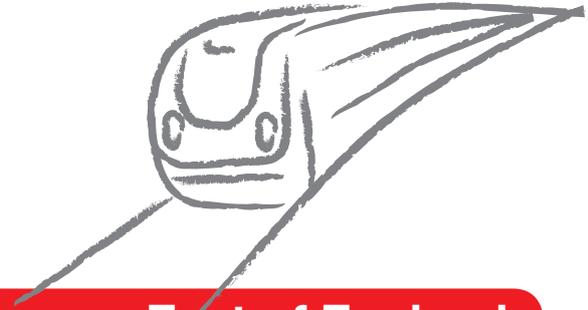


Independent national passenger watchdog

Passenger Voice Rail



Autumn/Winter 2010

East of England

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Car-park price and spaces are key

Car-park prices, a better chance of finding a space, the machines to pay your parking fee and safety after dark are what passengers most want to see improved at station car parks.

Passenger Focus has published research investigating passengers' satisfaction and use of station car parks on the route into London St. Pancras from Bedford. Passenger Focus's research looked at satisfaction with 15 car parks on the Sheffield to London St Pancras line and included an audit of car and

bicycle-parking at 42 stations.

In this latest research 72% of passengers were satisfied with finding a space, but 11 of the 42 stations audited had car parks that were at least 90% full by 9am on weekdays. Only one in 10 passengers was satisfied with value for money and just 17% with the machines provided to pay the parking fee. Although 84% of passengers said they feel safe in the car-park during the day, this drops to 53% after dark. Passenger Focus has also stressed the need

for more bicycle and blue-badge parking spaces at particular stations.

Guy Dangerfield, Passenger Focus manager, said: "Passengers tell us that car parks at many of the region's stations are nearly full by 9am and that the price to park at a railway station is an issue". He added: "It is positive to see that the rail industry embraced the capacity message in its route strategy – passengers now need to see delivery of the extra spaces".



Stations under review

Passenger Focus, with London TravelWatch, has been exploring how passengers feel about Barking and Luton stations in order to understand how the stations might better serve the needs of passengers. The research looked specifically at station access, information, station amenities, safety and security as well as retail outlets.

c2c, London Overground and London Underground passengers using Barking station said their top priorities for improvement were security, station staff, real-time information, toilet facilities and less congestion at ticket gates.

At Luton, East Midlands Trains and First Capital Connect passengers said their top five priorities were improvements to the footway linking the town centre to the station, the need for better lighting, waiting rooms, more station staff and toilets.

In the current economic climate, it is imperative that any improvements works taking place at stations reflect and address passenger priorities. While the funding previously identified for Luton has been withdrawn, we are pleased to see that work is now progressing on a new footbridge linking the station and town centre. Passengers highlighted this as the number one priority for improvement at the station and will welcome this development.

We are encouraged that First Capital Connect and Network Rail are working to identify future improvements to Luton station and Passenger Focus and London TravelWatch will continue to ensure that passenger priorities are considered within the development of these schemes.

c2c takes top London award



Passenger Focus has congratulated c2c on its efforts in turning around rail services provided to passengers commuting from the South Essex Coast to London.

Thanks to investment and a focus on punctuality, the train company this year was successful in taking the London Commuter Operations accolade at this year's National Rail Awards. This accolade finally buries memories of when this service was known as the 'misery line'.

Passenger Focus's National Passenger Survey shows that 91% of passengers are satisfied with the train company's overall performance and 94% satisfied with the punctuality and reliability of trains.

Tunde Olatunji, Passenger Focus manager, commented: "This award is warranted as passengers consistently tell us c2c does well in delivering overall satisfaction. The challenge now is to continue to maintain the very high standards that passengers have come to expect from c2c."

Ticket gates at stations

Passenger Focus has asked passengers their opinion of ticket gates at the stations.

In its National Passenger Survey, Spring 2010, Passenger Focus asked passengers whether they thought ticket gates were easy to use. Overall, 80% of passengers thought they were, but there were big variations between stations. While 93% of passengers at St Albans said ticket gates were easy to use, only 43% of passengers at Norwich station gave the same answer. Passenger Focus is therefore talking to National Express about what needs to be done differently at Norwich. Even at stations where ticket gates are rated as easy to use, passengers have reported problems.

