for TPE and 37 per cent for Northern). Increases in commuter fares will most likely have a further negative impact on these already low scores.

Satisfaction with leisure/off-peak travel is higher. However, by their very nature these journeys are more discretionary and so any increases could easily deter journeys being made.

We are pleased that the consultation acknowledges the issue of ticketless travel. Our own research into the Northern and TPE franchises found that this was something that concerned passengers.

Passengers reported that fare evasion had become common on Northern services. Many failed to buy a ticket simply because they had not been given the opportunity to do so. However, some passengers had also learnt how to 'play the system' and deliberately avoid payment. Most participants in our research had witnessed this, and some even admitted doing it themselves which in itself is a sign of how 'normal' and accepted fare evasion can become. As one respondent said:

"They don't bother checking tickets most of the time so there is no incentive to buy one. Everyone knows it." Lancaster, leisure.

While fare evasion was sometimes discussed as a local joke, it was also incredibly frustrating for the majority of customers. There are three main frustrations:

- There is a strong sense of injustice amongst those who have paid for a ticket when some passengers are known to be travelling for free:  
"It infuriates me...a lot of people, you know they haven't paid...and they don't intend to pay...they're just getting a free journey." Manchester, business.

- Honest passengers feel that others' fare evasion prevents badly needed investment into rolling stock, and many assume that those who do buy a ticket are paying a supplement to cover the losses made via fare evasion  
"They should damn well check tickets, get people to pay and invest this back into the trains because they really need it." Lancaster, commuter.
- It is often acceptable (and necessary) to buy a ticket on the train rather than before boarding, but sometimes not. As a result there is a great deal of confusion amongst both passengers and, they suspect, staff. Many participants reported that they had attempted to buy a ticket on board but were told that this was against the rules and were either fined or treated very rudely ("like a criminal"):

"I wish they would make up their minds about whether you are allowed to buy a ticket on the train or not so you don't get the rude lecture." Lancaster, commuter.

Passengers strongly felt that the main solution to fare evasion would be to make better provision for the purchase of tickets at stations and on board, and better checking procedures and enforcement. For this, more staff would be required. Although passengers recognised that this would involve a cost, it was felt that this would be more than covered by ensuring that revenue was not lost to fare evasion.

This suggests that there would be support for a targeted programme of reducing ticketless travel – subject to any enforcement being handled with adequate discretion and a proper right of appeal. This would provide a source of additional revenue which could be used to offset investment but which would not have the negative consequences (on passenger satisfaction and demand) of simply increasing fares.

We believe that greater consideration must be given to understanding and addressing the scale of ticketless travel before considering price increases.

A detailed study of fare-evasion should be required of the franchisees, with proposals to reduce it, with penalties (to be reinvested in initiatives to benefit passengers) if targets aren't met.

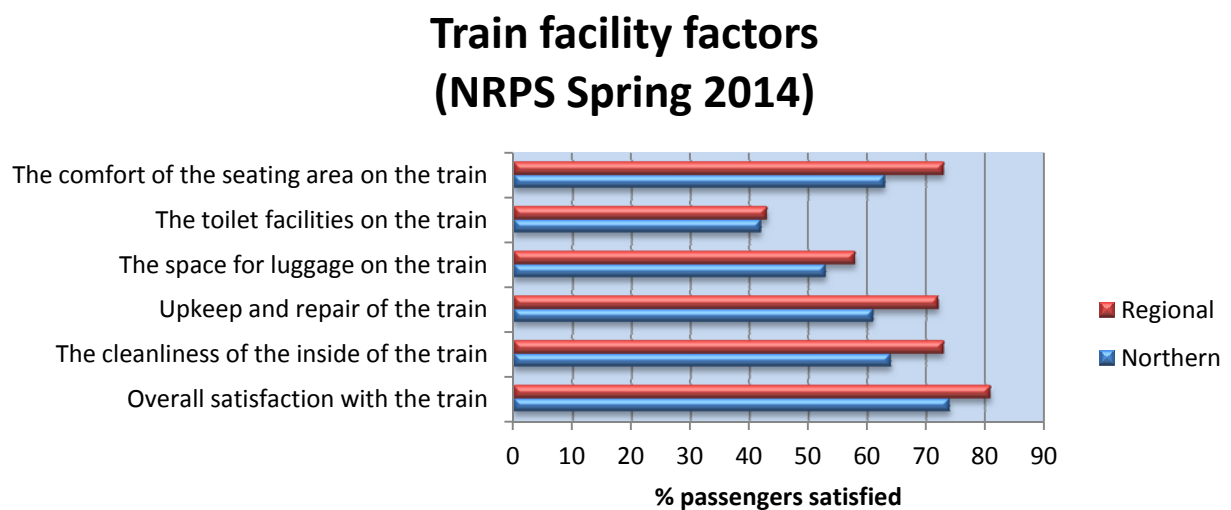
### **5.1.2 TO2: What are your views on giving priority to improving the quality of the Northern rolling stock at the expense of some reduction in lightly used services (e.g. fewer calls at low-use stations)? Do you have any evidence to support your views?**

One of the central findings of our 2012 research with Northern and TPE passengers was that Northern rolling stock was seen as not acceptable. The trains were considered to be dated and not well-maintained. This was a concern to passengers who felt their journey experience was adversely affected, being uncomfortable and sometimes considered dangerous. It also impacted on passenger views of the

operator, suggesting a lack of pride, professionalism and credibility, and indicating a lack of respect for passengers.

NRPS scores indicate how poorly passengers rate some of the on-train facilities and the gap between these scores and those for similar types of service. Figure 6, below, shows Northern scores below the regional sector average on each of a range of train facility factors. In many cases this is substantially below. The drivers analysis (see Figures 3a and 4a above) also shows that comfort of the seating area is associated with both passenger satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

**Figure 6 Northern and regional sector scores for train facility factors**



The poor perception of many of the factors associated with Northern rolling stock is starkly illustrated when building block scores for particular routes are compared with comparable typologies in Table 5 below.

**Table 5 Train facility factors – Northern building blocks compared with building block typologies (NRPS Spring 2014, percentage satisfied)**

Building Block vs Building block typology	Rural typology average	Lanc's & Cumbria	West & North Yorkshire	Short Commute average	Manc' & Liverp'l	Tyne Tees & Wear	Interurban typology average	South & East Yorkshire
Overall satisfaction with the train	77	71	75	80	70	82	82	81
The cleanliness of the inside of the train	71	67	69	75	57	74	79	67
Upkeep and repair of the train	67	57	67	76	54	76	79	65
The provision of information during the journey	64	57	67	70	53	68	74	65
The space for luggage on the train	55	62	51	53	52	62	58	53
The toilet facilities on the train	42	28	46	32	37	51	48	48
The comfort of the seating area on train	67	54	66	71	62	60	76	68
5% or more below typology average								
5% or more above typology average								

Our evidence indicates a clear need for improvement in the quality of Northern rolling stock. We have not, however, tested the proposition of reducing calls at certain stations with passengers.

Table 6, below, shows that, on all Northern building blocks, there is a fairly high level of satisfaction with the length of time the journey is scheduled to take. Satisfaction with the frequency of trains on the routes scores lower but is broadly comparable with similar services, with the exception of Tyne Tees and Wear which scores much below the average for the short commute typology. This suggests that across Northern routes there is more scope to improve passenger satisfaction with frequency of service than with length of journey time.

**Table 6 Frequency and journey time on Northern building blocks compared with building block typologies (NRPS Spring 2014, percentage satisfied)**

Building Block vs Building block typology	Rural average	Lanc's & Cumbria	West & North Yorkshire	Short Commute average	Manc' & Liverp'l	Tyne Tees & Wear	Interurban typology average	South & East Yorkshire
The frequency of the trains on that route	74	78	75	76	75	62	80	81
The length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed)	84	85	86	83	88	82	86	91
5% or more below typology average								
5% or more above typology average								

The 2014 passenger priorities study indicates frequency of service is a very high priority for improvement. There is no reason to expect that this desire would be any less at lower-used stations. In fact, given the well-identified issues with revenue protection, there is also a question about whether usage figures are accurate. A programme to reduce ticketless travel, as suggested above, may well change the assumed patronage numbers.

It is not clear from the text or the consultation question how fewer calls at low-use stations will generate savings to pay for 'improved quality' of rolling stock and nor is the 'improved quality' defined.

If the view is that there are entire services that have low usage and could be removed wholesale from the timetable then that proposition must be clearly set out to passengers and communities and proposals consulted upon. (See section 6 below for more detailed points on consultation around service changes). More likely, there may be individual stations that are viewed to be less well used and, if this is the case, removing or reducing some of the stops at these will make some small difference to journey time. But, whether these incremental results will make a material difference to the numbers of units required for operations, or generate savings substantial enough to make a material difference to the quality of rolling stock, seems questionable. There is a danger that passengers will suffer significantly while disproportionately small savings are made.

It seems reasonable to suggest that, for many passengers, the balance between quality of rolling stock and frequency of service is not an either/or issue. Frequency of service is a factor in decisions on usage, which for many passengers is largely based on cost and convenience. The industry has models which predict increased patronage with greater frequency. An assessment of the adequacy of existing

service patterns at some stations should be made. Indications are that, in some locations, the lack of frequency is already a barrier to use.

Community Rail Partnerships have also shown it is possible to increase demand if services are promoted well. In line with some of the other measures being considered for the new franchise, including strengthening links with local communities, it may be more positive to introduce new approaches to marketing and a 'use it or lose it' campaign before instituting cuts to station calls.

Against the backdrop of growth across the entire network over recent years, a cautious approach to reducing service calls would also be pertinent. Any decisions should take into account local and regional plans for future developments of housing and jobs. If the benefits of the Northern Hub are to be fully realised, increasing the patronage on existing and new services will be necessary, rather than reducing the rail offer.

#### **5.1.2.1 Rolling stock options**

The economics of rolling stock provision is challenging, particularly in relation to servicing the capacity needs of the peak. There can be no doubt that the Northern Pacers are viewed with dismay by most passengers. However, these long-used trains must already have generated significant returns. If negotiations with ROSCOs can deliver reduced costs for any Pacers retained, there may be some merit in considering a potential role for these as 'peak busters'. Whilst these trains will never be popular, they may be more acceptable if employed specifically to operate additional services at times of greatest capacity needs, if that may not otherwise be possible if newly-introduced trains are the only fleet options.

We also note some of the innovative emerging thinking in relation to rolling stock options for the North. The potential development of new markets and funding vehicles may provide additional options for acquisition of trains to deliver a better quality passenger experience at more affordable prices.

There are major challenges to be addressed in relation to the availability of diesel stock to operate on non-electrified lines and the current failure of older stock to meet accessibility standards. There appears to be limited availability of non-Pacer diesel multiple unit trains (DMUs) and these too can be expected to be due for replacement by the end of the franchise. What will then be the options for provision of rail services? This big looming issue is one which will need to be considered by all parties during the current franchise and for which the next operator will have to start the initial planning.

**5.1.3 TO3 – What are your views on allowing some reduction in the hours ticket offices are open and staffed if this is accompanied by the ability for passengers to have widespread access to ticket buying opportunities (e.g. through new and improved approaches such as smart ticketing, increased**



**advance purchase ticketing or via mobile phones), adequate measures to ensure vulnerable passengers are not disadvantaged and more effective customer service by both station and on-train staff? Do you have any evidence to support your views?**

Passenger 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 on the trains.

While the number of tickets sales made at ticket-office windows is declining, it is clear from what passengers tell us that 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 ticket machines. Even where the ticket is theoretically available, the complexity of the fares structure means that it can sometimes be extremely difficult on a self-service machine to find the cheapest fare or to understand the restrictions attached. We do not want to see a situation where passengers find it increasingly difficult to purchase the right ticket and either find themselves spending more than they should, getting it wrong and facing a penalty or fine, or even choosing to travel by other means. Evidence to support this view can be seen in our report on ticket vending machines<sup>12</sup>.

The ticket-office hours set out in existing licence requirements represent those in place at the point of privatisation irrespective of whether they were right or wrong at that time, let alone in the present day. We also recognise that, over time, passengers will make more use of ticket machines or other forms of tickets which will reduce the use of ticket offices at stations; we have therefore never taken the line that opening hours should be 'set in stone'.

The challenging financial times mean it is important 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 re-balancing 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.

One of the notable findings from our qualitative study in 2012 was the significance passengers placed on staffing. There were frequent references to the value of staff presence and the varied assistance staff could provide. Staff were appreciated where available and there were suggestions that they could bring further benefits if deployed at places they currently were not. In particular, passengers felt this could

---

<sup>12</sup>[http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/media/982f11af806764f35bf13d250434a7dee41cf5f4/ticket\\_vending\\_machine\\_usability\\_july\\_2010.pdf](http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/media/982f11af806764f35bf13d250434a7dee41cf5f4/ticket_vending_machine_usability_july_2010.pdf)

enhance feelings of security, reduce fare evasion, provide helpful assistance and improve the upkeep of small stations.

There may be good opportunities to explore how potentially greater community linkages with stations and the railway can provide more in the way of human presence at smaller stations. Approaches such as the multi-purpose booking offices on Merseyrail may also provide useful models for station staffing and retailing.

## **5.2 Community rail and other partnerships**

**COM1: How can local communities, local businesses and other organisations be further stimulated to play an active part in the running of Northern and TPE rail services, including at stations?**

**COM2: What opportunities are there for Community Rail Partnerships to expand their role and range of activities?**

### **5.2.1 Northern England partnerships**

Routes in Northern England currently encompass 21 partnerships:

- North Staffordshire
- Crewe-Manchester line
- North Cheshire
- Mid-Cheshire
- High Peak and Hope Valley
- South East Manchester
- Penistone line
- Barton Cleethorpes
- Clitheroe line
- East Lancashire
- West of Lancashire
- South Fylde
- Bentham line
- Settle-Carlisle railway development
- Furness line
- Lakes line
- Cumbrian Coast line
- Tyne Valley
- Bishop line
- Esk Valley railway development
- Yorkshire Coast

In addition, there are around fifty stations with friends or adopters groups

### **5.2.2 The value of Community Rail Partnerships**

Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) bring distinctive attributes to local rail compared to other parts of the national rail network, including:

- Creating a sense of involvement
- Information and marketing activities
- Implementing local schemes
- Providing a focus for investment

The report on the Value of Community Rail Partnerships<sup>13</sup> shows that they can be extremely successful. Focussing on the regional and local level, results can be seen in increased footfall at stations along CRP lines.

### **5.2.3 Passenger growth**

The Community Rail Steering Group report<sup>14</sup> shows high level sustained year on year growth in passengers travelling on community rail lines and local rail services in the last ten years.

The latest Community Rail Lancashire report shows all four lines have seen significant rises in patronage over the last six years and very steep rises between 2009/10 and 2012/13. The Clitheroe Line has risen from 1.56 million journeys in 2006/7 to 1.92 million in 2012/13 - a 23.1 per cent rise. The East Lancashire Line has seen an increase of 56.4 per cent in the same time. The South Fylde Line and West of Lancashire lines have seen an upturn of 9.2 per cent and 12.9 per cent respectively.

Recent modelling of rail passenger journeys, though, has underestimated the growth of trips on community rail services, as compared with the trends of the last ten years.

- The National Transport Model (published 2011) predicted growth on Regional rail services through to 2030 of only 1 per cent per year
- The Network Rail Strategic Business Plan and the Rolling Stock Strategy Report (issued 2013) uses growth rates of 3-4 per cent per annum
- The Network Rail LTPP draft Regional Urban Market Study (2013) predicts growth no higher than 3 per cent per year for the next 10 years and through to 2043.

### **5.2.4 Recommendations on data and passenger counts**

Passenger Focus recommends:

- greater transparency and sharing of data and methodologies by DfT, Network Rail and train operators with CRPs

---

<sup>13</sup> The Value of Community Rail Partnerships (June 2008), Association of Community Rail

<sup>14</sup> Community Rail Line Development (September 2013), ATOC and ACoRP

- CRPs are commissioned to carry out and submit regular passenger counts, to ensure more accurate passenger data is available for forecasting, especially for capacity and rolling stock requirements.

### **5.2.5 Local community and business involvement**

Key opportunities to enhance service provision can be realised through funding channels and sponsorship that may not otherwise be available to train operators – from PTEs, county councils, LEPs, local businesses and match funding. In Cumbria for example, the county council bid for Local Sustainable Transport Funds to provide a Sunday trains pilot along the Cumbrian Coast line; addressing the third-highest passenger priority for improvement of ‘trains sufficiently frequent at times I wish to travel’ and also the declining satisfaction with train frequency, in particular at weekends. On the Bentham line, the Parish Council at Gargrave have provided an additional car park, with signposting, space for ten vehicles and a bay for disabled travellers – expanding access to the station by car, which particularly in rural areas can be the most practical way for people to get to the station.

Educational schemes which link with local schools through art projects using local artists, organising visits to the station and links with older volunteers are successfully raising awareness of the railway, familiarity with local services and by linking curriculum-based learning into rail projects, promote future local rail use with the children. Different schemes in East Lancashire have created some very original artwork with year five pupils for Huncoat station and produced an animated film with 155 pupils and 25 teachers in Darwen for the local film festival, to encourage people to travel by rail.

Event sponsorship is a useful tool in encouraging infrequent or new users. For the Great British Rhythm and Blues festival in Colne, Lancashire CRPs team up with the Leisure Trust and local brewery to provide a ‘music and ale’ train to the event and also arrange for later trains from Colne to help to get festival goers home again. Also at local CAMRA beer festivals, the CRPs sponsor festival glasses branded with their logo, to raise awareness of the partnerships. Local tourism is enhanced through promotion of walks which start and finish at local train stations, publicised through leaflets and websites, such as the range of walks guided by friends of the Settle-Carlisle line and friends of Dalesrail. These initiatives also support service enhancements, such as the Dalesrail drawdown from the Designated Community Rail Development Fund.

