

Passenger Voice

East Midlands

Independent national rail passenger watchdog



Passenger survey on the Liverpool–Nottingham–Norwich route

As part of the lobbying campaign for improvements on this vital route, Passenger Focus, with support from volunteers from TravelWatch East Midlands, has asked passengers what they thought of the train service

About 1600 surveys were completed, with passengers' key concerns being overcrowding, the comfort and standard of trains, and the standard and provision of facilities such as catering and luggage space.

The survey also confirmed our National Passenger Survey results which show that, when compared to the Midland Main Line route, passengers on Liverpool–Norwich trains show lower levels of satisfaction for

punctuality, reliability and the ability to find a seat, and overall satisfaction is lower by 10 percentage points. In terms of the ticket offering value for money, however, passengers perceive Liverpool–Norwich services offer better value.

Passenger Focus will make these detailed results available to East Midlands Trains management, passengers and the Department for Transport as we call for a significant upgrade to the service levels on this route.

NPS action plan for East Midlands Trains

The Spring 2008 National Passenger Survey (NPS) was the first that East Midlands Trains (EMT) underwent as a new franchise, and the results are now being scrutinised to help the company understand how to improve services for passengers

Overall satisfaction is, at 79%, the lowest-scoring long-distance operator, and 9% lower than the equivalent results in Spring 2007. Interestingly, results for stations have either remained static or been positive; trains are the focus of dissatisfaction. Further analysis shows that it is on local routes and in many cases the Liverpool–Norwich route, that are the worst affected.

Passenger Focus manager Paul Fullwood is committed to helping EMT increase passenger satisfaction, and many of the initiatives that Passenger Focus campaigned for during the specification of the franchise are now starting

to be implemented, which should address the root causes of passenger dissatisfaction. For example,

the introduction of the December 2008 timetable will see additional Derby–Nottingham trains, later

evening and Sunday trains on the Robin Hood Line, and revised contingency planning for the Liverpool–Norwich service should see fewer journeys stopped early.

The refurbishment of the train fleet used on local services, plus new depot facilities to repair and maintain trains, with additional cleaning facilities, should see availability and cleanliness improve and the appearance of the train fleet will be refreshed with the application of EMT livery. Passenger Focus is hopeful that these measures will bear fruit and passengers will record improved satisfaction in future surveys.



Passenger Focus is helping East Midlands Trains to improve

Derby Station Travel Plan initiative

The National Station Travel Plan (STP) initiative was announced by the Government last year, and Passenger Focus was invited to take part in developing 12 national pilot schemes under the leadership of ATOC



Derby is a Cycling Demonstration Town and promotes more cycling to the station

STPs aim to increase the share of access to stations by sustainable modes: cycling, walking and public transport, as well as making the best use of station parking for those that need to use their car. Passenger Focus is committed to part-funding a benchmarking study at pilot stations to establish the current access share. The final outcome of the initiative will be a toolkit that Passenger Focus hopes all local authorities and train operating companies will find useful when planning access to their stations.

In the East Midlands, Derby has been

selected as a pilot station, and Passenger Focus manager Paul Fullwood is looking forward to working with local stakeholders to consider and deliver benefits for passengers and users of the station. Derby station is a major link between the city centre, which has seen substantial regeneration, and the Pride Park area where further investment is planned. Derby is already a Cycling Demonstration Town and promoting more cycling to the station would be a major objective of the STP, as would improving pedestrian access by 'streetscaping' Castleward Avenue and redesigning the station forecourt to reduce conflict between transport modes and therefore reduce barriers to access.

Station standards

Focus on East Coast improvements

'At station' factors in the National Passenger Survey lagged behind those for 'on train' – and all too often it is clear why. Passenger Focus is working closely with National Express East Coast to help the operator understand what needs to change for their stations to excel in presentation and most particularly cleanliness. Passenger Focus manager Guy Dangerfield said: "Whether the station loos are spotless or not will never rival train punctuality in terms of importance to passengers. But being able to rely on finding clean facilities, where the locks and hand-driers work and the soap dispensers have been filled is important – whether you have paid £200 or £10 for your ticket."



Clean facilities are important

Timetable change winners and losers

As with every timetable change, there are winners and losers this December, with resources being directed to the long-distance services

For example, additional and faster services from St Pancras will enhance long-distance services on the Midland Main Line but stations south of Kettering will be disadvantaged in the off-peak.

Among the welcome changes

are the new Nottingham–Matlock service, Sunday services to Mansfield and the addition of two new stations, at Corby and East Midlands Parkway.

In contrast, passenger groups are telling Passenger Focus's manager Paul Fullwood that East Midlands Trains (EMT) lack adequate rolling stock and this is forcing some undesirable changes. Equally many of the services EMT took over from Central Trains depend on timely and dependable connections with other operators, notably CrossCountry Trains, Northern, and National Express East Coast. The consultation process did not make it clear how these connections are to be enforced, and there is little evidence that operators are using their best endeavours to maintain them. Passenger Focus has raised these concerns with the DfT.