

Passenger Voice London

Independent national passenger watchdog

Passengerfocus
putting passengers first

Launch of new South Central franchise

Passenger Focus welcomes the continuity and improvements promised by Southern in its successful bid for another term at the helm of South Central

A wider role is envisaged for Passenger Focus, which will act as a 'critical friend', to help shape ideas before they are implemented and to assist with service quality management. The franchise incorporates National Passenger Survey targets for stations, trains and customer service, with a possible financial penalty as incentive, and a challenging target of 93.2% Public Performance Measure (trains arriving on time) by July 2015. A web-based passenger panel of 1000 will supplement Passenger Focus's surveys.

"Southern has bought into the idea that quality drives up revenue, and pricing

passengers off the network will form no part of its strategy," says Passenger Focus manager Sharon Hedges.

Among the benefits for passengers will be improvements to security, car and cycle parking, station travel plans at 30 stations, and more later-evening trains from London and on the Brighton-Worthing line. Station staff will be increased and more gates installed. There will be a £3.6 million investment in seven showcase stations on the Brighton line by March 2011, with better lighting, passenger information systems and improved waiting rooms and toilets.



Pictured are Southern managing director Chris Burchell with Anthony Smith, Passenger Focus chief executive, and Lord Andrew Adonis, Secretary of State for Transport, at the franchise launch in Eastbourne recently. The poster was designed in response to a recommendation in Passenger Focus's Fares and Ticketing Study.

Southern has also agreed to try Passenger Focus's idea of advertising at the station

the cheapest 'buy on the day' return price for a through ticket for popular destinations.

South London line research

Passenger Focus welcomes the massive investment happening to improve passenger journeys into and around the capital. However, London TravelWatch and Passenger Focus have been investigating the impact of service changes on the South London Line (SLL).

The line currently links Victoria with London Bridge via a number of stations in south London which are not served by the tube. The changes are being caused by work to reconstruct London Bridge Station for the Thameslink Programme and by the East London Line extension works to Clapham Junction.

It was originally expected that an alternative service would operate between Victoria and Bellingham via Clapham High Street, Wandsworth Road, Peckham Rye

and Denmark Hill, but this proposal has been dropped. The passenger watchdogs are concerned that many current users of SLL services will be severely inconvenienced if a rail replacement is not provided.



Watchdogs concerned for passengers

Finding out passenger rail priorities for the Kent RUS

To inform Passenger Focus's response to Network Rail's consultation on the Kent Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS), 3413 passengers have been interviewed on four routes serving the county: East Kent via Faversham; the Medway Towns; East Kent via Ashford and Tonbridge; and Ashford International via Maidstone East. The RUS looks at the future needs of the rail network and identifies gaps, which need to be addressed by Network Rail in its future planning. The research found that over a third of passengers said that if the train was not available they would drive to their

"37% of passengers would reduce their use of rail if trains were less frequent."

destination, while a quarter said they would use either the bus or coach. However, for a third of passengers surveyed, the train was the only mode of transport they could use to make their journey.

In terms of passenger satisfaction with their rail services, value for money had the lowest satisfaction score at just 32% and was among passengers' top five priorities for improvement.

The other top improvements that passengers want to see are to punctuality and reliability, frequency of train services, ability to get a seat and faster journey times. Only one in eight passengers had difficulty finding a car-park space. Getting a seat was a

problem for one in four passengers.

Over half of all passengers made it clear that they want later-evening trains on weekdays and weekends (especially Saturday). Tellingly, 37% of passengers would reduce their use of rail if trains were less frequent, while 33% would use them more if frequency was increased.

The research also sought passengers' opinions on the high-speed services. Two out of five passengers were unaware of the Javelin high-speed services to St Pancras. 45% said they would consider using them, 34% would not with the remainder uncertain. A premium of 10% for their use would be acceptable to 58% of passengers, but that fell to 28% if the premium was 20%. Apart from the cost, passengers wanted the flexible ticketing which would easily allow them to use either the high speed or existing train services.

The survey results played a key role in Passenger Focus's response to Network Rail's consultation on the Kent RUS. This can be viewed at www.passengerfocus.org.uk

Work starts on new rail study

The steering group working on the London and South East Route Utilisation Strategy met for the first time in October. The Route Utilisation Strategy looks at the future needs of the rail network and identifies gaps which need to be addressed by Network Rail in its future planning. Passenger Focus has agreed to contribute to work on London issues

and on a specific update looking at services for passengers in the South Hampshire area. It will also follow overall progress and the freight workstream through the steering group. A consultation draft document is expected in spring/summer 2010. Updates on progress will be published on the Passenger Focus website.

Focusing on station standards



Passenger Focus continues to champion an uplift in station standards on National Express East Anglia and First Capital Connect, working with key staff to help them understand what passengers need. Passenger Focus manager Guy Dangerfield said: "We will highlight where station standards are not good enough and seek actions to turn things round. This is particularly important at a time of belt-tightening when, for example, cleaning budgets may be under pressure."



What do passengers want?

The current term of the c2c franchise comes to an end in May 2011 and the Department for Transport (DfT) has started looking at the next deal.

Following on from Passenger Focus's involvement on behalf of passengers in the Southern re-franchising process the watchdog is helping to find out what rail service improvements passengers would like to see.

Passenger Focus is working closely with the DfT, c2c, local stakeholders, rail

user groups and the c2c Passenger Panel to ensure it understands aspirations for improvements on the route. It has also surveyed over 1000 passengers to find out what service improvements and priorities they have for the new franchise. Passenger groups have helped in shaping the survey questionnaire.

The watchdog will be using the research to inform its submission to the DfT which will outline passenger priorities for the new franchise.