Involvement of local businesses is achieved in a variety of ways, from cycle hire on the Settle-Carlisle line; Halcrow sponsorship of Handforth station and staff green travel plans; to corporate social responsibility plans such as the Cadbury-Schweppes environmental projects at Chirk station with staff involvement as well as funding. The strongest way of getting firms involved (particularly larger ones) is where there is commercial benefit through joint promotions, sponsoring projects or environmental initiatives such as green travel plans which show the company in a positive light.

More ambitious business models are also developing in other parts of the rail network, such as the current proposal for the Heart of Wales line from a local partnership Community Business Unit to run the line from Shrewsbury to Swansea; to create commercial conditions in a way that enables them to prosper and to deliver benefits to the regional economy.

The previous Northern 'Community Ambassadors' scheme was also very successful at reaching out to socially excluded groups within the local areas in which they were based.

### **5.2.6 Development and expansion opportunities**

Passengers expect the stations they use to be welcoming and attractive. Local involvement, typically by "friends of" groups and supported by the railway industry and local government, can achieve significant improvements to the attractiveness of stations, in stimulating community engagement with the railway and the use of redundant station buildings by local businesses and organisations, including those involved in local tourism.

Passengers expect transport to be integrated – which should, of course, mean that it is more effective in attracting users as well as being more useful. Increasing "Localism" should help this task, which will improve accessibility to local areas and help with the development of "gateway" stations to access areas of natural beauty along rural lines.

Innovative marketing schemes have become the hallmark for community rail. Local enthusiasm is a powerful tool in generating links with visitor attractions that can be accessed from local stations.

The Value of Community Rail Partnerships report asserts that CRPs contribute to social capital in a number of ways:

- Promoting awareness of local history, culture and landscape through guided walks, leaflets and local events
- Engaging with schools and other local groups, including marginalised groups
- Engaging with volunteers
- Contributing local input to development of rail
- Contributing to local regeneration strategies through tourism development, station gateway schemes and working with local businesses and organisations.

The paper on The Sustainable Branch Line<sup>15</sup> goes further in saying that CRPs have an excellent record of winning back passengers to rural lines through innovative marketing and community involvement. Adding that it is possible to develop a

---

<sup>15</sup> The Sustainable Branch Line (2010), Prof Paul Salvesson

scenario whereby such partnerships take on more and more 'peripheral' commercial activities and build up commercial expertise which – at a future stage – enables them to take on actual train operation. A model could be developed which is based on such a gradual progression:

- 1 Operation of rail-link bus services and on-train catering
- 2 Take over marketing of the service from train operator
- 3 Further development of rail-link bus services, including bus operations
- 4 Taking on station cleaning and maintenance contract for the line
- 5 Development of other commercial activities – station shops, tourism packages
- 6 Station staff employed by partnership (minor stations only)
- 7 On-train retail staff (conductors) employed by partnership

Volunteers can provide important back-up through 'additionality' – looking after station gardens, acting as conductors on the bus services, and assisting with catering services.

### **5.2.7 Recommendation – Community Rail Partnership development**

Passenger Focus recommends:

- Funding a community rail post at senior level, with appropriate support, to work towards these goals; promote and co-ordinate activities across community rail lines and services in the North, and provide liaison with county councils/LEPs/LTBs
- A formalised group to meet periodically for policy/investment discussion, to include the operator, Network Rail, DfT, CRPs, county council/LEP/LTB representatives, Passenger Focus and other partners as appropriate
- Supporting wider community involvement through station adoption and user group schemes, particularly to boost the local stations environment and improve passenger satisfaction, and the re-establishment of community ambassador initiatives to widen the reach of the railway beyond traditional boundaries.

## **5.3 Third party funded changes**

### **5.3.1 TPF1: Are you aware of any proposals for third-party funded changes not already indicated? Please provide details.**

Rail North, Local Authorities and other stakeholders from across the region are best placed to identify other schemes and potential options for funding them.

Regarding the potential for decrements, experience shows that those who lose services can encounter a number of difficulties unless there are well planned and effective mitigations, including clear passenger information about the changes and

alternative travel options, put in place from the outset. This must be a requirement should any proposed decrements be given consideration.

## **5.4 Future impacts on demand**

### **5.4.1 FID1: What factors may impact on demand for travel on the new Northern and TPE franchises? Please provide evidence.**

The Rail North strategy<sup>16</sup> and the Northern RUS<sup>17</sup> provide details, analysis and evidence about the expected changes in the local and regional economy and rail infrastructure.

Improvements to service frequencies and the better connections that will be delivered through the Northern Hub investment programme should provide more journey opportunities which can be expected to drive travel demand. The potential reallocation of routes between franchises and the implications for perception of service quality as well as changes to end-to-end journey times may also impact on demand for travel.

The prospect of newer, more comfortable and reliable trains, with greater capacity may also encourage discretionary passengers to use rail rather than alternative modes or not travelling at all.

Pricing decisions can also be expected to influence demand for travel on the franchises. Price increases may deter usage. Off-peak and advance ticket deals, as well as greater marketing or other community-based initiatives may encourage people to make journeys by train. Fares incentives to encourage travel in the shoulder-peak or off-peak may influence demand for those passengers who can be flexible in their scheduling.

## **5.5 Door-to-door journeys**

### **DTD1: What are your proposals for providing passengers better and safer access to different modes of transport at stations (including bus, tram, cycling and walking?)**

### **DTD2: How do you suggest your proposals to improve the door-to-door journey experience might be funded?**

#### **5.5.1 Improving station access**

When passengers decide what mode of transport to take they are swayed by three overwhelming factors: how convenient will the journey be, how much will it cost and how long will it take<sup>18</sup>. This applies to the whole door to door journey. The way

---

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.railnorth.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/LTRS-Final-August-2014.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.networkrail.co.uk/browseDirectory.aspx?dir=%5CRUS%20Documents%5CRoute%20Utilisation%20Strategies%5CRUS%20Generation%20%5CNorthern>

<sup>18</sup> Door to door by public transport – improving integration between National Rail and other public transport services in Britain, June 2009 [http://www.cpt-uk.org/\\_uploads/attachment/690.pdf](http://www.cpt-uk.org/_uploads/attachment/690.pdf)



passengers access the station can affect both overall journey cost and time. If getting to the rail station becomes too inconvenient passengers will often choose to make their whole journey by car; adding congestion to the roads and to transport's carbon footprint.

The passenger growth anticipated for Northern and TPE mean increased attention will need to be given to how passengers are going to access and pass through stations throughout the life of the franchise.

NRPS scores for Northern and TPE building blocks indicate a wide variation in satisfaction with different station access factors across the networks. This suggests there is scope for bidders to propose a range of different solutions and improvements to the door-to-door journey.

**Table 8 NRPS scores for station access for Northern and TPE building blocks**

Factor	Lancs & Cumbria	Man & L'pool	S & E Yorks	T Tees & Wear	W&N Yorks		TPE North	TPE North West	TPE South
Connections – public transport	64	73	86	61	65		71	64	89
Facilities for car parking	69	44	56	58	50		50	58	52
Facilities for bicycle parking	60	46	67	50	63		64	57	62

At some locations the solution to station access needs will be to improve public transport links and parking provision; but at others the solution will be more complex and could be more creative. With limited space for car parking at some stations, and the industry's desire to look at more sustainable options, Passenger Focus is supportive of the use of Station Travel Plans. Local groups and Community Rail Partnerships should be involved in developing proposals to improve station access.

The specifications should encourage commitment to station travel plan schemes, with rollout dispersed across the network and throughout the life of the franchises. The stations selected should not just be those with the highest footfall, as the 2011 Network RUS (Stations) demonstrated that congestion does not just occur at those stations with the highest number of passengers starting or ending their journeys.

The bidders should be able to demonstrate how they will work in partnership with local authorities and other agencies to improve accessibility to stations by all modes, including cycling and walking. Where identifiably beneficial schemes for passengers can be delivered by other partners, they should be encouraged and their future assured. The franchises should accommodate commitments to the future operation of any facilities provided.

Bidders might also be asked to explore the potential to develop ‘virtual branch lines’ using existing scheduled bus services, with bus times and through fares available through railway journey planning and retail systems to/from towns with no railway station.

Conversely, bidders may also need to address the absence, or potential loss, of access via public transport in places, particularly rural areas, where there is little or no funding for bus services. Bidders should be encouraged to explore how they can contribute to or replicate some of the suggested initiatives such as total transport<sup>19</sup> or other demand-led schemes.

Improving access to stations should drive rail usage and provide some additional revenue. Bidders will also need to work with local authorities and other agencies to explore other funding opportunities. There may be scope for local authorities to use planning gain mechanisms for schemes linked to new developments. The opportunities for development around stations to accommodate improved access facilities, including interchange, should also be considered within bidders’ proposals.

## **6. TransPennine service specification and service options**

### **6.1 Passenger Priorities and perceptions relating to the service specification**

Based on the results from the passengers’ priorities study, section 3 above identifies service-related elements as the top priorities for the franchise. The service specification should therefore seek delivery of improvements in capacity and frequency, within a timetable that also contributes to effective management of punctuality and reliability and minimising disruption.

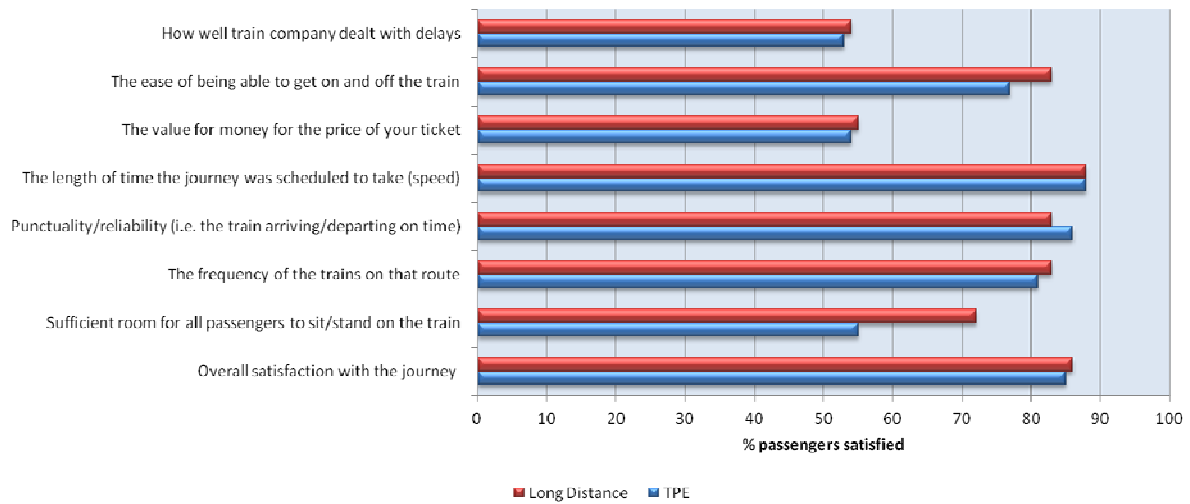
Figure 7 shows a comparison of TPE scores for core journey factors with the long distance average. The notable difference is how TPE satisfaction with room to sit/stand is well below that of the sector average. The score for ease of getting on /off the train is also lower. This latter score can also be influenced by crowding as well as the suitability of the rolling stock for the journey purposes on the routes employed.

---

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.pteg.net/resources/types/reports/making-connections-cross-sector-benefits-supporting-bus-services>

**Figure 7 Core journey factors - TPE vs long distance average**

**Core journey factors - TPE vs Long Distance average  
(NRPS Spring 2014)**



Looking in more detail at spring 2014 NRPS scores (see table 9 below) we can see that passengers travelling on routes that make up the TPE North West and North building blocks generally report satisfaction relatively close to that of others using services of similar types for the attributes of frequency, punctuality and reliability, scheduled journey time and handling of delays. However, both building blocks score substantially below the comparable typologies for sufficient room to sit/stand, and North West is also well below on scores for ease of getting on and off the train, another indicator for overcrowding.

**Table 9 Core journey Factors – TPE building blocks compared with building block typologies (NRPS Spring 2014, percentage satisfied)**

Building Block vs Building block typology	Interurban average	North West	South	Long distance average	North
Overall satisfaction with the journey	86	84	90	84	84
The value for money for the price of your ticket	54	55	57	53	53
Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand on the train	70	58	64	68	52
The frequency of the trains on that route	80	77	85	80	83
Punctuality/reliability (i.e. the train arriving/departing on time)	85	87	86	80	85
The length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed)	86	87	92	84	87
The ease of being able to get on and off the train	83	74	86	80	77
How well train company dealt with delays	48	47	49	54	56
5% or more above typology average					
5% or more below typology average					

The analysis from NRPS further emphasises the importance of delivering increased capacity to improve the passenger experience on these routes.

It should be noted that the satisfaction scores for these attributes are, by definition, applicable to existing passengers. Rail usage is driven largely by cost and convenience so there may be opportunities to increase patronage by improving a number of factors, particularly those associated with reliability, capacity and comfort. Frequency of service and the length of scheduled journey time may also influence decisions on whether to travel by rail.

## **6.2 Determining the service specification and service options**

**TPE1: What are your views on the degree of flexibility proposed for the train service specification for the new TPE franchise? Do you have any evidence to support your views?**

**The comments and principles below are also applicable to the following questions: NTP1 - 6, STP1- 5 and NW1 - 3**

Alterations to routes and service patterns will inevitably flow from the development of the rail infrastructure, electrification and changes to the train fleet. New journey opportunities will become available and markets are likely to change and grow. Local input may also identify other circumstances which require recognition in the service specification.

Within an over-arching framework which includes protection of minimum service levels, the operator should be given the flexibility to develop the train service to meet the needs of existing and potential passengers. They should be tasked with creating the best timetable for the places they serve, balancing the range of factors important to passengers.

However, whatever the drivers for change, there are some principles that should be embedded in the franchise specification to be followed whenever timetables are revised:

- Early consultation with passengers must be a prerequisite, and followed by honest feedback about why the ultimate decisions were made.
- Existing basic features such as first/last trains and frequency/connectivity, if satisfactory, should remain.
- Aspirations for improvements should be met if possible.
- Capacity and resources should be matched as closely as possible.

Passenger Focus believes that the train services should be structured around the journeys that passengers wish to make. The key issue is whether passengers at each station have the required level of service to and from the places they want or need to travel at the times they wish to do so. The starting point should be the available opportunities provided by existing services and the aim should be to optimise these based on passenger demand and the new opportunities that become available. The provision of sufficient capacity must be addressed, particularly for times of peak demand.

Our view is that origin and destination data should be used as the basis for understanding existing travel requirements. This data is available to the industry, but not generally to stakeholders. Without access to this key data and other relevant information, particularly about network capacity, timetabling options and

comprehensive assessments of stakeholder views, it is not possible for others to derive a properly balanced judgement about service options. It is therefore important that, when considering choices and bringing forward proposals, the decision makers, whether DfT, Network Rail (NR) or the operator, should ensure that the rationale that underpins them is properly set out to all who have an interest.

The service specification should take a holistic view of the needs of all passengers: commuter, business and leisure, from all parts of the network. Timetable opportunities must be optimised with passenger interests placed at the heart of planning and ahead of operational convenience. Within the acknowledged capacity constraints of the franchise the distribution of train services should be appropriate to passenger demand. Where possible there should be clearly differentiated services for different markets.

There will undoubtedly be significant changes to train service provision during the franchise and there must be a requirement for timely, transparent and meaningful consultation that allows all stakeholders views to be listened to prior to changes being finalised. Engagement with passengers and local communities should be regarded as a starting point for service developments. Feedback, irrespective of whether it has been possible to accommodate the recommendation or request must be provided.

### **6.3 Potential franchise remapping**

Passenger Focus has not specifically researched passengers' views regarding any potential franchise remapping. However, in our research with passengers on Northern /TransPennine Express routes we explored passenger attitudes to both brand loyalty to operators and potential devolution of rail responsibilities. The principal findings from this research indicate clearly that passengers' requirements focus on the delivery of an effective service more than who runs the rail operation.

#### **6.3.1 Principles relating to potential franchise remapping**

The significant issue to be assessed in any consideration of remapping must be the outcomes this would deliver for passengers. There may be benefits and drawbacks associated with transfers and the overall balance of these for the majority of passengers must be the key to any decision. There should also be a transparent evaluation of the costs of any re-organisation. Is it worth the cost? Who will end up paying? Passengers should not have to fund reorganisations out of which they will see little or no benefit.

A critical factor that must be assessed is which operator is best placed to manage and improve the services, maintain the trains, and provide the best response to passenger needs. Proposals should be subject to proper consultation.

Should any services transfer to/from another franchise then any existing arrangements for passenger access to discounted tickets for certain journeys should

be maintained or comparable products provided. Passengers should not suffer as a result of reorganisation.

Should services to any destinations transfer, in whole or in part, there must be a requirement for effective liaison between operators, particularly in relation to information, service disruption, connections and the management of station facilities. There must also be a clear agreement over responsibilities for complaints handling and compensation claims during the transition period.

#### **6.4 Comments on options for routes, re-mapping and connectivity**

The principles set out within 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 above remain valid for consideration of the various options for TPE routes. Input from Rail North/Local Authorities, communities and passengers should inform the next stages of analysis. However, in the comments below, as a contribution to the debate, we set out some thoughts about some of the options that may merit consideration as the assessments are made. These comments and suggestions are neither exhaustive nor exclusive and should be considered in the light of all the demand information available to Network Rail, the operator and DfT, and in the context of the local aspirations expressed by stakeholders across the franchise.

