



Issues to consider in the development of Station Travel Plans:

A submission to MVA and Southern from Passenger Focus

February 2010

Introduction

Passenger Focus welcomes the Southern initiative to introduce Travel Plans at 30 stations across the network as part of the commitments for the new franchise.

We have long maintained that few passengers' journeys start or finish with the train; reaching the station and completing one's journey at the destination end involves another mode of transport or walking. The development of station travel plans will go some way to ensuring that passengers' full journey experience is considered and hopefully improved in many areas.

This note sets out some of the issues we believe need to be considered in the development of the station travel plan proposals. We suggest that, wherever possible, the principle of improving access to stations and the integration with other forms of transport should be applied as widely across the Southern network as possible.

Modal integration: getting to and from the station

Passenger Focus believes integration is about more than just physical elements. The principle of ensuring transport modes operate in conjunction with one another is important but is just one vital element of the bigger transport picture. Other forms of integration include ensuring that transport policy is better linked with wider government objectives for economic prosperity, environmental protection, health and social inclusion.

This is likely to be increasingly important and provide opportunities for partnership as local authorities look to develop Local Area Agreement targets.

Also significant is the principle of an integrated information system which enables passengers to plan a journey from door-to-door – e.g. Traveline and Transport Direct services. We should welcome positive steps to ensure that Southern services are linked as widely as possible to all sources of public transport information.

We note the approach taken to the stakeholder meetings for each of the five clusters and hope that there will have been useful local feedback on the key problems and opportunities identified for each of the stations.

We suggest that in developing the plans the following questions are considered, as suggested in the 2007 White Paper, 'Delivering a sustainable railway':

- What prevents current passengers from getting to the station by more environmentally friendly means?
- What prevents non-passengers from getting to the station at all?
- What is the most cost-effective and environmentally friendly package of measures to improve access?

In 2005 Passenger Focus produced a guide for local authorities setting out a number of areas to address within their Local Transport Plans (LTP). Whilst this was produced at a time when local authorities were preparing the second round of LTPs, much of the content remains highly relevant to circumstances today, particularly the focus on improving modal integration.

To address this and improve public transport we believe there must be better integration between stations and other forms of transport: bus, car, taxi and cycles. Support and facilitation of journeys on foot is also important.

Buses

There is great scope for tying rail and bus timetables into a tighter, mutually supportive arrangement, especially given the extension of the Plus+Bus scheme. We encourage as far as possible improved co-ordination of bus and rail timetables. There are particular opportunities where Southern and the provider of bus services is within the same group. However, joined up thinking should be applied whichever operators serve Southern stations.

There also needs to be a focus on the interchange facilities at stations. For instance, are bus stops provided and are they situated in the optimum position, are the walking routes from the bus stop to the railway station clearly signed, and is the link secure and well lit?

We recommend that bus stops are located as close as possible to the station, preferably at a location from where the station can be seen. Feedback suggests that more than about 100 metres distant is off-putting, especially for passengers with luggage or who are not very mobile.

Other possible bus/rail integration improvements include:

- Working with bus companies or local authorities to create an extra stop where a bus passes a train station, or to alter routes slightly to ensure buses pass railway stations
- Working with bus companies or local authorities to alter existing schedules to help buses meet certain morning and evening peak hour trains (including some guaranteed connections)
- Displaying bus information at rail stations and train information at certain bus stops/stations
- Combined rail/bus tickets or preferably, travelcard schemes
- Examining the potential of park and ride schemes
- Creation of bus links between rail-heads to complement the network
- Improved facilities for connection between train and bus (e.g. better signing, provision of waiting rooms).

Cars/motorbikes

It is a fact that for many rail passengers, driving to the station remains the most viable and practical means of travel. The increasing length of a working day and the shift towards a '24/7' week means that it is hard to provide a comprehensive rail-bus service that meets the needs of commuters and/or weekend travellers. Fears over personal security also inhibit the use of alternative transport or walking. For these reasons, car parking facilities at stations remain important.

Our research *Getting to the station* found that:

- A lack of car parking space could actually suppress overall demand for rail
- If passengers couldn't park at their station some would drive to the next station or drive all the way to the destination - the net effect being to increase car use. Some would also travel earlier in order to get a space – which then further adds to congestion onboard the train by virtue of getting people to travel at busier periods when they don't need to.

Passenger Focus has long maintained that the provision of car parking at railway stations should be seen as a separate issue in its own right and not part of wider discussions on car parking in general. In many ways a railway station car park is the original 'park and ride' scheme and it is important that it is acknowledged as such.

It is also important to ensure that parking spaces at stations are solely for rail passengers rather than town centre visitors. This may become a particular issue if local authorities use road pricing and parking measures to reduce car use. We understand that car parking revenue is important to individual train operators. However, if spaces are being filled by non-rail passengers, then train companies are not addressing the revenue potential that could be made from rail passengers who pay for parking and a rail fare. In such cases Passenger Focus favours the type of scheme whereby higher car park prices can be redeemed against the cost of the rail ticket.

We would encourage consideration of the way in which car-share schemes might be facilitated and encouraged through station travel planning, possibly including provision of dedicated parking spaces for multi-occupancy cars.

Taxis

Taxis provide important links to and from the railway station, and there should be co-ordination between train companies and taxi firms. This includes discussions with taxis firms when there are proposals for change at stations.

The following are important in providing effective interchange between taxis and the rail network:

- Good signage to the taxi rank
- Well marked-out taxi rank
- Drop-down kerbs
- List of tariffs for regularly made journeys
- Contact details for local taxi firms (for when no taxis are readily available)
- Greater publicity for licensed taxi services at stations
- Accreditation scheme to give passengers a greater feeling of personal security
- Wheelchair accessible taxis. When taxis are not available, procedures need to be put in place between the station and the taxi rank so that station staff can call for taxis
- Covered waiting areas.

