



Information: Rail passengers' needs during unplanned disruption

Qualitative Research

August 2011





Colin Foxall CBE

Foreword

The National Passenger Survey shows that almost one quarter of passengers rate the way train companies deal with delays as “poor”, while only 36% say they are dealt with “well”. To give this context, overall satisfaction currently stands at 84%. Furthermore, dealing with delays is the top driver of overall dissatisfaction with passengers’ journeys and information during delays is the fifth highest priority for improvement among Britain’s rail passengers.

In the last year Passenger Focus has published “Delays and disruption: rail passengers have their say” and “Rail passengers’ experiences during the snow”, both drawing on the experiences of our 1,000 strong ‘disruption panel’. They show that, during service disruption passengers want the rail industry to treat them with respect, recognise their plight and help them avoid the problem in the first place. This new research digs deeper into the issues and explores what practical steps are needed to improve things. Passenger Focus is very pleased to have worked in partnership with Southern Railway to deliver this research.

On pages ii and iii we summarise what we found and make a number of recommendations. The key points to note from this research are that:

- Accurate, timely and consistent information is critical to the effective handling of delays

because it allows passengers to make informed decisions about what they do

- The attitude and empathy of staff towards passengers during disruption is a key factor, echoing findings in “Delays and disruption: rail passengers have their say”
- Passengers do not always trust the information they are given, particularly the reasons offered for delays and cancellations
- Once caught up in a problem, passengers need to know how long they will be delayed – having that knowledge allows people to judge the impact on their day
- Passengers want train companies to actively tell them if there are problems, particularly if there are cancellations or a temporary timetable is being introduced

Passenger Focus will now work with the rail industry, government and regulators to ensure that the findings of this research lead to improvements for passengers.

Colin Foxall CBE
Chairman
Passenger Focus



James Burt

“We were delighted to join forces with Passenger Focus in this important research project. As a customer service business we want to understand and then act on the views of our customers. We will be using the findings in this report to improve how we deal with delays, and make sure that our customers feel better informed and able to make choices about onward travel.”

James Burt
Service Delivery Director, Southern



Key findings and recommendations

Trust

The research shows an undercurrent of distrust among passengers when it comes to information and two particular issues are highlighted:

- i. That passengers do not always believe the reason given when there is unplanned disruption. They want more honesty and fewer excuses. In the scenarios we tested, passengers rejected the standard industry terminology in favour of franker, more factual explanations.
- ii. That passengers appear to place greater trust in channels of communications that have an inherent time-lag to the information (for example, radio or television) than they do in the channels that are genuinely 'real time' (for example, a train company's website). This appears to stem, at least in part, from greater trust in a human being than in a machine.

Passenger Focus recommends:

- That the industry reviews the list of 'standard' reasons used to explain delays and cancellations in order to address passengers' desire for franker, more honest explanations
- That National Rail Enquiries reports each period, by train company, on the proportion of cancelled and significantly delayed trains which are given a 'reason' within the Darwin real time running database.

Length of the delay

This report illustrates that one of passengers' key needs during unplanned disruption is to know how long they are likely to be delayed. That knowledge allows people to assess the impact of the disruption on their day and gives them the opportunity, in many cases, to change their plans to avoid the problem. For those passengers already caught up in disruption it allows them to pass on information to employers and family members. The industry needs to do more to improve its ability to provide an accurate estimate of delay to passengers as quickly as possible.

Passenger Focus recommends:

- That further effort is needed to improve the industry's ability to provide an accurate estimate of delay to passengers.

Getting information to passengers before they get to the station

The research confirms that few passengers are aware of

disruption before they arrive at the station, and also that passengers are more likely to actively check for disruption during severe weather. Passengers' desire for information to be 'pushed' to them is highlighted, for example to warn them that a temporary timetable has been implemented. The spontaneous references to SMS text as the desired method to be told is consistent with earlier Passenger Focus research.

Passenger Focus recommends:

- That the industry develops and implements a strategy to increase the proportion of passengers aware of disruption, including the implementation of a temporary timetable, before they reach the station. This should include encouraging commuters to sign up to receive 'line of route' disruption information by free email or SMS text and advising passengers who have reserved on a particular train if that train is cancelled or severely delayed.

Information at stations

The important role staff play in providing information at stations was highlighted. This was particularly apparent in London where passengers cited experience of live announcements made by London Underground staff physically on the platform, rather than hearing a 'voice from above'.

Passenger Focus recommends:

- That train companies and other station operators should make disruption announcements 'live', in particular avoiding apologies being delivered by computer rather than a human being.

Information on board the train

The research confirms that a delay should be acknowledged within two minutes of an unscheduled stop, but passengers felt that the rail industry is not routinely delivering what it has already accepted as good practice. It also found that passengers would welcome incorporation of "on time", "x minutes early", "x minutes late" messages into the sequence of information displayed on Passenger Information Systems.

Passenger Focus recommends:

- That a concerted effort is required by the industry to ensure that train crew acknowledge a delay within two minutes of coming to an unscheduled halt and acknowledge delays resulting from slow running

- That to keep passengers informed, train companies and systems manufacturers should look to display whether a train is on time, early or late using the onboard Passenger Information System.

Alternative routes

For passengers who have not yet got on a train, information about alternative routes – in other words ways to get around the problem – is very important. This was particularly the case for business and leisure travellers who are less likely to be familiar with their options than daily commuters.

Passenger Focus recommends:

- That train companies develop, for every station, comprehensive advice about how to get to key destinations by alternative routes and/or modes, together with plans to make sure the information is actively provided to passengers.

Display of information at stations during severe disruption

The research tested the proposition that during really severe disruption, it would be better to display only those trains that are running – rather than force passengers to hunt for them amid an array of departures showing “cancelled” or “delayed”. Broadly, the proposition was favoured by commuters who want to know about the first train to their destination and therefore have no interest in trains that are not running, while leisure and business passenger are more likely to expect the status of the particular train they intended to catch to be displayed.

Passenger Focus recommends:

- That train companies consider developing a ‘disruption mode’ for their Customer Information System for use during exceptionally severe disruption, and these findings are taken into account in doing so.

Temporary timetables

The term “emergency timetable” was rejected by passengers as the best way to describe the suspension of the normal timetable and its replacement with something different. The word “emergency” appears to be the problem – it has connotations of panic or disaster. Passengers felt the information that a temporary timetable was or would be in

place should be communicated by SMS text and, for commuters, displayed and announced the evening before so it is ‘taken in’ on their journey home.

Passenger Focus recommends:

- That the expression “temporary timetable” is used to describe an amended service that is necessary because of severe weather, industrial action etc. For example, “tomorrow, we will be running a temporary timetable because of heavy snow forecast for this evening”.

Real time running information on websites

The research suggests that, broadly, commuters are seeking line of route information and are less interested in specific trains, although this is likely to vary depending on the frequency of trains on the route concerned. Whereas, generally, business and leisure passengers are seeking information about the particular train on which they are booked or intended to catch. The ability to see at a glance the status of the route you intend to use, as is offered by London Underground’s ‘rainbow’ board, therefore has attractions for commuters. However, in practice, most train company websites would need to supplement this with easy access to train-specific information.

Passenger Focus recommends:

- That all train company websites should display the ‘at a glance’ status of their routes, but allow passengers to ‘click through’ to additional information, including train-specific live running information if they require it.

Style of information

As well as practical issues like diction and clarity of PA systems, many passengers used the following words to describe the style and tone they wanted for disruption announcements: “genuine”, “engaged”, “alive”, “caring”. It is a difficult balance, however, because while the need for an apology was consistent, some passengers used words like “neutral” and “factual” and did not want what they perceived could be over-the-top empathy. Use of humour attracted mixed views, but could help lighten the mood in terms of a guard or driver speaking to passengers stuck on a stranded train.