##### **6.4.1 NTP2: Are there other options for any additional North TransPennine (NTP) services that you would put forward for consideration? What evidence do you have in relation to any of these options?**

The NTP services cover all the main markets north and east of Leeds. As for the destinations at the western end there are only two, other than Manchester itself – Manchester International Airport and Liverpool. Chester could be an additional destination option, perhaps with one intermediate stop at Warrington Bank Quay after leaving Manchester.

Portioned working could be considered as a way to a) provide more capacity over the busiest core section of the route, and b) through services between more places at both ends of the NTP route.

##### **6.4.2 NTP5: Are there other options for Hull, Middlesbrough or Scarborough services that you would put forward for consideration? What evidence do you have in relation to any of these options?**

In the longer-term it would make sense to electrify all three routes. An option for consideration would be to run two trains per hour to York, with one going to Middlesbrough and one to Scarborough and creating a significant interchange hub at York. If electrification to Hull is not available a half-hourly diesel service to Leeds could provide a solution.

##### **6.4.3 STP1: What factors do you consider should be taken into account in the assessment of the option to specify one additional train per hour on the South TransPennine route, in particular in the balance of crowding, frequency,**



**journey time and connectivity benefits? Please provide any evidence you may have.**

Consideration could be given to it becoming a through regional express between Lincoln and Manchester (or beyond) via Doncaster. This would provide the means to deliver several positive outcomes; as well as faster services to Sheffield and Manchester, Lincoln would gain a regular direct service to the ECML at Doncaster. The line from Lincoln has the advantage of not crossing the ECML to get to/from Doncaster, and would not therefore add to the congestion there. The route via Doncaster is 56 miles versus 48½ via Worksop; it also serves Meadowhall direct.

**6.4.4 STP2: What factors do you consider should be taken into account in the assessment of the remapping and South Humberside connectivity options? Please provide any evidence you may have.**

There are two main issues here: the potential that TPE ceases to serve Cleethorpes and the potential to discontinue the Liverpool to Norwich through service. There is evidence of a strong backlash against both, and particularly the Liverpool to Norwich suggestion. It is clear from research, recognised within the rail industry's own demand modelling assumptions that passengers prefer through trains. Both proposals have been received by stakeholders as a step backwards and contrary to DfT's desire to improve connectivity between regions. In the case of the Liverpool to Norwich route, EMT has shown that 350,000 passengers per year travel 'across' Nottingham and would in future have to change trains, with the stresses that entails. There appear to be no passenger benefits in discontinuing the Liverpool-Norwich route and we encourage DfT to listen carefully to those stakeholders, particularly in East Anglia, who believe strongly that it should be developed and not discontinued. There is also a potential issue with loss of competition on the Sheffield – Manchester - Liverpool route if this change goes ahead.

**6.4.5 STP 3: Are there other options that you would put forward for consideration? Please provide any evidence you may have.**

Subject to the caveats about re-mapping in section 5.3 above, has there been consideration of the possible benefits of the suggestion that EMT might take over the Manchester International Airport to Cleethorpes service, plus the Barton-on-Humber route?

**6.4.6 STP5: If the ITT were to specify a third South TransPennine service via Stockport, or remapping of the EMT service to TPE, do you consider that it should specify which of these services should terminate at Manchester Airport or Liverpool or should this be left to bidders' commercial decisions, and what are your reasons? Please provide any evidence you may have.**

At least one service on the route should serve MIA; as the Liverpool to Norwich service provides a through link for Liverpool and Sheffield, both major destinations are served. Any additional service, if it can be more useful by extending west from Manchester, should go to the destination that provides the most passenger benefits.

**6.4.7 What factors do you consider should be taken into account in the assessment of the North West remapping options for Blackpool North, Windermere and Barrow-in-Furness services? What evidence do you have in relation to any of these options?**

Journey opportunities must be maintained. Blackpool North needs a faster link to Manchester; even TPE has a minimum of seven stops in the 58½ miles from Manchester International Airport to Blackpool North and usually it's 11. Northern's service has fourteen stops – the service is also split between Manchester Victoria and Manchester Piccadilly.

**6.4.8 What factors do you consider should be taken into account in the assessment of the Barrow and Windermere connectivity options? What evidence do you have in relation to any of these options?**

There is clear evidence that the local people want through services to the main North West regional centre and airport. There is also clear evidence that the TPE Anglo-Scottish trains are increasingly overloaded and cannot be an adequate way of providing connections from Lancaster to Manchester International Airport. More capacity is available from Preston, but on very slow stopping services.

**6.4.9 What factors do you consider should be taken into account in the assessment of the options for Anglo-Scottish services? What evidence do you have in relation to any of these options?**

The proposal to alter the frequency of TPE services to even out the quantum to Glasgow Central and Edinburgh does not appear to take into account that there are three train services split between two routes. We are concerned that it would actually make the split worse, with a more irregular pattern of service to Edinburgh: one analysis suggests no trains to Edinburgh in one hour, and only two hours in seven with two trains to Edinburgh.

More generally, consideration of Anglo-Scottish services needs to take into account that there are various operators all with different timetables. In considering how Scottish services connect into the North, the various timetable patterns make this more difficult to plan and manage onward travel to other places.

The long-term future of operations might also be considered. For example, would there be merit in exploring the outcomes for passengers that might be delivered if the TPE Manchester Airport to Scotland service was remapped to Intercity West Coast when this franchise is next re-let?

**6.5 Changes to first, last and weekend trains**

**TPE2: Where, if anywhere, would you like to see any changes to first and last trains on the TPE network and why? Do you have any evidence to support this?**

**TPE3: Where, if anywhere, would you like to see any changes to weekend trains on the TPE network and why? Do you have any evidence to support this?**

Our 2012 qualitative research with Northern and TPE passengers gathered some general views on timetabling.

In the research many described timetables as a being a little 'old fashioned' in the sense that they were based around an assumption of a 9am-5pm working day rather than current demands. The following are quotes from the research:

"Train companies haven't caught up with the real world. Sunday is like any other day. People work, people go shopping. The trains are used just as much on this day but the service is much poorer." Lancaster, leisure

"I recently went for a day with friends to York on a Saturday, and it was horrible coming back because the last train was half past 8...and it was crammed." Middlesbrough, leisure

"I think the last train leaves [Manchester] at about six o'clock ... A slightly later train back to Glasgow would be beneficial, say something like a 7 o'clock train which would get you in just after ten." Manchester/Leeds/Glasgow - business

"I think people have adjusted to supermarkets opening 24 hours a day, so people expect services to be there...you'd think you'd be able to get some sort of transport late at night rather than a taxi." Leeds, commuter.

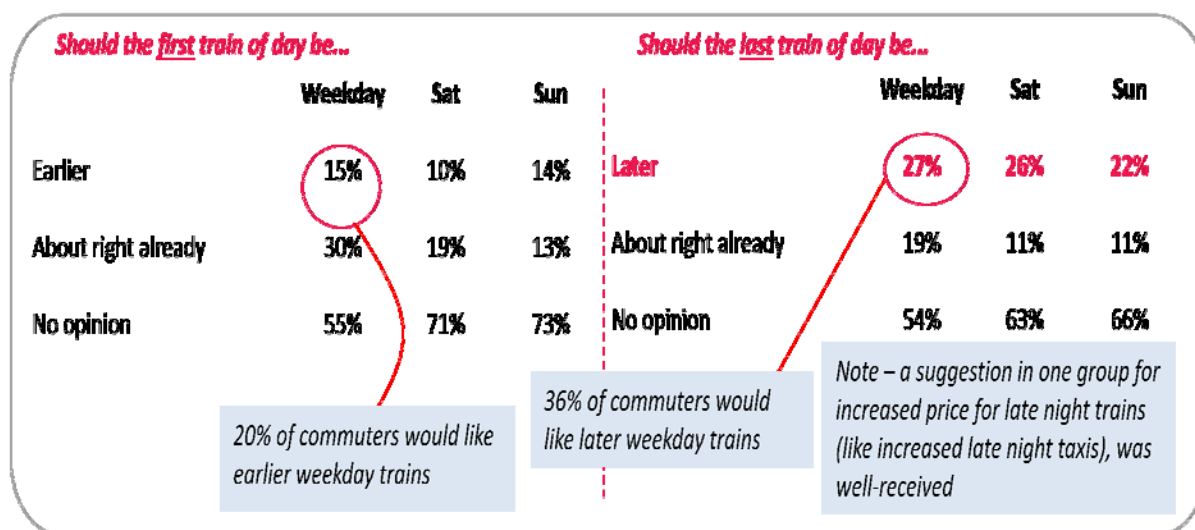
These comments suggest that passengers would particularly like to see later-running trains at weekends and later/night-time trains during the week.

Overnight trains were seen to be necessary for services running to and from Manchester Airport, and many passengers (even those not needing to travel to the airport themselves) mentioned that the timetables for these services did not seem to be well integrated with flights currently:

"It's an airport service, and I think in that respect it's incredibly poor...I think the last train back from Manchester is something like 10:20 in the evening, which to me is quite early...I've only ever used it once to get to the airport, and that's because it's never running at the right times." Lancaster, business.

Other research conducted with passengers in 2010 to inform input into the TPE RUS also indicated a specific appetite for later weekday trains amongst commuters. See Table 10 below.

**Table 10 TPE passenger views on first and last trains**



The service specification should emphasise the importance of providing appropriate services for early morning and later evening and also recognise that, for many, Sunday is a working day.<sup>20</sup> Boxing Day is also a significant day of travel - whether for work, visiting, shopping or leisure activity - and service provision should reflect this. More generally, development of a co-ordinated approach to bank-holiday service patterns which respond to passenger demand should be encouraged, both on the franchise and between those serving adjoining areas.

## 7. Northern train service specification

### 7.1 Passenger Priorities and perceptions relating to the service specification

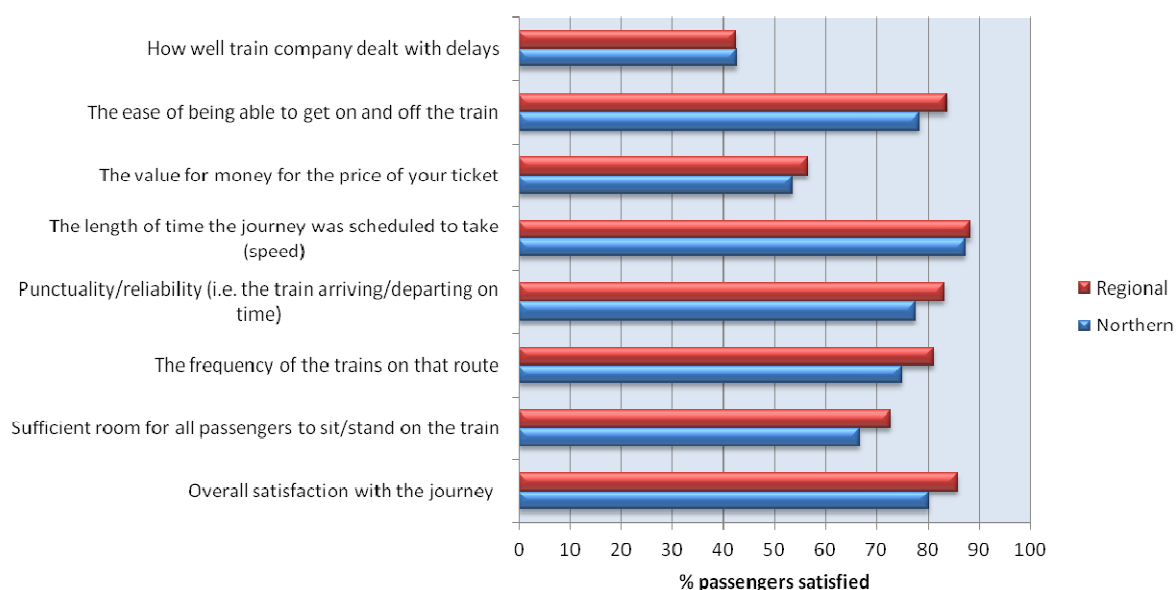
Based on the results from the passengers' priorities study, section 3 above identifies service-related elements as the top priorities for the franchise. The service specification should therefore seek delivery of improvements in capacity and frequency, within a timetable that also contributes to effective management of punctuality and reliability and minimising disruption.

Figure 8 shows a comparison of Northern scores for core journey factors with the regional sector average. With the exception of dealing with delays, Northern scores below the sector average on all these factors. The biggest differences, at 6 points lower than the sector averages, are frequency, room to sit/stand and ease of getting on/off, this latter factor also influenced by crowding.

<sup>20</sup> Understanding rail passengers – is there an 'average' commuter? July 2013  
<http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/publications/understanding-rail-passengers-the-average-commuter>

**Figure 8**

**Core journey factors - Northern vs Regional average  
(NRPS Spring 2014)**



**7.2 Determining the service specification and service options**

We support the need for a thorough review of the Northern train service specification in view of the fact that this has been substantially unchanged for some years, despite tremendous demand growth and the evolving needs of passengers. It is also important that the franchise is positioned well to take advantage of the new opportunities presented by the various infrastructure developments taking place on the network.

We also recognise the need to provide a quite detailed specification for Northern to account for the heavy dependence on subsidy and to ensure that the rail services respond to the social and economic needs of the region. However, within a franchise of 8-10 years, a degree of flexibility to respond to changes during the term will also be required.

Alterations to routes and service patterns will inevitably flow from the development of the rail infrastructure, electrification and changes to the train fleet. New journey opportunities will become available and markets are likely to change and grow. Input from passengers, local and regional bodies and other stakeholders may also identify other circumstances which require recognition in the service specification and it is vital that DfT takes this on board as more detailed plans for the specification are drawn up.

Whatever the developing plans it is essential that the timetable proposals are subject to proper consultation, including the initial proposals for the specification. Within the

requirements protecting minimum service levels, the next operator should be given some flexibility to develop the train service to meet the needs of existing and potential passengers. They should be tasked with creating the best timetable for the places they serve, balancing the range of factors important to passengers.

From the outset and throughout the life of the franchise, there are some principles that should be embedded, to be followed whenever timetables are revised:

- Early consultation with passengers must be a prerequisite, and followed by honest feedback about why the ultimate decisions were made.
- Existing basic features such as first/last trains and frequency/connectivity, if satisfactory, should remain.
- Aspirations for improvements should be met if possible.
- Capacity and resources should be matched as closely as possible.

Passenger Focus believes that the train services should be structured around the journeys that passengers wish to make. The key issue is whether passengers at each station have the required level of service to and from the places they want or need to travel at the times they wish to do so. The starting point should be to optimise rail services based on passenger demand and the new opportunities that become available. The provision of sufficient capacity must be addressed, particularly for times of peak demand.

Our view is that origin and destination data should be used as the basis for understanding existing travel requirements. This data is available to the industry, but not generally to stakeholders. Without access to this key data and other relevant information, particularly about network capacity, timetabling options and comprehensive assessments of stakeholder views, it is not possible for others to derive a properly balanced judgement about service options. It is therefore important that, when considering choices and bringing forward proposals, the decision makers, whether DfT, Network Rail (NR) or the operator, should ensure that the rationale that underpins them is properly set out to all who have an interest.

The service specification should take a holistic view of the needs of all passengers: commuter, business and leisure, from all parts of the network. Timetable opportunities must be optimised with passenger interests placed at the heart of planning and ahead of operational convenience. Within the acknowledged capacity constraints of the franchise the distribution of train services should be appropriate to passenger demand. Where possible there should be clearly differentiated services for different markets.

There will undoubtedly be significant changes to train service provision during the franchise and there must be a requirement for timely, transparent and meaningful consultation that allows all stakeholders views to be listened to prior to changes

being finalised. Engagement with passengers and local communities should be regarded as a starting point for service developments. Feedback, irrespective of whether it has been possible to accommodate the recommendation or request must be provided.

**7.2.1 NTSR1: Please indicate with evidence where available where passengers would be better served and revenue increased by:**

- Reducing the number of calls at low-use stations?
- Increasing frequencies on busier sections of routes or at busier times?
- Speeding-up the service for longer-distance passengers?
- Improving connections with other services where there is evident demand?
- Adjusting train services to meet seasonal changes in demand?
- Adjusting the time of the first/last train?

It is difficult to comment on these specific issues in detail without access to all the relevant information – e.g. on levels of existing and projected demand, crowding and revenue. For instance, it is difficult to balance the needs of passengers who may have a stop removed from their service against those who may have a quicker journey unless you know how many are actually affected by the change.

However, our qualitative research with Northern and TPE passengers did gather some general views on timetabling<sup>21</sup>.

In the research many described timetables as a being a little ‘old fashioned’ in the sense that they were based around an assumption of a 9am-5pm working day rather than current demands. The following are quotes from the research:

“Train companies haven’t caught up with the real world. Sunday is like any other day. People work, people go shopping. The trains are used just as much on this day but the service is much poorer.” Lancaster, leisure

“I recently went for a day with friends to York on a Saturday, and it was horrible coming back because the last train was half past 8...and it was crammed.” Middlesbrough, leisure

“I think people have adjusted to supermarkets opening 24 hours a day, so people expect services to be there...you’d think you’d be able to get some sort of transport late at night rather than a taxi.” Leeds, commuter.

These comments suggest that passengers would particularly like to see later-running trains at weekends and later/night-time trains during the week.

