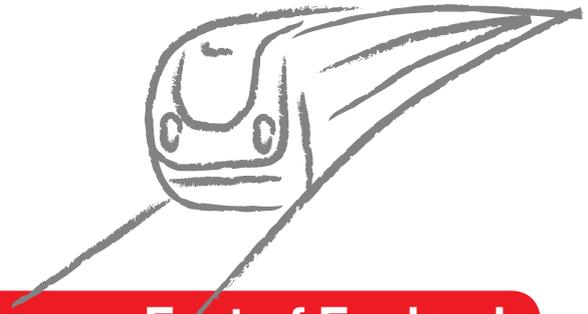


Independent national passenger watchdog

# Passenger Voice Rail



Summer 2010

East of England

**In this issue:** • Passengers want franchise overhaul • c2c passengers outline priorities for new rail franchises

## Passenger report card

Passengers travelling on trains in the East of England have rated the region's railway as part of the independent watchdog's National Passenger Survey (NPS).

Passenger Focus's NPS, in which over 56,000 passengers participate each year, gives a clear indication of how satisfied passengers are with c2c, CrossCountry, East Coast, East Midlands Trains, First Capital Connect (FCC) and National Express East Anglia (NXEA) rail services.

c2c (91%) continues to be a strong performer in the survey and passenger satisfaction with value for money increased for most of the region's operators as many fares did not rise in January. Following major problems on its Thameslink route in late 2009 to early 2010, FCC's score for managing disruption plummeted

10 points to only 24%. While NXEA's (77%) overall satisfaction score has remained static, other train companies in London and the South East generally improved by around two percentage points.

The publication of this independent comparative data is one of the most cost-effective ways of driving improvements on the railway. As operators vie with each other for pole position it also allows valuable comparisons between routes and the widely different scores operators achieve for various aspects of their services. For example, for NXEA there is a wide variation in satisfaction ratings ranging from 83% in the rural services to and from Norwich, Ipswich and Cambridge, to 73% on the services between London and Ipswich. This includes those trains serving Clacton, Harwich, Walton, Sudbury and Braintree.

### Spring 2010

Train Company	Overall satisfaction	Improvement in % satisfied or good since Spring 2009	Decline in % satisfied since Spring 2009
Great Britain result	83% up 2%	Value for money (8%)	Cleanliness of the outside of the train (2%)
c2c	91%	Facilities for car parking (7%) Provision of information during the journey (7%)	No significant decline
CrossCountry	85%	Value for money (6%)	Train toilet facilities (7%)
East Coast	88%	Connections with other forms of public transport (5%) The availability of staff on the train (5%)	No significant decline
East Midlands Trains	86% (up 5%)	How well the train company handles delays (14%)	No significant decline
National Express East Anglia	77%	Value for money (8%)	Cleanliness of the outside of the train (6%)



## Rail meeting

Rail user groups from around southern England have met Passenger Focus to discuss capacity, engineering work and punctuality on the railway.

Passenger Focus hosted the one-day event for rail user groups (RUGs) and it was attended by around 50 representatives. The aim of the conference was to discuss key topics which impact all the RUGs in the south and give them an opportunity to network with other groups and industry representatives. The event also provided an opportunity for RUGs to discuss the work the industry is doing to improve passenger information during disruption and to highlight further work required.

The event was held at National Express East Anglia Stratford staff training academy and was also attended by representatives from London TravelWatch and the British Transport Police.

## c2c passengers outline priorities

Passengers travelling on c2c services want punctual trains, more frequent services and value for money when a new operator is appointed to take over the region's railway. However, Passenger Focus has found that personal security is also a top priority for improvement for passengers using current rail services.



Passenger Focus has made recommendations to the Government on what should be included in the new Essex Thameside franchise, currently run by train company c2c.

Passenger Focus interviewed over 1000 passengers using c2c services and found that improved personal security at the station was ranked fifth and better security on the train eighth in their list of priorities. As the need for improved security is rated higher than in other parts of Great Britain, Passenger Focus is calling for National Passenger Survey security targets, a requirement for more visible staff, comprehensive CCTV and Secure Stations accreditation to be included in the franchise contract.