GfK

GfK NOP Social Research

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Passengerfocus 
putting passengers first

Research Report:
Passenger information needs during unplanned disruption

Prepared by: GfK NOP Social Research

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1 Executive Summary

The aim of this research was to investigate passenger information needs during unplanned disruption. Six focus groups were carried out in March 2011 with members of the general public who had recent experience of unplanned disruption. The key findings from the research are summarised below.

The research explored information preferences during unplanned disruption at key points during the customer journey:

Before you get to the station

Very few passengers actively sought information before they got to the station. However, there was a strong appetite for SMS text messages provided by train operators. Across the research there was low awareness of any SMS text message provision and the research suggests that these services should be advertised.

At the station and on board the train:

Frequent live audio announcements were considered to be the most trusted source of information when at the station and on board a train during unplanned disruption. Hearing information directly from a member of staff was considered very important, and participants were keen that pre-recorded messages be avoided where possible. The research identified a number of ways in which the use of audio announcements could be maximised:

- Ensuring that audio speakers and audio equipment is fully working. Participants noted that they easily became frustrated when audio announcements were difficult to hear.
- Ensuring that announcements are short and easy to understand.
- Signposting passengers to the person making the announcement. This was considered useful for passengers at the station as well as on board the train and reassured them that they could ask further questions about the unplanned disruption if needed.
- Ensuring announcements are made by clear and engaged members of staff. Participants' experiences of unplanned disruptions were greatly driven by interaction with, and information provided by staff. Positive experiences cited included examples where members of staff had genuinely wanted to help passengers reach their destination.
- Including an apology in announcements.
- Adopting a conversational tone to avoid scripted messages sounding 'robotic'. There was much debate in the research regarding the tone of announcements. Participants felt that a conversational tone that was clear and sounded engaged was the most appropriate tone for announcements. It was noted that when on board the train there was greater scope for a more caring and humorous tone and that this could help to neutralise the situation.

The research identified three information needs during unplanned disruption:

1. The key information need for passengers was an **accurate length of delay**. This information was considered important as it enabled passengers to judge the impact that the unplanned disruption would have on their day, and allow them to make alternative plans. Where an accurate length of delay was not available, participants suggested that an 'ice-breaker' announcement be provided, informing passengers that another update would be given once the actual length of delay, or a realistic estimate was known.

2. **Reason for delay** was also important, particularly for commuters and those travelling for business purposes as these passengers needed to provide a valid reason for their delay to their employer. These passengers sought a transparent reason when there was unplanned disruption.
3. Information regarding **alternative routes** was considered important when passengers were unfamiliar with the route; this was often the case for leisure and business travellers. Across the research it was suggested that where there was detailed information about route alternatives, this should be provided in both audio and visual formats.

Across the research a key theme to emerge was the **transparency** of information provided by train operators during unplanned disruption. Participants sought greater transparency from train operators, specifically:

- Providing any information regarding unplanned disruptions as soon as it was available.
- Providing 'real' reasons for unplanned delays. There was much discussion regarding reasons for unplanned disruption across the research. Reasons that were considered to be generic and frequently used - such as 'signal failure' - were often distrusted, and participants sought greater transparency of the actual reason for the delay.
- Providing information regarding compensation schemes. Whilst there was low awareness of these schemes across the research, participants felt that these should be in place and passengers made aware of them.
- Providing details of emergency timetables via a range of channels. Participants felt that any use of emergency timetables should be clearly signposted. It was suggested that details could be sent to passengers by train operators via SMS text messages. It was further suggested that information boards be displayed the evening before emergency timetables came into action.

Finally, the research explored attitudes towards information provision via **websites**. Participants felt that it was essential for website information provision to be clear and easy to follow. To ensure that passengers are able to understand and use this information, participants suggested that websites should:

- Use colour coded systems in conjunction with written information to convey the status of routes or lines. For example, use red in conjunction with the text 'major delay'.
- Use symbols only where they are universally recognised.
- Provide train level detail for business and leisure passengers who seek information about a particular train. It was suggested that this could be provided as a click through option.
- Provide route or line level detail for commuters who need to know the next available train to their destination (rather than track a particular train).

2 Research background

Passenger Focus is a public body that protects the interests of Britain's rail passengers and England's bus passengers outside London and coach passengers on scheduled domestic services.

The aim of this research was to investigate passenger information needs during unplanned disruption. This key research objective was to: **identify passengers' information requirements and preferences during unplanned rail disruption**. The detailed objectives of the research were to explore:

- Satisfaction with current practice;
- What information passengers want, and how this should be communicated;
- What tone and language should be used;
- How current practice could be improved;
- Suggestions for new ways to communicate with passengers during unplanned disruption.

To ensure consistency across the research, the following definition of unplanned rail disruption was shown to all participants.

By delays and unplanned disruption we mean any delay to your train departure or arrival; a cancellation that causes you a delay; or a suspension of service, route closure or diversion that disrupts your journey. Delays, cancellations, suspensions, route closures or diversions caused by planned engineering works do not count.

3 Research approach

Qualitative research was carried out to fully explore passenger experiences of unplanned rail disruption, and to investigate in detail preferences for information provision. Six focus groups were carried out in March 2011 with members of the general public who had recent experience of unplanned disruption. Each focus group included eight people. To ensure that a range of train operator passengers were included, four focus groups were carried out in London and two focus groups were carried out in Birmingham.

Focus group members were invited in accordance with a set of quotas designed to ensure that the research captured views from those with different train journey needs and experiences. This included those travelling for work and leisure purposes and those travelling different distances. Journey distance was stratified using the following definitions:

- Short distance journeys: up to 30 minutes in length.
- Medium distance journeys: between 30 and 59 minutes in length.
- Long distance journeys: 60 minutes or more in length.

Each focus group included a mix of male and female participants and a spread of ages. The sample framework for each focus group is detailed below.

Group 1: London	Group 2: London	Group 3: London
Commuters	Business/ Leisure	Commuters
Short distance journeys	Medium/ long distance journeys	Medium distance journeys
Mix of train operators including:	Mix of train operators including:	Mix of train operators including:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southern • NXEA • First Great Western 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southern • East Coast • Virgin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southern • Southeastern • First Capital Connect
Group 4: London	Group 5: Birmingham	Group 6: Birmingham
Business/ Leisure	Commuters	Business/ Leisure
Medium/ long distance journeys	Short distance journeys	Medium/ long distance journeys
Mix of train operators including:	Mix of train operators including:	Mix of train operators including:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South West Trains • NXEA • First Great Western 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • London Midland • Chiltern • Cross Country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virgin • Cross Country • Arriva Trains Wales

Each focus group lasted 1.5 hours in length. A discussion guide was developed to fully explore all of the research objectives. The discussion guide can be found in the appendix. During the focus groups participants were shown a range of audio and visual stimulus to discuss, and help generate debate regarding information preferences.

4 Research context: passenger experiences

When thinking about unplanned disruption, focus group participants immediately thought about, and discussed, customer service. It was felt that regardless of the industry, when something went wrong, customers expected excellent customer service. Focus group participants spontaneously recalled times when they felt they had experienced excellent customer service. These examples were often from the retail industry, and companies such as John Lewis and M&S were considered to be at the forefront of excellent customer service.

