



Thameslink Rolling Stock Qualitative research

Prepared for Passenger Focus in a joint project with the
Department for Transport and London TravelWatch

August 2008



Colin Foxall CBE

Introduction

This report is about what passengers want from the £5.5 billion Thameslink project. The scheme aims to deliver significant additional capacity on the First Capital Connect Bedford to Brighton route and, ultimately, other routes including some First Capital Connect East Coast Main Line (Great Northern) services.

These are already well-used parts of the network where passenger demand is expected to grow strongly. Many stations will have platforms lengthened to accept 12 coach trains and Blackfriars and London Bridge stations will be substantially improved through major rebuilding. As well as planned improvements to the physical infrastructure on which trains run and to the stations passengers use, the Thameslink Programme will bring brand new trains into service on the routes concerned. Passenger Focus as part of its work representing the interests of passengers commissioned research on passengers views about how the new trains should be laid out and the facilities they should provide for their passengers.

It is vital that the trains meet passenger needs and expectations and that they also reflect the diverse demands of the different routes they will serve. Two consumer organisations represent the interests of rail passengers on the Thameslink routes: Passenger Focus, the independent national rail consumer watchdog and London TravelWatch, the voice of London's transport users. The two organisations have worked together with The Department for Transport, which is responsible for the procurement of the new trains, to ensure that passengers' views are properly at the heart of decisions about the design of the trains – right from the earliest stages of their procurement.

This report sets out those passenger views.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colin Foxall'.

Colin Foxall CBE
Chairman
Passenger Focus



Guy Dangerfield

Highlights from the research

This qualitative research involved 93 passengers taking part in 13 structured discussion groups, plus 9 passengers with various disabilities who contributed through depth interviews

After establishing their travel patterns and likes/dislikes with the current rolling stock, participants were given high level information about the Thameslink Programme to provide context for the discussions about new rolling stock. The discussion groups were constituted to ensure views were captured from passengers using different parts of what will become the Thameslink network, as well as those using it at different times of the day and for different purposes. The groups had a good gender mix and spread of age and socio-economic group.

The Outlook Research report will speak for itself. However, Passenger Focus wishes to highlight the following:

High level findings:

- News of the Thameslink Programme was received positively, in particular that passengers' plight in terms of acute crowding has been recognised. There were, though, concerns about whether fares would rise to pay for it, disruption during construction and that completion in 2015 is a long way off.
- There was a high degree of pragmatism, albeit it probably as a result of 'conditioning', that – even with 12 coach trains – passengers boarding nearer to London are unlikely to get a seat in the morning peak.
- Flowing from that pragmatism, there was a clear view that the new trains should be designed to allow passengers to stand in complete safety and as comfortably as possible. With the exception of participants using the Wimbledon/Sutton loop, passengers were relaxed about the change in ratio of seating to standing that is envisaged.
- The needs of passengers with disabilities varied depending on their impairment – this is covered in Section 3.6 of the Outlook report.

More detailed findings:

- Spaciousness. The absence of rows of three seats side by side (i.e. "three plus two seating"), the wider stand-backs around the doors and so ability to board, alight and move around within the train, were widely welcomed. 'Three plus two' seating was universally unpopular with passengers because of the practical and social 'awkwardness' of getting in and out of the window and middle seat.

- Seating configuration. In addition to the 'two plus two' configuration, 'perch' and tip-up seating was welcomed because of the flexibility it offered and comfort for those who could not find a proper seat. However, there was a view – including amongst those travelling off-peak and from 'outer' stations – that four seats arranged in a bay was space-inefficient and incompatible with the objective of increasing capacity to meet future demand. While retaining the increased spaciousness, greater use of face to back (i.e. airline-style) seating was suggested.
- Grab rails to ensure safe standing. The designs presented did not show comprehensive fixtures for passengers to hold onto while standing. Participants identified this as a major area for the initial design to be improved, particularly in the vestibules, and echoes the earlier reference to the need to stand in complete safety, should you have to stand. It was noted that existing trains are poorly equipped to help shorter passengers, and children, to stand safely.
- On-board passenger information. The gap between passenger expectations/aspirations and current rail industry practice was at its most stark over this issue. Passenger Focus expects all parties involved to ensure that these new trains represent a step change in the standard of ontrain passenger information. This research shows that even the 'hygiene factor' level is higher than that currently provided on most First Capital Connect trains, while passengers' expectations would only be met if there was onboard real time information synchronised with information at stations. To exceed expectations would require more still, e.g. real time running information about routes with which you can connect from Thameslink trains, including London Underground.
- Personal security. Passengers' expectations will be met only if there is CCTV in every carriage AND a visible staff presence on trains.
- Wide gangway between each coach. Designing the connection between each coach to greatly enhance freedom of movement along the train, and provide more standing space, was widely welcomed. If it is proposed, however, that there is no door between coaches, concern would have to be allayed about noise from train wheels; anti-social behaviour in one coach spreading along the train; and perception amongst some that they might be thrown into the next coach in an emergency situation.
- Luggage space. Passengers wanted to see proper provision for luggage storage, particularly given that these trains will be serving Gatwick and Luton airports, and the Eurostar terminal at St. Pancras.

Guy Dangerfield
Passenger Link Manager
Passenger Focus

Department for Transport actions

This research has already been instrumental in steering the ongoing work of the Department for Transport's technical advisors, in establishing the base specification for new Thameslink rolling stock. Respondents to the Department's OJEU Notice issued 9 April 2008 have been directed to these research findings so that they are aware of passengers' aspirations and expectations.

The specification for the train will define that it is to be designed to relevant standards for safety and Technical Standards for Interoperability regarding accessibility and the Department's Technical Strategy.

These standards ensure that the types and layout of seats, grab poles, passenger information systems and toilets meet the minimum requirements to ensure safety, comfort and address the minimum expectations highlighted by the research. It will be expected that manufacturers will incorporate and better existing solutions in order to meet these new emerging standards.

Conceptual designs for workable options, based around the important criteria identified from this research, will be developed to help make an assessment of whether the minimum requirements to meet the standards are sufficient to provide an appropriate environment for the expected passenger groups and loadings throughout the train.

The specification will seek for the manufacturer to demonstrate an interior solution which meets standards, allows visibility and passenger flow throughout the train, and creates an optimal balance between the useful space and security, against the economic and environmental impact of providing various facilities.

Patrick Bateson
Senior Project Sponsor
Department for Transport

Thameslink Rolling Stock Qualitative Research

Research Report

Prepared for:

Passenger Focus, in a joint project with the Department
for Transport and London TravelWatch

Date:

April 2008

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Management Summary

- Passenger Focus, in a joint project with the Department for Transport and London TravelWatch, needs to understand the views of rail passengers about the proposed design of new rolling stock which will operate all Thameslink services from 2015.
- **13 Group discussions** (6-8 respondents per 90 minute session) and **9 depth interviews** (60 minutes each) were conducted among rail users (including Commuters, Business Users, Leisure Users, and users with disabilities). The research was conducted in March 2008.
- The key overall finding from the research is that First Capital Connect passengers are generally receptive to news of the Thameslink programme and extremely positive about the proposed improvements to the route and rolling stock.
- There were however a few issues identified in relation to the rolling stock design that will require further thought. Previous research conducted for Passenger Focus has highlighted passenger needs in relation to safety and comfort for all types of journeys. Certain concerns relating to the provision of safe standing space were voiced in response to the design concepts presented for research.
- The majority of passengers in the sample recognise the underlying design objective to increase capacity during peak times especially by increasing the ratio of standing spaces to seats. At a conceptual level, the proposed carriage designs were acceptable to almost all as long as this objective can be achieved without compromising the comfort and safety of passengers. A number of factors were identified that will contribute to overall perceptions of whether the correct balance is being achieved by the new designs:
- Of most critical importance in this respect is the fact that the lack of grab poles and other things for (standing) passengers to hold onto, as shown in the design concepts, represents a threat to passenger safety and will therefore need to be addressed in the next stage of development.
- While most are pleased to see that rows of three seats do not feature in the new trains, there is a common perception that the proposed designs do not optimise either the number or comfort of seats provided. High density (airline) seating is regarded as the most pragmatic solution for the next generation of trains, even among regular commuters making the longest peak-time journeys on the network. Alternative, flexible seating formats that are consistent with the overall design objective are also welcomed, such as perch seats and tip-up seats especially.
- Other design features that appeared to be missing from the concepts researched that would be required in order to achieve more

comprehensive endorsement from a broad cross-section of passengers are increased luggage space and improved Passenger Information Systems on all trains.

- All other design features and facilities are regarded as luxuries in comparison, given the relatively short journeys that are typical on the Thameslink route. Consequently, things such as tables, wifi and power sockets are considered to be non-essential items but their provision would add value to perceptions of the TOC and the overall journey experience.

In summary, the research indicates that the Thameslink programme offers potential benefits to all user groups but not surprisingly commuters feel they have most to lose or gain. The concepts presented appear to meet the core design objective and most passengers on this route are pragmatic in their acceptance of the need to increase standing capacity on future trains, as long as the safety concerns raised by this research can be allayed. The research suggests that the design objectives could be met more efficiently by considering high density seating and the inclusion of more flexible formats.

The research therefore recommends that the following will need to be considered for the next stage of development:

- **More grab rails to allow safer standing**
- **High density and flexible seating formats**
- **Improved luggage storage and Passenger Information Systems facilities**
- **How to resolve the trade-offs surrounding the provision of air-conditioning and First Class accommodation**
- **Various non-mandatory requirements for disability groups**

1. Research Context and Objectives

Passenger Focus takes very seriously its responsibility to ensure that the needs and well-being of rail passengers are always considered by the government and rail industry. In line with its mission of 'putting rail passengers first' this research project was commissioned by Passenger Focus, in partnership with the Department for Transport and London TravelWatch, to gain an understanding of passengers' views on the internal design and passenger facilities as shown in the indicative design of new trains for the Thameslink routes from 2015.

The specific objectives were:

1. To gain an understanding of passengers' views about the design elements of the new passenger accommodation for the routes that will form part of the Thameslink Programme when complete in December 2015.
2. To obtain feedback from passengers regarding the specifics of the new designs set out by the Department for Transport and its advisors Arup and Interfleet Technology.
3. To engage passengers in a consulting role, specifically to advise on the ideal internal specification of the trains and the key on-board facilities, according to their own experiences and personal requirements.
4. To drill down into passengers' experiences of travelling on current FCC trains, and how this compares with the experience of travelling with other train operators and other modes of transport.
5. To understand preferences and trade-offs in terms of passenger expectations of the passenger accommodation design, and in particular focusing on the ratio of standing capacity to seating capacity.
6. To identify what is likely to be required of the design specification in terms of minimum needs (hygiene factors), acceptable standards and what would exceed expectations.

2. Sample and Methodology

A mixed methodology comprising focus groups and depth interviews was employed to meet the research objectives. The sample was constructed to represent a broad cross-section of rail passengers in order to represent the views of various user groups travelling at peak and off peak times. The sample encompassed commuters, leisure users, business users and mobility-impaired passengers, as well as those with hearing and vision impairments and wheelchair users. Inner and Outer sections of the Thameslink route were covered. The research included a spread of journey length, age and socio-economic group.

