

NPS results beg questions in East Anglia

The causes behind National Passenger Survey results are often clear-cut, but not in the latest findings for East Anglia

The latest National Passenger Survey results put National Express East Anglia (the renamed 'one' railway) on a relatively low 75% satisfaction score, despite recent improvements in train punctuality to an annual average punctuality figure of 90.43%.

Is punctuality in terms of the Public Performance Measure (up to 5 or 10 minutes late at destination, depending on the route) at odds with Liverpool Street commuters' individual experiences? Are other factors playing a part –

such as train cancellations, ticket prices, the ability to find a seat/space to stand, the fact that there are few brand-new trains, the state of train cleanliness, management of disruptions? Passenger Focus manager Guy Dangerfield said: "National Passenger Survey overall satisfaction is normally aligned closely with punctuality, but National Express East Anglia seems to be bucking the trend and we are keen to work together to understand why."



Colchester to Clacton resignalling



Passengers' needs are being kept to the fore while lines are closed for major work during 2008 and 2009.

In 2007 Passenger Focus, in partnership with Network Rail and the then 'one' railway, carried out research into passengers' requirements while key Essex routes were resignalled. Passenger Focus manager Guy Dangerfield recalls, "the key finding was that the rail industry should provide passengers with as much information as possible and through a variety of

channels – blanket coverage was the message. London commuters were also worried about Monday morning overruns." In May, 2008 Passenger Focus chaired a meeting where Network Rail and National Express East Anglia gave a project update, and representatives from passenger groups along the line fed back information on how things were going. Had the research messages been heeded?

Representatives underlined that passengers

need to be made aware of the weekend closures and alternative arrangements. Clear instructions would be needed about the exact location of bus stops for the shuttle service to Thorpe-le-Soken during the five-week blockade of Clacton and the two-week closure of the Walton line. Reassurance was sought that help would be on hand for people needing assistance, whether or not they had booked in advance. Overruns associated with the resignalling project had been pleasingly few.

News roundup

- **c2c Passenger Panel**

Passenger Focus welcomes the new members of c2c's Passenger Panel, which consists of senior c2c managers and passengers who have volunteered to represent general passenger issues. Members are drawn from stations all along the route to represent typical passengers' views. Passenger Focus is represented on the Panel by Manager Tunde Olatunji and is committed to playing an effective role in championing the interests of all c2c passengers.

- **National Passenger Survey 2008**

You can now see this year's NPS results on our website at www.passengerfocus.org.uk/nps

- **Give us your feedback**

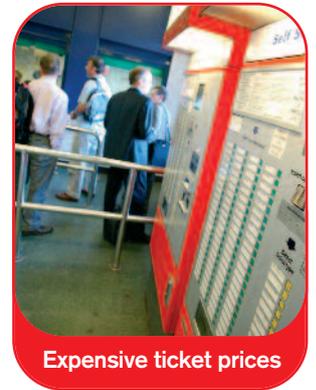
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East Anglia passengers hit by ticket changes

New restrictions on the use of One Day Travelcards mean hefty rises for many passengers

Passenger Focus criticised National Express East Anglia in May for introducing a ban on using One Day Travelcards in the evening peak. This caused steep price rises for some; for example, a return from Colchester to London was a 63% hike to £38. If you want to go to London after the morning peak but come back whenever you like, there is no longer a suitable ticket – you must either avoid both peaks or pay full price. “Withdrawing the ticket that allows passengers to travel into London after the morning

rush, but to come back on any train is retrograde. Why should passengers pay a rush-hour price when they are travelling off-peak?” asked Passenger Focus chief executive Anthony Smith. “Most passengers don't have the choice, but in south Essex it's worth remembering that c2c is cheaper anyway and has



no evening restrictions”, added Guy Dangerfield, Passenger Focus manager.



“Why should passengers pay a rush hour price when they are travelling off-peak?”

Anthony Smith, chief executive

Positive response to c2c franchise extension proposal



Passenger Focus welcomes proposals which may see c2c's franchise extended by two years. The original proposal was rejected but c2c are resubmitting a revised application.

At the heart of the proposals are capacity improvements such as 10 additional Class 321 trains, infrastructure enhancements such as the previously postponed turnback siding at Grays, West Ham resignalling and platform extensions to accommodate 12 cars.

The consultation process generated very helpful feedback from local passenger groups. Passengers want the current levels

of performance to be maintained (c2c is one of Britain's most punctual railways).

In addition, the expectation is that Class 321 trains will be refurbished to the same standard as the Class 357s and that there will be full consultation on any operational changes such as proposals to increase the number of West Ham stops.

If successful, the challenge for c2c will be to deliver an even better quality of service and drive up improvements in National Passenger Survey satisfaction results.

The Passenger Focus report on this proposal can be found at www.passengerfocus.org.uk