When thinking about the travel industry, excellent customer service examples included Eurostar, where delayed passengers had been upgraded to first class travel, and an airline, where delayed passengers had been provided with accommodation and refreshments. Excellent customer service within the travel industry was often associated with the feeling that there was a 'duty of care' to ensure passengers were safe and able to get to their final destination.

Across the focus groups it was clear that there were high expectations for customer service. However, participants felt that they did not always receive excellent customer service from train operators when there was unplanned disruption.

When thinking about recent experiences of unplanned disruption, participants felt that customer service was inconsistent and usually dependent on the member of staff making announcements. **Positive experiences** cited by participants focused on times when information provision had been up to date and reliable, and staff had shown empathy, been honest and, in some circumstances, injected some humour into the situation. Positive experiences had also involved staff providing route alternatives that had helped people reach their final destination. **Negative experiences** typically involved a lack of information provision and lack of transparency regarding the length of the delay or the reason for the delay.

"It's the lack of information I find really frustrating because if you know there's not going to be a train then you can make other plans for the day." (London, Commuter)

"What frustrated me the most was not knowing what was going on." (London, Commuter)

"I find you get this blank [information] board that comes up and it's just like they expect you to have ESP [extra sensory perception] or something...because there's no information available...and then at the last minute you find you've got five minutes to get to another platform...so it's lack of information, lack of courtesy and I think customer service is a bit poor." (London, Commuter)

Participants also noted that in some instances members of staff had been unsympathetic towards the inconvenience caused to passengers.

"I found that most members of staff that I've approached, you feel they automatically have their back up that you're going to have a confrontation with them." (London, Business/ Leisure)

Negative experiences tended to result in participants questioning whether they were receiving value for money from their train fares, and encouraged them to question whether they were entitled to compensation.

"If it's their fault I think that they should give you your money back or at least compensate you in some way." (London, Business/ Leisure)

Across the research, few participants were aware of any compensation schemes. Only a couple of participants commented that they had used any compensation schemes. Most participants questioned whether there were compensation schemes and felt that train operators should provide more details regarding the availability of these.

Overall, these negative experiences had led participants to feel that train operators were not transparent with passengers during unplanned disruptions. In particular, many participants questioned the reasons for delays provided by train operators, and in some instances felt that these were "excuses" rather than valid reasons. Some reasons for delays such as signal failure and leaves on the line were considered old and repetitive.

"If a train's delayed you're thinking, what now, is it a leaf?" (London, Commuter)

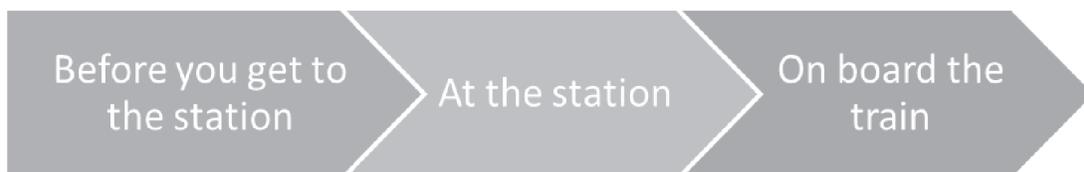
Overuse of some reasons for delay suggested that they were just being used as a 'stock response' and these participants wondered why train operators were not willing to provide the actual reason for the delay. Others commented that if delays were genuinely due to issues such as signal failure, it meant that train operators were not taking steps to resolve these issues, as they were repeatedly the cause for disruptions.

*"It's always signal failure...well why don't you get a new system?"
(London, Business/ Leisure)*

Overall, participants sought greater transparency regarding the reason for delay; this is further discussed in section 6.2 of this report.

5 The customer journey

Passengers were asked to think about information they sought or received with regards to unplanned disruptions during three stages of their rail journey:



5.1 Before you get to the station

Very few passengers actively sought information before they got to the station, although there was a strong appetite for SMS text message updates.

Few passengers routinely considered checking for information about rail services before they arrived at the station. Some participants mentioned that they occasionally came across travel information on the television or on the radio, but nobody reported that they purposely used these channels to seek information.

"This morning I heard there were staff shortages from Euston to Birmingham...so I did hear it on the TV this morning, on BBC radio local." (London, Business/ Leisure)

Passengers were most likely to proactively check for information if there were bad weather conditions such as snow, as they envisaged this could potentially cause delays.

A couple of participants habitually used smart phone applications to check whether their train route was running smoothly. These participants were commuters and were checking the running of their route to work.

Whilst participants assumed that information regarding the running of train services was available on train operator websites, some questioned whether this information would be up to date. Some envisaged that websites were updated infrequently and therefore worried that any information could be old, and unreliable. Channels such as television, radio and SMS text message were considered to be more reliable as the information was immediate, and up to date.

Across the focus groups there was low awareness of SMS text message services offered by train operators. A couple of participants had come across these services but the cost associated with them had been off-putting. Once asked about the provision of these, participants were keen to know more, and envisaged that the service would be useful; many participants spontaneously suggested that such a service should be provided by train operators. In general, the commuter focus groups showed a preference for SMS text messages that provided information regarding the running of their route/ train line. By contrast, business/ leisure focus group participants sought train specific information that detailed whether their specific train was running to schedule.

5.2 At the station

Live audio announcements were considered to be the most trusted source of information when at the station.

Once at the station, information boards were the first source of information about the running of trains.

However, participants were quick to agree that any live audio announcements would "override" the information boards. This was based on the assumption that live audio announcements were more likely to be up to date. Many participants also recalled times when information boards did not match audio announcements which suggested to them that information boards were not always up to date. Examples given included changes of platform, where information boards displayed one platform, which was then changed and announced via the tannoy.

Overall, live audio announcements were the preferred channel of information when waiting at the station, but participants were keen to note that any information should be provided via both audio and visual channels. Participants were particularly positive towards audio announcements because they were live, up to date and provided by a human and not a machine. It was also suggested that live audio announcements were more likely to be tailored to fit the exact situation at the station, whilst information provided via machines were less likely to have this flexibility. Again, this suggested to participants that live audio announcements were more likely to be correct.

Whilst audio announcements were liked, participants could recall times when audio announcements had been difficult to hear and unclear. Participants assumed that this was due to faulty audio equipment.

When thinking about how information provision at the station regarding unplanned disruptions could be improved, participants in London expressed a desire for greater visibility of staff. These participants noted that they would like to be able to see the member of staff making the audio announcements as they would like to know where the announcement was coming from, and of whom they could ask questions. It was noted that staff were visible on tube station platforms on the London Underground, and this was felt to be good practice.

"Because you can actually see them and they make the announcements, you are like 'oh, you made the announcement, what did you say?'...and you can go up to them and find out exactly what happened because they are receiving the information then and there. So I think at train stations that would be a really, really helpful point instead of having someone hidden away in the clouds talking to you." (London, Commuter)

Participants in the Birmingham focus groups noted that many of the stations they used were unstaffed. Therefore they had a higher level of reliance on the visual information and were keen that this be as up to date and accurate as possible.

5.3 On board the train

Frequent live audio announcements were considered the most important element of information provision when on board a train during unplanned disruption.

In line with the rail industry view, participants agreed that when a train stops, some information should be provided within two minutes. Whilst participants commented that they did not always receive information within two minutes, they felt that two minutes was an acceptable length of time to wait for an announcement. Following the initial announcement, participants suggested that subsequent announcements should be made either when there is any new information, or every 10 minutes to reassure passengers that information was being sought.

"If you're on a platform and you have to wait 60 minutes you can always go and do something else. On a train you want reassurance because you are stuck there." (Birmingham, Business/ Leisure)

When asked whether visual information on board a train would be appealing, participants agreed that a display detailing whether a train was 'running early', 'on time', or 'running late' would be useful. A couple of participants furthered this by suggesting that trains display the progress of the train against the geographical route, similar to the types of systems used on aeroplanes.



