

Passenger Voice South East

Independent national passenger watchdog



Watchdog puts passengers on party agenda

September and October saw Passenger Focus travel to the main Great Britain political party conferences, including to Brighton for the Labour

Party event. As part of its future role as bus and coach passenger champion (subject to approval by Parliament), the independent

passenger watchdog discussed its future bus role with delegates. It also held a fringe-event where the question 'Do we need government more or less involved in rail and bus services?' was posed to several guest speakers as well as the audience.



Passenger Focus chief executive Anthony Smith (right) at the Passenger Focus bus with the Association of Train Operating Companies' chief executive Michael Roberts (left) and its interim chair Tom Smith (middle).

Work underway on new generation RUS for London and South East

The steering group for the London and South East Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) met for the first time in October. 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. Passenger Focus has agreed to contribute to work on London issues and on a specific update looking at services servicing 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.

South London line research



Watchdogs have concerns for passengers

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 mitigating service is not provided.

Passenger Focus manager, Sharon Hedges is supporting Transport for London and London TravelWatch in evaluating options to address the problem.

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', helping to shape ideas before they are implemented and assisting 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



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.

systems and improved waiting rooms and toilets.

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.



Passenger Focus is exploring bus passenger issues

South East bus pilot continues



Passenger Focus manager Jocelyn Pearson has been leading work on the bus passenger satisfaction survey in Southampton.

Councillors, transport officers and operators have been looking at how the research can be used to improve services in the region. Improving information at bus stops is high on the agenda, and Passenger Focus is happy to be involved in ongoing work in Southampton.

Meanwhile, in Milton Keynes, Passenger Focus is working with Arriva and the council on research into passenger satisfaction with bus services.

In a separate piece of work for Milton Keynes council, Passenger Focus will be looking at the views of people who don't use buses – yet! Bus satisfaction research is also planned for Medway, Brighton and Hampshire.

News roundup

- **New face in the South East**
Paul Bentley, below, has joined Passenger Focus from South West Trains (SWT) and comes with a wealth of knowledge about SWT stations, accessibility issues and disruption mitigation. He will be working with Jocelyn Pearson on both bus and rail issues in the South East.



Accessibility issues at Alton resolved

Passenger Focus has applauded Network Rail's commitment to improve accessibility at Alton station after years of lobbying by the watchdog and the wider community

The news that work will start in November to make accessible South West Trains' Alton station in Hampshire will be good news for those attending Treloar College. The college works with or provides resources for young people aged 16 or over with physical disabilities and students travel

from all over the UK and overseas to attend. Passenger Focus manager Jocelyn Pearson has been working with Network Rail over recent months and praises Richard O'Brien, Network Rail's Wessex route director, for finding a solution to what seemed an insoluble problem.