Tunde Olatunji, Passenger Focus manager, said: "Our research shows personal security is a higher priority for improvement among passengers using c2c services than those travelling in other parts of Great Britain. The safety and security of passengers should always be of paramount importance and if there are worries about safety, the industry should address this from the outset.

"c2c passengers tell us they also want better value for money from their train company; this means fair prices, on time services, more seats and better handling of disruption. Passengers have outlined their priorities for improvement and we hope the Government will take their views seriously as it reviews the deal for the new franchise operator."

The Government has since announced plans to halt the process to re-let the Essex Thameside rail franchise as it looks at the franchise process.

Mr Olatunji concluded: "Passengers will probably not be surprised that the new Government wishes to review franchising policy before letting any new rail contracts. Whenever the process restarts, passengers will want to see the new Essex Thameside operator incentivised to focus on improving the things that matter to them. Passenger Focus will be pressing for early action on these issues, whoever is running Essex Thameside's trains.

# Passengers want franchise overhaul

Punctuality and improved trains must be core to plans for the East Anglia franchise if passenger satisfaction is to improve, says watchdog Passenger Focus. Passengers using current East Anglia services are among the least satisfied in Great Britain. The Spring 2010 shows 77% of National Express East Anglia (NXEA) passengers are satisfied, compared with the Great Britain result of 83%.

Passenger Focus has asked more than 3000 passengers currently using NXEA rail services their priorities for improvement. The watchdog has used that feedback to make recommendations to government about what passengers want from the new operator, now expected to take over the Liverpool Street routes during 2012.

Based on the passenger research, the independent passenger watchdog is calling for

investment in new trains and refurbishment of carriages. It is also advocating a greater focus on measuring train punctuality at all stations along the route not just the arrival time at the end of the journey.

Passenger Focus's recommendations to the Government include improvements to ticketing, more punctual trains, and better disruption handling. It also suggests timetable changes including the trial of Boxing Day services, more later-evening trains, journey-time improvements on the London to Norwich route and to destinations in the West Anglia area.

To view a copy of the submission see Greater Anglia rail franchise: What passengers want at [www.passengerfocus.org.uk](http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk)



## Passengers talk disruption

The way train operating companies (TOCs) handle disruption consistently falls short of passengers' expectations.

In the Spring 2010 National Passenger Survey only 35% of Great Britain's passengers said they were happy with this aspect of train services. To provide constructive feedback from passengers to TOCs, Passenger Focus has set up a nationwide disruption panel with around 1000 passengers acting as reporters.

East Midlands Trains has used the feedback to overhaul its disruption and communica-

tions plans, which include improvements to public announcement equipment, help points and customer information screens.

Detailed comments on East Coast delays have been fed into the Guards' Standards and East Coast and Network Rail have created a joint disruption booklet to clarify responsibilities.

Passenger Focus executive Paul Bentley has analysed the reports for consistent themes and is presenting them to the National Express East Anglia customer service director.

## NXEA takes backward step on passenger information

Passenger Focus has strongly opposed the decision by National Express East Anglia and c2c to withdraw their free-of-charge text alert service for passengers whose train is cancelled or delayed. Texts will now cost 25p each, although a free email will be available. Passenger Focus manager Guy Dangerfield said: "This decision, which we understand has been made mainly for financial reasons, flies in the face of passenger research". In a letter to NXEA, Guy Dangerfield said: "Passenger Focus's research shows that a text alert

is the preferred way to inform passengers about delays before they reach the station (40%). It is not email (8%). A chargeable text service is not an acceptable replacement for the service currently offered to passengers."

He continued: "Paying for a text would be the only option for most people and research shows that many passengers object to paying a train company to be advised that their train is late or cancelled." In its submission to Government about what passengers want from

the new Greater Anglia franchise Passenger Focus has called for free text alerts at times of disruption to be offered to passengers.

