



Making a difference 2012-13

Work plan

March 2012

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1. Introduction

Passenger Focus is the independent, official consumer watchdog for Britain's rail passengers and England's bus coach and tram passengers. Basing our work on research we aim to make a difference for all Britain's passengers. We will continue to represent rail passengers in Scotland and Wales.

We will focus on the pressing consumer issues facing passengers as well as dealing with rail 'appeal' complaints. The views of over 100,000 passengers will be researched on a range of key issues that affect them. All of our research will be published and used to drive change, while being useful to Government and the transport industry in the process.

Passenger Focus will be concentrating on a smaller number of issues and work themes this year, following a substantial budget cut, than has been the case in the past. We are also still coming to fully understand what we can do and what we have to stop doing. It is very likely that this work plan will be the subject of some revision during the year. The scale of some activities may also change as we secure more match funding for some research projects. It is clear that the high number of rail franchise replacements will dominate our work. Rail franchise replacement represents a key opportunity to influence long term decisions. However, we are conscious we must continue to build on the strong start in bus passenger representation we have already made.

The following are the key areas of focus for the work plan:

- Passenger satisfaction – benchmarking, understanding and driving change
- Punctuality – more trains, buses, coaches and trams on time
- Helping the industry to understand and respond to passenger experiences of disruption
- Fares, ticketing and value for money
- Industry long term planning and / or service changes
- Rail 'appeal' complaints handling where train companies and passengers are deadlocked

Our new website will be launched, significantly increasing the ease of access to and usefulness of our own data and research. We will also boost the depth and quality of our relationships with partner organisations. These include rail and bus user groups, online forums such FixMyTransport.com, London TravelWatch, other regional TravelWatches, Passenger Voice Scotland, the Welsh Passenger Transport Users Committee, disability group, local and national Government, the Office of Rail Regulation and the Traffic Commissioners as well the passenger transport industry.

Anthony Smith
Chief Executive

2. About Passenger Focus

2.1 Mission

Getting the best deal for passengers.

2.2 Values

- Focused on consumers - making a difference for all passengers
- Being useful
- Efficient
- Credible, basing our work on research
- Respect for our people
- Accountable and transparent

2.3 Priorities

Passenger Focus is a relatively small organisation. We make work priority choices based on passengers' priorities and resources. These are evidence-based from our research. In developing our work priorities we ask:

- Is the issue of direct concern to passengers?
- How many passengers will be affected and how serious is the actual or potential impact?
- Will addressing the issue improve the service and / or deliver significant improvements to the passenger experience?
- Do we have the resources to deal with the issue?
- Are we best placed to focus on the subject?
- Is the issue within our remit?

3. Longer term goals

What will Passenger Focus look like and be doing in 2015?

Passenger Focus has a number of longer-term aspirations. This work plan represents the first step in that direction.

Passenger Focus wants to:

- Re-enforce our position as the leading Great Britain passenger representative organisation.
- Secure a three year funding agreement for the Bus Passenger Satisfaction survey, similar to the agreement underpinning the Rail National Passenger Survey.
- Create a new legal entity to allow Passenger Focus, without losing sight of its core statutory responsibilities and accountabilities, to work on a broader range of passenger issues and to use income to re-invest in its core business.
- Boost the credibility, reach and accessibility of our research and evidence base.
- Radically increase match funding of research projects.
- Continue to have staff that want to work at Passenger Focus.
- Demonstrate high levels of accountability and transparency in our work.

4. Research and projects planned for 2012-13

National Passenger Survey

The National Passenger Survey (NPS) provides a powerful network-wide picture of customers' satisfaction with rail travel. Passenger opinions of train services are collected twice a year from a representative sample of passenger journeys. Passengers' overall satisfaction and satisfaction with 30 specific aspects of service can therefore be compared over time. The research contains passenger ratings of their journey for each individual Train Operating Company (TOC). Ratings are also provided for each sector i.e. London and the South East, long distance, and regional operators.

An innovation with effect from the Autumn 2010 wave is publishing passenger ratings for certain specific aspects of service for all TOCs on one page and results for routes within TOCs. National results by journey purpose, age, gender and how passengers spend their time on train journeys are now also included. Over 65,000 participate in the NPS every year.