Participants were also very positive towards the idea of being informed of the location of the train conductor in any audio announcements. This reassured them that the train conductor was there to help and provide advice if needed.

"I think it's useful to say he's [train conductor] walking through, so you could, you know, get face-to-face information from him." (London, Business/ Leisure)

6 Information needs

Three core information needs emerged across the focus groups. These are fully discussed below, and are:

- Length of delay;
- Reason for delay;
- Route alternatives.

6.1 Length of delay

Across the research length of delay was considered the most important information to provide passengers when there is unplanned disruption.

During the focus groups participants discussed the importance of having accurate information about the length of delay. Once they knew the length of the delay they were able to judge the impact it would have on their day, and could make alternative plans if needed.

"The time factor...as to whether I'm going to walk out and try an alternative route or whether I'm going to wait." (London, Business/ Leisure)

"You need to know if you need to adopt another route, get on a bus to another station." (London, Commuter)

"Just tell me where the train is. Is the train twenty miles away, is it five miles away? They say the train is in Brighton, so it isn't going to be five minutes!" (London, Commuter)

Participants felt strongly that an accurate length of delay was important, but they recognised that it was not always possible to provide accurate information at the beginning of an incident. In these instances they wanted a realistic estimate as quickly as possible. Under-estimated lengths of delays were seen as particularly annoying as participants made a decision regarding their plans for the day based on the estimate provided by the train operator.

"The annoying thing is if they just say five minutes...whereas if they say there's going to be a two hour delay straight off, then you know you can make alternative arrangements." (London, Business/ Leisure)

6.2 Reason for delay

When providing reasons for delays, participants wanted train operators to be open and transparent.

Desire for knowing the reason for the delay was driven by participants needing, and wanting, to pass on the reason for their personal delay to work, family or friends. For this reason, they wanted train operators to be open and transparent regarding the reason for any unplanned disruption. Some participants also noted that they felt more in control of the situation if they knew the reason for the delay, and again sought openness in this explanation.

"If you're waiting in the station, if someone actually says 'this is what is happening' and so you have that information, the more information you have, the more power you have or the more in control of the situation you feel. If you don't have any information then you just feel like you're just standing around." (London, Commuter)

A couple of participants recalled needing to know the reason for delay when completing train operator compensation forms, and for this reason, they were keen to know why unplanned disruption had occurred.

Across the focus groups, participants explained that it was frustrating to not know the reason for unplanned disruption. It was noted that phrases such as 'a passenger incident' lacked depth and left passengers wondering why the delay had happened.

"A passenger incident...they never tell you, so everyone starts speculating, and the more you speculate, the hotter it gets." (London, Business/ Leisure)

"It's too woolly saying 'a problem with the track', what's the problem? (London, Commuter)

"Just to say 'an incident'...it could be anything. Is it a bomb? Is it someone on the track?" (London, Business/ Leisure)

It should be noted that across the research participants were clear that where the delay was due to something technical, they were keen to know the detail regarding the reason for the delay. However, when the reason for the delay was a passenger or animal on the track – a reason that was distressing – they preferred for the reason for delay to be kept broad.

To further explore preferences for information regarding the reason for the delay, participants were shown a range of potential explanations for some typical delays – these are shown in the table below, with the preferred explanation highlighted in blue.

To explain a delay caused by high winds meaning trains must travel more slowly than usual.	
a	Adverse weather conditions
b	High winds
c	Speed restrictions being introduced
d	Speed restrictions because of high winds

To explain a delay because a rail has broken.	
a	A problem with the track
b	Emergency engineering works
c	A broken rail

To explain a delay caused by a points failure.	
a	A points failure.
b	A problem with the track.
c	A signalling problem.

To explain a delay resulting from overhead wire failure earlier in the day.	
a	Late arrival of the incoming train.
b	Disruption to services earlier today because of overhead wire problems at [location].
c	A delay on a previous journey.

To explain a delay because a tractor and crop sprayer damaged the track when crossing the railway.	
a	A problem at a level crossing.
b	A problem with the track.
c	A tractor damaged the track at a level crossing.

All of these preferences demonstrate that participants valued transparency in information regarding unplanned disruption. Further examples such as 'leaves on the line' and 'snow' were spontaneously mentioned by participants. Again, participants felt that these lacked detail regarding the specific reason for the delay. For example, some noted that snow was cited as a reason for delay even when they were unable to see any snow in their local area; it transpired that the snowy weather had resulted in icy conditions which were the cause of the delay. These participants would have preferred to be told that the reason for the delay was 'ice had frozen the engines' or similar, rather than using the generic reason of snow or adverse weather conditions.

6.3 Route alternatives

Route alternatives were considered particularly important when travelling on an unfamiliar route.

When travelling on a less familiar route (which was often the case for leisure travellers), participants sought advice regarding how they could complete their journey when there was unplanned disruption. In particular, participants sought information about alternative train services, other modes of transport such as buses, or whether they could travel to another station and change trains in order to get to their destination via a different route.

"Is there an alternative bus service or something?" (London, Business/ Leisure)

6.4 Information need prioritisation

As shown in the diagram below, length of delay was consistently cited as the most important information to provide passengers during unplanned disruption. Following this, reason for delay and route alternatives were prioritised depending on the stage of the journey, purpose of the journey, and the passenger's familiarity with the train route.

"You want to know what's happened, and how is it going to affect me – how long [is the delay]?" (London, Commuter)

When thinking about the **stage of the journey**, to find out about unplanned disruption before arriving at the station, or when at the station, participants prioritised route alternatives over reason for delay. Participants felt that before they boarded a train, there was opportunity to take an alternative route, and therefore wanted to know the alternative route options. By contrast, when finding out about unplanned disruption whilst on board a train, participants noted that the reason for delay became more important than the alternative route options. When on board the train participants wanted to know why there was a delay so they could pass this on to work, or to family/ friends who were waiting for them.



Length of delay remained the top information priority regardless of **purpose of journey**. Among those travelling to work/ for business, next was the need to know the reason for the delay; again, this was so that they could provide a legitimate reason to work regarding the reason for their delay. Whilst reason for delay was also important for those travelling for leisure purposes (who wanted to inform family/ friends) demand for the information was stronger amongst commuters/ those travelling for business.

Familiarity with journey also affected information needs. Again, length of delay was considered the most important information to provide to passengers. However, following this, those who were infrequent travellers and less familiar with the train route reported a preference for being informed of route alternatives. These participants tended to feel more nervous about the route alternatives available and sought reassurance and advice regarding how they could complete their journey. Route alternatives were less of a priority for those who were familiar with their route and knew for themselves the other travel options available.

6.5 Information needs during major disruption

Participants were asked whether during times of major disruption (for example, the snow disruption in November 2010) they would prefer:

- a) A visual display showing all train services detailing which are cancelled and which are running.

- b) A visual display showing only train services running.

Across the research there were mixed views regarding which of these options was preferred. Those who would prefer all train services to be shown were those who were interested in a specific train. Broadly speaking, these participants tended to be travelling for business/ leisure, and were looking for information regarding a specific train that they had planned to take.

*"If I didn't see my train there at all I wouldn't know if it was cancelled."
(Birmingham, Business/ Leisure)*

Those who preferred for only those trains that were running to be shown were those who wanted to know the time of the next available service; these participants tended to be commuters.