Fieldwork was conducted in Camden Town, Totteridge, Enfield, East Croydon, Cheam, Bedford and Brighton in February and March 2008. Full details of the sample structure are outlined below:

Thirteen group discussions, each lasting approximately 90 minutes:

- Two focus groups in Camden
 - Group one: commuters who travel in peak time from Luton, Harpenden and St Albans to London.
 - Group two: mix of business and leisure rail passengers who travel off peak from Luton, Harpenden and St Albans to London.
- Two focus groups in East Croydon
 - Group three: commuters who travel in peak time from East Croydon to London.
 - Group four: mix of business and leisure rail passengers who travel off peak from East Croydon to London.
- Two further focus groups in Camden
 - Group five: commuters who travel in peak time from Potters Bar, Foxton and Sandy to London.
 - Group six: mix of business and leisure rail passengers who travel off peak from Potters Bar, Foxton and Sandy to London.
- One group in Cheam
 - Group seven: commuters who travel from Wimbledon loop stations to London.
- Two groups in Enfield
 - Group eight: commuters travelling from north London stations on the Thameslink or Great Northern routes to London.

- Group nine: mix of business and leisure rail passengers who travel from north London stations on the Thameslink or Great Northern routes to London.
- Two groups in Totteridge
 - Group ten: rail passengers who travel to either Luton or Gatwick airport using FCC.
 - Group eleven: mobility-impaired passengers
- One group in Bedford
 - Group twelve: rail passengers who travel from Bedford, Flitwick and Harlington to London.
- One group in Brighton
 - Group thirteen: rail passengers who travel from Brighton, Hassocks, Preston Park and Burgess Hill to London.

Depth interviews

In addition to the 13 focus groups, nine depth interviews were conducted (60 minutes each) among the following passenger groups:

Depths 1,2,3: Passengers with impaired vision

Depths 4,5,6: Passengers with impaired hearing

Depths 7,8,9: Wheelchair users

These were conducted in London and the South East and reflected the user segments specified for the group discussions.

Additional recruitment criteria

All groups included:

- A mix of both sexes in each group and across the depths.
- A representation of age groups and lifestyles as appropriate to each of the passenger categories, e.g. mothers with (pre) school age children, retired/grandparents etc.
- A mix of social grades to reflect the profile of the local population and rail user groups (e.g. BC1; C2D).
- Frequent and infrequent rail users.
- Those who use season tickets and who purchase tickets daily.
- A representation of those with experience of First Class travel on these routes.
- A representation of those with experience of making journeys with luggage, buggies and bicycles.

Standard industry exclusions applied to ensure that the research did not include any respondents who work in market research, marketing, advertising, journalism and on this occasion anyone who has anything to do with the railways or public transport.

3. Main Findings

3.1 Context on existing rolling stock

Current rolling stock issues and experiences

Respondents were pleased to learn that improvements are scheduled for FCC services going forward as part of the wider Thameslink Programme to increase capacity on these routes. They feel they are currently travelling on old trains and are keen for the industry to look to other train operators and modes of transport which have set a new standard of comfort and safety for travellers.

Importantly, respondents did recognise that the design of passenger accommodation in the new Thameslink trains, as shown in the indicative designs presented, had been developed with them in mind as users and there was a sense that they are heading in the right direction. However, it was clear from comments and suggestions made during the research there is also room for improvement on the initial designs presented.

When asked to talk about current FCC experiences, respondents identified a number of potential improvement areas. Key issues spontaneously raised, and consistent across all of the passenger groups, were: a desire for a safer and more comfortable standing environment; the need for the most space-efficient seating configuration; a desire for more effective luggage storage; designated areas for disabled and mobility-impaired users; and improved cleanliness of the carriages.

Spontaneous positives

Off peak users across all user groups were the most forthcoming with positive comments in this area of discussion.

Comfortable journey: Off peak travellers in particular described their journey as comfortable on the basis that they almost always get a seat and space around their seat for bags and additional items. Similarly, morning peak travellers who start their journeys at or near the end of a line e.g. Bedford and Brighton also feel they travel comfortably, as they almost always get a seat.

"I start work after the main rush, after 10:00am so I tend to have a simple, easy journey and can stretch out."

[Enfield, Business/Leisure]

Not too noisy / overcrowded: This is a benefit common to off peak travellers who are used to travelling on less busy trains.

"You really notice the difference, even going into the city later if you are starting work late – all of a sudden there is a different feeling to the whole train, everyone has a seat and there is no shouting."

[Enfield, Commuter]

Clean / tidy: Respondents feel that the trains are being cleaned in preparation for their journeys. First thing in the morning and after the commuter rush are cited as particular times of the day people can see cleaners maintaining passenger accommodation areas.

Visible bins: Respondents clearly recall where the bins are within the carriages, and find it useful to know that they will be in the vestibule area where they are easily accessible and emptied regularly. This is becoming a recurring theme in much of the recent work conducted for Passenger Focus as consumers become increasingly conscious of recycling.

CCTV: There was some debate and uncertainty over whether there is CCTV on existing FCC trains. Many commented on feeling safer on seeing a camera in their carriage.

"You don't know if they are on, or if they are there as a deterrent, but it seems to work."

[Enfield, Commuter]

Community Support Officers: Reports of seeing an increased Community Support Officer presence on trains have led passengers to feel more secure, especially when travelling at night.

Choice of seat direction: This is commonly-regarded as an important issue as some respondents claimed to feel sick if they do not face the direction of travel.

Families can sit together: Travelling with friends or family and being able to sit together (around a table) is seen as a benefit of travelling by train at off peak times.

Guaranteed seat (off peak): As touched on above, knowing a seat is likely to be available, and possibly having room to spread out or put bags on surrounding seats enhances the overall impression of comfortable travel.

“Taking the kids into town on the train is easy, we can all sit together around a table, it’s nice.”
[Enfield, Business/Leisure]

Spontaneous negatives

Discussions about the negative issues experienced when travelling on FCC trains were particularly prevalent among commuters who feel that they pay the most yet experience the worst conditions. The issues for these passengers were consistent and centre around the following areas: experience in terms of crowding; security of self and personal belongings; cleanliness of passenger accommodation; and overall quality, maintenance and comfort of passenger accommodation. Experience of travelling on the trains on a daily basis and often in congested conditions meant that commuters looked to other train operators and modes of transport for inspiration as to how the onboard experience could be improved.

Comfort

Barriers to feeling comfortable in FCC passenger accommodation are as follows:

Lack of personal space: Experiencing a lack of personal space is an issue for commuters on two levels. First, when sitting down, their personal space is invaded by the bags and elbows of other passengers leaning over them to hold onto grab rails. Second, when standing up, they struggle to reach grab rails and often feel safe only when cushioned by other passengers.

“Sometimes you’re packed in so tightly you can hardly breathe, but at least it means you won’t fall over if the train stops suddenly!”
[Croydon, Commuter]

“Even if you are sitting down you get a backpack or elbow in your face.”
[Bedford, Commuter, Peak]

Nothing to hold onto: Certain parts within the carriage are noted as being particularly uncomfortable areas in which to stand because of lack of grab poles to hold onto. The vestibule area was particularly mentioned in this respect, making passengers feel unsafe if they have to stand there. In the saloon area, passengers are often reluctant to move down the carriage away from the vestibule area if they perceive there to be nothing for them to hold on to.

“I’m too short to reach the rails, and I won’t move down the carriage because it’s dangerous for me. People don’t understand this and get irate.”

[Bedford, Commuter]

No Air-conditioning: A final issue affecting respondents’ comfort onboard the FCC carriages relates to air-conditioning. This is a particular problem in the summer, and respondents expressed fears of a train breaking down mid-route with no air-conditioning (often based on previous experiences).

“There was one case when the train broke down, the air-conditioning was broken and I heard about people trying to uproot the chairs from the ground to break the windows.”

[Bedford, Commuter]

Heating: This was also identified as a problem area for respondents who feel that in the winter they cannot guarantee their journeys will be made in comfort as the heating is often not working or too hot, especially at floor level.

“Sometimes in the summer, the temperature on those trains can be unbearable.”

[Camden, Commuter]

“My shoes have melted sitting next to those floor heaters before.”

[Bedford, Commuter]

Security

Travelling after 19:00: Frequent concerns were expressed for both personal safety and personal belongings after this time. Respondents feel that there is a reduced staff presence and more likelihood of anti-social behaviour by youths on trains.

No CCTV: As mentioned above, there was some uncertainty over whether there is CCTV onboard FCC trains and whether it is monitored. Particularly in the evenings, passengers expressed a need for the reassurance that having CCTV is claimed to provide.

No staff presence: There was a consistent feeling across the passenger groups represented that there is a lower staff presence on trains now than at any time in the past. On Driver Only Operation services, passengers have an increased need for other staff presence, either in the form of staff serving refreshments, Police Community Support Officers or ticket inspectors.

“You can arrive at a station, board the train and arrive into London and not see a member of staff the whole time, this is a new thing.”

[Enfield, Commuter]

Luggage: The final issue relating to security on FCC trains concerns luggage. In particular, unattended luggage being left by the door is a cause for concern. In addition to the security risk, luggage brought into the saloon area and placed on seats or in the gangway is also a source of frustration, especially at peak times.

“I prefer to stay with my luggage for security reasons but I’m always conscious that I’m blocking the door for other passengers.”

[Brighton, Leisure User]

Cleanliness

Dirty after rush hour: Respondents who travel during the shoulder peak feel that once the rush hour is over, the passenger accommodation is not cleaned and maintained for their use.

“I notice that when I get on around 10:00am there will be newspapers, coffee stains and rubbish leftover from the morning.”

[Enfield, Business/Leisure]

Dirty seats / windows: Respondents often questioned how regularly (or whether at all) seats and windows are cleaned.

Broken / worn seats: Respondents described regular experiences of having to fix or rearrange seats before they can be sat in, or experiencing worn seats which are uncomfortable to sit in.

“Is it just me or are there always loads of broken seats on these trains?”

[Camden, Business/Leisure]

Toilets always smell: This was felt to be a problem for older FCC trains especially. In the worst instances respondents claimed that the

smell could affect the entire carriage rather than being contained to the toilet itself.

“There are some FCC trains, the older ones, where I deliberately avoid carriages with a toilet in because I know I will be nauseous the whole journey home.”
[Bedford, Commuter]

Accommodation

Seat width: Passengers often felt that seats fail to provide them with enough personal space. As well as feeling too narrow, this problem is exacerbated by the lack of armrests and head restraints.

“The seats are too narrow to have any personal space. I always seem to sit next to someone who encroaches into my area.”
[Camden, Commuter]

Seat format: Respondents across all passenger groups represented often felt that space is not used efficiently within FCC carriages. Rows of three seats side by side are a major driver of dissatisfaction in this respect. A common experience is that one person tends to sit in the aisle seat, and another in the window seat making a small middle seat available, which is often laden with bags. Furthermore, seating configurations with two seats facing each other can make some passengers feel uneasy (e.g. because people find themselves touching knees or not knowing where to look).