Bus Passenger Survey

Passenger Focus has developed the Bus Passenger Survey to deliver a robust measure of bus passenger satisfaction – to provide detail at administrative area level and for bus operators within that area.

Passengers rate their satisfaction with a wide range of aspects of their bus journey as well as their overall satisfaction with that bus journey and their rating of value for money. Our research methodology has been widely acclaimed and is increasingly being seen as an industry benchmark

The main objectives of the survey are to (a) measure the availability of facilities at the bus stop; (b) measure satisfaction with a range of factors associated with bus travel – bus stop factors, bus boarding factors, on-bus factors, and bus driver factors; and (c) identify the drivers of overall satisfaction based on the range of factors in the survey.

It is impossible to cover all services falling within our remit in any one year, so a further objective of this continuing work is to maintain the potential to compare the results from future surveys with those from previous surveys.

Coach and tram research

Passenger Focus will commission research on coach and tram travel when there is a good business case to do so, and where funds allow. Of key importance however in 2012-13 is to build on recent coach research by working with the industry, and explore the potential of coach passenger satisfaction surveying. Similarly, any tram research will focus on complaint handling objectives and related issues in 2012-13, and working with the industry and local authorities to bring about a more consistent approach to passenger satisfaction monitoring.

Other research

Research conducted in addition to our flagship NPS and BPS will reflect key organisational priorities. Thus we will conduct a small number of surveys to uncover passenger priorities to feed into franchises, as these opportunities arise.

We will continue to look for opportunities to present the passenger perspective on major projects as we are doing with our 'released capacity' study on HS2. Such opportunities may include CrossRail or electrification, and will involve, as does our HS2 work, collaboration with other industry or government stakeholders wherever possible and appropriate.

Further bus research will be driven by what passengers tell us their priorities are, including information provision and multi-operator/modal ticketing.

The following represents our indicative list of potential research projects. This will change according to funding and other priorities:

- Publish the following research which was started in 2011-12:
 - The use of social media to communicate with passengers – what works?
 - Passenger attitudes to planned engineering work.
 - What happens to passengers whose bus service is cut?
 - Future transport – what are the major trends that will affect passengers?
 - What passengers want from the new Great Western, Thameslink and Southeastern rail franchises?
 - Fares and ticketing in Europe and beyond.
- There are a number of potential franchise renewals that could commence during 2012/13 that may require fresh research or a refresh. These include TransPennine Express, Northern, Scotrail, Greater Anglia and East Coast. While we may not be able to carry out new research in relation to all these franchises should they materialise, we will make representations and influence the specifications based on our existing body of knowledge.

- A large piece of smartcard development research specifically funded by the Department, covering both rail and bus, and potential running over two-three years.
- Research looking at perceptions of value for money amongst bus passengers, probing how issues such as ticketing, trust and transparency impact. This can be built on an in depth analysis of Bus Passenger Survey data.
- Research to further understand the bus passenger experience of disruption, as well as their needs in terms of information (content and channel), building on a similar exercise conducted with rail passengers in collaboration with Southern.
- We will consider research for bus quality contracts that adopts some of the concepts we apply to rail franchise renewal, dependent on internal resourcing and developments in the bus industry.
- Conduct research on the specific needs of younger passengers.
- Building on the 'Future priorities for the West Coast Main Line: released capacity from a potential high speed line' research by carrying out further work on passenger priorities for any released capacity on the northern section of the proposed new high speed line.
- We shall develop a Tram Passenger Survey, working with Passenger Transport Executives and /or tram operators. This may require a harmonisation study that was successful in making progress with bus.

5. Key themes

5.1 Rail

Passenger satisfaction

- Rail National Passenger Survey - benchmarking, understanding and driving change. We will continue to drive improvements for passengers and understand their needs. This will include our ability to extract information about the experience of passengers with disabilities and younger passengers. There is potential for a revised questionnaire and methodology.

Punctuality:

- Continue to make the case for increased publication of route based data to drive accountability.
- Publish more route based NPS data.

