

Independent national passenger watchdog

Passenger Voice Rail



Summer 2010

London

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Frozen New Year fares please London and South East commuters

Spring 2010

Train Company	Overall satisfaction	Improvement in % satisfied or good since Spring 2009	Decline in % satisfied since Spring 2009
Great Britain results	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
Chiltern	91%	Value for money (8%)	Station facilities and services (8%)
First Capital Connect	76%	Value for money (7%)	How request to station staff was handled (10%) How well the train company handled delays (10%)
First Great Western	83%	How well the train company handled delays (9%)	Cleanliness of the outside of the train (5%)
Heathrow Connect	88%	Station facilities and services (10%)	How a request to station staff was handled (10%)
Heathrow Express	93%	Helpfulness and attitude of staff on the train (6%)	No significant decline
London Midland	86% (up 8%)	Train frequency (11%) Punctuality/reliability (11%) Value for money (11%)	No significant decline
London Overground	72%	Upkeep and repair of the train (20%)	Overall station environment (9%)
National Express East Anglia	77%	Value for money (8%)	Cleanliness of the outside of the train (6%)
Southeastern	81% (up 5%)	Helpfulness and attitude of staff on the train (18%)	No significant decline
Southern	84% (up 4%)	Value for money (10%)	No significant decline
South West Trains	85%	Value for money (7%)	Overall station environment (5%)

Passenger satisfaction scores for value for money on rail services travelling into London and around the South East railway are up a whopping eight points (43%). This follows many fare prices being frozen last January following on from the low-inflation rate in mid-2009.

Passengers in London and the South East 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 train companies travelling into the capital and around the South East.

c2c (91%) and Chiltern (91%) continue to be strong performers in the survey and passenger satisfaction with value for money increased for most of the region's operators thanks to many fares either dropping or being fixed last New Year. Following major problems on its Thameslink route in late 2009 to early 2010, First Capital Connect's (FCC) score for manag-

ing disruption plummeted 10 points to only 24%. FCC's overall score remained static at 76%, while the overall London and South East score rose two points to 82%.



The NPS is one of the most cost effective ways of driving improvements for passengers. The results allow valuable comparisons between routes and train companies.

For example, Southeastern's new high speed services are loved by those who can afford them – 95% overall satisfaction, with a good rating for value for money. Similarly, passengers on FCC's Great Northern route are most satisfied (81%) compared with those using Thameslink South services, starting from stations between London Bridge and Brighton, with 66% satisfied.

King's Cross redevelopment

Passenger Focus has welcomed ongoing work to improve London's busy King's Cross station and recently attended the opening of platform 0.

The redevelopment includes the new western concourse, due for completion in time for the Olympics, more shops and restaurants, better seating areas to use while waiting for trains and improved links to St Pancras International and the Underground.

Guy Dangerfield, Passenger Focus manager, said: "Passengers will see the opening of a new King's Cross platform as the first really tangible benefit from this important project. It is a shame to see that passenger satisfaction with facilities and services at King's Cross has dropped while work is being undertaken."

News roundup

Passenger Focus hosts South 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) with the aim of the conference to discuss key topics which effect 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 to discuss the work the industry is doing to improve passenger information during disruption and to highlight the 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.



Passenger Focus move

Passenger Focus's London base has moved from Islington to Pimlico.

The new address is 2nd Floor, One Drummond Gate, Pimlico, London, SW1V 2QY.



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 32% of passengers in London and the South East 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 over 1000 passengers acting as reporters. The watchdog plans to publish the results of the research panel later this year.

Bad weather

With summer already upon us, the winter's cold snap may seem a long time ago, but the disruption caused by snow is still fresh in Passenger Focus's minds. Especially those Eurostar passengers caught up in the Christmas chaos.

Passenger Focus's rail director Ashwin Kumar has given evidence to the Department of Transport as part of its Winter Resilience Review.

Ashwin spoke on passengers' experiences during the disruption and what the industry should do to help passengers during these unplanned for events.

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, and the Greater Anglia franchise, run by National Express East Anglia (NXEA).

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 for improvement. 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.

Passenger Focus has also called for timetable improvements, including earlier starts to weekend train services, later-evening trains and the trial of Boxing Day services.

Similarly, 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 passengers are satisfied overall, 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.

The Government has since announced it was putting decisions on both franchises on hold while it looks at the franchising process. Guy Dangerfield, Passenger Focus manager said: "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 operators 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 the trains."

Backward step in 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. 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 previously 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".



Initial findings from ticket machine research

Passenger Focus's research on the benefits and shortcomings of ticket vending machines (TVMs) and queuing times at stations is being finalised. The research looks at why passengers queue to speak to a member of staff when there is no queue for a TVM. What is it about some TVM programs that passengers find off-putting and drives them to wait longer to buy their ticket from the booking office? The need for reassurance is compounded by the complexity of tickets and fares. If you would like a copy of the research, contact info@passengerfocus.org.uk or visit www.passengerfocus.org.uk