---

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/media/9c579370077fbf55766b11f099e10072a529627c/Northern%20TPE%20franchise%20FINAL%20DOC.pdf>



Overnight trains were seen to be necessary for services running to and from Manchester Airport, and many passengers (even those not needing to travel to the airport themselves) mentioned that the timetables for these services did not seem to be well integrated with flights currently:

“It’s an airport service, and I think in that respect it’s incredibly poor...I think the last train back from Manchester is something like 10:20 in the evening, which to me is quite early...I’ve only ever used it once to get to the airport, and that’s because it’s never running at the right times.” Lancaster, business.

The service specification should emphasise the importance of providing appropriate services for early morning and later evening and also recognise that, for many, Sunday is a working day.<sup>22</sup> Boxing Day is also a significant day of travel - whether for work, visiting, shopping or leisure activity - and service provision should reflect this. More generally, development of a co-ordinated approach to bank-holiday service patterns which respond to passenger demand should be encouraged, both on the franchise and between those serving adjoining areas.

We realise that there are potentially challenging decisions for DfT and Rail North in shaping the service specifications for Northern within resource constraints, particularly the availability of diesel trains and application of subsidy. We recognise the affordability pressures on the franchise and the need to resource new opportunities and increase capacity on high-pressure services. We also understand that services cannot be preserved in aspic.

The starting point for specification should be consideration of what passengers want? They want – sufficient capacity at busy times, appropriate frequency, first/last trains at times that match their needs, good connections if no through service and, often, faster journeys.

If, after accurate passenger counts, efficient revenue protection and effective marketing to promote patronage, there are locations where demand can be proven to be low and reduction in any calls is being contemplated then the next steps should be guided by a coherent philosophy. Such stations should have a service at times that meet the needs of commuters – work or education – and shopping/leisure. Passengers should be able to get away and back at sensible times. Some of our thinking in relation to proposals for service reductions at low use stations is also set out in 4.1.2 above.

### **7.2.2 NTSR2: Please set out, with evidence where available, any other approaches that might improve route utilisation and make better use of existing resources on the Northern franchise.**

Resourcing long routes from both ends, and not being afraid to stable stock overnight at places such as Whitby, sending crews home by taxi, so that the service

---

<sup>22</sup> Understanding rail passengers – is there an ‘average’ commuter? July 2013  
<http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/publications/understanding-rail-passengers-the-average-commuter>

can start at a sensible time to meet passenger needs. For example, the first train from Whitby doesn't get to Middlesbrough until 10.17; the last train from Middlesbrough back is at 17.40.

Improving the consistency of timetable patterns of the different operators of Anglo-Scottish services (see 5.4.9 above) might also provide better connectivity with Northern services and increase uptake.

### **7.2.3 NTSR3: Please indicate, with evidence where available, where services should be improved on weekends, resources permitting**

The obvious areas to consider are tourist areas, and lines affected by blocks on the WCML. There will also be demand for rail transport to special events across the network at different times.

### **7.2.4 NTSR4: Please indicate, with evidence where available, where weekend services provide poor value for the subsidy required to operate them.**

There is insufficient information available to provide comment. However, please see comments about lower-used stations and potential service reductions in 4.1.2 and 6.2.1 above. It will be important for the DfT to be transparent about any calculation of poor value for subsidy required. Wider social and economic objectives should also be borne in mind.

### **7.2.5 NTSR5: What are your views on retaining the route from Cleethorpes and Grimsby to Barton-on-Humber within the Northern franchise? What evidence do you have to support your views?**

Consideration might be given to the suggestion that EMT should take it over, as part of a "package" that would hand the Cleethorpes to Manchester International Airport route to them. Doing so would mean the South Trans-Pennine route would have one operator for "fast" trains.

## **8. Delivering improvements for passengers**

Passenger Focus would like to highlight a number of other issues that are important to passengers and that we should like to see addressed in the franchise specifications.

### **8.1 Improvements to service quality**

Passengers will undoubtedly expect proposals to improve the overall quality of service delivered by the next franchises. Passenger Focus is pleased to be working with DfT and Rail North on developing plans for service quality for both Northern and TPE. We want to see the specifications setting out clear and ambitious requirements for delivering improved passenger satisfaction across a range of areas and throughout the franchise terms. Section 3, above, includes details of passengers'

priorities for improvement and the drivers of satisfaction and dissatisfaction which, together, provide a clear indication of the quality factors of greatest importance to passengers on stations and on trains. More granular analysis of the drivers of satisfaction for each building block is also shown in Appendix 2.

Passenger Focus has published research on many aspects of passenger experience, some of which is cited in the consultation document. The specification should require that bidders identify passenger research which has been considered, along with the steps they will take to ensure that the issues important to passengers will be addressed in their service proposals.

## **8.2 Better railway stations**

The specifications for the next franchises should require bidders to commit to ensuring that a minimum level of standards - appropriate for the size, footfall, location and reflecting local passenger aspiration - are delivered and maintained at all stations. The Better Rail Station standards<sup>23</sup> could provide a starting point for the assessment of requirements which can then be adjusted for local circumstances.

Further cycles of investment should also be committed to maintain and progressively improve upon the station environment and facilities.

We suggest consideration is given to specifying a rolling programme of steady improvement to stations on a line of route basis, to concentrate benefits in a way that should create a bigger impact than spreading improvements around randomly. This should also create greater synergies in the works.

In addition to utilising all available industry funding schemes, the operator should also look beyond these and work with stakeholders and other partners to seek opportunities to bring in funding for allied improvements where these address wider objectives such as promoting economic development, improving transport integration, increasing safe access or enhancing the public realm. Holistic improvements to investments in and around stations are likely to deliver better results and increase efficiency and value.

### **8.2.1 Station investment should focus on passenger needs**

Whilst Passenger Focus is supportive of the principle of funding streams allocated to specific purposes, it is important passenger needs are central to the investments made and that resources are directed to the factors valued by the users of stations and the rail services from them. To this end, proposals should be required to reference how they address the findings of research into passenger requirements and perceptions of stations, including NRPS satisfaction scores.

---

<sup>23</sup> <http://assets.dft.gov.uk/publications/better-rail-stations/report.pdf>

**Table 11 NRPS satisfaction scores for station attributes for Northern and TPE building blocks (spring 2014, percentage satisfied)**

Factor	N'n Lancs & Cumbria	N'n Man & L'pool	N'n S & E Yorks	N'n T Tees & Wear	N'n W&N Yorks		TPE North	TPE North West	TPE South
Overall satisfaction with the station	77	72	92	80	73		86	87	86
Ticket buying facilities	76	68	96	81	71		88	83	94
Provision of information about train times/platforms	83	81	85	82	84		90	84	94
The upkeep/repair of the station buildings/platforms	78	65	84	74	78		82	80	81
Cleanliness	81	71	89	83	77		85	81	87
The facilities and services	48	53	69	52	44		69	68	80
The attitudes and helpfulness of the staff	73	71	81	83	67		81	83	82
Connections with other forms of public transport	64	73	86	61	65		71	64	89
Facilities for car parking	69	44	56	58	50		50	58	52
Overall environment	75	65	86	62	66		78	81	83
Your personal security whilst using the station	76	62	86	70	65		77	79	80
The availability of staff	57	57	86	60	51		69	68	74
The provision of shelter facilities	64	58	79	71	66		75	70	84
Availability of seating	57	43	75	63	54		56	58	68
How request to station staff was handled	85	88	77	78	83		93	89	91
The choice of shops/eating/drinking facilities available	34	39	51	49	35		62	57	73
Facilities for bicycle parking	60	46	67	50	63		64	57	62

Table 11, above, shows NRPS satisfaction scores for station attributes for Northern and TPE building blocks. These show some variation both within and between the networks and some notably lower scores for certain factors. For Northern the attributes with generally fairly low levels of satisfaction include: availability of seating; choice of shops, eating and drinking facilities; and facilities and services more generally. Whilst passengers are fairly pragmatic about what facilities should be provided at different category stations, low scores for these factors would suggest that in many instances stations fail to meet even basic expectations.

Passenger Focus research conducted at Clapham Junction, Barking and Luton stations following the Better Rail Stations report<sup>24</sup> shows that at individual stations there are often specific areas of improvements that passengers want to see and that priorities can vary according to location and circumstance. Bidders should seek station feedback from local passengers and community rail partnerships to identify aspirations for specific locations and gather information about relevant accessibility issues.

Appendix 5 includes information about passenger priorities for station requirements and improvements based on station footfall which illustrates how needs can vary at different station types.

### **8.3 The importance of staffing and information**

Passenger Focus research on stations consistently demonstrates that, in addition to station facilities, there are two key factors that operators need to consider when thinking about how to improve passenger satisfaction with stations: information and staff.

#### **8.3.1 Passenger information** – please see also section 4.3 above

The way the industry manages delays is the biggest single driver of rail passenger dissatisfaction; the key to improving this is through the provision of real-time information on delays. Despite the increasing use of technology many passengers still only tend to find out about disruption once they have arrived at the station. It is therefore crucial that operators look at how they can best pass on accurate information to the passenger once it is known to the industry. This is particularly important at unstaffed stations where the passengers' only source of information might be a CIS screen. Real time information provision at all stations should be a core requirement of the franchise.

Other types of information are also important to passengers. It is important that the franchise specification requires high standards of information provision for all stages of the journey: This should include requirements to meet passenger needs for initial planning, at the station of departure, during the journey, at the arrival station and, particularly, when there is disruption. The operator should be required to adopt strategies that maximise the effective use of evolving technology throughout the next five years. (See Appendix 6 for details of information used by passengers at different stages of the journey).

It is also important that, at all times when trains are running, passengers can have access to someone who can provide information and, if disruption means that journeys are curtailed, is also empowered to help stranded passengers by arranging/authorising alternative transport, accommodation or other appropriate responses.

---

<sup>24</sup> The Better Stations Report identified 10 of the worst category B stations in the country. Clapham Junction, Barking and Luton, all featured in that list.

### **8.3.2 Staffing**

The pressure on the industry to reduce costs inevitably places a focus on the overheads associated with staff. However, Passenger Focus is concerned that the next franchise operators do not overlook the very significant roles that staff play and the value that passengers attach to a visible staff presence, especially at stations.

One of the notable findings from our qualitative study in 2012 was the significance passengers placed on staffing. There were frequent references to the value of staff presence and the varied assistance staff could provide. Staff were appreciated where available and there were suggestions that they could bring further benefits if deployed at places they currently were not. In particular, passengers felt this could enhance feelings of security, reduce fare evasion, provide helpful assistance and improve the upkeep of small stations.

Staff are an important and trusted source of information for passengers. This role can encompass information about journey planning, cover wider issues relating to ticket retailing, where there remains considerable complexity about terms and conditions applicable to tickets, and, of course, sale of tickets that are unavailable from TVMs.

During disruption staff have a central role in providing information and advice to passengers, helping them with queries and to make further plans for their journey.

Passengers with assistance needs are particularly dependent on staff to deliver the help they require and to fulfil requests made through Passenger Assist.

Many station facilities and services are only available whilst staff are present. Feedback indicates significant concern about the lack of access to toilets and waiting rooms if staff are withdrawn from stations or hours are significantly reduced.

Passengers cite the lack of staff as a major reason for their feelings of concern over personal security. Passengers consistently identify staff presence as important to providing reassurance to those travelling on the railway. The industry therefore needs to give serious consideration to how it can best deploy staff. Our publication "Passenger perceptions of personal security on the railways" sets out passengers concerns in more detail. The specification should include a requirement to set out how these issues will be addressed across the franchise.

It is important that staff are trained, managed and supported to deliver the highest possible levels of customer service. Expectations of customer service continue to rise as standards do across the range of passenger experience, both within and beyond the rail industry. The organisational culture must recognise that passengers are the very reason the organisation exists, ensuring that passengers are valued and appreciated at every level of the operation. This approach needs to be driven from the top to achieve exemplary staff behaviours amongst a workforce that is genuinely empowered. The ethos must be that passenger interests are central to the decisions

and actions of the business, making a genuine and consistent demonstration of care for whether a passenger returns again.

### **8.3.3 Security and safety**

In autumn 2013 NRPS asked passengers whether they had had cause to worry about personal security in the last six months whilst making a train journey. Nationally the number of passengers saying yes stood at 11 per cent, as was the case on Northern (compared to 10 per cent on regional services). Seven per cent of TPE passengers reported concerns, in line with the long distance sector average.

NRPS then went on to ask those passengers who said that they had been concerned why that was, both in term of their experiences at the station and on train. On both Northern and TPE the main causes for that concern, both on the train and at the station, were attributed to the anti-social behaviour of others and a lack of staff. (See Appendix 7 and 8 for details)

In spring 2014 passengers were asked a slightly different question relating to the specific journey being undertaken, 'whether the behaviour of other passengers' had given them cause to worry or feel uncomfortable'. 12 per cent of passengers on Northern and TPE reported concern/discomfort. For Northern this is similar to the levels reporting concerns over the previous 6 months in answer to the autumn 2013 question. However, this is an increase of 5 per cent on TPE.

Passengers expressing concern in spring 2014 also largely attributed it to anti-social behaviour, but more specifically: rowdy behaviour (48 per cent Northern and 43 per cent TPE); passengers drinking/under the influence (40 per cent and 49 per cent respectively); feet on seats (45 per cent Northern) and; music being played loudly (37 per cent TPE).

In addition to the above passengers were asked in autumn 2013 whether concerns about personal security have prevented them from making trips by train. Nationally, 4 per cent said that they either travelled by another mode or did not make the journey they wanted to, due to concerns over personal security. On Northern the figure was also 4 per cent, whilst on TPE the figure was 1 per cent lower at 3 per cent.

To improve security and safety Passenger Focus recommends that the franchise specification should include CCTV and linked help-point provision at all stations that do not currently have these facilities. Where stations are currently unstaffed during any part of the day when trains operate, they should be priorities for such investment. We believe that virtually every station should have appropriate technology to enhance personal security, although we acknowledge that it may be appropriate to specifically exempt this requirement for particularly lightly used stations in order to ensure best use of limited resources.

Passenger Focus also supports accreditation of stations and car parks through the established industry schemes.

## 8.4 Better on-train experiences

Beyond the core journey requirements relating to the timetable, service delivery and information, the key influencer of passenger satisfaction on trains is the cleanliness of the inside of the train. The specification should require demonstration of how high standards for this important aspect of experience will be established and maintained, including the arrangements for maintenance and cleaning of toilets.

Tables 11a and 11b, below, show NRPS satisfaction scores for train attributes for Northern and TPE building blocks. There are variations across the routes in satisfaction with a number of factors, including the cleanliness of the inside of the train. There is low satisfaction with the train toilet facilities across the board.

**Table 11a Satisfaction with train attributes on Northern building blocks**

### NATIONAL RAIL PASSENGER SURVEY – SPRING 2014

#### Building block/route data for Northern

Train attributes	Lancashire & Cumbria	Manchester & Liverpool	South & East Yorkshire	Tyne Tees & Wear	West & North Yorkshire
Overall satisfaction with the train	71	70	81	82	75
The frequency of the trains on that route	78	75	81	62	75
<i>Punctuality/reliability (i.e. the train arriving/departing on time)</i>	<i>81</i>	<i>73</i>	<i>89</i>	<i>89</i>	<i>77</i>
The length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed)	85	88	91	82	86
Connections with other train services	81	74	88	74	71
The value for money of the price of your ticket	60	49	65	67	51
Cleanliness of the train	67	58	73	77	69
Upkeep and repair of the train	57	54	65	76	67
The provision of information during the journey	57	53	65	68	67
The helpfulness and attitude of staff on train	75	59	80	81	74
The space for luggage	62	52	53	62	51
The toilet facilities	28	37	48	51	46
Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand	74	62	74	79	65
<i>The comfort of the seating area</i>	<i>54</i>	<i>62</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>66</i>
The ease of being able to get on and off	82	71	88	83	83
Your personal security on board	81	74	85	79	83
<i>The cleanliness of the inside</i>	<i>67</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>67</i>	<i>74</i>	<i>69</i>
The cleanliness of the outside	61	52	64	65	63
The availability of staff	58	47	66	79	59
<i>How well train company deals with delays</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>41</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>67</i>	<i>38</i>

*Blue font: aspects of journey which are particularly important to passengers*



Table 11b Satisfaction with train attributes on TPE building blocks

## NATIONAL RAIL PASSENGER SURVEY SPRING 2014

### Building block/route data for First TransPennine Express

Train attributes	North	North West	South
Overall satisfaction with the train	80	78	88
The frequency of the trains on that route	83	77	85
<i>Punctuality/reliability (i.e. the train arriving/departing on time)</i>	<i>85</i>	<i>87</i>	<i>86</i>
The length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed)	87	87	92
Connections with other train services	82	78	83
The value for money of the price of your ticket	53	55	57
Cleanliness of the train	84	83	91
Upkeep and repair of the train	87	86	92
The provision of information during the journey	79	70	87
The helpfulness and attitude of staff on train	81	80	81
The space for luggage	48	53	60
The toilet facilities	50	53	61
Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand	52	58	64
The comfort of the seating area	78	72	86
<i>The ease of being able to get on and off</i>	<i>77</i>	<i>74</i>	<i>86</i>
Your personal security on board	81	83	86
<i>The cleanliness of the inside</i>	<i>84</i>	<i>81</i>	<i>88</i>
The cleanliness of the outside	82	87	86
The availability of staff	67	67	70
<i>How well train company deals with delays</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>49</i>

Blue font: aspects of journey which are particularly important to passengers

Passengerfocus | 20  
putting passengers first

The 2014 passenger priorities for improvement study identified a desire for free wi-fi on trains. The specification should ask how this aspiration will be addressed. The specification should also require the operator/bidders to set out how they plan to assess and address passenger requirements for on-board catering.

