

Passenger Voice Scotland

Independent national passenger watchdog

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West Coast RUS research kicks off

Network Rail's West Coast Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) is one of the last geographic RUSs to be undertaken, and Passenger Focus has begun research to inform its input. 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. Besides the trains that use the route from end to end, there are numerous sections used by the cross-country, regional and local services run by seven train operating companies. Therefore, for research purposes, the route

is being divided into six key areas: Euston–Milton Keynes; Nuneaton–Tamworth; Crewe–Wilmslow; Chester–Llandudno; Euston to Manchester and Liverpool; and Lancaster–Glasgow.

The draft RUS consultation document should be sent out late Autumn 2010 with a final document published in 2011.

Passenger Focus manager Julie Warburton is also starting work on planning passenger research to feed into the specification for the West Coast franchise from 2012 when Virgin Trains' contract comes to an end.



Passengers can comment on plans

New hi-tech travel service for Stirling

Passengers using Stirling station can now plan their journey with the help of new state-of-the-art equipment offering interactive travel services and real-time advice.

The Smart Point terminal, funded by Transport Scotland, is the latest phase of a £650,000 upgrade of Stirling station, co-funded by ScotRail and Transport Scotland. Passenger Focus will be monitoring how the new system is received by passengers.

The Smart Point provides up-to-the-minute train departure information and a touch-screen offers free access to journey planning, timetables and local area information, all of which can be printed off to take away.

Similar terminals are due to be installed at Aberdeen, Glasgow Queen Street and Edinburgh Waverley stations.

Travel from London to Scotland in just two hours by train

Passenger Focus has welcomed the conclusion by Network Rail that there is a strong business case for building a new 200mph high-speed line between London and Scotland, serving both Birmingham and Manchester

Network Rail's investigation into how to address the challenge of growing demand on the railways began last June and ran to over 1500 pages of research, modelling and analysis. It found that a new high-speed London–Scotland line offered the best option, generating almost £55bn of value with a capital construction cost of £34 billion.

Benefits would include economic growth, regeneration and social inclusion. The review concluded that it would also offer a low-carbon alternative to flying, take cars and lorries off the road, and release capacity on the existing rail network.

Passenger Focus manager for Scotland, Robert Samson, said: "By removing longer-distance journeys from the classic network it would improve capacity between regional

centres, acting as a catalyst for economic development in areas away from London and the South East of England.

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"It is undeniable that building this new line will be expensive. The current economic climate is unfavourable, certainly, but it would be a number of years before any significant funding would be needed to build it. Additionally, the benefits of building it are so substantial, and the consequences of not building it so severe, that we believe it is essential that further progress is made."

Review of station car parking

Passenger Focus's research reveals low satisfaction with car-parking facilities at stations, confirmed in the most recent National Passenger Survey results (NPS). The survey found only 44% of respondents rated the station car park as good. First ScotRail's score was marginally better, but still only 47%.

In Scotland, there is no nationally-applied policy on the provision or charging for car parks, which is set on a station-specific basis. Now, Transport Scotland is seeking views from stakeholders on the development and delivery of a policy that will encourage motorists to leave their cars

at the station and take the train for the rest of their journey.

Findings from recent research carried out by Passenger Focus on four Scottish routes showed a considerable lack of car-parking capacity. Between 20%

and 40% of drivers either never or hardly ever found a space.

Respondents also revealed an unwillingness to pay much for a car park. A large proportion said they would stop driving to the station if the charges were more than they considered

"A large proportion said they would stop driving to the station if the charges were more than they considered 'fair'."

"fair." In addition, the research found that introducing a charge for parking that is

currently free would result in considerable numbers of people deserting rail (nearly 10% on the Edinburgh–Aberdeen route, for example).

The conclusions from the research were:

- there is a need for more affordable station car parks
- increases in charges could deter passengers from rail travel, so much wider analysis and consideration is required
- the high cost of creating additional parking spaces requires phased implementation at carefully selected locations
- demand for spaces should be reduced by promoting car sharing, cycling to the station and improved bus-rail integration.

Robert Samson, Passenger Focus manager for Scotland, said: "Our research demonstrates the need for more affordable station car parks and the suppressed demand for car parking. Transport Scotland needs to address these issues."

Shaping a new East Coast franchise

Passengers want punctual and reliable trains, value for money and to be able to get a seat on services run under the new East Coast franchise.

As National Express handed back the franchise to the Government, Passenger Focus completed research asking what passengers want delivered by the future operator.

Guy Dangerfield, Passenger Focus manager, said the return of the franchise to the Government brought an end to the period of uncertainty. He commented: "Passengers were relieved that the transfer was smooth and will welcome assurances that the level

and quality of service will not suffer.

"Looking forward, it is most important that passenger needs and priorities are at the heart of any future franchise. In the last two months we have surveyed over 6000 passengers on this route and have fed their views to the Government – we hope passengers' concerns and aspirations are central to the next franchise."

Passenger Focus is also working with the Department for Transport to understand passengers' views about various service quality issues to be addressed during the period when the Government has direct responsibility for the East Coast franchise.

Helping passengers during delays

Passenger Focus, in partnership with ScotRail, has been carrying out workshops to gain a better understanding of why passengers are so dissatisfied with the way train companies handle delays.

The most recent National Passenger Survey results found only 42% of passengers in Scotland were happy with delay-handling.

Participants in the workshops have included Passenger Focus, ScotRail customer service staff and passengers, and are designed to find out the type of information rail users require on the train and at stations when delays occur.

The findings will help ScotRail improve the way it communicates delays to passengers.

CrossCountry agrees to route-level NPS results

CrossCountry has accepted Passenger Focus's recommendation that the results of the National Passenger Survey (NPS) will be more effective if broken down to route level.

The train operator has the widest and most diverse franchise of any train operator, running services in the South, South West, East Midlands and North East of England and Scotland. Its huge geographic spread means that NPS results averaged across its entire network are not

always meaningful enough for detailed business planning, which delivers improvements to passengers.

To demonstrate the value of route-level NPS results, Passenger Focus developed reports based on the results for key CrossCountry lines, which showed the main passenger concerns in different parts of the network and highlighted areas for targeting improvements.

CrossCountry is providing Passenger Focus with essential

information about a number of key routes radiating from the core of its network in Birmingham so that it can provide data on passenger perception at route-level for the Autumn 2009 wave of the NPS. While CrossCountry is unique in not having responsibility for any stations, the NPS also provides details of passengers' needs at the stations it serves.

Passenger Focus manager Sue Tibbett, said: "The results from this wave will provide a



much clearer indication of passenger satisfaction with CrossCountry journeys and enable us to work more effectively together to target and deliver improvements with the resources available. We will monitor the usefulness of the building blocks and adjust if necessary for future waves."