“I’d rather stand than sit in a row of three seats because you can’t get in and out of them without bumping into other people.”
[Camden, Commuter]

“The three seats opposite each other are too cramped and you have to sit with your knees touching.”
[Croydon, Commuter]

First class: This is an area of contention, especially during peak times when the standard passenger accommodation is full and people are forced to stand while there is unused capacity in First Class.

“There’s no need for 1st Class on short journeys when that space could be used to seat 30 more people.”
[Camden, Commuter]

Other Issues

Lack of onboard information: If the train is delayed on route, respondents do not feel that enough information is passed onto them about the reason for the delay and the implications for journey times. This concern is exacerbated in the case of older rolling stock without dot matrix displays.

“Even if the driver doesn’t know anything, we should be told that.”
[Bedford, Commuter]

Access with buggies: The step up between the station platform and the carriage door can be difficult to negotiate with a buggy. Once onboard the train, there is no designated area for buggies.

Safety of children boarding: This is a concern for mothers boarding with toddlers. There is limited access to grab rails at a low enough level to make boarding completely safe for toddlers.

“One time, someone got in the way of my daughter boarding and she was nearly left on her own on the platform.”
[Airport User]

“I can remember being on my own, trying to board the children and luggage on the way to the airport, it was very difficult.”
[Airport User]

Bikes: Respondents feel that there is no visible policing of bikes brought onto the train during peak periods. Cyclists also complained there is no dedicated space for their bikes to be stored safely and securely once on board.

3.2 Priority Areas and Overcrowding

Current issues:

In evaluating key priority areas in terms of future train design it is important to bear in mind a contextual issue that was universally recognised across the sample. Namely, that the key priority for all train users is to be able to board their intended train and to do so safely. All respondents also agree that passenger safety should be a primary design consideration that cannot be compromised under any circumstances. This was a constant theme that emerged during the evaluation of the initial design concepts presented for research.

It is important to draw a distinction between the macro issues which are generally challenging for the rail industry as a whole and micro issues which relate to the onboard journey experience. The macro issues raised by respondents regarding the need for more trains per hour, longer trains, re-designed carriage interiors and the need to be able to stand more comfortably were encouragingly felt to be addressed by the Thameslink Programme and the design prototypes.

The micro issues included a desire for an alternative seat configuration including more face to back seating; always having something to hold onto; more flexible seating options (e.g. tip-up and perch seats); and carriages which cater specifically for particular user groups (e.g. disabled passengers or those travelling with luggage to airports).

Regardless of whether they are travelling in the peak or not, users have concerns that stem from their own experiences. Commuters are most familiar with the issues being considered as part of this research as they are the most frequent users and therefore likely to be most affected. There were two main strands of thought expressed by commuters:

First, some were dissatisfied with the overall service and travelling experience. Others accept that this experience is the price they pay for working in London, but are glad to see that major changes are planned.

In terms of how these frustrations manifest themselves, the main theme is perhaps unsurprisingly that of overcrowding – a sense that the commuter trains are constantly running at, or over, capacity. Passengers who often have to stand describe feeling unsafe due to the lack of sufficient grab rails within a designated safe and comfortable standing area.

Leisure and off peak users do not experience the same problems, but have particular issues that are important to them, such as travelling with children, buggies, bikes etc. These specific issues are all addressed in detail in later sections of the report.

Seating and Safe Standing

The current carriage design is felt to contribute to high passenger stress levels particularly in peak times. Passengers see unsafe and uncomfortable standing as the biggest negative contributor to their overall journey experience and believe this is the number one priority to be addressed in the next generation of trains. Respondents drew on a wide range of examples across different train operators, modes of transport and international transport operators to inform what they would like their ideal travelling experience to be.

Current Problems and Issues

Problems highlighted related to the perceived inability of the network to cope with the current demand placed on it, best illustrated by overcrowding during peak periods. These issues were commonly felt to be the consequence of not running enough trains at the busiest times, exacerbated by insufficient carriages on those trains.

Inside the carriages, the seating format was often felt to be inefficiently designed, particularly three plus two seating. Rows of three seats side by side were universally criticised as being uncomfortable to sit in and for contributing to the problem of narrow gangways, which in turn makes access through the carriages difficult.

Therefore, many passengers felt that they were often unable to sit or stand comfortably and more importantly that their safety was compromised, particularly so when it was necessary to stand in the vestibule area.

“I dread to think what would happen if there was ever an accident on this line, the results would be critical.”

[Bedford, Commuter]

“You end up with people bunched around the doors because they don’t want to get stuck in the aisle and not be able to get out.”

[Enfield, Commuter]

“You have to use other people to cushion you in or else you would tumble, it’s not safe and it’s too busy.”

[Bedford, Commuter]

3.3 The Thameslink Programme

The Thameslink Programme was introduced to respondents in all focus groups and depth interviews as below.

- The Thameslink Programme is a £3.5 billion investment by the government to provide more capacity to meet existing and future passenger demand.
- It will operate 12 coach trains from Bedford to Brighton, as opposed to four and eight coach trains.

- 12 coach trains will operate on the Royston, Letchworth, Sandy, Biggleswade, Hitchin, Stevenage and Potters Bar lines to central London, London Bridge, Gatwick Airport and beyond.
- 24 trains will run per hour through London at peak times.
- Rebuilding work will be carried out at stations including London Bridge, Farringdon and Blackfriars.
- The work will be completed in phases. From December 2012, 12 coach trains will run between Bedford and Brighton and by 2015, some Great Northern services will be linked into Thameslink and run through central London.
- Brand new trains will start running in 2012, with the full new fleet in service from December 2015.

It was consciously not highlighted that the Thameslink Programme involves the permanent withdrawal of services between Farringdon and Moorgate, affecting Barbican and Moorgate stations, to avoid distracting respondents from the core research purpose of considering the rolling stock issues.

Passenger Reactions to the Thameslink Programme

The majority of respondents welcomed the investment being made through the Thameslink Programme. They recognised that there is an intention to improve FCC services as a whole and welcomed this news. However, there were also some negative reactions, particularly in relation to the anticipated disruption caused by engineering works.

Positive reactions

Respondents were surprised at the scale of the proposed investment in FCC services and the Thameslink route. They recognise that the service is much in need of improvement and are pleased to see the extent of forward thinking about how to take into account passengers' needs.

Specifically, they appreciated that there is a recognition that overcrowding is a key concern for passengers, especially for commuters, and that the new train designs are attempting to address this.

Additionally, the news that there will be longer trains after 2012 was met with surprise and relief. It was felt that the proposed improvements would resolve overcrowding problems, especially in the short term, as far as respondents requirements are concerned.

Negative reactions

Although positive reactions to the Thameslink Programme outweigh the negative reactions, there are concerns regarding the completion of the Programme itself and the extent to which it will benefit passengers in the long-term at a number of levels:

- fear that passengers will pay for the Thameslink Programme through an increase in fares.
- concern about the level of disruption the Programme will cause and the extent to which passengers will be inconvenienced during construction works.
- concern that it will take until 2015 to complete and whether the new services and trains will be able to cope with the level of demand at that time or in subsequent years.
- unanswered questions at this stage about the infrastructure and whether stations such as Moorgate* can cope with more trains and longer trains.

* As mentioned above, the fact that Moorgate services will cease had not been specifically drawn to participants' attention.

3.4 Reactions to New Design Concepts

Overview

Overall, there was a positive response to the design concepts for the new trains, as they were felt to address passengers' core concerns of overcrowding and the need to stand safely and comfortably. Respondents felt that the carriages had been designed with their own needs in mind and were pleased to learn that their input into the process will help inform further design decisions.

The designs performed consistently well across all focus groups and depth interviews with similar positives and negatives being raised.

However, respondents also expressed mild disappointment that they were viewing what were perceived to be modified designs of train carriages they were already very familiar with. This caused some to question whether the new trains were a sufficient step forward from current designs*.

*Note: the visual images shown to respondents used a Class 319 interior (the existing First Capital Connect Thameslink rolling stock) as the base on which the initial design concepts were illustrated, so this comment is entirely understandable.

Spontaneous positive aspects

Two main advantages should be highlighted here. The interior space within the carriage was felt to be the biggest standout change. Respondents felt that the designs showed a more comfortable space to board and travel in. Particular areas things mentioned included the vestibule area and gangway, which was expected to ensure easier movement around the carriage.

The second area generating a positive response was the seating. It was felt that the seating configuration shown created more flexibility at busy times. The inclusion of perch seats contributed to this overall perception which encouraged respondents to feel that there will be an increased likelihood of standing/perching in relative comfort.

Interior space

Vestibule area

Positive responses were driven by the feeling that the whole area surrounding the door has been opened up and is therefore more spacious. Respondents compared this with the design of the existing trains they use, stating that it can be difficult to board trains if passengers are standing in the vestibule area.

The new design was felt to be similar to the vestibule area found on some London Underground carriages, which were expected to have been designed to allow easy and rapid boarding.

Easier movement: The new designs are felt to have opened up the interior of the carriages up for easier movement. Respondents described how they are reluctant, at present, to move further into the carriages for fear of getting stuck and not being able to disembark before the doors closed. The new designs created a sense that there would be greater freedom to move around, even at peak times.

“There’s a lot more space in the door area. It would be easier to get on and off and there’s more room for standing.”

[Wimbledon Loop]

“That’s better because it’s a pain when you are travelling with a buggy so it’s good to have more space for them.”

[Croydon, Business/Leisure]

Wider aisles: Respondents spoke positively about the aisles being wider, and expected this to reduce the number of people standing in the vestibule area at peak times.

The new designs featuring pictures of passengers on board encouraged respondents to feel that the aisles were more suited to the variety of user groups travelling at different times of the day. They could envisage having a buggy with them, but still allowing others to pass through the carriages with ease.

“You can see in that picture with the buggy that you could easily get past it.”

[Enfield, Business/Leisure]

Seating

More seats available: After respondents were introduced to the Thameslink Programme, they were informed of the number of standing and seating places to be available on board a 12 coach train and an eight coach train. This news was positively received across the sample.

“So there will be 100 more seats on a train, that’s an improvement.”

[Enfield, Commuter]

More flexibility: Traditionally, people have been used to trains with fixed seats. However, they have become more accustomed to new carriages on London Underground trains which use perch and tip-up seats, allowing space to be used more efficiently at different times of the day.

“Underground trains massively increase capacity by having those cushioned pads you lean against which are good for space maximisation.”

[Camden, Commuter]

“Pull down seats wouldn’t take up any more space but it would be more comfortable.”

[Wimbledon Loop]

Perch seats: Respondents focussed on the perch seat as an essential inclusion in the design of the new carriages. The main benefit of the perch seat will be to provide another option for people to travel comfortably when they can’t get a fixed seat.

"I look for those on the tube, I don't mind them at all, it means I can stay by the door and sort of sit down."

[Enfield, Commuter]

"It means that if there are no seats, at least you know there are more options than just standing."

[Enfield, Business/Leisure]

No rows of three seats side by side: This was another standout change respondents noticed with regard to seating. There was strong support for not having three seats side by side, i.e. three seats one side of the aisle and two seats the other side (3+2 seating). This was expected to remove the awkwardness that can occur with personal space, particularly when getting in or out of the train.

