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Dear Mike,

First Capital Connect Rolling Stock

As you know on 12th June 2006 FCC in an attempt to restrict demand for its services at peak times, introduced evening peak restrictions at 37 stations on its cheap day return tickets between the hours of 16:30 and 19:01 hours. Passenger Focus together with London TravelWatch objected strongly to FCC on this approach to capacity management, as we have consistently stated publicly that we oppose any pricing that penalises passengers in this way. We do support incentivising passengers to travel on the shoulder peak, as supported in research "Edge of morning peak travel" report published in October.

Following further discussions between Passenger Focus, London TravelWatch and FCC, on the 10th July the restrictions on evening peak travel were removed from 12 of the original 37 stations.

In October Passenger Focus interviewed 517 passengers who travelled the Thameslink and Great Northern routes. In summary our research showed:

- The restrictions on certain tickets do not appear to have resulted in any major changes of behaviour – very few respondents have changed the station at which they start their journey and only a small minority have changed their journey times as a result (3% of non season ticket holders).
- There are more passengers opposed to the changes than support them – even among commuters there is no net support.
- Trains are perceived to be the same or more crowded than in the spring, even among commuters.
- Therefore there is no evidence that fare restrictions have helped reduce crowding (as there is limited evidence they have really affected consumer behaviour).



Following this research Passenger Focus held a Parliamentary event at the House of Commons on 25th October, hosted by Anne Main MP, St. Albans, which was attended by six passenger representative groups and four MPs. The output was that they wished Passenger Focus to continue to lobby FCC for the restrictions to be lifted.

Colin and I met with the Secretary of State on 26th October, where this issue was discussed in some detail. It is our considered opinion that we have reached a dead end, and that the principle of what FCC has done by imposing these restrictions, which penalise passengers is wrong, especially given that the London commuter market typically have no restrictions after 09:30 hours – the only exception being “One” which has restrictions on some flows between 16:59 and 18:15 hours. The main priority for this franchise is capacity, therefore a possible way forward would be for the DfT to review and identify what rolling stock options are available for release to FCC, 13 four car units from Southern for the Thameslink route and other rolling stock options for the Great Northern of the route. On finding and implementing a robust solution, this would then allow FCC to review their current restrictions with a view to suspending them. The SoS said that he would consider this approach and asked for Passenger Focus to pursue this with his department.

Therefore it would be very helpful if you could update Passenger Focus on what the current plans or options are for a cascade of rolling stock which will help First Capital Connect and passengers on their routes.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Smith
Chief Executive