During the focus groups participants were asked if they were aware of emergency timetables. Across the focus groups there was low awareness of these. Many assumed that emergency timetables equated to delays in services. A few expressed concern that an emergency timetable was put in place when there was a national emergency, and associated this with "*panic*". For this reason some participants suggested that the emergency timetables be called the 'adverse weather timetable' or 'snow timetable' when the major disruption was snow. Participants did not come to a consensus on what the timetable should be called, but felt that the word 'emergency' could convey the wrong message.

Finally, participants were asked how they would prefer to be told when an emergency timetable was being put in place. Spontaneously, participants suggested that they could be sent an SMS text message from the train operator. Commuters also suggested that this information be provided by audio announcement and visual display boards the day/ evening before the timetable is put in place; commuters noted that they would be likely to hear or see this information on their way home from work. Some noted that the London Underground currently provides display boards for planned weekend engineering work on tube lines at the ticket barriers at tube stations. Whilst participants recognised that these display boards were for planned works, they felt that this was a good way of providing information about both planned and unplanned rail disruption.

7 Information style preferences

When thinking about how information is provided, participants identified five key preferences and felt that these should be taken into account by train operators when providing information during unplanned disruption. These five preferences are detailed below.

Short announcements: Participants noted that they found it difficult to assimilate and retain information provided via long announcements. Short announcements were preferred as they were clear and to the point.

Up to date information: It was clear that real-time information was preferred by participants who were less trustful of channels that were considered slow to be updated (for example, visual information and websites).

"It says live information on some of the [websites], but it's probably from about twenty minutes previous." (London, Commuter)

As soon as possible: Participants expected train operators to provide information regarding unplanned disruptions as soon as it was available.

"Instantly, as soon as the problem occurs you want to know about it." (London, Commuter)

Live messages: Across the focus groups pre-recorded messages were disliked as they were considered to be impersonal. Further to this, participants felt that pre-recorded messages could never be fully relevant to the specific situation and so could lack detail and information that was important to convey to passengers.

"I was going to say about these automated voices, I think because they're not human you feel disconnected from it so you don't trust what you're hearing. So if you hear an automated voice you're thinking well, they're just playing something to placate people." (London, Commuter)

Participants voiced a clear preference for live messages that were real-time. Within this there were mixed views regarding the scripting of audio announcements. Whilst it was agreed that it made sense to script announcements to ensure consistency of information provision, there was potential for scripting to result in announcements that sounded "robotic". Participants suggested that it was the tone in which a scripted announcement is delivered that could be the difference between it sounding robotic or conversational. Preferences regarding the tone of messages are detailed in section 7.1 of this report.

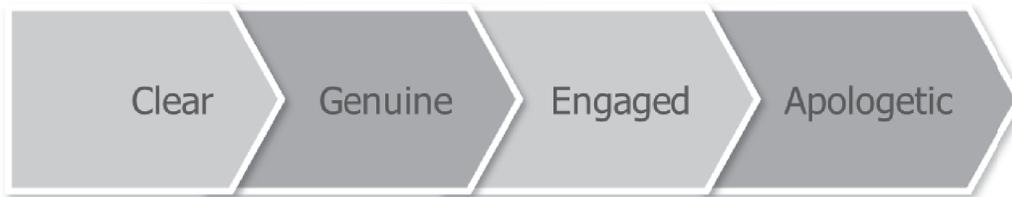
Signposting to detailed information: Where there was a lot of information to provide to passengers, such as alternative route options, participants felt that it was sensible to provide information both via audio announcement and visually on an information board. Specifically, they felt that it would be useful for the audio announcement to signpost passengers to more detailed information.

"I'd like him to say that if you've missed any of this information then its available on the board at platform X." (Birmingham, Commuter)

7.1 Language and tone preferences

Passengers sought information that was delivered clearly, and provided by a member of staff who genuinely wanted to help and inform people.

Across the focus groups, participants agreed that the following four attributes were important and expected when it came to the language and tone used.



Clarity of the information was considered to be of vital importance. Participants recalled times when they had not been able to understand an announcement, and this had left them feeling frustrated. They agreed that any announcement should be clear, without mumbling, and easy to understand.

A **genuine** feel to the announcement was frequently cited by participants as an important element to information delivery. Participants sought honest information, noting that they wanted train operators to *"tell me how it is"*. Closely linked to genuineness was a desire for the person delivering the information to be **engaged**. Participants used words like *"alive"* and *"awake"* to describe how they would like the member of staff to sound. Key to this was that the member of staff sounded as though they genuinely wanted to help passengers get to their final destination. As part of this it was expected that any information provision would be accompanied by a genuine **apology**; this was considered key to maintaining a positive relationship with passengers.

Whilst participants agreed that the above attributes were important to successful information delivery, there were mixed views on the following additional aspects:



Personal preference dictated attitudes towards these aspects. Whilst participants felt that a **caring** tone should be present in announcements, there were mixed views regarding the importance of this. Some felt that it was important that the member of staff conveyed sympathy with the situation and demonstrated that they understood the inconvenience to passengers. However, some raised concerns that this could sound *"over the top"* and these participants tended to favour a more **matter of fact** tone. They sought information that sounded *"neutral"* and *"factual"*.

"A bit of sincerity." (London, Business/ Leisure)

Those that were less positive towards a matter of fact tone noted that this could sound robotic and lack a personal or human touch. Finally, views were mixed when it came to the use of **humour** in announcements. Some participants felt that this provided light relief, and could

neutralise the situation; this was particularly the view when thinking about unplanned disruptions when on board a train, and when passengers were a captive audience.

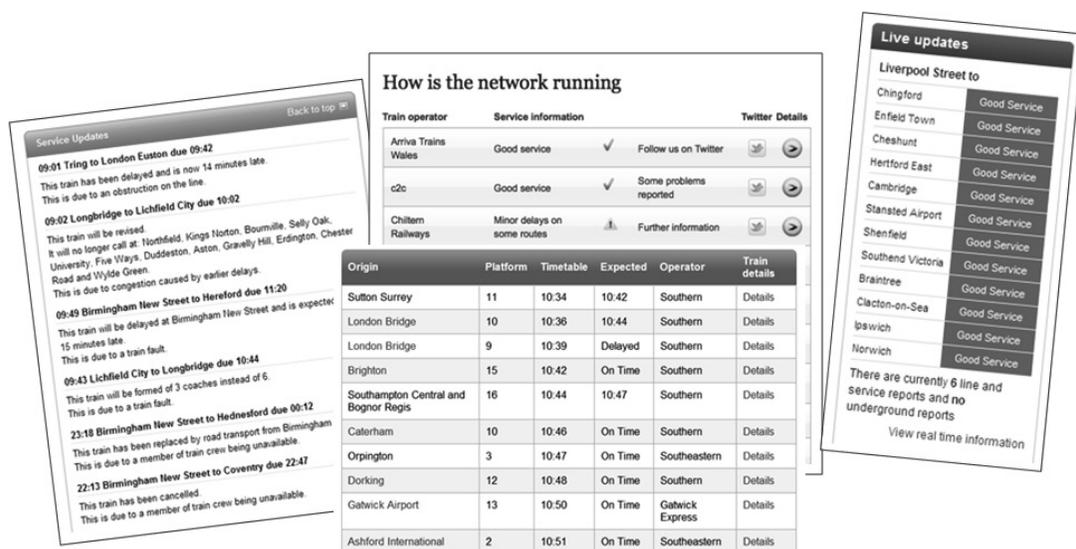
"Lighten the mood, it makes it a bit more pleasant...just have a laugh and a joke or whatever, just a bit more soft in the tone, and not so robotic." (London, Business/ Leisure)

However, some participants felt that a humorous tone was inappropriate and felt that it could annoy passengers or set an unprofessional tone.