"It will be much easier to sit by the window if there is already someone in the aisle, much less cramped."

[Bedford, Commuter]

Spontaneous negative aspects

This section is concerned with key areas for improvement on the initial designs, as identified by respondents, rather than strong negatives emerging or a rejection of the designs.

Safe standing: This is the key area of improvement to be identified from responses to the new designs. Although respondents recognised the benefits of the more spacious interiors, they didn't feel there were enough things to hold onto to make them feel safe when standing. In this respect, passengers claimed to feel particularly vulnerable in the vestibule and saloon areas.

"What are we supposed to hold on to? There may be more space, but it's more dangerous."

[Bedford, Commuter, Peak]

"You need something to hang onto to make it more secure for people standing up."

[Camden, Business/Leisure]

Seat format and density: Respondents felt that space was not being optimised due to the layout of fixed seating. London Underground and London Buses have incorporated more flexible seating options on their vehicles, particularly tip-up and perch seats which give passengers the option to pull the seats down in off peak hours or stand during busier periods.

"I like those different kinds of seats, more options is good and that way it can be geared towards different times of day."

[Bedford, Commuter]

"Some of the tube lines have that little padded thing you can rest back on."

[Croydon, Business/Leisure]

Luggage / storage: The new designs raised issues concerning luggage storage, as there appeared to be no designated space for it, despite the route serving Gatwick and Luton airports and the Eurostar terminal at St. Pancras International. This was raised as an important issue for many user groups as luggage would have to be left unsupervised in the door area or in the aisle. The overhead storage racks did not look big enough to accommodate large suitcases, which was a further source of frustration.

"Where is the space for luggage, I can just imagine people still putting it on the seat next to them."

[Bedford, Commuter]

"Surely these trains that are servicing airports need to have more space for luggage than it's showing here."

[Camden, Commuter]

Reactions to Vestibule, Gangway and Saloon configuration

The next section of this report will take in turn the new designs for the vestibule, saloon and gangway areas and address respondents' comments about areas for improvement. The biggest area of concern is the lack of grab poles throughout the whole carriage. London Buses and London Underground trains were frequently cited as good models for comparison purposes in this respect

Vestibule area

The vestibule area epitomises much that is felt to be positive about the initial designs. However, the key area for improvement will be making this area into a space that people feel safe and comfortable standing in.

"It feels like the whole area needs to have railings so no matter what height you are you can always hold on."

[Bedford, Commuter, Peak]

Access / egress: Respondents feel that there has been a marked improvement in this area. They feel that the area is more spacious and that they would have more personal space as a result. It was expected to make boarding and disembarking much easier and quicker due to the increased space surrounding the door.

Huge standing area: This is seen to meet the objectives of the Thameslink Programme as far as increasing the ratio of standing to sitting passengers is concerned as it was seen as a suitable area in which to increase standing capacity. It is felt to offer an improvement on the space currently available on other train operators and London Underground trains.

“That’s a big improvement. It would get rid of the funnel effect that you get on the current trains”
[Brighton, Commuter]

Perch seats: Interestingly, this was felt to be a positive step in the right direction by all research groups. There is universal familiarity with perch seats across other modes of transport and people feel that there is a benefit to being able to lean on something if a proper seat is not available.

“I like those padded things you can lean against like they have on the tube.”
[Croydon, Commuter]

Overhead storage: There is a sense that there is more overhead storage in the new designs than on the current trains. The minimum requirement is that it will easily accommodate a laptop bag. The ideal would be closer to the dimensions of an airline cabin storage facility.

“The overhead storage looks too high for me to be able to reach and not deep enough to take anything bigger than a laptop.”
[Wimbledon Loop]

Ineffective rail: The rail along the edge of the luggage rack is felt to be inadequate as a grab rail designed to aid standing. Many respondents find it too high to reach comfortably and dislike the idea of having to reach over people, or having their personal space invaded if they are sitting down.

“Is that a rail underneath the storage shelf? I couldn’t reach that so it would be no good for me .”
[Bedford, Commuter]

Nothing to hold: the vestibule area is seen to be dangerous on the basis that there are not enough grab rails. This is the key criticism of the initial designs that was raised by respondents.

Gangway area

The gangway area is seen as much-improved accommodation for passengers standing and passing in the aisles. It is clear to respondents that the designs have taken into account their current concerns regarding comfortable standing and the need to pass through this area with ease.

Wide doorway: The connecting doors are visibly different and the new designs enhance the overall impression of additional space.

Sliding doors: Doors were not visible, but are assumed to be sliding / electric. This is universally preferred over older 'slam' style doors. It is also seen as an additional security feature to be able to see through the train. However, if the intention is to have no doors at all, concern was expressed about noise from wheels/track; increased potential for 'maurauding youths' to run amok along the whole train; and a perceived risk that if a train braked hard or was involved in an accident passengers could be thrown into the next coach.

"That open design would be better because those doors can be difficult to negotiate when you are moving through the train."

[Mobility Impaired]

Wider aisles: There is considerable improvement here over the current FCC trains. The space is seen to have been created by the removal of the rows of three seats side by side. It is felt that the wider aisles will benefit passengers by enabling them to stand in more comfort, and make it easier to move down the carriage when it is full.

"That looks much better than the current trains because it looks a lot wider between the seats."

[Camden, Commuter]

"The two plus two seat formation is much better and I like the single seat at the end."

[Mobility Impaired]

Carriage access: This is seen to have been improved as a consequence of removing the zig-zag effect created by the current 3+2 seat arrangement. This is expected to enable easier access for those travelling with buggies, luggage and children. Additionally, it could also allow wheelchair users to choose to sit in areas of the train that are currently not accessible to them.

“That looks much wider and I might be able to get my chair through there so I could sit with my friends instead of next to the toilet.”

[Wheelchair User]

Bigger windows: Some had the positive impression that the windows are bigger. However, this was often coupled with concerns that there seem to be no windows that open. While it is assumed that the new trains will have air-conditioning, there are fears over the consequences of it not working in summer, particularly if it is not possible to open windows.

“I’m pleased to see that the windows don’t open because that means that these trains will have air conditioning or climate control.”

[Camden, Commuter]

Single seats at the end of each coach: Many passengers recognised that this would be a desirable position if travelling alone, especially at peak times. However, most considered it to be an unnecessary luxury and an inefficient use of space that is contrary to the overall design objectives.

“Why would you just put one seat there, there is nothing to hold onto so you couldn’t stand in the space around it.”

[Enfield, Business/Leisure]

Insufficient grab poles: Experience of grab poles running throughout carriages in London Underground trains and London buses has established a design precedent for trains. Providing more grab poles at more regular intervals will promote a feeling of being able to stand safely.

“I can still see myself having to lean over people, so it’s not really much of an improvement.”

[Enfield, Commuter]

No hand holds on seat tops: In relation to points raised about the lack of grab poles, respondents would also like to see ‘hand holds’ on the top of aisle seats. This would mean that if the overhead pole was difficult to reach, easy access to a hand hold would still ensure safe standing.

“Couldn’t they put grab rails on the back of the seats so that everyone could hold onto them.”
[Bedford, Commuter]

Saloon area

Comments here were focused on the amount and style of fixed seating, which was felt to be an inefficient use of the interior space available. The lack of grab poles was again highlighted as a potential threat to passenger safety.

No rows of three seats: The benefit of the additional space created by removing the third seat was, universally, felt to outweigh the disadvantage of losing a seat.

“They’ve got rid of those rows of three seats to create more space.”
[Wimbledon Loop]

Inadequate lighting: Although difficult to tell from the stimulus materials provided, the strip lighting was often expected to be inadequate.

“It looks darker in the new designs than it is in the current ones.”
[Mobility Impaired]

“It looks a bit dingy. I would prefer the environment to be brighter”
[Croydon, Commuter]

Drab colours: This added to the perception of the new designs feeling very familiar and exacerbated concerns regarding the efficacy of the lighting. Respondents were expecting a fresher and brighter colour scheme as part of a new train.

“I take it these are the corporate colours then, they are very dark, too dark.”
[Bedford, Commuter]

No luggage racks: This was identified as a problem for passengers travelling to airports and St Pancras International. The strength of feeling on this issue was illustrated by the fact that most were happy to sacrifice an occasional row of seats in order to accommodate what was regarded as an essential design feature.

Tapered seat backs: Respondents see this as a lower priority than some of the other issues raised. However, tapered seat backs appear to give the impression that the seats are narrower than they actually are, which affects overall perceptions of passenger comfort.

“I don’t like the way the seats taper, it makes them look narrow and uncomfortable. They should be more rectangular.”

[Brighton, Commuter]

“Those seats look uncomfortable, as if they would be pushing your head forward.”

[Camden, Commuter]

No head or arm rests: There was a common view that the provision of head and arm rests provide the dual advantage of enhancing levels of comfort and establishing a greater sense of personal space than it is possible to achieve without them.

“I like being able to block my seat off, that way it’s definitely my space.”

[Bedford, Commuter]

Low seats – no room for luggage: Some felt that the seats appeared to be too low to the floor for an average sized person to be able to sit in comfort. Respondents suggested that raising seats would address this concern and at the same time create additional luggage storage space beneath.

Low density seating: Many thought that the seating configuration appears to be contrary to the overarching design objective. Respondents across all research groups spontaneously suggested airline-style seating as the simplest way to maximise the chances of getting a seat while still giving a large area for standing. Although they had previously identified the ability for a family group to sit together round a table as a current positive, even off peak users felt that this was likely to represent the most pragmatic solution for trains that should be designed primarily to meet the needs of commuters.

“Airline style seats would be better and I’d rather look at the back of a seat than some bloke’s knees.”

[Camden, Business/Leisure]

“These seats are good for a family bit I use the train for commuting, not travelling with my family.”

[Camden, Commuter]

‘Outer’ Route Issues

Passengers making the longest journeys recognise the reality of increasing demands on the rail network. Although they have their own frustrations related to their particular experiences on FCC trains, they are often more sanguine than those making much shorter journeys.

An advantage of travelling from ‘outer’ routes is that most are able to get a seat in the morning peak. There was some initial resistance therefore to the proposed increase in the ratio of standing to seating space as some were concerned that they will lose a perk that they enjoy at the start of their day. These concerns were allayed to some extent on exposure to the news that their trains would be longer in future.

These respondents recognised that the new trains need to accommodate future demand. They accept that efficient use of space is the best way to achieve this and look to other modes of transport for inspiration. Even on outer routes, airline-style seating was felt to be the optimal solution and, if standing was necessary, then it should be comfortable and safe.

“Surely the more seats they can fit in the better because then everyone has more chance of getting a seat at some point in their journey.”

[Brighton, Commuter]

‘Inner’ Route Issues

There were mixed views from inner route users. The majority of these travellers board the train in the morning as it nears full capacity and often will not get a seat. Although not overjoyed with this situation, they tend to regard it as a consequence of their lifestyle choice to live and work in and around London. The majority, probably through conditioning, simply didn’t think standing for short distances was an issue. These commuters welcomed the proposals to upgrade the services and regarded most aspects of the Thameslink Programme as major improvements.

