

Passengers hit by fare hikes

Rises unlikely to improve value-for-money rating.

Passengers on 'one' are facing rises of up to 7.6% in the latest round of fare increases.

Unregulated fares have risen considerably. For example, the Norwich to London Open Return fare jumped from £66 to £71 (up 7.6%) and the Bishops Stortford to London Cheap Day Return from £11.20 to £11.90 – a rise of 6.25%.

"The National Passenger Survey shows that just 36% of 'one' passengers – compared to similarly poor ratings of 38% for First Capital

Connect and 44% for C2C – are satisfied with the value for money they get for the price of a ticket. Yet many unregulated prices yet again went up by more than the rate of inflation in January," says Passenger Focus Manager, Guy Dangerfield.

"How is this going to attract more passengers to rail and address the low value-for-money ratings?"

The latest round of New Year fare rises has also hit passengers using the new East Midlands Trains franchise, which combines

the previous Midland MainLine franchise with the services previously operated by Central Trains in the East Midlands and East Anglia.

The average unregulated fare rise this January was 7%, with some fares rising by approximately 10% since the last round of increases – or, if counted year-on-year, by 13%.

And East Midland Trains has indicated that it might want to raise unregulated fares annually by an average of 3.4% above inflation.

The big question is: what will passengers get in return for these higher fares? Paul Fullwood of Passenger Focus asks: "Passengers have seen



What will passengers get in return for fare rises?

some significant fare rises: will rises in performance match these levels?"

'one' railway: a long way to go

The National Passenger Survey shows that, while overall levels of satisfaction remain the same, some things are getting better for passengers on 'one'. However, the service still lags behind in significant areas.

The latest National Passenger Survey (NPS), carried out by Passenger Focus, reveals that, while some aspects of the service are pleasing 'one' passengers, there is still a long way to go.

In the survey, which was carried out in Autumn 2007, 75% of 'one' passengers say they are satisfied or very satisfied with the overall level of service. This is the same as the results produced 12 months before. In more than half of the 30 aspects of service measured by the NPS 'one' is below the London and South East average.

Nevertheless, passenger satisfaction with 12 of the 30 individual aspects of service measured by the NPS have shown



significant improvement over the same period. These include:

- ticket buying facilities
- information provision
- staff attitudes and helpfulness
- the frequency of trains
- punctuality.

Despite the improvements, the survey also shows passengers are still dissatisfied with key aspects of the service than are satisfied. These include:

- value for money for the price of your ticket
- toilet facilities on trains
- the availability of staff on trains
- how well 'one' deals with delays.

Passenger Focus Manager, Guy Dangerfield, emphasises the challenges that National Express East Anglia faces.

"As 'one' becomes National Express East Anglia in February, continuing the focus on improving punctuality, reducing cancellations and driving up the quality of service on trains and at stations is key to improving overall satisfaction," he says.

First Capital Connect and C2C recorded a small increase in their overall satisfaction ratings, now at 77% and 89% respectively.

Anger at Liverpool Street over-run

News roundup

• Signal work

Passenger Focus is continuing to work with 'one' railway to minimise passenger inconvenience on the Clacton/Walton line while Network Rail replaces the signalling equipment. A key message given to us by passengers is that they don't want engineering work to over-run into Monday mornings. Sadly, this has not been avoided entirely.

• What's in a name?

The quirky and largely un-loved train company name 'one' railway passes into history on 27 February 2008 when the Greater Anglia passenger franchise is re-launched as National Express East Anglia. From a passenger point of view, the re-launch must be deeper than just a new name and new colours. There must be a renewed focus on train punctuality, fewer cancellations, reduced overcrowding and improved service quality.

• Challenges for National Express

Passenger Focus has three top challenges for National Express East Coast. The company took over from GNER as intercity operator on the East Coast Main Line from London to Peterborough, East Midlands, Yorkshire, North East England and Scotland, in December. We want to see it:

- tackle the poor punctuality record
- deliver consistent high-quality service on-board
- be more empathetic with passengers, particularly when things have gone wrong.

• 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

Want to have your say about something you've read in Passenger Voice? Got a burning issue you want to see highlighted in the next edition? It's your Voice, so contact: krista.hamblin@passengerfocus.org.uk

Commuters returning to work badly let down.

For over 12 months passengers had been warned that London's Liverpool Street station would be closed for nine days over Christmas 2007 so that a disused bridge outside the station could be demolished in preparation for construction of Transport for London's new East London Line.

Network Rail used the closure of Liverpool Street to completely renew the overhead line electrification in the station, carry out work for the Olympics at Stratford and replace track and renew points.

This was extremely inconvenient for people who needed to travel over Christmas and New Year, with coaches replacing trains and passengers having to use London Underground to and from Stratford. The closure included three working days.

However, Network Rail's failure to finish the overhead line work on time to allow Liverpool Street to reopen on 2 January was the final straw, with services not back to normal until lunchtime on 3 January. Worse

"Passengers have been badly let down and must be compensated."

Guy Dangerfield,
Passenger Focus Manager,



Network Rail must learn big lessons

still, Network Rail didn't tell 'one' until the early hours of 2 January that there was a problem, leaving

no time to tell passengers what was going on.

Passenger Focus has welcomed 'one' railway's decision to refund season ticket holders for days when no effective service ran. Passenger Focus Manager, Guy Dangerfield, said: "Passengers who are not season ticket holders and who were delayed by over 30 minutes on 2 and 3 January should make a 'delay repay' claim for compensation. Visit www.onerailway.com to find out how."

Thameslink programme research looks at passengers' needs

Passenger Focus is planning two research projects to help ensure passengers get the best deal from the Thameslink programme.

The first study, which will be carried out in partnership with London TravelWatch, and the Department for Transport will look at passengers' needs and opinions on new rolling stock for

the Thameslink route.

A fleet of completely new trains will operate the service when the Thameslink programme is complete, and our joint research will help determine what these will be like.

The other study, in partnership with train operators, will look at how the rail industry can minimise negative impact on passengers during the construction of this £3.5 billion project.

Through service to stay

Passenger Focus was pleased when the Department for Transport recognised our argument that splitting the Liverpool to Norwich service at Nottingham is not what passengers want, and directed the new franchisee to maintain the through service.

Due to the route's popularity it does suffer from overcrowding on key sections and would benefit from investment.