Given the emphasis on costs and efficiencies the future roles of staff on the train will undoubtedly be given close scrutiny. From a passenger perspective, provided there can be appropriate assurances about safety, the most valuable role for on-board staff will undoubtedly be in a customer service function; be that information provision, ticket sales or simply a visible and reassuring presence.

### 8.5 Specification of service quality, targets and transparency

It is important that the specifications set out clear requirements for the service quality to be delivered on the new franchises, alongside targets and monitoring and reporting frameworks. It is only against a sufficiently detailed franchise specification that a train operator's performance can be effectively monitored. And, in the worst case, it would be the standards set out in this specification that would provide the context for determining if an operator should be removed for poor performance. For

the Government to ensure it gets what it pays for with taxpayers' money there must be specification to set out what is required of the new franchisee.

Targets, measurements, monitoring and transparent reporting are fundamental to delivering improvements to service quality. Passenger Focus strongly supports the principle of monitoring and improving service quality through a combination of NRPS results and periodic reviews of TOC Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

Disaggregated targets for all measures should be set and performance against them published widely. A financial penalty regime should apply with resources ring-fenced for additional investment into service quality measures that are most likely to improve passenger satisfaction.

There should be a requirement for the franchise operator to commit to high levels of transparency about all aspects of the franchise, including operational performance and service quality.

### **8.5.1 National Rail Passenger Survey**

We have long advocated more use of qualitative targets within a franchise. Our strong preference is for targets based on what passengers think, the best judge of quality being those who have used the services in question. NRPS provides this measure and with existing sample sizes of over 1000 on both Northern and TPE each wave, this already provides for a fair assessment of measures across the identified franchise building blocks.

We recommend, in line with practice on other recent franchises, bespoke targets should be established on each of the building blocks to measure passenger satisfaction with station, train and customer service attributes. Existing levels of satisfaction should be the starting point for establishing targets which should generally become more stretching as the franchise progresses and also increase to reflect the outcomes delivered by investment (e.g. in new trains). An annual assessment of the combined spring and autumn results would provide a fair measure of the overall passenger satisfaction within each given year.

Passenger Focus will continue to discuss the application of NRPS targets for the franchise with the Department and the bidders as required.

### **8.5.2 Key Performance Indicators**

The specification should require operators to conduct KPI assessments across the entire franchise and include all stations and representative samples of the major train service groups. Standards of satisfaction with the customer services function, complaints handling, and the level of appeals to Passenger Focus should also be measured. All assessments should be conducted regularly to provide ongoing management information as well as a basis for regular reviews based on collated information.

### 8.5.3 Performance targets

Given the very high significance of these factors to passengers, the specification must include traditional 'hard' performance targets covering punctuality, reliability and crowding. However, we believe that there is a need for much more transparency surrounding these targets.

Transparency will promote greater accountability by making clear to rail passengers, staff, management and other parties how key aspects of the rail service are performing at different places and at different times. The provision of detailed information will enable rail passengers and others hold the train company to account and to ask what is being done to improve services in return for the fares paid. Good management should not feel threatened by this. Indeed the availability of accurate data may actually help them as a particularly bad journey can linger in the memory and distort passengers' perceptions. Accurate, relevant data can help challenge these negative perceptions and is also a vital management tool.

Punctuality data only provided at the overall operator level can easily mask significant differences between routes and times of day. Passenger Focus supports the provision of performance data (PPM, 'on time'/'right time' and cancellations) in a fully granular way, allowing data to be aggregated as required. This would allow those who use only the '0719' and '1720' to see the performance of those trains – because that is all that matters to them.

Equally, there is currently next to nothing in the public domain about crowding. This is another fundamental aspect of a passenger's journey and an area where greater transparency can generate improvements for passengers.

In the medium term we also see value in looking more closely at the choice of performance measurement used. The existing measure (PPM) allows a five minute leeway on late arrival; a train is not late until it exceeds this allowance. However, we know from our research<sup>25</sup> mapping passenger satisfaction against train performance that a delay begins to have an effect on passengers well before that. This might mean addressing the suitability of the current thresholds or even introducing a secondary measure based on right-time arrival. Recent steps by the industry towards publication of right-time data on particular trains make this increasingly feasible and more likely to be the measure on which performance is publicly judged.

Network Rail's performance clearly has a huge bearing on an operator's punctuality and yet a franchise agreement typically only creates an obligation on factors within the train company's control. Clearly there are limits to how far one organisation is willing to be held accountable for another's performance but, from a passenger's perspective, it is overall punctuality that matters - not just how well the train company did. There are obvious benefits in aligning operator and Network Rail incentives and

---

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/publications/relationship-between-customer-satisfaction-and-performance-northern-rail>

there is much work going on to address this, not least in terms of joint improvement performance plans and potential alliances. We would like to see the franchise specifications encourage and cement this joint working approach. To this end we would ask DfT to consider the scope for introducing joint targets within these franchises.

Passenger Focus has worked with the Office of Rail Regulation and National Rail Enquiries, on behalf of all train operators, to explore passenger views on performance and other data and to understand how this may best be made available to them. This qualitative research<sup>26</sup> should inform the approach to data publication in the new franchise.

#### **8.5.4 Input vs. output measures**

The balance between input and output measures is a fine one. For instance, the franchise could specify that the bidder purchases 50 new ticket vending machines (an input target) or that it increase passenger satisfaction with retailing (an output target). The latter follows the pattern set in the 2009 South Central franchise with the bidders setting targets for passenger satisfaction and these becoming contractual targets with fines for non-compliance.

Passenger Focus recognises the value of both input and output measures provided that they are based on passengers' priorities and needs. Some input targets will clearly remain important to passengers e.g. to cover 'hard' targets for things like punctuality, cancellations and crowding; while output targets (based on passenger satisfaction) may be better placed to address some of the 'softer' qualitative elements of a journey. Passenger responses to the consultation should be used to further inform the targets and measures that go into the franchise specification.

#### **8.6 Passenger and stakeholder communication and engagement**

Central to improving the passenger experience of rail services are effective mechanisms for passenger and stakeholder engagement, particularly for gathering intelligence on local aspirations and developments, and for consulting on future proposals.

Our report, Giving passengers a voice in rail services<sup>27</sup>, found passengers are often unaware that a new franchise is being negotiated in the first place; they want to know more about plans for letting a new franchise and for their views to be taken into consideration. They also want to be able to hold the operator to account.

In common with other recent franchises, Passenger Focus recommends the specification requires the establishment of a Customer and Communities Investment Fund, the production of at least an annual customer report and clear plans for an engagement strategy that accommodates the needs of different passengers. This

---

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/publications/presenting-righttime-performance-information-to-rail-passengers>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/publications/giving-passengers-a-voice-in-rail-services>

should include a mechanism to alert passengers to prospective changes when the next franchise period expires.

Passenger Focus advocates that a wide range of means should be employed to communicate with passengers and wider communities to allow people to access information and provide input in the ways that are most suited to each individual or group.

## 8.7 Fares and Ticketing

In our 2014 priorities for improvement research value for money was the highest priority for improvement on Northern and a close second on TPE – it is also traditionally one of the lower areas of passenger satisfaction (54 per cent of Northern and TPE passengers were satisfied in the NRPS Spring 2014 wave of research).

An 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.

- Making buying a ticket easier  
Passenger Focus's research<sup>28</sup> has identified a number of issues with both ticket vending machines (TVMs) and websites – much of which was reflected in Government's own Fares and Ticketing Review<sup>29</sup>
  - Printing any restrictions on passengers' tickets to remove confusion over validity
  - Displaying outward and return ticket restrictions on ticket vending machines prior to a passenger committing to purchase
  - Making it impossible to buy an Advance ticket on the internet at a higher price than the 'walk up' fare available on the same train
- Smart ticketing and extending the range of products
  - Fares and cost of living pressures are a major concern for many passengers. A range of initiatives to improve this should be fostered which include, but are not limited to, smart technology. For example:
    - Carnet style arrangements, providing discount on a number of tickets for the same journey purchased together
    - Cash-back/early-bird/part - time season tickets that 'reward' passengers when they travel less frequently or outside the peak. At the heart of a new commuter fares structure should be the principle of rewarding passengers who avoid the busiest times, rather than penalising those who cannot.

---

<sup>28</sup> Ticket vending machine usability, Passenger Focus, June 2010 and Ticket retailing: website usability, Passenger Focus, June 2011.

<sup>29</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/249001/fares-ticketing-next-steps.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/249001/fares-ticketing-next-steps.pdf)

- Schemes that spread the cost of an annual season ticket over the course of a year
  - An additional benefit from season tickets being loaded onto smart technology could be that lost or stolen tickets can be ‘stopped’ electronically, removing the, at times, financially devastating ruling about the non-replacement of season tickets if lost/stolen more than twice within a 12-month period.
- Complexity and consumer confidence
 

Research by Passenger Focus and others<sup>30</sup> has found that some passengers are not confident that they bought the best value fare for the journey they have made. Passengers should be able to buy the most appropriate ticket for their intended journey, regardless of whether this is purchased at a ticket office, online, at a ticket vending machine (TVM) or through any other method.

Our report (Passenger Focus response to the Government’s rail fares and ticketing review- 2012) made a series of recommendations designed to improve consumer confidence. These include:

- The use of single-leg pricing (to avoid the return sometimes just being £1 more than a single. By pricing Off-Peak Singles at 50 per cent of the current return fare the industry would allow passengers to mix and match between Advance and other ticket types and would create a reasonably-priced, semi-flexible product mid-way between Advance and Anytime.

This latter point is also consistent with our research among employer<sup>31</sup>s which shows that business passengers find the lack of flexibility within the ticketing structure a real problem –e.g. to allow for a meeting that overruns by 30 minutes. Prices for those passengers who can buy well in advance and stick to their plans can be fantastic value for money. However, the options for those travelling at short notice, or requiring even a small degree of flexibility, are in some cases extremely expensive and result in value-for-money scores plummeting.

- That if a passenger misses the train on which they booked an Advance ticket, the sum paid already should count towards the new ticket they need to buy (less a reasonable administration fee).
- That passengers wishing to change previously-purchased Advance tickets for a different date or time should pay one £10 administration fee to cover all the tickets in the transaction (at present, a family of four needing to

---

<sup>30</sup> Passenger Focus and ORR, May 2014  
<http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/publications/the-passenger-experience-the-full-research-report>

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/news-and-publications/document-search/document.asp?dsid=2526>

change out and back return tickets would face £80 in administration fees, which feels utterly disproportionate to the train company's costs and makes many Advance tickets de facto "no refund, no change")

- The 'cut-off' time for buying Advance Single tickets be moved to the latest practicable time to allow the production and positioning of seat reservation labels. The remaining as-yet-unsold Advance tickets should stay on sale until the latest practical time – CrossCountry's Advance Purchase On the Day (APOD) setting the benchmark.

In addition, we wish to see the existing range of 'rover/ranger' tickets in the North given greater prominence and awareness. These can offer good value and can also be attractive for tourism if visitors can locate the information about them. We also wish the specifications to make clear that the next operators must continue with, and expand where appropriate, the current provisions for any advance fares and discounted tickets available on the franchises.

#### **8.7.1 Fares regulation**

The level of flexibility that can be applied to increases in individual fares should be maintained at (or below) the +/- 2% level announced as part of the DfT's Fares and Ticketing Review Conclusions. Any plans to move away from this on either franchise should be fully evidenced and justified.

#### **8.8 Revenue Protection**

Our research (Passenger views of Northern and TransPennine rail franchises - December 2012) showed that passengers found the issue of fare evasion very frustrating. There was a strong sense of injustice amongst those who have paid for a ticket when some passengers are known to be travelling for free. They also felt that this reduced the amount of money available for investment.

Passengers believed that the main solution to fare evasion would be to make better provision for the purchase of tickets at stations and on board, and better checking procedures and enforcement. This must include:

- clarity and consistency over when it was permissible to buy a ticket on board a train – the current system is felt to be too arbitrary
- managing ticket queues effectively (at TVMs and offices)
- providing ticket restrictions in an easy to access form and in plain English
- providing the passenger with verification of permission to travel without a ticket
- providing the passenger with verification of attempt to purchase a ticket if a card is declined due to bank security measures or signal issues



- having a revenue protection system that filters out those who make an innocent mistake and whose intention was never to defraud the system. Our 2012 report, Ticket to Ride<sup>32</sup>, provides numerous examples of where this did not happen.

We acknowledge that it is not always easy to determine the latter so we recommend that the revenue protection strategies for Northern and TPE address the following core principles/issues:

- clear consistent guidelines explaining when staff should show discretion in the enforcement of penalties. We would welcome the introduction of some basic underpinning principles:
  - Stated criteria on which decisions are based for Unpaid Fare Notices, Penalty Fare Notices, settlements and prosecutions
  - Presumption against enforcement action where there has been no loss to the train company (and therefore no gain to the passenger). The most obvious examples being when a railcard has not been presented at the time of the ticket inspection but can subsequently be proved to have been held, not printing off 'print-at-home' tickets.
  - Consideration of alternative forms of verification of purchase e.g. where a passenger has three parts of a four part ticket and can also prove purchase through a receipt or bank statement
  - Information about revenue protection and the criteria for decision taking should be readily available to the passenger on the TOCs web site. Some TOCs already provide full information and have not found it jeopardises revenue
  - Train companies need to retain overall accountability even when they have outsourced revenue protection to a third party (especially when third-party bodies are involved).
- The ability / right of the passenger to appeal against the decision of the operator.

Appeals should be considered not only on the grounds of technicalities and correct application of the rules.

- If additional information is provided by the passenger this information should be checked.
- When an appeal is made "the clock must stop" and no admin charges should be added until a decision is announced.
- If an appeal is upheld the passenger should never be charged a penny.
- Letters should address the issues raised by passengers not simply make a statement about strict liability
- The system should be subject to external audits to show that appeal criteria are being followed properly. This move could actually help generate some confidence in the process.

---

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/publications/ticket-to-ride-full-report-may-2012>



- The rail industry has considerable power available to pursue ticketless travel, including mounting criminal prosecutions. Indeed, using the ‘strict liability’ nature of the Rail Byelaws means that they do not even have to prove any intent to defraud on the part of the passenger in order to do so. We are concerned that the operator acts as investigating officer and prosecutor whilst also being the complainant; and that there are currently no external checks or balances to how this power is exercised. Strict liability makes it extremely difficult for a passenger to prove their innocence.

**We recommend:**

- A commitment not to go straight to any form of criminal prosecution unless they suspect (and have proof) that there was intent to defraud.
- Letters sent to passengers about prosecution or offering a warning in lieu of prosecution should enlighten not intimidate. Information about penalties that are irrelevant to the case should not be included.
- A PFN is a civil debt it should not be converted to a prosecution simply in order to encourage the payment of a debt.
- Penalties should be proportionate to the actual loss suffered by the operator.
- Greater transparency and accountability  
A requirement on train companies to publish details on the number of PFNs, UFNs issued and prosecutions brought; and the number successfully challenged.

We welcome action to reduce fare evasion. However each franchisee should be able to demonstrate that at each stage of the process there are safeguards for the honest passenger who has made a mistake, and that they can actively filter them out of the penalty and prosecutions route.

### **8.9 Compensation policies**

In keeping with recent practice Passenger Focus believes that the new franchises should be let on the basis of a single set of compensation arrangements introduced from day one with the following provisions:

- Delay Repay applicable to all ticket holders experiencing delays of 30 minutes or more, irrespective of cause (50 per cent 30-59, 100 per cent 60 minutes or over)
- additional compensation – a ‘safety net’ – for season ticket holders who experience regular delays under 30 minutes (such passengers are currently protected by discount on renewal arrangements which delay repay on its own does not offer)

A formal definition of sustained poor performance to cover these latter circumstances and some firm proposals about how this will be reflected in additional compensation to regular travellers should be required. The definition should take into account both

the frequency of sub-30 minute delays and their cumulative total in any period. The assessment of poor performance should also reflect the proportion of time the passenger was delayed in relation to the scheduled journey.

The proposals for additional compensation should be subject to consultation.

More also needs to be done to increase passengers' awareness of their rights to claim compensation. This right should be promoted through a range of channels, including on trains that are delayed and at stations where delayed services are calling, as well as within the passenger charter, on websites and via Twitter etc. Mechanisms to identify passengers who have been delayed and provide automatic recompense should also be developed and introduced.

### **8.10 Complaints handling**

In our role as the statutory appeals body<sup>33</sup> Passenger Focus has extensive experience of working with passengers and rail operators to seek resolution of appeal complaints. We have found a number of recurring issues with either the operators' complaints processes or response quality. We have been working with the industry in an effort to improve customer service, reduce complaint handling times and focus on operators providing quality complaints handling, which should in turn, decrease the number of passenger appeals to train companies.

It is important that the specification for the franchise requires detailed information about policies and procedures for dealing with complaints. These should demonstrate a clear commitment to best practice and should encompass the following points:

#### **8.10.1 Process issues**

- Empower customer service advisors to apply 'natural justice' when dealing with poor passenger experiences and allow redress to go beyond the minimum levels of the Passenger Charter or National Rail Conditions of Carriage.
- Ensure mechanisms to monitor and manage response times and to acknowledge complaints if they cannot be resolved within the target time, which should be published.
- Implement a process whereby appropriate issues are proactively investigated by the customer service advisor, and other relevant staff members, and feed back the findings to the passenger.