“I have a relatively short commute so I don’t mind standing as long as I’m not crushed like a sardine in a can.”

[Camden, Commuter]

However, there was a second group of commuters using inner routes (those using the Wimbledon/Sutton loop services) who had extremely negative mindsets and were less prepared to see the benefits of the proposals. They expected to pay via fare increases for the upgrades and anticipated considerable inconvenience to be caused by the inevitable engineering works. They saw proposals to increase standing space as the thin end of the wedge and thought that this should be unnecessary given the plans to provide longer trains.

“I know what will happen, we will end up paying more for our tickets and having to put up with years of engineering works.”
[Wimbledon Loop]

“I can’t see why there has to be fewer seats if the trains are going to be longer. Where are all these extra passengers expected to come from?”
[Croydon, Commuter]

3.5 Specification and Facility Specifics

Overview

This next section will provide a more thorough appraisal of the areas of importance to respondents. It will look in more detail at specific issues e.g. provision of grab poles, seating and luggage and expand on respondents’ views and suggestions of how to improve the proposed design concepts.

Most of the features addressed in this section have been evaluated then summarised at three levels:

1. Minimum expectations: These are essentially mandatory requirements and should be regarded as hygiene factors.
2. Meet expectations: Things that are nice to have and will make a difference to the quality of the journey experience.
3. Exceed expectations: Key drivers of satisfaction that have the potential to delight if included.

Grab Poles: The new designs have an inadequate number of grab poles. This is a key concern for passengers and represented a key barrier to support for the design concepts and the proposal to increase the ratio of standing space. London Buses and London Underground trains are felt to provide these in a way that makes passengers feel safe and secure over the course of their journey if they are standing up. Specific reference was made to the Docklands Light Railway grab 'ring'.

"They should look at the most recent London buses. They have loads of things to hold on to if you are standing up."

[Croydon, Business/Leisure]

"Standing would be a problem, especially if you are short, because there's nothing to hold on to."

[Camden, Commuter]

The minimum expectation is that there are enough grab poles for all standing passengers, guaranteeing passenger safety.

It would meet expectations if the grab poles copy existing models found on London Underground, Docklands Light Railway and London Buses.

It would exceed passengers' expectations if grab poles were available and accessible for all heights of travellers. Comfort would be maximised if the poles were padded and soft to touch.

Seat Types: Airline-style seating was consistently felt to be the most pragmatic solution for the next generation of trains, in conjunction with the removal of rows of three seats side by side.

"Getting rid of the rows of three seats is definitely the right decision."

[Croydon, Commuter]

"I always try and get a Southern Train, they have airline seats so you have more chance of slotting into one of those ."

[Bedford, Commuter]

Airline-style seating is felt to be more consistent with the overall design objective of increasing passenger-carrying capacity. People feel they will have more chance of getting a seat in the peaks if seating is of this layout.

Seats which result in passengers facing each other also generate negative responses as people feel they have limited personal space, and often find it embarrassing when knees or feet touch.

The facing seats tend to be preferred by off peak users as they are more convenient for family groups and others who like to be able to spread out across the four seat area when the train is not busy.

"I wouldn't want all airline seats but then I'm not using the trains for commuting every day."

[Croydon, Business/Leisure]

"People with a hearing impairment prefer to sit opposite each other, especially if you need to sign."

[Hearing Impaired]

There was an overwhelmingly positive reaction to the variety of seat types which will offer greater flexibility and comfort for the next generation of trains:

Tip-up seat: Felt to offer passengers the best of both worlds as it is a flexible solution. It was also perceived to fit with the wider design objective to create more space and accommodate more standing passengers in the carriages.

"I'd be happy if all the seats were tip-up; just think how much space that would create."

[Camden, Commuter]

"The flip-up seats would be a more flexible way to create more space during peak times."

[Wimbledon Loop]

Perch seat: There is widespread familiarity with this style of seating from London Underground and other train operators. They serve to enhance standing comfort and therefore feel like a sensible inclusion. However, it is important that they are situated at a height that is accessible to the majority.

"I think the perch seats are a great idea but can they be lower than they are on the tube because I'm too small to get my bum on them."

[Camden, Commuter]

Folding seat: There is little awareness of this style of seating and assumed to be specifically for wheelchair users. However, overall the response to them was positive and there would be few objections to including these.

"I haven't seen that type of seat before but it's sensible to include them if they accommodate a wheelchair."

[Croydon, Commuter]

The minimum expectation is that there is priority seating for those with the most need.

Passengers' expectations would be met if there was an efficient use of space with regard to seating styles and configuration.

Expectations would be exceeded if a seat could be guaranteed for every journey.

On-Board Information: This is an important aspect of train travel for many in the sample, and respondents were quick to pick up on its apparent exclusion from the design concepts displayed. Currently, on-board information is felt to be largely inadequate on FCC trains. Therefore, the quality, availability and reliability of information is a source of frustration for passengers on FCC trains and with other train operators.

Information is felt to be haphazard and in the form of a tannoy announcement from the driver, which can either not happen at all, be inaudible or insufficient to meet passengers' needs. The newer trains are seen as preferable as they have dot matrix visual displays. This is considered a much more useful way of delivering information to passengers. The ideal situation would be a combination of verbal and visual information which has the ability to be updated as things change in real time over the course of the journey.

"The tannoy announcements are either inaudible or so loud that they are deafening."

[Camden, Commuter]

"I've seen a really simple but genius idea which is to give you the approximate time the train will arrive at each station."

[Camden, Business/Leisure]

"The displays with the information running across are excellent."

[Wimbledon Loop]

The minimum expectation is for onboard information to follow that provided on other train operators, London Underground and London Buses, both visual and audible.

Expectations would be met if real time journey information was provided. In addition, this should be synchronised with information displayed at stations.

Expectations would be exceeded if added value information could be provided such as arrival times, details of future engineering works, real time running information about adjacent lines (including London Underground).

Storage Space: Dedicated and safe storage capacity is felt to be an essential requirement for the next generation of trains. There is a common consensus that the current provision is inadequate and moreover that FCC compares unfavourably to other train operators in this respect.

For airport users, key requirements consistently identified include a dedicated space for luggage and not just space near the door in the vestibule areas. In addition, luggage must be visible to allay security concerns and ideally this would also apply to items stored in the overhead racks. The Southern trains' racks inside the doors are felt to be the optimal solution, and respondents are willing to lose fixed seating to make room for this addition.

The new designs appear to have luggage storage space in the vestibule area only which is widely acknowledged as a known source of frustration for other passengers.

"I was on a Virgin train recently, you get on and there is somewhere to store your luggage immediately."

[Airport User]

Airport shuttles and airport express trains were cited as ideals in this respect, even though this was recognised as an unfair comparison to draw as these services are designed specifically to cater for people with large amounts of luggage. Principles that could be adopted, however, include dedicated areas and seats that face the luggage space for added reassurance and security.

"Thinking about the airport shuttles, you sit opposite your luggage so you can see it the whole time."

[Airport User]

“Trains that stop at airports need to cater for heavy luggage that can’t be lifted into overhead spaces.”
[Camden, Business/Leisure]

One idea popular with the focus group of regular airport travellers was to raise the height of the fixed seats and create storage space underneath the seats. This group also suggested that the existing First Class accommodation could be removed and put to better use as additional luggage space.

As well as providing storage space for luggage, dedicated areas were also felt to be necessary for buggies and bikes. It is felt that the bigger vestibule area and wider aisles do go some way to meeting these needs.

Minimum expectations are to provide a luggage storage facility which meets the safety and security needs of passengers.

Expectations would be met if adequate luggage racks and overhead storage facilities were provided.

Expectations would be exceeded if a dedicated area for airport luggage, buggies and bikes was provided.

Toilets: there are no current issues regarding the number of toilets onboard, only the usual issues regarding cleanliness and being out of order that is a consistent feature of research of this nature.

For peak users, the toilets are a low priority issue, and not a major need area on a day to day basis. Nevertheless, commuters would not be content with the absence of toilets and expect them in every other carriage for use in an emergency.

“I’ve never used a toilet on a train but there should be at least two on each eight carriage train and ideally not next to each other.”
[Camden, Commuter]

Off peak users see toilets as a more salient priority, especially when travelling with families and young children. They also recognise that their provision is essential on late night services for passengers who have been drinking. However, they still do not feel that more toilets are needed than at present and having one toilet every other carriage is thought to be acceptable.

“There are never enough toilets, especially when you want one after you’ve had a few beers.”

[Croydon, Business/Leisure]

“I think there should be one toilet per carriage, especially if you travel with children.”

[Camden, Business/Leisure]

The minimum expectation is that toilets are available, working and clean.

It would meet passenger expectations if there were enough toilets onboard to meet demand and for some of them to have disabled access.

It would exceed expectations if all the toilets onboard were always in working order and clean!

First Class: It is difficult to conclude from this research how the question of First Class accommodation should be addressed in the design of the new trains – the sample had a heavy bias towards Standard passengers. It is therefore felt that whether First Class should be provided is a policy decision to be taken with a number of issues in mind, including: the numbers currently travelling First Class; the extent to which removal of First Class would allow additional passengers to be seated and/or stand in relative comfort; relative earnings from the alternative uses; whether on a Driver Only Operated railway First Class can be ‘policed’, particularly on inner routes.

“You don’t see anyone sitting in First Class, ever.”

[Camden, Commuter]

“I think those seats and that space should be for everyone.”

[Croydon, Commuter]

Air Conditioning: Reactions to air-conditioning are strongly polarised, but overall respondents find it hard to argue against its inclusion in the next generation of trains.

Those in favour of air-conditioning felt it to be essential on commuter routes during hot summers. They claimed it was becoming a standard feature of public transport even to the extent that some are aware that London Underground have considered it. As we have found in previous research, none of those in favour of air-conditioning were concerned about the environmental impact of its energy consumption.

“Air-conditioning is better in principle but the most important thing is for the temperature to be regulated.”

[Brighton, Commuter]

“The trains have got to have air-conditioning and it has to always work.”

[Wimbledon Loop]

“Sometime air-conditioning can be too cold. We know they will never get it right but at least they could make an attempt”

[Camden, Commuter]

The arguments against air-conditioning centre around fears that there will be no opportunity to open windows, especially on occasions when the air-conditioning is out of order. Additionally, some respondents reject the concept as they react badly (in health terms) to air-conditioning generally, while others were concerned about being too cold based on experiences in other situations, especially in the USA.

“Some people do have problems with air-conditioning, they get headaches and things like that.”

[Camden, Business/Leisure]

“In America the buses and shops are always freezing cold.”

[Camden, Commuter]

A minimum expectation is for a comfortable ambient temperature that adjusts according to the weather outside.

It will be difficult to meet expectations of all passengers given that views are strongly polarised.

It would exceed expectations if trains could have air-conditioning and windows that could be opened as required.

Personal Security: This is a priority area for all passengers and therefore essential to ensure that needs are met as an integral design element of the new trains.

CCTV is regarded as a standard part of train equipment, but is insufficient on its own to allay concerns regarding personal security. Although some reservations about 'Big Brother' and privacy were raised, these were always outweighed by the perceived advantages of having cameras on trains.