Disruption:

- Help industry understand the passenger perspective on disruption management.
- Work with the industry to reduce the impact on passengers during planned disruption.
- Influence improvements to the way the industry keeps passengers informed during unplanned disruption.

Fares, ticketing and value for money:

- Provide major input to fares review.
- Press for improvements to retailing including more consistent application of unpaid fare notice rules.
- Continue to comment on ticket office closure proposals.
- Bring about improvements to retailing – including work on smartcard developments.

Industry long term planning:

- Work with bidders and the Department for Transport to improve franchise specification and bids based on original passenger research.
- Provide passenger input to long term industry planning processes with particular attention paid to boosting capacity.
- Improving and commenting on Disabled Persons Protection Policies.

Complaints handling:

- Handle some 15,000 enquiries from passengers and intervene in some 6,000 issues raised in 2,500 rail appeal complaints.
- Achieve at least 70% passenger satisfaction with how we handled complaints.

5.2 Bus

Passenger satisfaction

- Bus Passenger Survey - benchmarking, understanding and driving change. We will continue to drive improvements for passengers and understand their needs. This will include our ability to extract information about the experience of passengers with disabilities and younger passengers. The research will be done in two waves, spring and autumn. We will seek to secure a three year funding agreement from the DfT and significant match funding through stakeholders.

Punctuality:

- Use the findings from the Bus Punctuality Project to improve bus timekeeping.
- Push for requirements that operators publish punctuality data.

Disruption:

- Help industry understand passenger perspective on disruption management.
- Bring about specific improvements to the quality of bus industry disruption management and information.

Fares, ticketing and value for money:

- Research to probe bus passengers' views on value for money.
- Bring about improvements to retailing – including work on smartcard developments.

Industry long term planning:

- Work with Passenger Transport Executives and urban local authorities on plans to improve bus passenger services including quality partnerships.

Service changes

- Publish Passenger Focus guidelines on service change consultation – work with some councils to improve quality of consultation.

Complaints handling:

- Continue our work with the Bus Appeals Body improving the quality of the handling of bus appeal complaints.

5.3 Coach

Passenger satisfaction

- Coach Passenger Survey - benchmarking, understanding and driving change. This will include our ability to extract information about the experience of passengers with disabilities and younger passengers. Potential for groundbreaking quantitative research on satisfaction heavily funded by industry.

Fares, ticketing and value for money:

- Bring about improvements to retailing – including work on smartcard developments.

5.4 Tram

Passenger satisfaction

- Tram Passenger Survey - benchmarking, understanding and driving change. This will include our ability to extract information about the experience of passengers with disabilities and younger passengers. Potential for new work co funded with PTEs and tram operators.

Fares, ticketing and value for money:

- Bring about improvements to retailing – including work on smartcard developments.

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

Passenger Focus will:

Report

- Report four times a year in public at Board meetings on our plan delivery, including reports on our passenger and industry facing work. The Board will also receive reports from meetings of the Audit Committee, which supervises Passenger Focus's internal audit programme and management of risk, including information risk
- Use financial and key performance indicator data to manage the underlying performance of the business, compiled and reviewed monthly
- Publish an annual report on performance, activities and expenditure
- Explore how to gather and publish more information regarding our performance and effectiveness
- Maintain a useful, easy to use website as a key 'entry-point' into Passenger Focus, and seek and publish feedback on its usefulness
- Publish a wide range of research reports and other publications
- Maintain a proactive and well informed press office
- Publish on our website proceedings and decisions reached by our Board and management team

Track

- The number of passengers that we engage with thorough research and consultation.
- Major policy decisions within the rail, bus and coach industries and across local and central government that we have influenced

7. Budget 2012-13

Passenger Focus's budget for 2012-13 will be £3.8 million plus National Passenger Survey funding of £0.9 million.

Passenger Focus provisional budget for 2012-13

	2012-13	
	£000's	£000's
Fixed pay		2,488
Fixed overheads		611
Variable overheads		359
Total running costs		3,458
Projects		
Research and other projects	242	
Bus passenger survey	235	
Total projects		477
Total operating costs		3,935
Joint project funding		100
Net operating costs		3,835
National passenger survey		865
Total net operating costs		4,700