---

<sup>33</sup> For British rail passengers outside of London

- Establish mechanisms to feed complaints into service improvements, where possible, and feed information about this back to the passenger.
- Ensure a clear and well communicated escalation process is in place for complaints handling, including referral to, and cooperation with, Passenger Focus or London TravelWatch.

### **8.10.2 Response quality**

Train and empower customer service advisors to identify and address all the points in the complaint and give heavy weighting to ‘addressing all issues raised by the passenger’ in internal quality monitoring processes. A focus on first time resolution reduces ‘comebacks’ and the need for a subsequent response by the operator.

- Provide clear explanations about why the passenger is/ is not receiving compensation and/or gesture of goodwill.
- Make careful use of appropriately worded standard paragraphs, supplemented as necessary by bespoke responses.
- Ensure customer service advisors use clear, jargon-free English with correct spelling, grammar and punctuation when writing responses.
- Implement a culture of continuous improvement and use complaints handling as an opportunity to restore a customer’s faith in the train operator.

### **8.10.3 Legacy complaints**

A clear process for handling legacy complaints should be established. Passenger Focus recommends that all complaints should be dealt with by the new operators from the first day onwards, with appropriate recompense mechanisms from the outgoing operator established to enable this.

Making the incumbent responsible for handling complaints reduces confusion and complexity for the passenger. It also ensures that complaints are handled by the operator with an ongoing interest in retaining the passenger, and who is best placed to resolve any issues and implement any changes as a result of the complaint.

## **8.11 Accessibility, the Equality Act 2010 and minor works fund**

We expect the specifications to include requirements to comply with equalities and discrimination legislation and to produce a Disabled People’s Protection Policy (DPPP). Passenger Focus also recommends a minor works fund and advocates that consultation with relevant groups should include inviting suggestions about how this money might best be spent to meet identified needs.

In addition to the provisions set out in DPPP guidance, Passenger Focus believes the franchise specifications should also require the following provisions:

- Scooter policy – ensure that a suitable scooter acceptance scheme is in place for smaller, lighter and more manoeuvrable machines – e.g. Scootercards. Blanket bans are no longer acceptable – always understanding that some models will be too wide/heavy ever to be accepted on to trains.
- Provide a priority seat card scheme (as initiated by Southern and now adopted as good practice by a number of operators) to help passengers demonstrate a specific need for a seat, backed up by publicity on stations and greater prominence made of which seats are priority seats so that they are easily located and recognised. This is especially important in the case of trains where no reservation facility is available.
- Clarify the priority of use of priority seating and the groups considered eligible for it.
- Clearly clarify priority of usage in ‘shared’ spaces – i.e. wheelchairs have absolute priority over prams.
- Provide assistance cards which disabled passengers can show to staff to explain their disability – hearing-impaired, speech-impaired, learning difficulties, so that staff can react and provide the necessary additional assistance.
- Comprehensive Passenger Assist monitoring – proper management, e.g. perhaps the number of assistance requests delivered, rather than satisfaction, which can be deceptive. This could be included in the Passenger’s Charter and the DPPP.
- Best use should be made of the management information gained from Passenger Assist – e.g. enabling TOCs to plan assistance provision better.
- Training of staff – especially front-line staff in immediate customer contact, whether face-to face or by telephone.
- Examine all possibilities to improve station accessibility: e.g. induction loops; help points; adjustable-height counters; automatic doors etc.

## 9. Further information

For further information about this response to the Northern and TPE franchise consultation please contact:

Sharon Hedges

Passenger Issues Manager

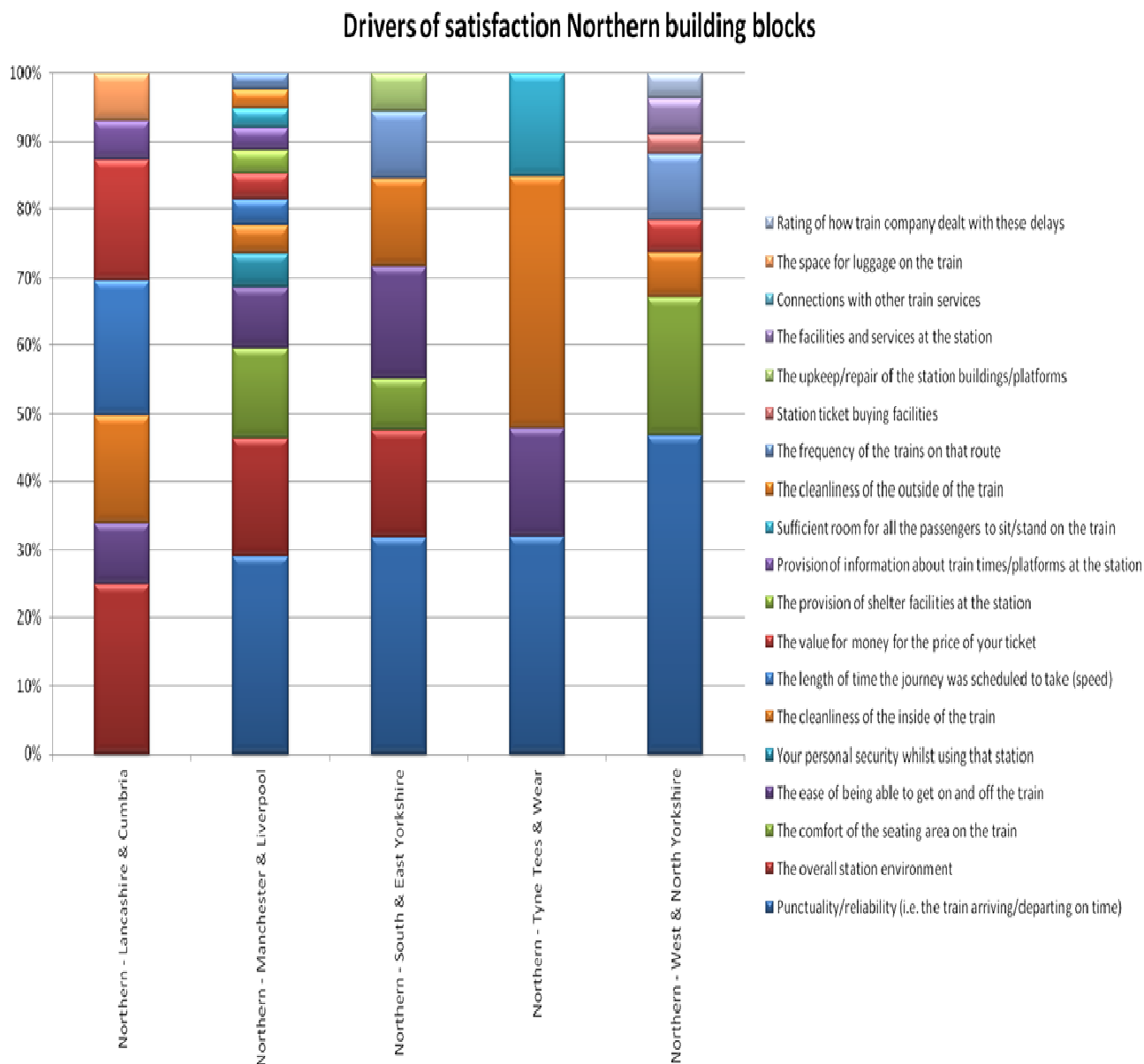
[sharon.hedges@passengerfocus.org.uk](mailto:sharon.hedges@passengerfocus.org.uk)

## Appendix 1 Northern and TPE NRPS building block route definitions

- **Northern: Lancashire & Cumbria**  
Journeys from stations in Lancashire and Cumbria
- **Northern: Manchester & Liverpool**  
Journeys from stations in the Manchester and Liverpool conurbations
- **Northern: South & East Yorkshire:**  
Journeys from stations in South and East Yorkshire, and Lincolnshire
- **Northern: Tyne Tees & Wear**  
Journeys from stations in Tyne and Wear
- **Northern: West & North Yorkshire**  
Journeys from stations in West and North Yorkshire
- **First TransPennine Express: North**  
Journeys on rail lines between Liverpool Lime Street/Manchester/Manchester Airport and Hull, Scarborough, Middlesbrough and Newcastle
- **First TransPennine Express: North West**  
Journeys on rail lines between Manchester Airport and Manchester and lines to Blackpool North, Barrow-in-Furness, Windermere, Glasgow and Edinburgh
- **First TransPennine Express: South**  
Journeys on routes between Manchester Airport/Manchester and Cleethorpes

## Appendix 2 Drivers of passenger satisfaction

### 2a Drivers of passenger satisfaction - Northern building blocks

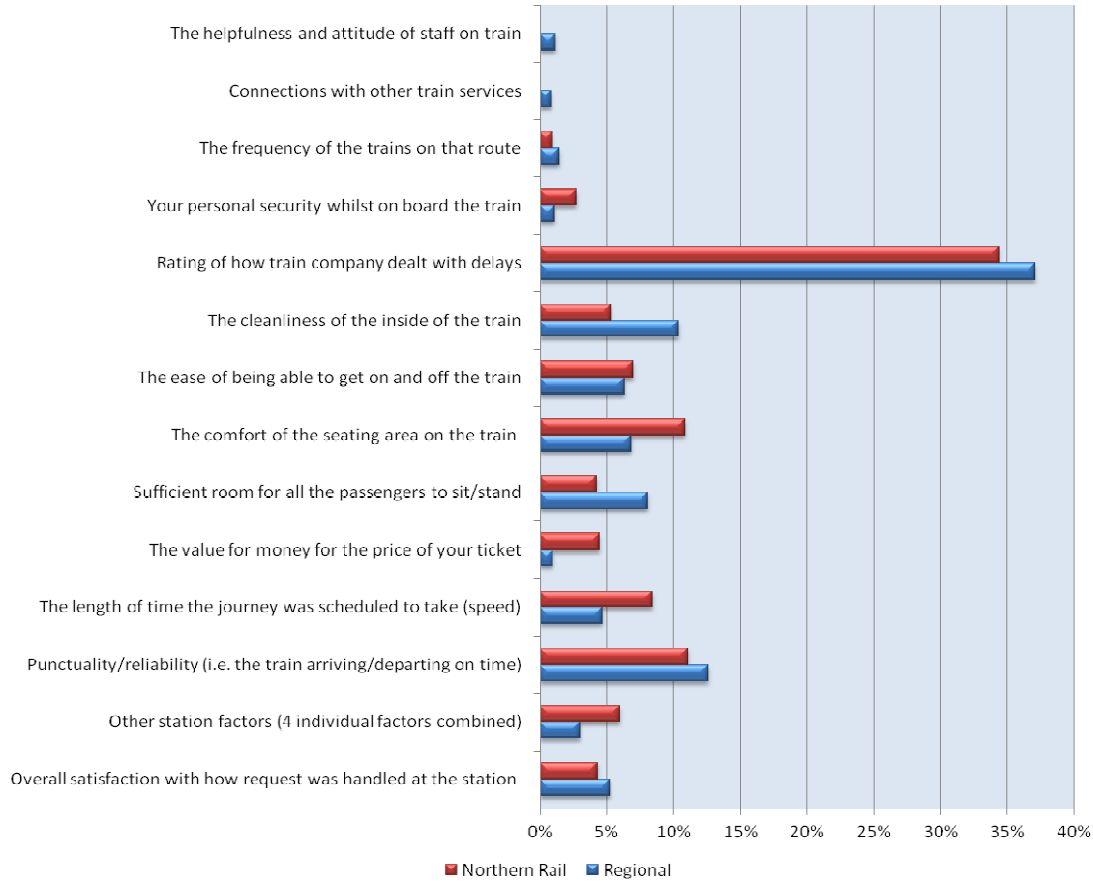


Note the absence of punctuality and reliability for Lancashire and Cumbria building block. The overall station environment is the biggest driver for Lancashire and Cumbria and second highest driver for Manchester and Liverpool and South and East Yorkshire.

The comfort of the seating area on the train is second highest driver for West and North Yorkshire and is also notable for Manchester and Liverpool and South and East Yorkshire.

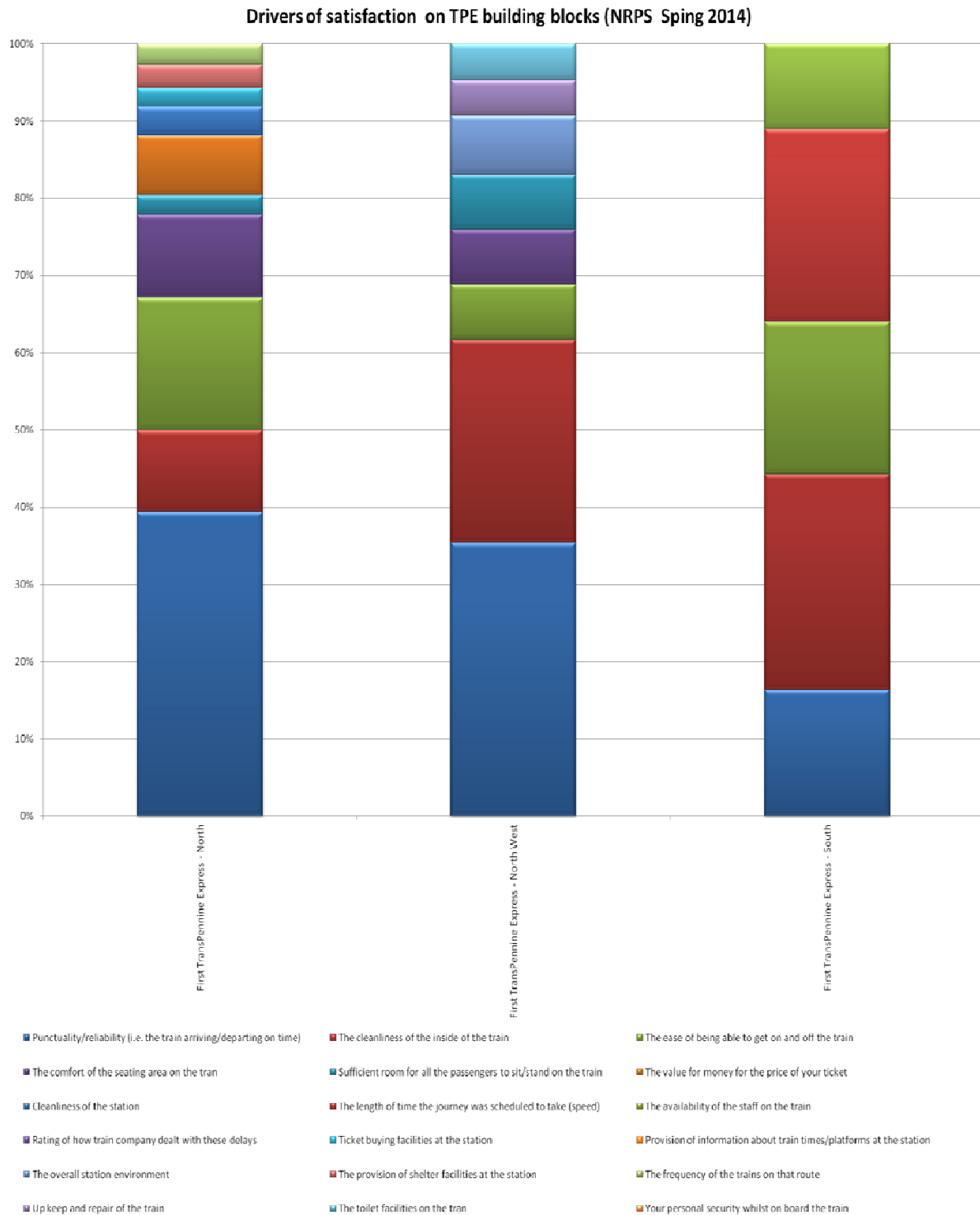
## 2b Drivers of passenger dissatisfaction - Northern compared to regional sector

**Drivers of dissatisfaction for Northern and the regional sector**



Note how comfort of the seating area and length of time journey scheduled to take are greater drivers of dissatisfaction on Northern than for regional sector on average.