*"I think cameras are an essential safety feature on the new trains."
[Mobility Impaired]*

*"Unfortunately there is still some disabled targeted crime so CCTV is a
must"
[Wheelchair User]*

*"CCTV is like having a mobile phone, it's reassuring to know it's there if
you need it."
[Camden, Commuter]*

*"CCTV is important when trains are quiet, not when they're busy."
[Croydon, Business/Leisure]*

British Transport Police and train operator staff will need to provide additional reassurance at stations as well as on board the trains themselves.

The minimum expectation is for any passenger to feel safe enough to be able to make any journey at any time on the network.

It would meet passenger expectations if CCTV is present in every carriage and there is a visible train staff presence.

It would exceed expectations if there was also an increased presence of British Transport Police on the trains, especially at night.

At Seat Facilities: Passenger views regarding tables and catering are determined primarily by the length and nature of the journeys most frequently made.

Tables are not widely regarded as a key priority among most user groups. However, if being considered as part of the train design, being able to accommodate a laptop should be regarded as a fundamental design principle. Having four seats around a table is considered a luxury by most, especially on relatively short journeys that are typical

on FCC routes. Furthermore, this was felt to be at odds with the overall objective of maximising space available.

"We don't have those big tables on trains at the moment and I wouldn't want them."

[Camden, Commuter]

"Having airline style seats would solve the problem of whether to have tables or not because everyone has one in the back of the seat in front."

[Camden, Commuter]

"I can't really see the benefit of having tables on these trains."

[Wimbledon Loop]

The small side tables that feature in some current FCC trains were often criticised for not fulfilling any useful purpose, and cup holders were requested on the basis of enhanced functionality and potential space saving.

"Those mini tables are pointless, I don't know what they're meant for."

[Camden, Commuter]

"You'd be better off with cup holders than those stupid little things they have now."

[Camden, Commuter]

A **buffet car** is felt to be completely inappropriate on trains serving Thameslink routes. A refreshment trolley would be impractical for commuter services but may be welcomed by off-peak users. Respondents suggested that their needs may be better met by outlets/vending machines at stations, although this was balanced by concerns about vandalism.

"You don't need it on such a short journey. You can get something at the station or when you get to work."

[Camden, Commuter]

"It's nice to be able to get a cup of coffee but not essential for a journey of that length."

[Brighton, Commuter]

WiFi and Power Sockets: Both are seen as non-essential for the new Thameslink trains given their relatively short journeys, but if provided are likely to make a positive contribution to the overall journey experience.

There is a high awareness of the increasing availability of WiFi across the transport network and train operators already providing it are seen as innovative. Thus, there is potential to add value to the service provision if the trains are WiFi enabled, especially if available free of charge. Most however accept that WiFi would be hard to justify due to the length of journeys undertaken.

“You only need it on long journeys because there’s no room to work when you’re commuting.”
[Croydon, Commuter]

“It’s not essential but if it was available then your estimation of the train company would go up a bit.”
[Camden, Commuter]

Power sockets are not expected to be provided on FCC trains, and are seen as more of a necessity for train operators with longer routes. However, they would be welcomed as an additional facility, being useful to charge a phone / laptop even if not using them on the journey. Overall, their provision would be likely to be seen as a passenger benefit.

“They have them on Virgin but it’s not necessary for a short commuting journey.”
[Camden, Commuter]

“It would be brilliant to be able to charge your mobile phone if you needed to.”
[Camden, Commuter]

Very little in terms of minimum expectations to fulfil. Some table provision is hoped for.

Some catering provision during off-peak times would meet expectations, if feasible.

Providing free WiFi and power sockets would exceed expectations.

Quiet Coaches: Even those in favour of the concept of quiet coaches regarded this as a low priority issue. It was assumed they may be impractical in terms of maximising space, be difficult to police at peak times and that journeys on FCC trains are generally too short to be able to justify having a designated quiet area.

“It could work off-peak but it could never be enforced during commuting time.”

[Croydon, Commuter]

“There’s nothing to stop people using mobile phones and if everyone was using one it would be a nightmare.”

[Enfield, Commuter]

“I can’t stand travelling when it’s really noisy.”

[Brighton, Commuter]

3.6 Passengers with Disabilities

Priorities for mobility-impaired

Reaction to new design concepts

The new design concepts were generally expected to provide easier access to all areas onboard the train for those with a mobility-impairment due to the increased space created by the layout. The open area by the door in the vestibule area is expected to make boarding and disembarking easier and more comfortable.

The seating configuration in the saloon area was felt to have been improved, as the absence of rows of three seats side by side will make movement through the carriages easier. There was also a very positive reaction to the greater flexibility that will be provided by using tip up and perch seats.

“I think they (perch seats) are a good idea nicked from the tube. You can lean on those comfortably over a short distance.”

[Mobility Impaired]

Longer trains were also expected to help from the point of view of relieving demand and overcrowding on services generally.

Suggested improvements to the new designs

Improvements suggested by mobility impaired respondents were in line with those of other user groups in terms of what would make their journey experience more comfortable. Of prime importance for these passengers is the need for more grab rails and supports throughout the trains, as this would make boarding, getting to a seat and moving around the train more easy.

“We need more things in more places, it looks as though they have been designed with no clutter in mind, but clutter can be good.”

[Mobility Impaired]

This group also expressed an interest in having a designated space for disabled and mobility-impaired passengers. In this instance, the seating configuration suggested was different to that in other Standard class accommodation with seats facing inwards (as is the case on London Underground carriages) as opposed to being in airline formation. Some even requested a pass or swipe card system to allow access to this area, although most would be reluctant to openly identify themselves as disabled.

In terms of the seats themselves, a priority seat for mobility-impaired users would ideally be designed differently to standard seats, being more contoured and raised for ease of getting in and out of the seat. Respondents recall that London Buses provide similar priority seats for mobility-impaired users which one or two suggested could be used as a design template.

Priorities for Wheelchair users

Some FCC trains currently make wheelchair users feel there is no specific place for them onboard, and no provision to make it easier for them to move around the carriages. This leads them to feel that they cannot travel alone, and in addition are unsure if help will be available from station staff.

A key priority for wheelchair users is to board and exit the train without feeling pressured, ideally by knowing that a ramp will be available. London Buses were again the most often cited example of how to cater for the needs of this user group

“London Buses are superb. I use them all the time and every one of them is accessible for a wheelchair user.”

[Wheelchair User]

“The current trains are only accessible with assistance. You have to book ramps which can be a problem.”

[Wheelchair User]

Some claimed that there are no designated accessible areas on FCC trains, leaving wheelchair users to stick out in the aisle and block doors as people enter and exit. The lack of a designated space can make for an unpleasant travelling experience if surrounded by the bags and elbows of other passengers sharing the same space.

“The worst place for me during the rush hour is on First Capital Connect trains because I often get discriminated against.”

[Wheelchair User]

“We should have a dedicated space away from the doors because it's draughty and cold to sit there and dangerous for us and for all other passengers.”

[Wheelchair User]

A further issue once onboard is moving around the train as aisles are often too narrow for wheelchair users to sit with family and friends.

“I don't care too much about the design as long as there are the required number of wheelchair spaces.”

[Wheelchair User]

“I would like to have the option to be able to move away from the toilet or from other passengers if necessary.”

[Wheelchair User]

Toilets: One area felt not to need improving is access to the disabled toilets, on those FCC trains where they are provided. However, comments were made that cleaning materials can sometimes be found stored inside the accessible toilets, making access difficult. Ideally there would be two disabled access toilets onboard the train, although their location will be important, as having them at either end of the train could prove problematic if one was out of order.

Reaction to the new designs

The reaction to the new designs was positive overall. They are felt to offer increased space and mobility benefits, but wheelchair users are unable to comment fully as no designated areas were shown on the designs presented.

There was some feeling that the new designs are not different enough to the existing FCC passenger accommodation. The carriage appears to lack a dedicated wheelchair space, which is the most disappointing issue for this user group.

"It's the same train! They've just refurbished the current stock. There don't seem to be any wheelchair spaces or priority seats."

[Wheelchair User]

"I don't care too much about the design as long as there are the required number of wheelchair spaces."

[Wheelchair User]

The vestibule area generated the most positive response, as it is now a much larger area and expected to offer significant benefits when boarding and disembarking.

"It looks like there is lots of space, you will not be cramped waiting to get out of the door."

[Wheelchair User]

South West Trains were felt to have set a good example for wheelchair access and have enabled wheelchair users to feel more independent. Specifically, features that were referred to in this respect were accessible areas away from doors for safety reasons, more than one priority space in each area, a separate bike space so there is no competition for this, one accessible toilet every three or four car set, better signage and information, grab rails positioned for wheelchair users, ability to access and sit in any area of the train and to have more disability awareness amongst staff.

Priorities for Vision-Impaired

Vision impaired users claimed that FCC passenger accommodation is worse than other train operators and cited Southern trains as a local point of comparison.

Three different degrees of impairment were encountered across the depth interviews conducted. One respondent had partial sight, one respondent had very little sight and one respondent had no sight at all. Certain issues are specific to the passenger with no sight and many of these issues concern information available onboard and information relayed to him for use onboard the train by station staff.

"I'd like to know what carriage number I have been boarded on, so that I know how far down the platform I am when I arrive at Victoria."

[Vision Impaired]

The passenger with no sight requested a system to alert him to which side the doors would open at stations as currently he has to wait until he can hear the beep by which time he will be caught up in the surge of other passengers exiting.

Problems encountered for all passengers with a vision impairment

Irrespective of the extent of visual impairment, all respondents faced a similar range of difficulties when travelling on FCC trains.

Auto-announce system non-existent or not switched on: The consequence here is that passengers have to count down the number of stops until their station, instead of being able to rely on information provided during the journey. In addition, more information about where and when to disembark for connecting trains is also needed.

"I don't like having to count down the stations during the journey because I can't relax."

[Vision Impaired]

Lack of familiarity with interior carriage layout: Due to the mix of different rolling stock operating on the FCC network, visually-impaired respondents find it difficult to navigate the inside of the carriages, especially the seat layout.

Lack of confidence when moving within carriage: This problem is due to the varying interior designs experienced on different FCC models and is exacerbated by luggage blocking the aisles and a general lack of grab poles.

Unsuitable three plus two seating: Another common area of frustration is the current seating format on FCC trains. Rows with three seats side by side can be difficult to get in and out of for passengers with a visual impairment, as there is often another passenger seated in the aisle seat and it requires stepping over them and their bags to gain access to the window seat. Rows with only two seats together would make the saloon area far easier to use.

Navigating step down and step up: Similarly, navigating the step between the train and the platform can be exacerbated by different train operators and FCC trains serving the same station (and hence passengers do not know what height/step configuration to expect).

Reactions to New Design Concepts

The new design concepts are felt by respondents to have addressed issues for vision impaired passengers as a result of having more space in priority areas and more efficient, flexible seating.

Interior space

The gangway and vestibule areas appear more spacious, encouraging respondents to feel more confident when boarding and disembarking and also moving through the train.

