

Independent national passenger watchdog

Passenger Voice Rail



Spring 2011

London

In this issue: • Priorities for 2011 • c2c rail deal welcomed • Plans on the table

Watchdog looks at passenger scores

Autumn 2010

Train company	Overall satisfaction
Great Britain result	84%
c2c	91%
Chiltern Railways	90%
First Capital Connect	76%
First Great Western	82%
Heathrow Connect	92%
Heathrow Express	93%
London Midland	86%
London Overground	85%
National Express East Anglia	79%
Southeastern	80%
Southern	82%
South West Trains	87%

Passenger satisfaction with both train and station facilities on journeys to and from the capital is steadily creeping up.

Overall satisfaction in London and the South East stands at 83%, according to the Autumn 2010 National Passenger Survey. However, for the first time the independent passenger watchdog has also published a breakdown of passenger satisfaction scores within each train company.

Breaking the National Passenger Survey results down by routes marks a huge step forward in accountability and transparency. Passengers can now get a much better idea of how their train services compare with others run by their company, as well as those across Great Britain.

For example, on London Overground, 93% of passengers are satisfied with services on the Watford-Euston route, compared with 77% on the Gospel Oak-Barking journey.

The research found that among the best-scoring routes are Southeastern's high-speed, with 94% of passengers satisfied. The lowest scores were observed on First Capital Connect's London-Bedford route and National Express East Anglia main line routes (not including intercity services).



Looking ahead to future rail

Passenger Focus has responded to Network Rail's draft West Coast Main Line (WCML) Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS), which sets out the priorities for rail investment between now and 2024.

As part of the consultation process, Passenger Focus and Network Rail have held meetings in Glasgow, Preston and London for rail user groups to discuss what the RUS should be addressing. The group discussions highlighted some key priorities, including capacity, connectivity and station improvements.

Feedback from these groups, together with other Passenger Focus research, was used to inform the watchdog's response to Network Rail.

Fares and ticketing progress



Passenger Focus has been working with Southern on a number of improvements to fares and ticketing and has welcomed progress in key areas. A smartcard ticketing system will be piloted later in the year and a 'next generation' of ticket vending machines will introduce new functions and more information for passengers. New 'Ticket on Departure' machines have also been introduced.

Both Southern and First Capital Connect have introduced discounted season ticket options where passengers who sign up to monthly direct debits can qualify for a month of free travel.

These developments should help improve passenger satisfaction with value for money and ticket buying options.

Priorities for 2011

Despite it not being short-listed to bid for the interim Greater Anglia franchise, Passenger Focus has called on National Express East Anglia (NXEA) to maintain focus on improvements it has already started to deliver.

The independent passenger watchdog has published the latest National Passenger Survey which shows NXEA is lagging behind other train companies running services in the London and South East, where passengers' overall satisfaction score averages 83%.

Commenting on the short-listing of Abellio, Go-Ahead and Stagecoach to bid for the interim contract Passenger Focus manager Guy Dangerfield said: "Passengers will want to see real improvements during this interim period – they won't want

to wait until 2013 when a long-term franchise is in place."

Passenger Focus has set out the top two areas where the watchdog wants NXEA to improve in the remainder of its franchise.

Mr Dangerfield said: "First is train punctuality. The second priority is to drive up passenger satisfaction with the way in which industry provides information during disruption."

Passenger Focus has been working with NXEA and has encouraged them to improve in a number of areas. This has contributed to the introduction of a 60-second target for drivers to provide information to passengers when a train makes an unscheduled stop and improvements to the contingency planning for passengers travelling to and from Stansted Airport.

Performance under scrutiny

Since the timetable changes in December 2009, Southeastern's performance has been on the decline to the point where in December 2010 it only narrowly avoided dropping below the 82% punctuality target on its 'High-speed and Mainlines' routes. Passenger Focus is disappointed that its overall punctuality score is propped up by good performance on the high-speed line and believes the distinct high-speed service should be separated from the other main line routes.

Passenger Focus has successfully called for Southeastern to publish the results of an independent audit reviewing the company's punctuality statistics to demonstrate to long-suffering season-ticket holders why compensation had been avoided. Under the compensation arrangements, passengers on Southeastern's 'High Speed and Mainlines' routes looking to renew their season tickets at the end of last year would have been entitled to a five percent discount if punctuality fell below 82%. According to industry figures, Southeastern's punctuality for these routes was 82.04%.

The audit has revealed that 'High Speed and Mainlines' punctuality was above 82% because of good results on the high-speed line.

The Government has since announced Southeastern's franchise has been extended after meeting performance targets.

Tunde Olatunji, Passenger Focus manager, said: "The announcement confirming the two-year extension of Southeastern's franchise will be received with mixed feelings by those passengers who have seen a deterioration in performance, sharp fare increases and little or no compensation for the delays.

"However, the silver-lining for passengers who have felt aggrieved about the failure to get compensation last year is that the franchise extension has now included a consultation on changing the compensation arrangement to a system known as 'delay repay', where passengers are entitled to compensation for every journey delayed by more than 30 minutes.

"The extension of the high-speed service to Maidstone West is also welcome news."

c2c rail deal welcomed

Passenger Focus has welcomed news of additional services and further investment in the region's railway with the extension of the c2c franchise.

The franchise will now run for a period of up to two years to 26 May 2013; it had been due to expire in May 2011. Passengers using c2c services consistently rate the train operator highly in Passenger Focus's National Passenger Survey, with 91% satisfied overall and 94% satisfied with train punctuality.

However, for the future, c2c passengers will want to see continued focus put on maintaining punctuality and reliability, more services and longer trains, as well as better value-for-money fares. Passenger Focus asked passengers currently using c2c services to outline their priorities for the rail network and more weekend and later-evening trains, being able to get a seat and improving security came top.

Plans on the table

Passenger Focus has provided feedback on industry long-term plans for the London and South East rail network.

Rail User Groups (RUGs) from across the region took the opportunity to hear latest plans and feedback on proposals for the region's railway at a meeting joint-hosted by Passenger Focus, London TravelWatch and Network Rail.

Network Rail published a draft of the 'second generation' Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) for London and the South East and Passenger Focus has now

responded to the consultation. Passenger research demonstrates a number of factors that the RUS must seek to address. These include:

- punctuality and reliability of the trains
- delivery of sufficient capacity, particularly sufficient seats and minimising overcrowding
- adequate frequency of trains to meet passenger needs.

Provision of information, particularly during disruption, and the way delays are handled are also highly significant issues for passengers.



Thameslink progress

Passenger Focus has been keeping a close watch on the next steps in the Thameslink Programme and Sharon Hedges recently met Network Rail for an update.

Network Rail will soon be announcing its plans to redevelop London Bridge station and will be seeking views on the scheme. The transformation of the station

and surrounding tracks will be the final phase of the Thameslink Programme which will mean a better station, longer trains and more frequent services on the Thameslink route.

For more information and the chance to comment, visit Network Rail's website: www.networkrail.co.uk/thameslink