8 Website information

Participants preferred information that was structured by train/route and colour-coded.

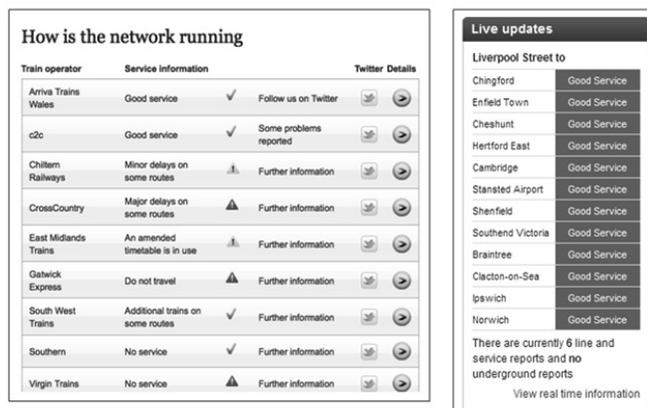
During the focus groups participants were shown examples of website information detailing whether there were any delays or disruptions (see examples below).



The examples included both detailed and summary information provision as well as the use of symbols and colour coding.

Upon reflection, participants assumed that the first tier of information provided was likely to be route or train operator level as shown in the two examples to the right.

This tier of information was sought by commuters whose key information need was to



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know when the next available train to their destination would be running.

By contrast, business and leisure participants were looking for information pertaining to the specific train they were planning to take. Therefore, they voiced a preference for more

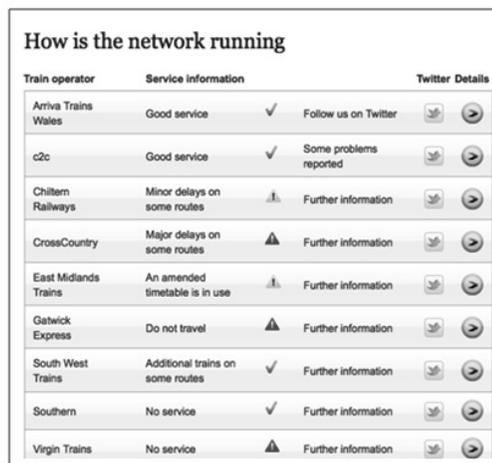
detailed information as shown on the left where they could look for their specific train. It should be noted that these participants did not envisage that this level of detail would be available in the top tier of information provision on a website. Instead,



Origin	Platform	Timetable	Expected	Operator	Train details
Sutton Surrey	11	10:34	10:42	Southern	Details
London Bridge	10	10:36	10:44	Southern	Details
London Bridge	9	10:39	Delayed	Southern	Details
Brighton	15	10:42	On Time	Southern	Details
Southampton Central and Bognor Regis	16	10:44	10:47	Southern	Details
Caterham	10	10:46	On Time	Southern	Details
Orpington	3	10:47	On Time	Southeastern	Details
Dorking	12	10:48	On Time	Southern	Details
Gatwick Airport	13	10:50	On Time	Gatwick Express	Details
Ashford International	2	10:51	On Time	Southeastern	Details

they assumed that this detail would be accessed by clicking on a 'more details' button.

When it came to clarity of website information, the use of symbols (as shown in the example to the right) was considered confusing. Participants felt that the symbols lacked universal definition and noted that they did not fully understand what the different symbols were meant to mean. For example, participants queried whether a red triangle meant that no services were running or that they were running with a delay.



"It's confusing...it's over-complicated...too many patterns, colours." (London, Business/ Leisure)

"Maybe the yellow [triangle] is like, I don't know, ten to twenty minutes [delay] or something, and then the red [triangle] is for thirty minutes [delay] or over." (London, Business/ Leisure)

Participants also noted that the written information did not always match the symbol which added to the lack of clarity. For example, the final two rows of the table both state 'no service' for service information, but one has a green tick, and the other a red triangle.

Across the focus groups it was clear that participants preferred a colour-coded system that incorporated a written description. The example shown to the right was cited as a good way of providing information. In the London focus groups this was likened to the information provided by London Underground at tube stations which again used written information highlighted in a specific colour (blue) to identify any problems with the tube lines. An example of this is shown below.

Bakerloo	Good service
Central	Good service
Circle	Good service
District	Part closure
H'smith & City	Good service
Jubilee	Planned closure
Metropolitan	Part closure
Northern	Good service
Piccadilly	Good service
Victoria	Good service
Waterloo & City	Planned closure
DLR	Good service
Overground	Part closure

Live updates	
Liverpool Street to	
Chingford	Good Service
Enfield Town	Good Service
Cheshunt	Good Service
Hertford East	Good Service
Cambridge	Good Service
Stansted Airport	Good Service
Shenfield	Good Service
Southend Victoria	Good Service
Braintree	Good Service
Clacton-on-Sea	Good Service
Ipswich	Good Service
Norwich	Good Service
There are currently 6 line and service reports and no underground reports	
View real time information	

Appendix: Discussion guide

Objectives:

The overall objective of these focus groups is to identify passengers' information requirements and preferences during delays and unplanned disruption. Specifically to explore:

- Satisfaction with current practice
- What information passengers want and how this should be communicated
- What tone and language should be used
- How current practice could be improved
- Suggestions for new ways to communicate with passengers during unplanned disruption

Note: this document is intended to guide the discussion. Not all questions may be asked in each focus group, or in the exact order as detailed below. The discussion will be tailored to reflect the focus group participants, their experiences and views.

Moderator note: please do not let participants dwell on negative comments as the aim is to generate discussion regarding requirements, preferences and improvements. Please also note and probe at any times when participants mention respect, care for customer, helping the customer resolve their journey, providing with information to help them avoid delays as these themes were highlighted in a previous PF report.

1. INTRODUCTIONS

5 mins

(Aim: introduce participants to the research, the moderator, and to each other.)

Moderator:

- Thank respondents for taking part in the research
- Introduce self and GfK NOP
- Explain purpose of research: *to talk about times when you have experienced a delay or unplanned disruption to a train service.*
- Discussion will last 1.5 hours and will be recorded for the purpose of the research
- Reassure: confidentiality, tape recorder, two-way mirror (where appropriate), MRS Code of Conduct
- Please can you turn off any mobile phones
- At the end of the discussion I'll be asking people to take part in some videoed vox pops
- Check people have their completed pre-tasks; we will refer to these later during the discussion.
- Explain importance of being able to say what they think, no right or wrong answers
- Any questions?

Participants:

I'd like to start by getting to know everyone a little bit. Let's introduce ourselves to each other. Tell me...

- Your first name, occupation, family set-up, hobby
- About one of the experiences you have written about in your pre-task.

2. SETTING THE SCENE

5 mins

(Aim: to set the scene for the discussion by understanding how participants understand 'delays and unplanned disruption', clarifying this term for the rest of the discussion.)

As mentioned, this evening we're going to be talking about delays and disruption to rail journeys. It could be a delay to an individual train, or it could be route-wide disruption. I just want to be clear, we'll be talking about delays and **unplanned** disruption – in other words things that have gone wrong, rather than timetable changes or route closures because of engineering work.

EXERCISE: WORD ASSOCIATION:

- What comes to mind when you hear the words 'delay' or 'disruption'?
- Why do these words come to mind?
- What do you consider to be a 'delay' or 'disruption'? How late constitutes a delay?

Moderator note: where distrust is spontaneously mentioned regarding reasons for delays explore reasons for distrust.

For the purposes of the discussion this evening, when thinking about delays and unplanned disruption, I'd like us to use the following definition.