Seating

The saloon area seating style also generated positive responses, especially having two seats per row as opposed to three. This was felt to open up the aisle for easier movement and make it easier to get into a free seat by the window if the aisle seat is occupied.

The flexible seating options also elicited a positive reaction. Perch seats were welcomed and respondents anticipated using them on short (inner) journeys. Tip up seats are seen as an excellent way to provide more seating and make the train adaptable for different times of the day.

“It would be good if you had more options because it’s used differently in the morning to other times.”

[Vision Impaired]

Suggested Improvements

Overall, the new design concepts were not felt to meet the needs of passengers with vision impairments (based on materials provided). The key priority areas to be addressed in the next stage of design can be identified as follows: More grab poles and hand holds to make standing safer and facilitate movement through the carriages; easier access to seats; audible announcements to complement visual displays and under-seat luggage storage as reaching up can be difficult.

“Southern always have the auto announcer on, it tells you what the next stop is and what the destination you are arriving at is. So I don’t have to spend the whole journey counting down the stops in my head.”

[Vision Impaired]

Priorities for Hearing-Impaired

Problems for passengers from the deaf community were often not as acute as those of other disability groups, and tended to revolve around inadequate information provision and displays. Other train operators are felt to cater for hearing impairments better than FCC, especially those with newer trains.

The consequence of not receiving effective, usable information is that traveling alone can be uncomfortable and difficult, especially during peak times. Specific problems identified related to the format and clarity of information provided in audio announcements, which are felt to either be non-existent or inaudible.

“The clarity of the announcements is the main problem. Sometimes I can’t hear what’s being said, especially if there’s a lot of other noise.”
[Hearing Impaired]

“I’m not confident about using trains alone because I often can’t hear announcements when it’s busy.”
[Hearing Impaired]

Responses to the design concepts tended to be neutral given that it was unclear how the specific needs of this user group had been addressed. Key future requirements focused on the quality of information displays that should ideally show arrival times at stations and allow updating by the driver as required. Other suggestions included a loop system (possibly with priority seating), retention of some facing seats which are preferred by those with a hearing impairment and some way of communicating with the driver in an emergency.

“The Heathrow Express trains have some long seats with the Loop sign for people with hearing aids.”
[Hearing Impaired]

“It looks the same as the current trains and there is no dot matrix display which is essential for someone with a hearing impairment.”
[Hearing Impaired]

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

This research showed that the Thameslink Programme has potential benefits for all user groups, although it is unsurprisingly commuters who feel that they have the most to lose or gain from the proposals.

Responses to the details of the Programme naturally varied according to the different user groups: Commuters tended to feel that they currently get the worst deal due to the relatively higher cost of their travel and the overcrowding that they endure. Off-peak users acknowledged that they are able to benefit from the best of both worlds and, importantly, tended to feel that new trains on the FCC network should be designed with commuters' needs in mind, rather than their own. Disability groups, understandably, have specific needs depending on their individual circumstances and have different priorities that require special attention.

News of the Thameslink Programme when presented during the course of the research sessions tended to be positively received across the sample on the basis that improvements were felt to be much-needed and long overdue and the potential benefits for passengers were readily recognised.

The design concepts presented received a mixed response across this large sample of passengers, but overall the reaction to the initial designs can be regarded as encouraging.

Some passengers felt that the new designs were not sufficiently different or future-facing enough to represent the next generation of FCC rolling stock; indeed, some suggested that trains already being used by other train operators were more advanced. Although certain key improvements were recognised and welcomed, the research indicated that some design elements will require further thought and will need to be addressed in order to allay concerns consistently expressed by passengers.

Importantly, however, the design concepts appear to successfully address the core objective of attempting to meet future demand by addressing the current ratio of seats to standing spaces, although passengers were not always inclined to react favourably on exposure to this news.

A central finding of this first stage of research, however, is the consistency of views and requirements across all user groups from different points on the network with regard to this core issue. In spite of widespread and reluctant acceptance that buying a ticket does not guarantee the holder a seat, there was a general acknowledgement that future demand will increase to such a level that trains must be designed with increased standing capacity as a priority.

In the context of this pragmatic acceptance across the sample, the primary concern among passengers is to be able to travel on their intended service, standing is seen as an unavoidable compromise, which many seem prepared to tolerate. Provided, that is, measures are taken to ensure maximum safety and comfort for those unable to get a seat.

Seat type and layout emerged as an issue of critical importance and of high relevance in the context of discussions on the subject of increasing the carrying-capacity of the next generation of trains. This was recognised as being central to achieving the overall design objective.

The majority of passengers represented in this research felt that the designs presented were not optimal in this respect and suggested that they appeared to be catering for off-peak rather than peak usage. Given the recognition that most journeys on the Thameslink network are likely to be relatively short in the context of rail travel generally, many were prepared to accept an emphasis on high density as a more sensible and pragmatic solution to cope with the anticipated increase in future demand. Furthermore, most also accepted and indeed welcomed alternative seating formats that were felt to offer maximum flexibility wherever possible, as demonstrated by the universally-positive response to tip-up and perch seats.

On the basis of this research we therefore recommend that the following areas should be considered a priority for the next stage of development:

- The number and positioning of grab poles needs to be addressed in order to allay passengers' concerns regarding safe standing
- Greater use of face to back seating and the inclusion of more flexible formats (e.g. perches/tip up seats) to maximize the space available
- The trade-offs and compromises required regarding air-conditioning: it will not be possible to meet all needs in this respect

- The inclusion of luggage racks. This may be welcomed, even at the expense of seating, especially on trains serving airports and St Pancras International
- The provision of First Class accommodation: a decision about this cannot be made on the back of this research.
- The various design features referred to by disabled passengers, which go beyond the mandatory requirements.

5. Appendices

5.1 Discussion Guide

Introduction

- Moderator to explain that research is being conducted on behalf of London TravelWatch, DfT and Passenger Focus who wish to understand passengers' views about the proposed design of new trains for the Thameslink routes
- Moderator to explain that feedback will help inform decisions about the specification of these trains but that any views expressed will not necessarily be implemented

Background

- Respondent introductions: name, age, occupation, nature of train journeys most frequently undertaken
- Explanation of nature and purpose of research

Current rail travel

- Tell me about what train journeys you have made in the last six months. What is the main purpose of these journeys (**moderator** to ensure good understanding of the mix / frequency of different journeys made e.g. commuting, business, leisure, other)
- Tell me about typical situations you find yourself in on the train, who are you with, prompt with children, family, friends, partner, colleague, alone. How are your needs different in each of these situations, why.
- What other modes of transport do you use, what journeys are they used for, likes and dislikes about the different modes of transport.
- Which train operators do you use for your journeys. Likes / dislikes about each of them.
- Where does train travel fit into your life, what is its purpose, how does it compare with other modes of transport, why.

Specific Problems and Priorities Going Forward

- Refer to Pre-Task Exercise – thinking about using your experiences of travelling on the trains currently in use on the routes concerned, I'd like you to tell me what you feel are the things that you currently like most about the carriages and 5 main things that need to be improved to make your journeys better. [All to outline key areas from pre-task]
- [Discuss as group to get group consensus, **moderator** to list key areas for improvement on flipchart] How important are each of these, why/not. Which should be done prioritised, and why.

Potential Areas for Improvement Onboard

- What are your feelings about your current onboard experiences, likes / dislikes. How important is the experience you have onboard the train to your overall experience of your train travel / journey as a whole.
- Tell me about any onboard experiences good or bad that stand out for you and how they impacted on the train journey as a whole.
- What do you require from onboard facilities. How are those requirements catered for currently. What are the key areas for improvement.
- What would you like to see improved onboard, how could improvements relate to all the different kinds of journeys you make.
- Focusing specifically on the facilities available to you onboard, what are your current thoughts, why. How could they be improved, what is most important, what is least.
- Thinking about other public transport types you travel on, how do the facilities compare, likes. dislikes. How do they compare by country. Tell me about any standout experiences and facilities.
- What key learnings / improvements do train travel providers need to take from other public transport providers (prompt air, tube, tram, bus)
- Help me to make sure I have an overview of your key requirements onboard e.g. comfort, safety, onboard facilities, always getting a seat. [Brainstorm and **moderator** list on flipchart].

[ROTATE ORDER OF SECTIONS ACROSS GROUPS]

Brain storming exercise – your ideal train

Train Design & Train Crowding Issues

- What would you say are your key needs as passengers when it comes to train interior / onboard experience, explore reasons for each need. [Brainstorm and **moderator** list on flipchart]. Imagine you are walking onto your perfect train, what do you see, probe on colours, textures, layout, space, standing and sitting ratio, toilets, luggage, additional facilities.
- What do you think of the interior design of the trains that you use [spontaneous, don't prompt] – what in particular works well for you, what is not so good. Give examples of good/bad design and how it affects you as a passenger.
- What are your experiences of the volume of passengers travelling on the routes concerned at the times that you tend to be making journeys. What impact does this have on the time that you choose to travel, why. What impact does the volume of passengers have on how often you travel by train, why/not. What do you think could be done to combat any problems of overcrowding on the trains you use.

- What do you think of the amount of standing/sitting space available on the trains that you use. How well does this currently work. To what extent does this need to be improved, why/not. What could be done to make your journey more comfortable in future in this respect. Response to floor to ceiling poles; straps; seat back handles. Explore attitudes to standing – what is an acceptable amount of time to stand. How happy are passengers to stand if in comfortable position.
- Thinking now about the **allocation of space** (number of toilets, amount of first class space, need for buffet cars, in-car luggage racks, number of doors etc.). How do you feel about this on current trains on routes concerned. What is good/bad about this – what are the main issues/problems. How could it be improved, if at all [**moderator** note on flipchart]. What difference is doing this going to make to your future journeys, why/not. Which needs would it address.
- Ask same questions for following areas of service provision:
 - **level of passenger comfort** (seats, curtains, grab rails etc.)
 - **getting on/off the trains** (doors, steps, aisle space etc.)
 - **at seat facilities** (trays/tables, laptop sockets, trolley service etc.)
 - **on train facilities** (toilets, buffet cars, bins, overhead storage, luggage racks etc.)
 - **length of trains** (number of carriages, amount of 1st class etc.)
- [Ask for each of above areas of service provision] How do you feel about this on current trains that you use, what are your requirements and how are they met. What is good/bad about this – what are the main issues / problems. How could it be improved, if at all [**moderator** note on flipchart]. What difference is doing this going to make to your future journeys, why/not. Which needs would it address.
- Thinking about the onboard experience / interior of current trains [**moderator** refer to list on flipchart], which of these changes are most/least important, why – rank in order of priority.
- Of all these changes we have looked at, which are the most important/relevant to you, why/not. What targets should the government set to help achieve these improvements.
- To what extent do you think more frequent services would address issues of overcrowding more than any of this, why/not.

Explaining the Thameslink Programme

Moderator to introduce the Thameslink Programme to the group.