## 2c Drivers of satisfaction - TPE building blocks

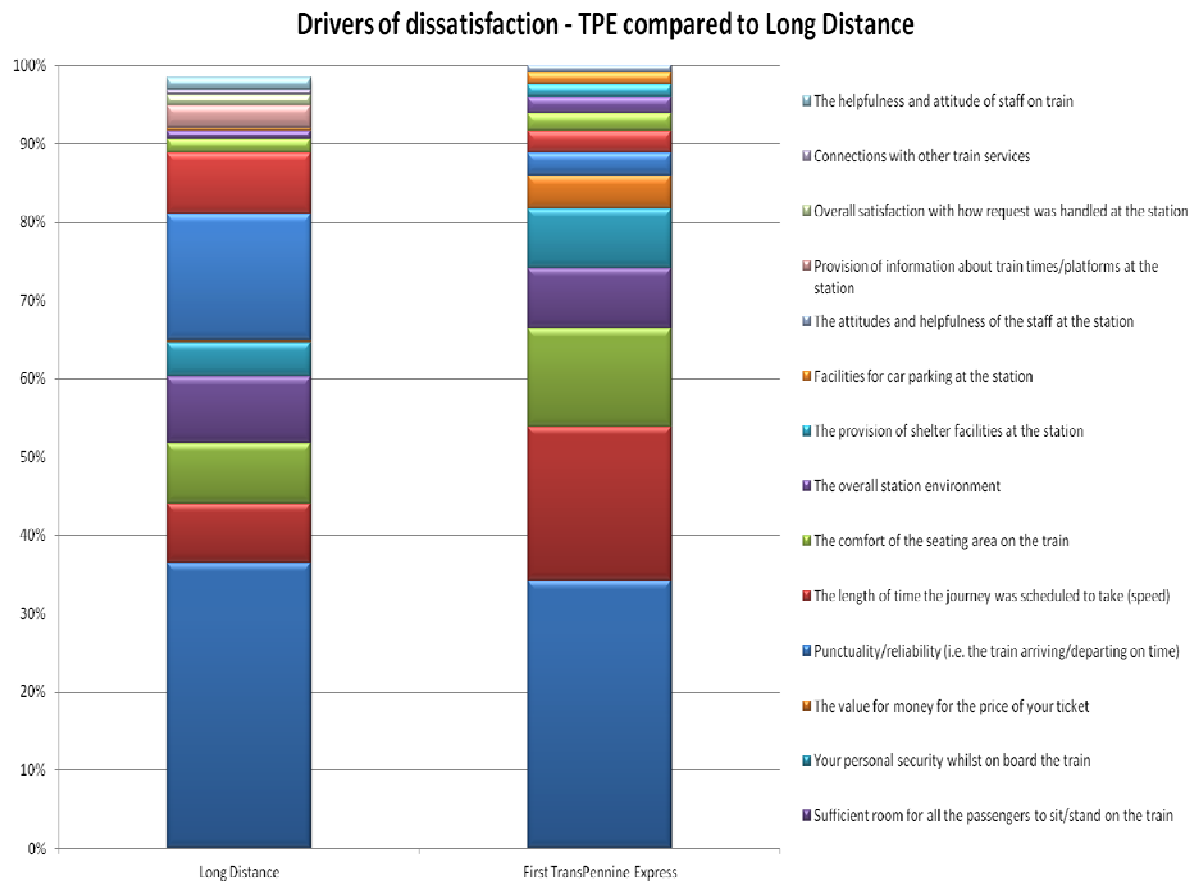


Note for TPE South the lesser impact of punctuality and reliability and the greater impact of length of time journey scheduled to take.

The cleanliness of inside of train is more important to TPE North West and TPE South and ease of getting on/off is more important to TPE North and TPE South.



## 2d Drivers of dissatisfaction - TPE compared to long distance sector



Note the impact of length of time journey scheduled to take and comfort of the seating area on the train for TPE passengers compared to long distance

## Appendix 3 Southern bus replacement sign – an example of good practice



## Appendix 4 Passenger Focus's PIDD recommendations

(for publication later in 2014)

Passenger Focus's recommendations arising from this research, drawing also on National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) and our observations of passenger information quality during autumn and winter 2013, are set out below, broadly in order of priority.

### 1 Measurement and continuous improvement

- Introduce ongoing quantitative research to measure improvement in passenger satisfaction with the handling of service disruption. There should be a common methodology and a sample size sufficient to give statistically robust results for each train company. It should be noted that the industry almost did this in 2011 under the auspices of the National Taskforce "Passenger Information During Disruption (PIDD) Workstream 4", but the plan was abandoned. We believe robust data at train company level is essential if managers are to be tasked with, and held to account for, achieving improvements in passenger experience. The research should be published.
- Develop a measure of 'core message'<sup>34</sup> quality to complement the quantitative measures in place. Only by measuring the quality and quantity of core message production can a meaningful picture of performance become part of a senior management Key Performance Indicator (KPI) 'dashboard'. Passenger Focus is aware that some advocate weakening the Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) requirement to update a 'core message' at least every 20 minutes, arguing that it encourages a focus on quantity not quality. We believe measuring quality as well

---

<sup>34</sup> 'core message' is the term used in the PIDD ACOP to describe the update message to be sent by 'control' every 20 minutes during disruption

is the solution, not weakening the quantitative target. Research already shows frequency of update to be a weaker area of current provision.

- Significantly boost arrangements to ‘sense check’ if online information is accurate, consistent and up-to-date. This should cover train companies’ own websites, National Rail Enquiries, third party retailers and other key information providers such as the BBC. The need is not for high-end forensic analysis: it is for basic “that can’t be right, what’s going on here” skills that ensure inaccuracies and inconsistencies are spotted and put right. Two recent examples: i. replacement buses and the trains they are replacing showing simultaneously in journey planning systems and ii. two train companies running over the same track telling passengers to travel with the other, despite the line being closed entirely. The industry should consider including a ‘what to look for’ checklist in the ACOP.
- Report the level of adherence within each Network Rail ‘control’ to the “Guidance Note for Control, Response and Station Staff: Information During Disruption”, which covers the production and dissemination of Prioritised Plans during disruption. This must be quantitative and qualitative, becoming a regularly reported KPI for each Network Rail Route Managing Director.
- To supplement regular post-incident analysis, carry out an independent in-depth review of at least one Customer Service Level 2 (CSL2)<sup>2</sup> disruption incident per train company each year. This should focus on the passenger impact, identifying what was handled well and what should have been better, including passenger information and other aspects of customer service. A transparent method of selecting incidents for review will be essential. Findings and recommendations should be published.

<sup>2</sup> ‘CSL2’ is the term used in the PIDD ACOP to describe disruption that is significant enough to trigger an enhanced level of customer service

## **2 Trust and honesty**

- Give information controllers the tools to accurately describe the cause of disruption. Passengers want the truth, not generalised stock descriptions some believe are intended to hide the facts. A tree across the railway is just that: don’t call it “an obstruction”. If a car has driven into the level crossing barriers say so: don’t say “a problem at a level crossing”. The term “signalling problems” is used to describe faults that are simply not signalling problems, fuelling some passengers’ suspicion that they are not being told the truth. It should be noted that in 2012 the industry agreed significant changes to address this, but they have never been implemented.
- In seeking to improve the quality of messages during disruption, consider how to more effectively ‘tell a story’, or ‘paint a picture’, of unfolding events. The objective should be to give passengers a continually-evolving sense of the

activity going on to restore the service. Understanding what is being done helps passengers practically and emotionally. If told that the rescue locomotive has set off but is 45 minutes away, or the website shows a photograph of a tree across the railway, passengers can relate to why they are stuck.

- To increase trust and believability the industry should make live announcements during disruption, whether at stations or on trains, in particular avoiding automated apologies. Can an organisation be truly sorry if it uses a computer rather than a human to say so?
- Reinvigorate efforts to ensure all passengers entitled to compensation know that they are and that it is simple to claim and receive what is due. Smart ticketing will give the potential for automation, but in the meantime when a train is delayed by more than the compensation trigger there should be, at least, an announcement encouraging passengers to submit a claim. On trains with a guard or other onboard staff freepost claim forms should be distributed wherever possible. Passengers who have booked online on a train that is delayed by more than the trigger should be sent an email inviting them to apply online.
- To increase transparency and accountability, each 'local plan' issued under the ACOP (as well as the ACOP itself) should be published on the relevant train company's website, accompanied by an annual progress report. The Network Rail National Guidance document should also be published and an annual progress report provided.

### **3 Help me avoid the problem in the first place**

- Address the low proportion (17 per cent) of passengers aware of disruption before they arrive at the station. Research is required to understand what is preventing a higher proportion of passengers signing up to receive some form of push alert, whether by text, email, in-app alert or Twitter. Is there an awareness problem? How well do current alerting services meet passengers' needs? What could be improved? Is the signup process off-putting? It is unlikely, but perhaps 83 per cent of passengers are just not interested in knowing in advance?
- Introduce (reintroduce, in some instances) and promote free text alerts as quickly as possible. Text was selected by more passengers than any other method as the best way to tell them about disruption before they arrive at the station.
- Provide free alerts to passengers who have bought tickets online for trains that are cancelled, significantly delayed or where the schedule is amended after purchase. The sentiment of passengers is "they know I was booked on it, but they couldn't be bothered to tell me".
- Ensure critical passenger messages, such as that there is a significantly reduced service operating tomorrow, are highly prominent on websites. Too many train

companies present such information in their 'house style', resulting in vital information blending in with the rest of the webpage or feeling like a "will you accept our cookies?" message.

#### 4 Accuracy and usefulness of information

- Significantly improve capability to estimate the delay. This would include the delay a passenger will encounter if they set off now; how long passengers on particular trains will be stuck; how long it will take to fix the problem; and how long it will be until the train service is fully recovered. Messages like "delays of up to 60 minutes" are backwards-looking, reporting what has happened (i.e. that some trains are running up to 60 minutes late), not forward-looking giving an estimate of what to expect if you set off now. Not knowing, if your train has stopped in the middle of nowhere, if it will be 20 minutes or two hours causes real frustration. Too many disruption incidents go from "until further notice" to "cleared" with no estimate ever given about likely duration. Although it has improved, there is still a tendency to sound the 'all clear' before understanding the knock-on consequences of congestion, trains and crews being in the wrong place etc.
- Deliver the capability, and then use it, for train company 'control' staff to speak directly to passengers in any train via the GSM-R system<sup>3</sup>. We believe this change will substantially improve the quality of information provided to passengers during disruption, particularly on driver only trains.

<sup>3</sup> GSM-R refers to the Global System for Mobile Communications – Railway, an international wireless communications standard

- Review CSL2 thresholds to ensure enhanced arrangements are triggered in line with passengers' expectations, not playing catch-up. We again suggest that CSL2 triggers should be consistent with the point at which 25 per cent of passengers regard a delay as "serious". Analysis of NRPS data between autumn 2008 and autumn 2013 shows the tipping point between minor and serious delay to be, in passengers' eyes, 16-20 minutes for London and South East train companies, and 21-25 minutes for long distance and regional train companies.
- Evaluate whether 'control' is sufficiently resourced, in terms of humans and systems, to ensure that Darwin is always accurate, even during major disruption. Arguably, staffing 'control' for the workload on a normal day will guarantee failure on a day of disruption. In an era when passengers are checking websites and apps before and during travel, making sure journey planners and live departure boards are accurate is vital. Yet too often trains continue to show as "on time" right up until, and sometimes after, the time that they should have left.
- Develop the capability to implement a revised timetable, and revert to the normal schedule, significantly more quickly than current processes allow. Day A for Day

B<sup>4</sup> is clearly an improvement on the underlying Day A for Day C arrangements, but its limitations are significant:

- i. Train companies currently have to decide by 1100 on Day A if a revised timetable is required on Day B. If it becomes clear at lunchtime that horrendous weather will affect the railway tomorrow it is already too late
- ii. If a train company has decided to run a reduced timetable, but the severe weather warning is downgraded, it is difficult to revert to the normal timetable
- iii. The process assumes that train companies have provided a fully worked up contingency timetable to Network Rail in advance, to be implemented in its entirety. This 'all or nothing' approach appears insufficiently flexible to respond to weather, or anything else, affecting routes – or sections of route – in different ways
- iv. Day A for Day B is envisaged to be available only in the winter. For example, the St. Jude storm (28 October 2013) fell outside the coverage period, although Network Rail did its best to accommodate train companies seeking to amend timetables.

<sup>4</sup> 'Day A for Day B' is the phrase used to describe an enhanced process by which a train company can advise on a particular day that it wishes to operate an amended timetable the next – the normal process (Day A for Day C) requires a further day before the amended timetable will appear in passenger-facing information systems

- Ensure those responsible for passenger information have the authority, and the means, at any time of day or night to refocus their website to provide information of immediate value to passengers, where necessary suppressing marketing material. Too often we hear of interdepartmental battles and 'out of hours' practicalities getting in the way of giving passengers the information they need.
- When a section of infrastructure is unexpectedly out of use for many weeks the industry must stop showing trains running normally. The practice of bidding changes to the base timetable only a week or two ahead, and leaving the normal timetable in place beyond that, ignores T-12<sup>35</sup> information obligations and leaves tickets on sale on trains that cannot run (Dawlish and the Cambrian Coast being recent examples).
- Work with online retailers and information providers to develop an automatic means to identify which trains are affected by a particular incident, allowing them to be 'flagged' and a contextual message shown to passengers making relevant journey enquiries and/or ticket purchases.
- The ACOP currently envisages a 'core message' comprising "problem, impact, advice", but the research suggests that "impact, problem, advice" may be better-

---

<sup>35</sup> T-12 is shorthand for the requirement that timetable information in passenger-facing systems must be correct 12 weeks in advance

aligned with some passengers' needs. In essence, those passengers are saying "give me the implications for my journey, then tell me what's wrong with the railway".

## **5 Staff**

- Ensure staff are at least as well informed as passengers with a smartphone. The fact staff sometimes know less than they do, baffles and frustrates passengers who cannot fathom why train companies do not equip staff with a tablet or smartphone and solve the problem. This should be a given, yet the ACOP has it only as "ideally". Staff need appropriate equipment: the rail industry has tended to play catch-up, issuing staff with Blackberrys when passengers were buying smartphones and issuing smartphones when passengers were moving on to tablets. But it is also about training and the expectations that staff use the devices to passengers' maximum benefit.
- Require drivers and guards to acknowledge a halt between stations within two minutes, and measure if it is happening in practice. Research continues to show that saying something quickly, even if it is simply "We've stopped at a red signal, I'm going to find out why" is powerful in demonstrating that the train company knows the train has stopped and cares enough to acknowledge it.

## **6 Fares and ticketing**

- Ensure passengers do not pay more as a result of service disruption. Closing seat reservations because of uncertainty about the timetable does not stop passengers being sold tickets, but it often increases fares significantly (because Advance tickets cannot be sold). The industry must ensure that during sustained disruption Advance tickets are immediately available where they would normally be, even if a replacement bus is now involved.
- Change aspects of the national ticketing rules to give passengers greater protection during disruption, specifically:
  - i. Passengers choosing not to travel because it is highly likely, even certain, that they will be delayed after leaving or their journey cannot be completed should have the same rights to a full refund (in other words with no administration fee) as a passenger intending to catch a train that is already delayed or cancelled
  - ii. Passengers holding out and back Advance single tickets who choose not to travel because of known or likely disruption should be refunded for both legs of the journey without an administration fee (if you couldn't get there, you don't need your ticket to come back)
  - iii. Passengers holding out and back Advance single tickets who are delayed on their outward journey should be permitted to return on a later train than they have booked. If you had been looking forward to four hours sightseeing somewhere, why should you cut short your day because disruption meant you arrived late?
- Ensure industry retailing systems can reflect any temporary fares policy that is proposed. During the Dawlish closure, systems proved incapable of reflecting



CrossCountry's laudable policy that, given the replacement bus from Exeter to Plymouth, an Advance single to Exeter was good for travel to Penzance. As a consequence it is highly likely that some passengers paid more than the policy required.

## **7 Additional recommendations**

- Train companies should continuously review how they communicate with the National Rail Communications Centre (NRCC) and online retailers during disruption, especially in relation to supplementary contextual information. Do all relevant staff, including communications/press office staff, appreciate how vital it is to keep the NRCC and online retailers informed; understand what those organisations need to know; and have the right email addresses at their fingertips?
- The industry should revisit its 2012 decision that the PIDD ACOP would no longer be a joint ATOC/Network Rail document. Given that in many cases the raw material a train company uses to produce passenger information originates with Network Rail, together with the existence of many joint controls, would a single document be more effective?

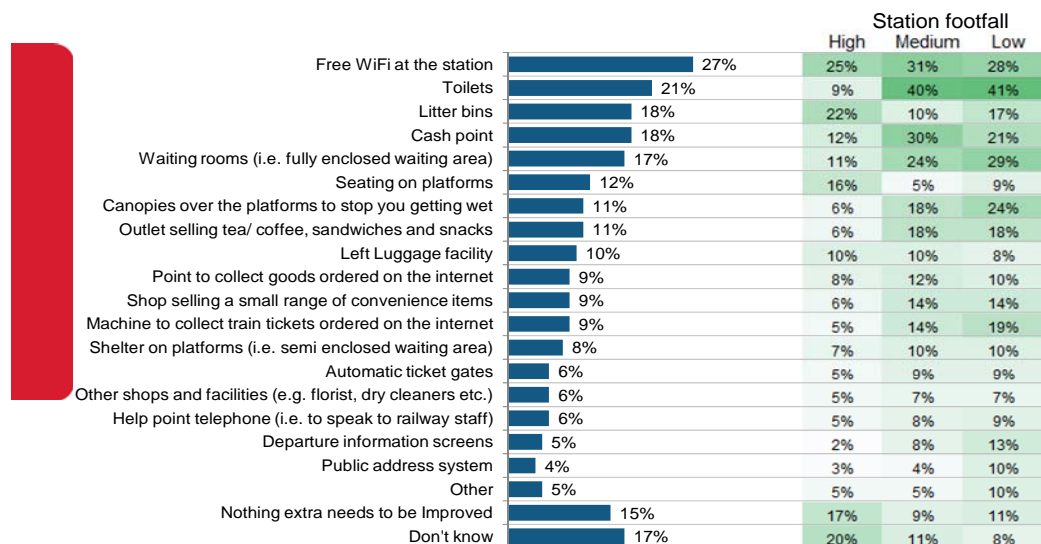


# Appendix 5 Passenger priorities for station requirements and improvements according to station footfall

## A –Facilities need providing

Free Wi-Fi at stations consistently required by station type

**Station improvements [prompted] – needs providing: All GB rail passengers**



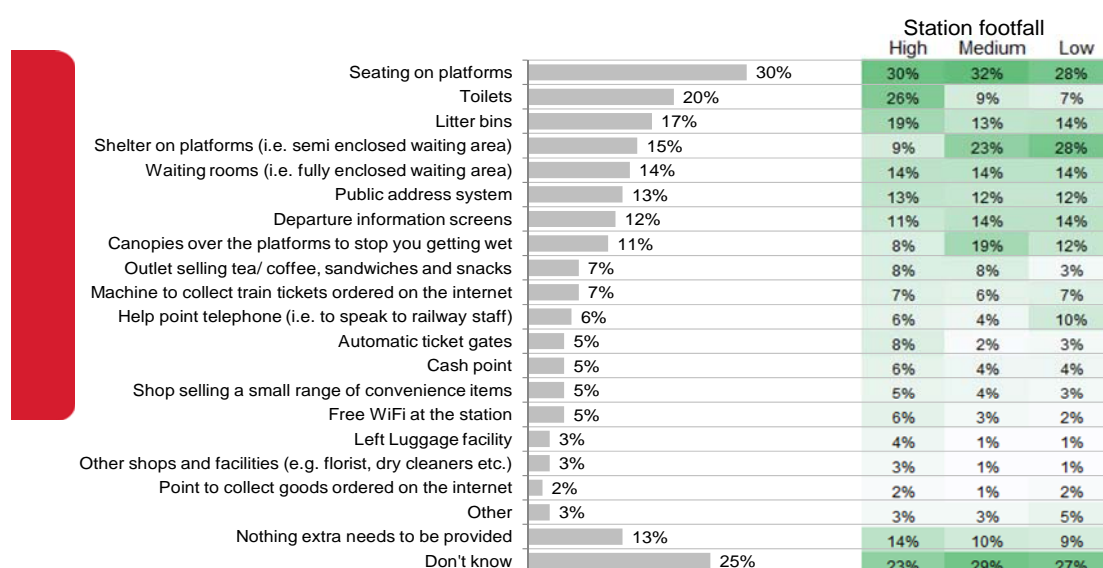
29 Q.26b Still thinking only about the station where you were handed this questionnaire, which of the following station facilities need to be improved or need to be provided at this station? providing; Base: All GB Rail Passengers n=3,559