Those passengers reporting problems with gates raised concerns around bottlenecks at peak times, issues at gates when carrying luggage, valid tickets being rejected by gates and staff being unhelpful.

In an ideal world there would be no need for ticket gates at stations, but they have an important role to play in reducing ticketless travel and can help improve passengers' personal security on the railway. While not opposed to ticket gates, Passenger Focus believes new installations must be looked at on a case-by-case basis, with design, reliability and compatibility with tickets all taken into account. Gates must be easy to use, and benefit passengers as well as the train companies.



Disruption handling

Passenger Focus welcomes improvements made by c2c in the way it handles passenger information during disruption, following feedback from its disruption panel.

Passenger Focus invites passengers on its disruption panel, which comprises of about 1000 rail users nationwide, to report back on their experiences of disrupted journeys. The feedback is used to campaign at national and local level for improvements in the way train operating companies handle disruption.

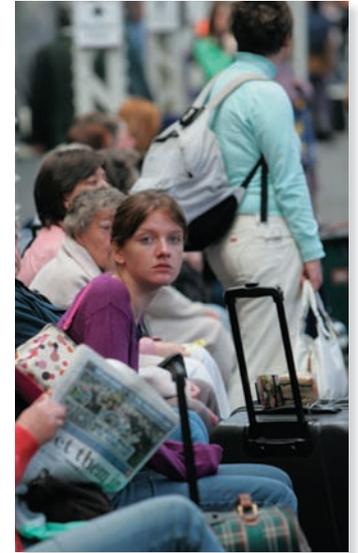
Passenger Focus continues to emphasise the key role played by c2c staff in keeping passengers properly updated, highlighting the importance of staff training in making consistent and timely information available to those using its services.

Meanwhile, National Express East Anglia has made a number of improvements to the way it communicates disruption to passengers as a direct result of feedback from Passenger Focus.

The train operator has reviewed its procedure for handling delays to the small

number of trains that it runs to and from Liverpool Street stations following an incident at Bethnal Green, where a faulty train meant the service was terminated and passengers were left stranded.

Finally, Passenger Focus has asked members on its disruption panel to continue to monitor progress on First Capital Connect's improvements to real-time information provision on stations and to report back on the quality of information given on trains.



News roundup

New trains should improve rail journeys

Passenger Focus is pleased to see good progress being made on new trains for Stansted Express and West Anglia services.

After visiting Bombardier's workshops in Derby, Guy Dangerfield, Passenger Focus manager, said: "These trains will transform passengers' experience on the West Anglia route. They give a real opportunity to make a step-change in passenger satisfaction with information provided and Passenger Focus is in discussion with National Express East Anglia."

Charge for East Coast's internet

Commenting on the introduction

of charges for Wi-Fi on East Coast trains Guy Dangerfield, Passenger Focus manager, said: "It's disappointing that East Coast is abandoning National Express's commitment to make Wi-Fi on the east coast route free throughout the journey and for all passengers. If passengers are going to be paying in future, East Coast will have to work hard to ensure the Wi-Fi system is more reliable than it's historically been."

All Standard-Class passengers will be entitled to 15 minutes' free access to the Wi-Fi system per journey. Thereafter, access will be charged at £4.95 for 60 minutes or £9.95 for 24 hours. First-Class passengers can access the service free of charge.

National Passenger Survey

How satisfied are passengers in

the East of England? Passenger Focus will be releasing the results of its Autumn 2010 National Passenger Survey early in 2011.

Do you need more information?

For more information about Passenger Focus's work around the East of England or Passenger Focus's research, see www.passengerfocus.org.uk

Passenger advice

Passenger Focus's advice team (PAT) has already secured almost £29,000 in additional compensation for passengers this financial year. Where a passenger and a train company cannot resolve a complaint, the watchdog's passenger advice team will, where appropriate, mediate in an effort to get a better outcome for the individual. If

you need help with your appeal contact Passenger Focus's helpline on 0300 123 2350 or email info@passengerfocus.org.uk.

Passenger Focus blog

Passenger Focus chief executive Anthony Smith regularly updates the Passenger Focus blog at <http://passengerfocus.blogspot.com/>

Winter weather

Passenger Focus has been critical of the way the industry has handled disruption during poor weather over recent years – especially massive disruption to passengers using Eurostar services over Christmas in 2009. Passenger Focus has subsequently been feeding into industry planning as it works to address winter weather disruption.