

## Action needed to improve Liverpool–Norwich services

Complaints to Passenger Focus indicate high levels of dissatisfaction with a once flagship service

Passenger Focus has received growing levels of passenger complaints concerning the operation of this route since East Midlands Trains (EMT) took it over. The fleet of trains that used to run on this route has been replaced by an older and smaller fleet of trains, as specified in the

franchise let by the Department for Transport. We feel that the levels of overcrowding and discomfort endured by passengers on a route serving four of England's core cities need to be addressed urgently. A solution must be found between the rail industry, government and other agencies and partners.

To facilitate this, Passenger Focus's Paul Fullwood has gathered the views of groups along the line of the route into a manifesto for change, specifying what we believe to be the minimum levels of service that passengers expect and deserve. Backed by research and evidence, this document will be used to put all parties on the spot and ask what they are doing to help realise this route's potential.



## Passenger priorities for future growth

Research on passengers' priorities is helping to inform two Route Utilisation Studies (RUS).

The West Midlands and Chilterns RUS and the East Midlands RUS commenced work earlier this year. As part of the stakeholder management group, Passenger Focus is playing an active part in feeding passenger views into the process, which should be complete by the end of 2009. The RUS is intended to plan for the effective and efficient use of the rail network in the two areas. West Midlands and Chiltern is bounded by Shrewsbury, Stafford, Lichfield, Nuneaton, Northampton, Stratford, Hereford and the Chiltern Line to Marylebone.

The East Midlands RUS covers the area bounded by London St Pancras to Sheffield, Thameslink services to Bedford, services from the West Midlands to Leicester and Peterborough and from Peterborough to Lincoln. Both areas have seen considerable growth since the last RUSs were published. Although there are plans to lengthen platforms and renew signalling, much needs to be done to meet the passengers' priorities indicated by our research: sufficient train services at times that passengers want to use them; 19 out of 20 trains arriving on time; passengers being able to get a seat; and conveniently timed connections.

## First benchmark results for new East Midlands franchise

The Spring Passenger Focus National Passenger Survey will provide a yardstick for measuring the new East Midlands Trains (EMT) franchise against its commitments. The results show that satisfaction with many facets of the passenger experience has fallen since EMT took over services from Midland Mainline and Central Trains in November 2007. Passenger Focus manager Paul Fullwood said: "We will be looking to East Midlands Trains to offer reassurance to passengers that it has plans to improve the levels of satisfaction it offers to its passengers, especially those entirely within its control."



# First results for new CrossCountry franchise

CrossCountry has maintained satisfaction scores since taking over the franchise from Virgin, according to the Spring 2008 National Passenger Survey

Comparisons and trends across time are difficult to establish because CrossCountry has taken on some routes from Central Trains and lost routes between the North West and Scotland, but overall there do not appear to be any significant changes in passenger satisfaction. Comparisons can be made with other long-distance operators, and room to sit and stand remains a key issue for passengers travelling on CrossCountry

trains; the operator ranked 17th out of 21 operators on this measure. However, there are plans to improve capacity as part of the new franchise which should help to address this concern, and CrossCountry is exceeding the 30% increase in capacity recommended by Passenger Focus to create 35% more seats.

CrossCountry remains below other long-distance operators in many areas. Passenger perception of helpfulness, attitude

and availability of staff on trains is of particular concern, especially as many CrossCountry passengers change trains during their journey and may need help and information from train staff. Staff issues clearly need to be carefully considered by CrossCountry, and we will continue to encourage CrossCountry to work with us to develop clear action plans which will address passengers' concerns.

## Watchdog supports moves to improve access to rail

Passenger Focus has welcomed the Government and industry's commitment to improving access to the railway across Great Britain.

The Station Travel Plan project, launched in Derby, will involve investment

and research into improving passengers' experience on the railway by coordinating every stage of the journey, including getting to the station and arriving at the destination. The idea behind the initiative is to encourage passengers to use environmentally friendly forms of transport when travelling to and from the station.

Passenger Focus said it was delighted to be able to fund a significant part of this research which will explore the ease of the end to end journey for the passenger, including connections, car parking and access to stations. The funding of at least £25,000 comes on top of Passenger Focus contributing to an innovative pilot project with Warwickshire County Council, which is now nearing completion. The Warwickshire County Council project saw the launch of the station travel plan concept and considered the end to end journey at small, rural stations through to intercity transport hubs.

Passenger Focus has long been an advocate for station travel plans and easing

## Good use of East Midlands stations

Redundant or partially used station buildings are being given a new lease of life thanks to an initiative managed by the Association of Community Rail Partnerships with key partners East Midlands Trains and Network Rail and the support of Passenger Focus. Charities or community groups are being given the opportunity to take a tenancy of up to 25 years at a peppercorn rent, and the first project, at Oakham station, recently gained its second such tenant. At Grantham, Newark and Retford, National Express East Coast is looking for similar tenants willing to 'adopt' the station.

## News roundup

- **National Passenger Survey 2008**  
This year's NPS results are now available on our website at [www.passengerfocus.org.uk/nps](http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/nps)
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Anthony Smith

the end to end journey. Work began with Passenger Focus's ground breaking 'Getting to the Station' report looking at car parking facilities. This report found that concerns about full car parks are leading people to drive rather than risk not being able to park at the station even if, in reality, there is some space.

Anthony Smith, Passenger Focus chief executive said: "Passenger Focus is pleased the rail industry and local authorities have enthusiastically embraced station travel plans. Our research shows passengers are put off the railway if they can't get to the station without fuss. And, with passenger numbers set to grow, easy access to stations is increasingly important as emphasis moves to consider the whole journey, not just the train trip."