UNPLANNED DISRUPTION:

By delays and unplanned disruption we mean any delay to your train departure or arrival; a cancellation that causes you a delay; or a suspension of service, route closure or diversion that disrupts your journey. Delays, cancellations, suspensions, route closures or diversions caused by planned engineering works do not count.

Moderator: stick the definition on the wall so that people can refer to this and remind themselves of the remit of the discussion throughout the session.

3. INFORMATION THROUGHOUT THE PASSENGER JOURNEY

40 mins

(Aim: to understand current information provision and expectations for information provision during different stages of the passenger journey)

I have removed the questions at the beginning of this section as we felt they were repetitive.

Now I'd like us to think about information that train companies provide when there are delays or unplanned disruption at three stages of your journey:

1. Before you get to the station
2. At the station/ platform
3. On board the train

Before you set off for the station (10 minutes of the 40)

- Do you generally know about delays and disruption before you set off for the station? If not, why not? What are the barriers to your knowing before you set off? Do you expect the train company to send information to you, or are you happy to check things out for yourself (i.e. push or pull).
- Ideally, what do you need to know about your trains before you set off for the station? How far in advance do you need to know?
- On the occasions when you do know about delays before you set off for the station, how have you found out?
 - Website using a computer (e.g. rail company or National Rail Enquiries)
 - Radio or television
 - Apps or accessing a website via mobile phone
 - Text messages, email or social media alerts on your mobile phone
 - Email alerts on your computer
 - Telephone (e.g. National Rail Enquiries)
 - Other
- Which of the above do you trust and why?
- *Moderator: explore feelings of trust.*
- What could be improved about these and what do you think is the best way for a train company to let you know about a problem before you set off for the station?

At the station/ platform (10 minutes of the 40)

- Ideally, what do you need to know once you have got to the station/are waiting on the platform when there are delays or disruption?
- What is the best way to tell you about delays and disruption once you are at the station?
Probe:
 - Visual display information
 - Audio PA/ tannoy announcements
 - Staff physically walking about providing information face to face
 - Platform help point
 - Other?
- Which of the above do you trust and why?
- *Moderator: explore feelings of trust.*
- When you are at the station do you use your mobile phone to get information by text, use an App, browse a website? Why? If the information at the station isn't meeting your needs, what else needs to be provided.

- When there are delays and disruption, how successful do you think train companies are at telling you what you need to know once you are at the station? What could they do better?

STIMULUS: EXAMPLES OF AUDIO ANNOUNCEMENT: - audio examples A and B with written script

- What do you think about this announcement?
 - What do you like/ dislike about it?
 - If you heard this announcement when there was unplanned disruption, how would it make you feel? Why?
 - What else should the message include? Anything that could be removed?
- What do you think about the language used? Why?
 - What type of language do you think should be used in these announcements? Why?
 - What type of language should not be used? Why?
- What do you think about the tone of the announcement?
 - Probe for comments on matter of fact vs. empathy
 - What type of tone should/ should not be used for these announcements? Why?

On board the train (15 minutes of the 40)

- Ideally, what do you need to know once you have got on the train and it becomes delayed or gets caught up in disruption?
- What is the best way to get that information to you?
 - Probe:
 - Visual display
 - PA/ tannoy announcements
 - Other?
 - Which of the above to you trust and why?
- When you are on the train do you use your mobile phone to get information by text, use an App, browse a website? Why? If the information given on the train isn't meeting your needs, what else needs to be provided.
- How successful do you think train companies are at telling you what you need to know if the train you are on is delayed or gets caught up in disruption? What could they do better?
- When a train stops, how long do you expect to wait until you are provided with some information?
- The rail industry regards it as good practice that within two minutes of a train making an unscheduled stop (e.g. at a red signal or because it has broken down) there will be an announcement.

- In your experience, does this generally happen?
 - Do you think two minutes is about right?
 - If you are still not moving, how often should there be an update announcement?
 - Even if you have not actually stopped, but have just made slow progress, after how many minutes delay do you think there should be an announcement?
- In future it may be possible, on trains with an automated visual display system, that the train could display – periodically throughout the journey – whether it is on time, early or late (and if so by how much). Would you welcome that confirmation?
 -

Thinking more about announcements on the train during disruption ...

STIMULUS: EXAMPLES OF AUDIO ANNOUNCEMENTS: - audio examples C and D with written script

Moderator: listen to audio announcements and discuss. Please explain that in reality there would be 5-10 minutes between the two announcements.

- What do you think about this announcement?
 - What do you like/ dislike about it?
 - If you heard this announcement when there was unplanned disruption, how would it make you feel? Why?
 - What else should the message include? Anything that could be removed? Anything missing?
- What do you think about the language used? Why?
 - What type of language do you think should be used in these announcements? Why?
 - What type of language should not be used? Why?
- What do you think about the tone of the announcement?
 - Probe for comments on matter of fact vs. empathy and script v.s off the cuff.
 - *Moderator: explore preferences for scripted vs. spontaneous on personalisation of message. Explore how much they feel should be scripted vs. spontaneous or a mixture of both.*
 - What type of tone should be used for these announcements? Why?
 - What tone should not be used? Why?
- How do you feel about pre-recorded messages?
 - What are the good things about pre-recorded messages during delays and disruption?
 - What are the bad things about pre-recorded messages during delays and disruption?

4. MAJOR DISRUPTION

10 mins

- When there is really major unplanned disruption – for whatever reason – there can come a point at which more trains are cancelled than are running. When this happens passen-

gers sometimes say they can't spot the trains that are running amid a 'sea' of trains marked "delayed" or "cancelled".

- Have you had experience of this?
- Is there a point at which disruption is so significant that it is better to display only the trains that are running, rather than a long list of those that are cancelled?
- What do these terms mean to you? Emergency timetable, contingency timetable, amended timetable, temporary timetable, snow timetable?
- Occasionally, generally because of the weather, train companies have to run a different timetable to normal – and at short notice (for example because of unexpectedly heavy snow):
 - How do you think these timetables would be best described? Emergency timetable, contingency timetable, amended timetable, temporary timetable? Something else?
 - What is the best way for train companies to make sure you know they're running a different timetable before you set off for the station?
 - Train company and National Rail website
 - Email/SMS
 - (for commuters) announcements on your way home the night before?
 - (for leisure and business) if a train company cancels a train you've reserved a seat on – and they've got your email address or mobile number – do you expect them to tell you? Would it help to know?
 - How successful do you think train companies are at telling you they will be running a different timetable to normal? What could they do better?

(Stimulus E and F – not in use.)

Now I'd like to think more now about the information that you are given when there is a delay to your train or disruption on your route ...

5. INFORMATION CONTENT: DELAY REASONS AND ESTIMATES 10 mins

(Aim: to explore expectations and preferences for the content of the information provided for unplanned disruptions)

- How important is it that you know the reason for the delay? Why?
 - Does your need to know the reason change depending on whether you have not yet left for the station; are stuck at the station unable to go anywhere; or are on a train that gets delayed?
 - Probe: is your need to know practical (e.g. you are making your own judgement about the likely length of the delay based on the reason given) or more emotional (e.g. it's just easier to accept if you know the cause)
- In recent years train companies have been using a standard list of agreed descriptions for various things that can go wrong and cause delay or disruption.

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- In general do you prefer them to be more detailed? Why/ why not? Does it make a difference if you have more detail?
- To what extent do you want to know the exact details? Why/ why not?

STIMULUS: EXAMPLES OF DETAILED VS LESS DETAILED INFORMATION: - stimulus pair G and H

- Which of these examples do you prefer? Why?
- What information is essential? What is unnecessary? What is missing?