Bicycles

Cycling to the station helps reduce road congestion, improves health and is a totally self-reliant form of transport. However, to convince people to cycle, adequate provisions need to be provided at stations and on the approaches to stations.

Passenger Focus acknowledges the specific issues of overcrowding associated with carrying bicycles on trains. However, the lack of such an obligation means that greater efforts must be in providing secure facilities at stations.

Passenger Focus is a member of the Cycle Rail Task Force which was launched in the Department for Transport's (DfT) Rail White Paper 2007. The group comprises ATOC, Cycling England, DfT, Passenger Focus, Network Rail and TfL. It was set up to promote the station improvements required to increase the access share to rail of cycling. In order to do this the Task Force is looking at what measures can be taken to provide more and improved cycle facilities at stations. We recommend that the practical strategies that the Cycle Rail Task Force is promoting are applied where appropriate to the Southern station travel plans.

We have been impressed by the South West Trains Route network map showing cycle facilities and links. We encourage Southern to consider providing similar information for their network.

Walking

Train operating companies should work closely with local authorities to ensure that the best possible provisions are in place for pedestrians. Possible barriers to walking to the station include:

- The way-marked route to the station may be indirect and therefore unnecessarily long
- Walking routes may be poorly maintained
- There could be no pathways to the station or crossing provisions on major roads
- The routes could be seen as insecure – poor lighting, secluded etc.
- Poor or misleading sign posting
- Physical barriers including roadside railings, hedges, etc.

We recommend that careful consideration is given to the implications of potential or existing gating schemes at the stations where Travel Plans are being developed. It would be highly unfortunate if good progress in improving walking routes was to be undermined by any closure or disincentive to use secondary entrances

The major hurdle in encouraging people to walk to the station is undoubtedly the perception of security as illustrated by the following extract from a report called *People's perceptions of personal security and their concerns about public transport*:

'After dark, 51 per cent of women and 20 per cent of men feel unsafe walking from home to the station, and 61 per cent of women and 26 per cent of men feel unsafe walking from the station to home.'

Southern has opportunities to utilise the new safer travel team and also local station managers in work with local authorities, the British Transport Police, and the local police force to make the station and the surrounding areas secure for passengers.

Integrated Transport – perception and reality

Passenger Focus and ATOC have published the results of a study examining the perceptions of passengers towards integrated transport, specifically looking at end-to-end journeys.

It identifies concerns with the perceived 'hassle factor' and value-for-money associated with rail travel but establishes that some of these concerns are actually unfounded.

There may be lessons from this study which will link well both with Southern's station travel plan development and the wider marketing campaign to promote off-peak travel.

Feedback from the Station Travel Plan pilot schemes

We are aware that Southern will look to the findings from the Station Travel Plan pilots but acknowledge that it is relatively soon to be drawing full conclusions from the schemes, as they are still at an early stage. However, a colleague who has been involved in the pilot programme has provided some initial feedback and suggestions which we summarise below.

There is a strong view that the plans are very location specific and each station needs individual consideration. A good idea may be universal, but the degree to which it promotes modal shift is likely to vary from station to station.

The pilots started with a benchmark of what the existing modal split at each site was, and then each pilot was encouraged to set targets relevant to that site. For example, providing additional cycling storage (and promoting usage) is universally good but if your station is nowhere near a cycling route then it may be difficult to encourage usage.

Conversely, if your site is already popular with cyclists then additional facilities will be good and will promote satisfaction but you may have already reached saturation point.

The lessons coming out of the pilots this far are probably:

- Know what you are starting from
- There are probably quick wins easily implemented which may be more likely to be of the “stop doing things wrong” before you think about the “start doing things right” variety
- Money talks – very loudly
- Partnerships are essential but arranged marriages don’t work
- Passenger perception is key; money invested in soft measures (publicity, promotion) are more likely to generate success even though it is may not be so tangible. Be brave in encouraging passengers, even if you cannot see hoops, tarmac, notice boards etc.
- Things take time.

We anticipate the final report will draw out the long term nature of the change required, but there is some way to go before conclusions can be drawn. The lessons which emerge may suggest additional approaches that might be combined with steps already taken as time goes on.

Journey Solutions Partnership

Passenger Focus notes the Journey Solutions Partnership (JSP) involving the five largest public transport groups plus ATOC, CPT and the Department for Transport and we encourage the active engagement of each individual rail operator.

The JSP publication, *Door to Door*, identifies existing good practice in the provision of integration facilities and services and has developed a list of facilities and services that may be provided to guide train users through a door-to-door journey by public transport, specifically information, integrated ticketing and interchange. A programme of initiatives has been prepared that can be delivered primarily by operators.

In addition to providing safe, reliable and attractive services, the report identifies that there are four main components to a successful, seamless journey by public transport, when National Rail is the primary mode and where buses/coaches and trams provide access to and from the rail station.

These are:

- Readily available, easy to understand information about services and fares (before and during the journey)
- Integrated multi-modal ticketing for the entire journey, including modern purchase methods
- Good interchange infrastructure and facilities, so that changing between methods of transport is convenient, easy and quick, and
- Services that provide timely connections.

Further information

Please contact Sharon Hedges, Passenger Link Manager, to discuss issues relating to this submission or for assistance in sourcing any of the documents referenced on 07918 626 126 or email sharon.hedges@passengerfocus.org.uk



© 2009 Passenger Focus

Passenger Focus
Freepost (RRRE-ETTC-LEET)
PO Box 4257
Manchester
M60 3AR

0300 123 2350
www.passengerfocus.org.uk
info@passengerfocus.org.uk

Passenger Focus is the operating
name of the Rail Passengers Council