## B – Facilities need improving

Improvements to seating consistently important. Improving toilets important at high footfall stations, and shelter important at lower footfall

**Station improvements [prompted] – needs improving: All GB rail passengers**



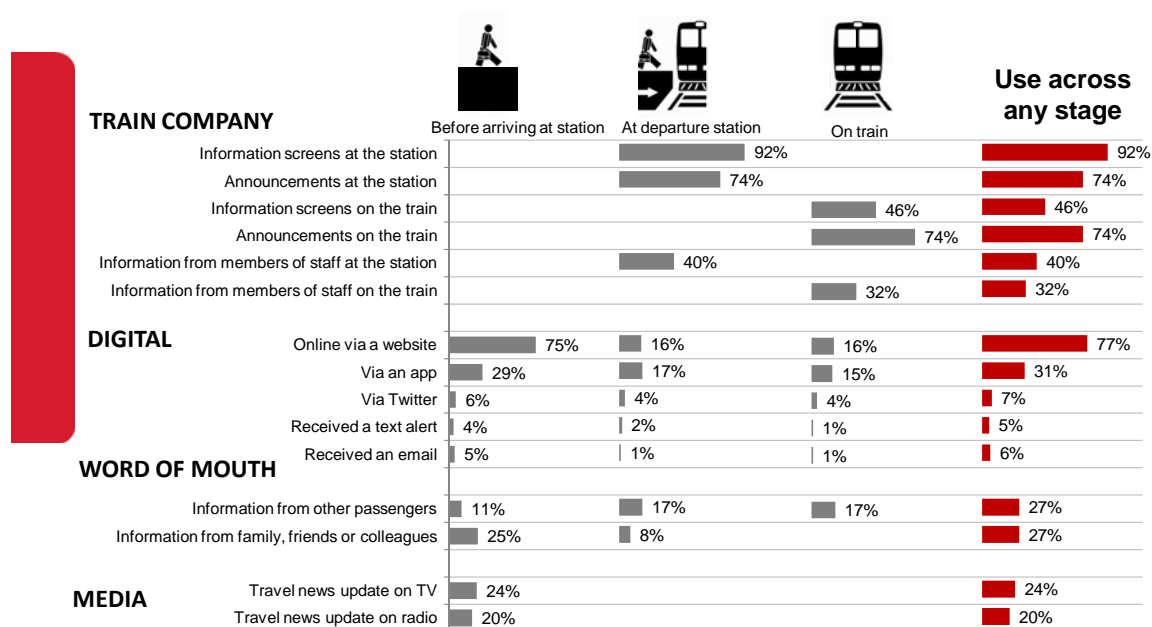
30 Q.26b Still thinking only about the station where you were handed this questionnaire, which of the following station facilities need to be improved or need to be provided at this station? Improving; Base: All GB Rail Passengers n=3,559



# Appendix 6 Information used at different stages of the journey

## Information used at different stages of the journey

Stages of journey where information used: All GB rail passengers



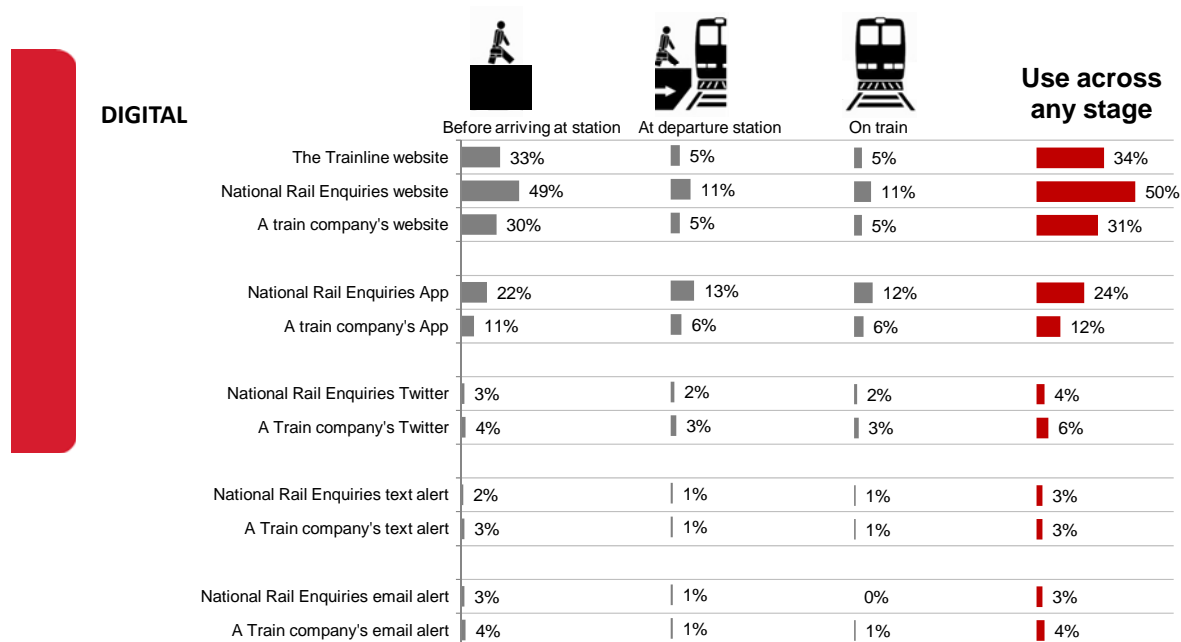
32 ?

Q.27a-c Now thinking more generally about information sources for rail travel, which of the following do you typically use to keep you informed about your train journey? Improved; Base: All GB Rail Passengers n=3,559



## NRE website and app key sources of digital information

Stages of journey where digital information used: All GB rail passengers



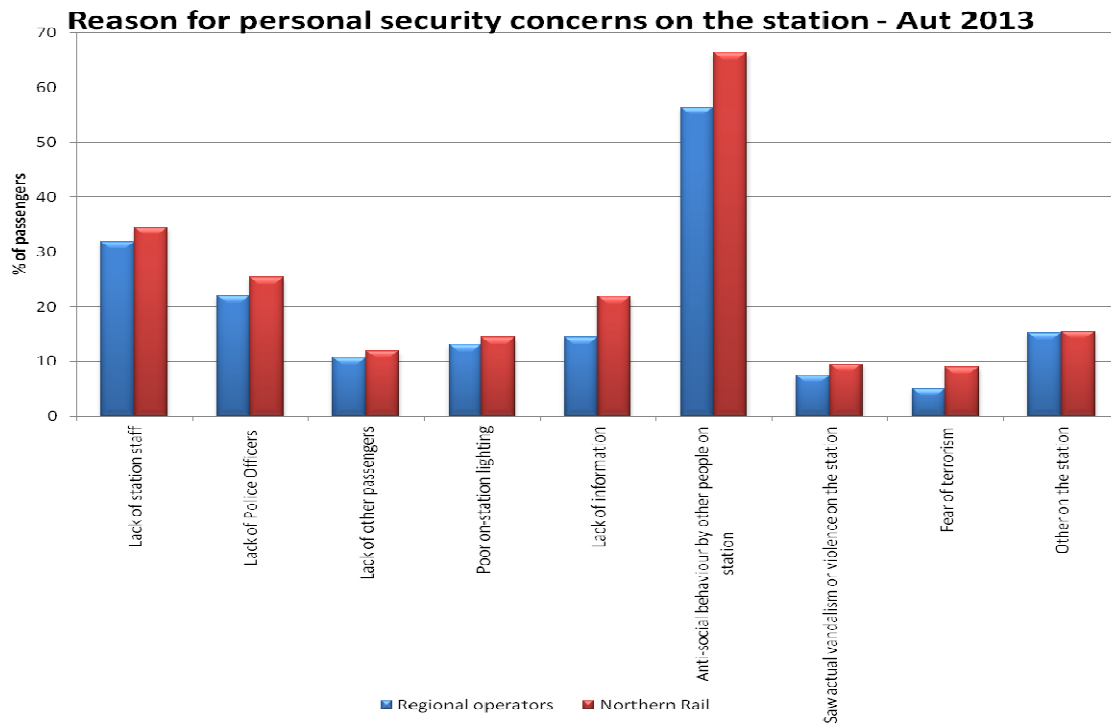
33 ?

Q.27a-c Now thinking more generally about information sources for rail travel, which of the following do you typically use to keep you informed about your train journey? Improved; Base: All GB Rail Passengers n=3,559

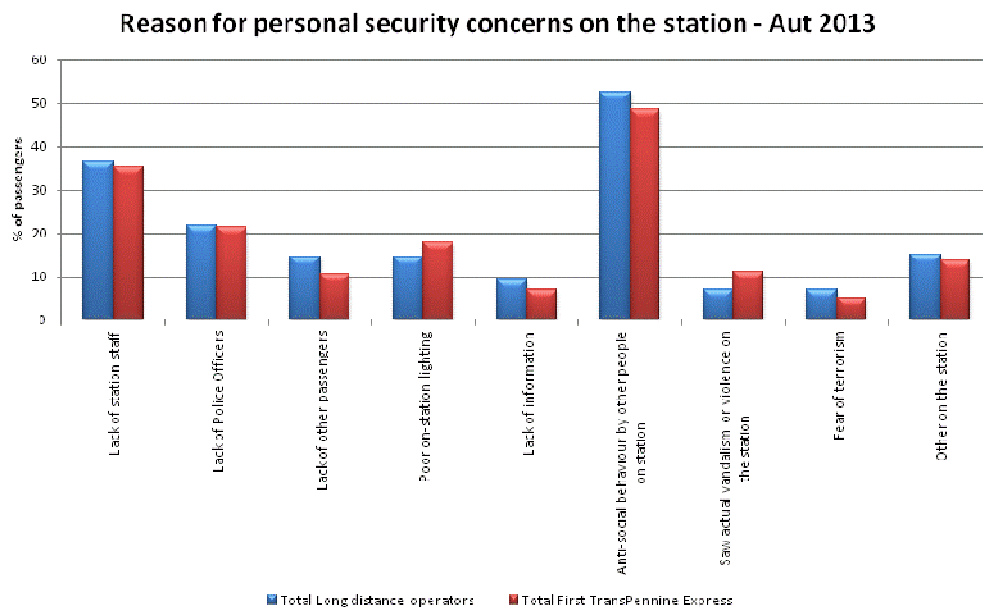


## Appendix 7 Personal security concerns on stations

### A – Northern and regional operators



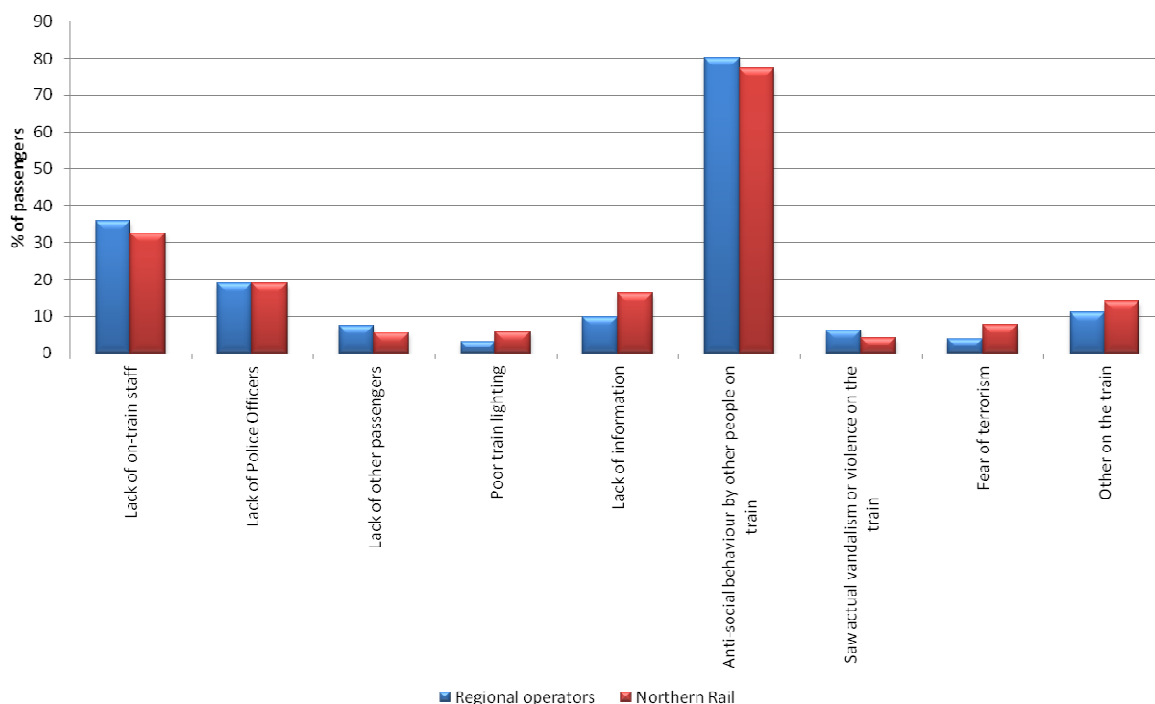
### B - TPE and long distance operators



## Appendix 8 Personal security concerns on train

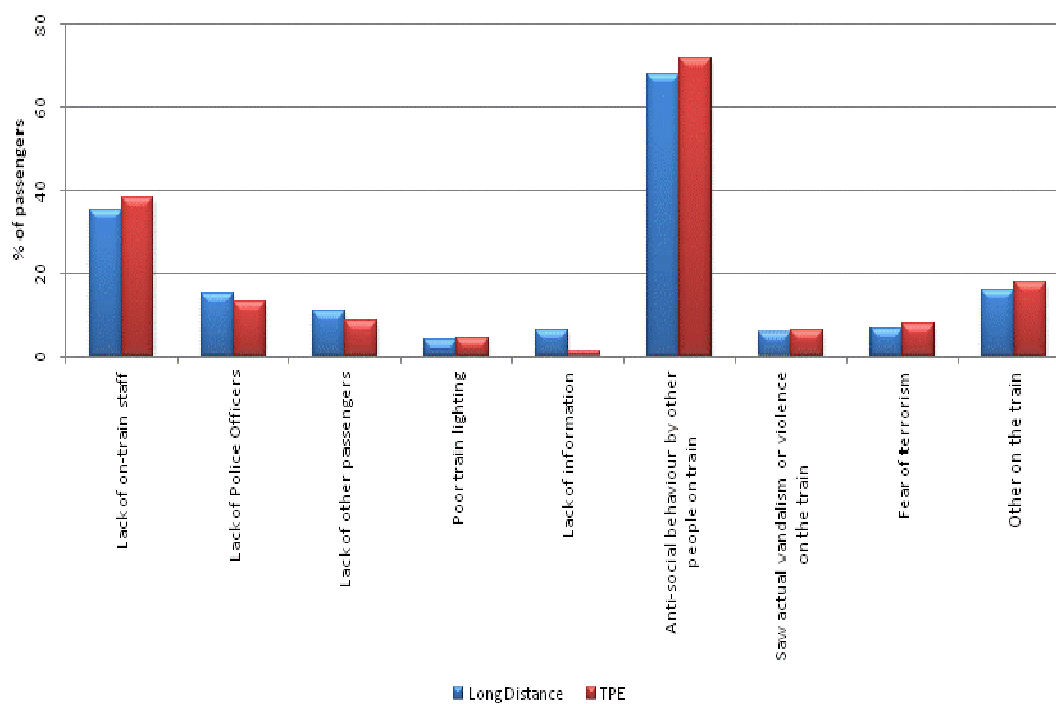
### A – Northern and regional operators

Reason for personal security concerns on the train - Aut 2013



### B - TPE and long distance operators

Reason for personal security concerns on the train - Aut 2013



© 2014 Passenger Focus



Passenger Focus  
Fleetbank House  
2-6 Salisbury Square  
London  
EC4Y 8JX

0300 123 2350  
[www.passengerfocus.org.uk](http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk)  
[info@passengerfocus.org.uk](mailto:info@passengerfocus.org.uk)

Passenger Focus is the operating name of the Passengers' Council