STIMULUS: PREFERENCES FOR EXPLANATION: - stimulus I, J, K, L, M AND N.

Moderator: explore preferences for 2 of these per group - rotate this stimulus across groups to ensure all are covered across the research.

For each stimulus card:

- Which of these explanations do you prefer? Why?
- Length of delay
 - How important is it that you know how long the delay will be? Why?
 - Does your need to know how long you'll be delayed change depending on whether you have not yet left for the station; are stuck at the station unable to go anywhere; or are on a train that gets delayed?
 - Do you prefer to be given an immediate 'best estimate' of how long the delay will be, or not be given an estimate until the train company can be precise? Why?

6. INFORMATION FORMAT: WEBSITES 15 mins

(Aim: to explore expectations and preferences for the format of the information during an unplanned disruption)

STIMULUS: EXAMPLES OF INFORMATION ON WEBSITES:

- **Stimulus pair O and P: London Commuter groups**
- **Stimulus Q: London Commuter groups (ONLY SHOW IF HAVE TIME)**
- **Stimulus pair R and S: London and Birmingham business/ leisure groups**
- **Stimulus pair T and U: London and Birmingham business/ leisure groups**

Moderator: only show one stimulus pair per group. If have time please show stimulus Q in London commuter groups.

- What do you think about these examples of disruption information on websites?
 - Which ones do you like/ dislike? Why?
 - *For stimulus pairs:* which one do you prefer? Why? What information is essential? What information is unnecessary? What is missing?
 - If you read this information when there was unplanned disruption, how would it make you feel? Why?

- What do you think about the language used? Why?
- Which ones are best at helping you understand what the disruption means for you?
- How could they be improved?

STIMULUS: EXAMPLES OF INFORMATION ON WEBSITE: Stimulus V
ADDITIONAL EXAMPLE TO BE ADDED FOR COMPARISON – TO BE PROVIDED BY SULTANA

- This is the information you are provided on a train company website when you click on 'live information'.
 - How useful is this information? How clear is the information?
 - Is it useful to see about delays by specific train?
- Within the last year, National Rail Enquiries have launched a National Service Indicator on their website – designed to give an overview of how things are running across the rail network as a whole. They are about to tweak it a little and would like to get your reaction to the revised design ...

STIMULUS: NATIONAL RAIL ENQUIRIES NATIONAL SERVICE INDICATOR: Stimulus W

- What do you think of it? Have you ever come across it?
- What do the green tick and yellow and red triangles mean to you?
- What information would you expect if you clicked on "further information" against the train company you travel with?
 - A basic textual explanation? (e.g. A good service is operating except for London Waterloo to Hampton Court trains which are suspended because of a broken down train at (location))
 - Another "layer" of the indicator with that company's operation split into its different routes?
- Would you want to view the definition of "good service", "minor delays", "major delays" from this page?
- Would you expect the definitions to be common, irrespective of the train company you are travelling with? In other words that what constitutes "minor delay" on one company is the same as on another?
- A number of train companies have recently introduced "rainbow" boards on their websites

STIMULUS: NXEA RAINBOW BOARD: Stimulus X

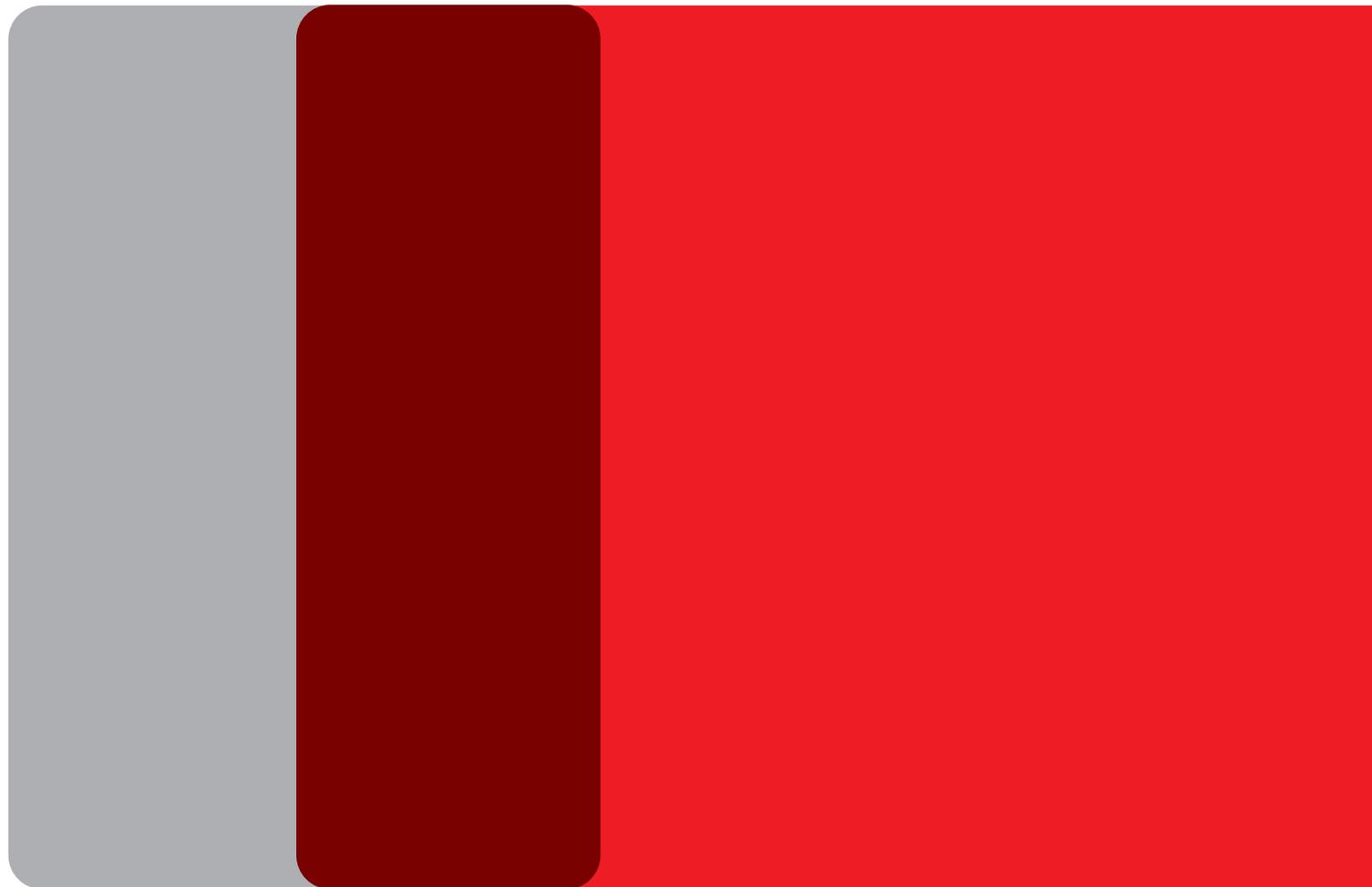
- Anybody familiar with them?
- Are they a good idea? What works, what doesn't?

7. SUMMARY AND CLOSE

5 mins

(Aim: thank participants for their time and sum up the discussion.)

- Finally, I'd like to go around the room and ask each person to tell me: if you could make one change to the way that train companies provide information to people when there is a delay or unplanned disruption, what would that change be?
- Any questions?
- Thank you for your time.
- *Moderator: collect completed pre-tasks and reveal client: Passenger Focus and Southern Trains. Passenger Focus are the National Passenger Watchdog.*



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