- The Thameslink Programme is a £3.5 billion investment by the government to provide more capacity to meet existing and future passenger demand.
- It will operate 12 coach trains from Bedford to Brighton, as opposed to four and eight coach trains.
- 12 coach trains will operate on the Royston, Letchworth, Sandy, Biggleswade, Hitchin, Stevenage and Potters bar lines to central London, London Bridge, Gatwick Airport and beyond.
- 24 trains will run per hour through London at peak times.
- Rebuilding work will be carried out at stations including London Bridge, Farringdon and Blackfriars.
- The work will be completed in phases. From December 2012, 12 coach trains will run between Bedford and Brighton and by 2015, Great Northern services will be linked into this service.
- Brand new trains will start running in 2012, with the full fleet in service from December 2015.

Discussion of new trains

- **Moderator** to explain that the group will now focus on the interior and design of the new trains, and how opinions will help to inform future decision making.
- Explain that the new trains are soon to be purchased by the Department for Transport and that the group this evening is a way of making sure passenger opinion is taken into account at the early stages of design work.
- Explain that one of the key criteria in designing the new trains will be to allow a larger number of people to board the trains, and in addition board and depart the train quickly, easily and comfortably.
- Key issues that this research needs to address are seating / standing ratio, First Class, toilets, public address, visual information, luggage space, cleaning and other onboard facilities.
- Additionally, explain that although in mechanical terms all trains will be identical, there will be two internal 'fit outs' which will result in one train type being suitable for longer distance services e.g. Bedford to Brighton and one being suitable for shorter distances e.g. like the metro stops on the Wimbledon loop.
- **NB: groups 7, 8 & 9 will consider the 'metro' design only, whilst the remaining groups will concentrate on the 'outer' design, but also spend a short time considering the 'metro' design.**

Response to design of new trains

- **Moderator** to introduce the new design concepts to the group.
- **Moderator** to introduce the designs by train area e.g. Saloon area, Gangway area, Vestibule area, toilet, luggage rack, new seating e.g. perch, normal and tip-up.
- What do you think of this – initial reactions. What is good / bad about it. How new / different does this feel to what you are used to on trains. Is it appealing, why / why not.
- How relevant does the design feel to you, how will the new designs benefit you in each of the different kinds of journey you make.
- What kind of environment is being created here.
- What stands out to you as being particularly good / bad. How does what you have just seen compare with what we talked about earlier with regard to your ideal train interior / onboard environment.
- Looking at the new designs in front of you, what fits most closely with your onboard needs and requirements. What fits the least.
- Tell me about the elements of the new design that appeal to you most and why. Think about how each are of the new design will impact on your journey, what will be of greater benefit to you, what will be of lesser benefit to you.

Outer

- **Seating: Moderator** to explain to the group that a 12 coach train will have 670 seats (two seats each side of the aisle) and room for 1,040 standees. Currently an 8 coach 'outer' service has 578 seats and room for 210 standees. What is your reaction to this.
- **Style / mix of seating type: Moderator** to explain that there is a plan for there to be a mix of high density seating (airline style, face to back) and low density seating (arranged in bays with tables) within the same train, probably alternating every other coach). How do you feel about this, how will that benefit you, how will this make your journey more comfortable and more efficient.
- Tell me what this will mean for you during busy rush hour periods. Thinking about standing up during busy / peak periods, what could make you most comfortable. Prompt with grab handles, perches.
- **First class:** how do you feel about current First Class provision, is having First Class important to you, why, who is it important for. How should it be implemented in the new design. How should the train be split between standard and First Class, why.

- **Toilets:** Tell me your thoughts on toilets on Thameslink trains currently. How many should there be onboard. What do you think about the plan to have one toilet every four coaches, is that enough, not enough. Tell me whether having one Universal Access Toilet per train is enough.
- **Luggage:** What do you do with your luggage currently, what would you like to be able to do, how would that benefit you, what forms of luggage storage on train are there, what do you use, why / why not.
- Tell me what you think about plans to install traditional overhead luggage racks and in addition luggage stacks in the coaches. Tell me whether you need larger overhead luggage racks in which larger cases could be placed. The number of luggage stacks would be reduced, what are your thoughts, why.
- What are the specific issues for those who travel on routes that serve airports. What are the issues/trade-offs regarding luggage and security
- What are the specific issues for those who travel with bikes. What accommodation should be made for bikes.
- **Power points:** What do you think about the provision of power points on Thameslink trains, are there enough / not enough. Should they be in every coach, only First Class, why.

Inner

- **Seating: Moderator** to explain that an 8 coach train will have 470 seats (two seats each side of the aisle) and room for 840 standees (currently on an FCC train there are 606 seats and room for 218 standees). What are your thoughts on the ration of standing to sitting going forward. Probe fully any issues that arise and how they can be resolved.
- What do you think about tip up seats for peak use. Will this make things more comfortable for you going forward. What are your views on perch seats. How do you feel about the possible inclusion of mini tables / shelves
- **First class:** how do you feel about current First Class provision, is having First Class important to you, why, who is it important for. How should it be implemented in the new design. How should the train be split between standard and First Class, why. What do you think about there being no FC here.
- **Toilets:** Tell me your thoughts on toilets on Thameslink trains currently. How many should there be onboard. What do you think about the plan to have one toilet every four coaches, is that enough, not enough. Tell me whether having one Universal Access Toilet per train is enough. What do you think about there being no toilets here.
- **Luggage:** What do you do with your luggage currently, what would you like to be able to do, how would that benefit you, what forms of luggage storage on train are there, what do you use, why / why not.

- Tell me what you think about plans to install traditional overhead luggage racks and in addition luggage stacks in the coaches. Tell me whether you need larger overhead luggage racks in which larger cases could be placed. The number of luggage stacks would be reduced, what are your thoughts, why.
- What are the specific issues for those who travel on routes that serve airports. What are the issues/trade-offs regarding luggage and security
- What are the specific issues for those who travel with bikes. What accommodation should be made for bikes.
- **Power points:** What do you think about the provision of power points on Thameslink trains, are there enough / not enough. Should they be in every coach, only First Class, why.

Comparison of new interior train designs with existing interior train design

- **Moderator** to introduce pictures of existing train interior design. Introduce Saloon area, Gangway area, Vestibule area, toilets and luggage racks.
- Explain that you want to understand how passengers feel about the old design in relation to the new design.
- Tell me what stands out to you as being the biggest improvement. What do you like, how will it benefit you, how will your needs be met going forward.
- Tell me about other changes you have noticed.
- Thinking about the new design compared with the existing design, tell me what you feel about the following. Do you think there is a difference in the seat to standing ratio, what do you think about the provision of first class, what do you think about the provision of toilets. How will it make a difference to your journey, what are your likes and dislikes.
- What should stay the same, what changes should without doubt be incorporated.

Additional information requirements / features

- Tell me about other things that are important to you during your journey as well as the design and interior of the train.
- **Information:** what information do you need when on board the train. What information do you need during normal running, during planned disruption works, and when there is unplanned disruption. Take me through a typical journey and at what points you need different types of information.
- What other transport providers are good at keeping you well informed over the course of your journey, how do they do this, when do they do this.

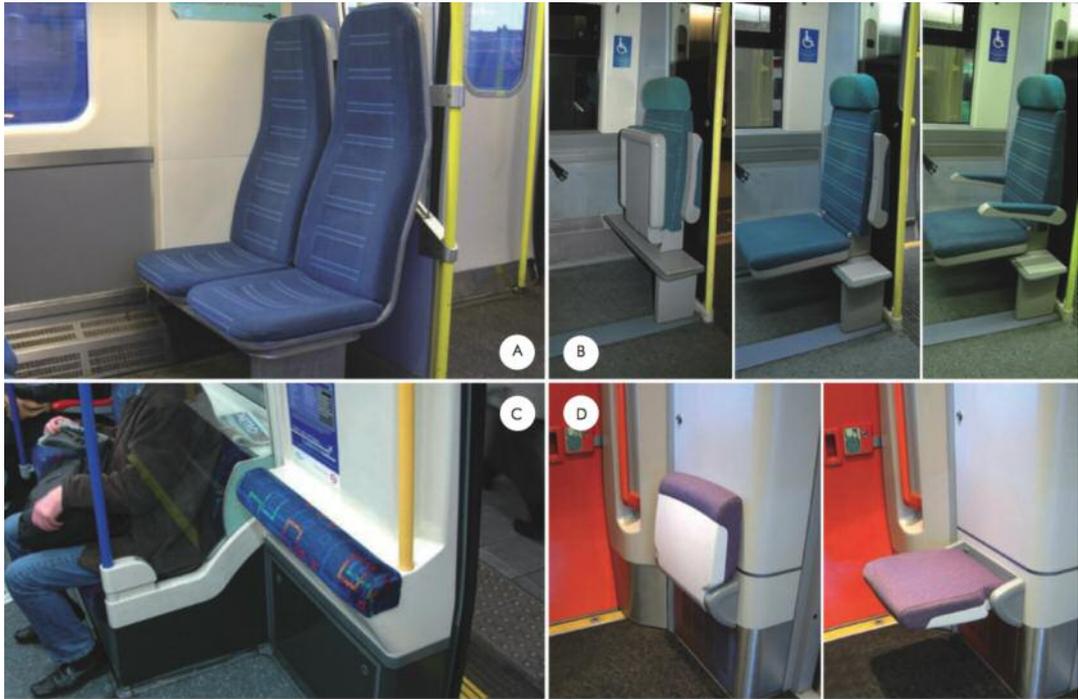
- How important is 'real time' information about the destination / calling pattern of the train behind the one you are on. How important is 'real time' information about trains on routes with which you can connect
- **Air conditioning:** What do you feel about a 21 degree temperature being maintained at all times. Would a less energy-hungry system that in the hottest days will ensure a cooler environment within the train than outside be sufficient. Is facility to open window if air conditioning not working required.
- **CCTV:** How do you feel about CCTV being fitted on all the new trains, does this make you feel about safety at the times you will travel by train.
- **Wi-fi:** How do you feel that there will be connectivity throughout the train, how will this benefit you on your journeys.
- **Stepping Distance:** what are your current experiences. What are the generic needs of passengers. What are the considerations for specific user groups eg those with buggies/luggage and those with vision/mobility impairments
- **Quiet coaches:** How do you feel about the possible inclusion of quiet coaches. To what extent do you consider them to be welcome / necessary

Wrap

- Recap on main issues and concerns related to travelling on routes concerned. Understand current issues faced by passengers in different travelling capacities. Recap on most important priorities for improvements.
- Probe responses to proposed new designs, likes and dislikes. Ensure thorough understanding obtained of key requirements going forward.
- To what extent will the new designs address current issues identified.
- What impact will the new design concepts presented for research have on journeys you will make and propensity to make them in future

5.2 Stimulus Materials





Visual 18. A) Ordinary seating B) Folding C) Perch D) Tip-up



Visual 17. Class 377/4 Electrostar - Luggage Rack



Visual 16. RVAR Compliant Toilet (Southern Class 377/4)

“The research into what passengers need from new trains on the Thameslink route is ground-breaking and positive. Passenger Focus, working in conjunction with the Government and London TravelWatch, is delighted to be helping ensure that passengers’ views are at the heart of decision making about the design of the next generation of trains to run on these busy routes.”

Anthony Smith

Passenger Focus chief executive

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