

Passengers' views on trains should be paramount

Passengers have high expectations from the next generation of trains and want more luggage space, better toilets and more comfortable seating included in new designs.

Passenger Focus has revealed the findings of research looking at passenger satisfaction with a range of intercity train interiors. The study is intended to help with the design of the new Super Express Trains. Passenger Focus is now calling on the industry to build mock-ups of the new trains to run on the East Coast Main Line and Great Western Main Line, giving passengers the opportunity to provide feedback on design.

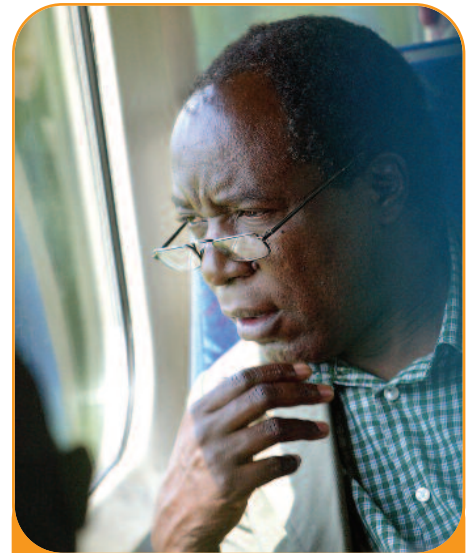
The national passenger watchdog's research looked at passengers' views



Anthony Smith

Anthony Smith, Passenger Focus chief executive, said: "Some of the trains currently running on these lines are at least 30 years old. Modern trains with better performance and passenger capacity are urgently needed.

"Passengers will be buying tickets to travel on these trains for the next 30 or 40 years, so it is only right that they're given a say on how trains for the 21st century should be designed."



Passengers comment on train design

on the design of trains currently running across the British rail network. The findings show that while passengers want improved luggage space, this should not impact on the comfort of their journey. They also expect seating and legroom to be of a standard which at least meets current best practice.

The design should include improvements to grab rails, seat reservation systems and better designed toilet facilities.

The report, 'Designing the future: Passengers' preferences for new national intercity rolling stock from 2012' is available to download from www.passengerfocus.org.uk

Passengers report satisfaction with rail journey

More than 25,000 passengers have given their view of the country's railway in Passenger Focus's Spring 2009 National Passenger Survey.

The survey found the majority of passengers (81%) across Great Britain say they are satisfied with their rail experience.

The national passenger watchdog is now working with Great Britain's train companies to improve those areas passengers have identified as being problematic.

Anthony Smith, Passenger Focus chief executive, said: "Despite the credit crunch and

train companies cutting staff, reducing cleaning and other services in some locations, passenger satisfaction has held up since last spring. This must be partly due to continued overall improvements in trains arriving on time – the key factor that underpins rail passenger satisfaction."

The National Passenger Survey is now classified as Official Statistics and is named in the Official Statistics Order 2009. Full National Passenger Survey results can be found at www.passengerfocus.org.uk

East Midlands

Train Operating Company (TOC)	Overall % satisfied	Passengers' satisfaction up	Passengers' satisfaction down
CrossCountry	85	Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand	–
East Midlands Trains	80	Connections with other forms of public transport	–
National Express East Coast	87	Facilities for car parking	Connections with other forms of public transport
Northern	80	–	Train toilet facilities

National Express rail future reviewed

The future of a National Express-run franchise is under review following the company predicting that without a renegotiation of franchise arrangements it would have to hand back its East Coast business

The Government has established a publicly owned company to take over the franchise if National Express defaults on its deal at the end of the year.

Anthony Smith, Passenger Focus chief executive, said:

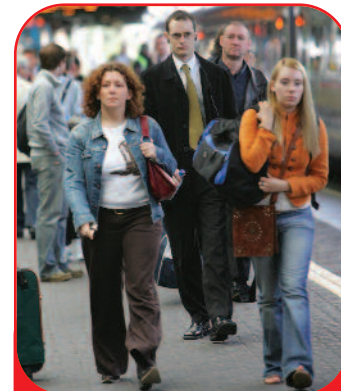
“This potentially brings an end to a period of uncertainty as passengers became

increasingly squeezed between government and the train operating company in an unrealistic deal. Passengers will welcome the assurances from government that the level and quality of service will not suffer in the meantime. Passenger Focus will monitor this very closely.

“Now we must begin the

task of building a new passenger-focused franchise that puts passenger needs first.”

Andrew Adonis, Secretary of State for Transport, said: “I can assure the travelling public that services will continue without disruption and all tickets will be honoured”. Lord Adonis said he was now considering whether National Express



Promise: Passengers won't be disrupted

will be able to keep its c2c and East Anglia franchises.

Passenger Focus has reported its concerns over recent months about increases in parking costs, seat reservation charges and staff cuts.

News roundup

- **Sheffield gates opposition**
Passenger Focus continues its opposition to the scheme to fit automatic ticket gates at Sheffield station because it restricts access to a key stop on the city's tram network.
- **Sunday working**
East Midlands Trains' Sunday services are returning to normal with drivers volunteering to work. Passengers have faced disruption on several Sundays over recent weeks. Passenger manager Guy Dangerfield said: “This is good news for East Midlands Trains' passengers – being unable to operate the published timetable was an untenable position.”
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Opposition to seat reservation charges

National Express East Coast's (NEXC) £2.50 charge for many seat reservations has been greeted with dismay. The fee came on top of other recent fare increases and at a time of negative inflation. Guy Dangerfield, Passenger Focus manager, said: “Charging passengers to reserve a seat beggars belief; this is another example of back-door fare rises. Some National Express routes cover long journeys, cost considerable amounts of

money and passengers expect that getting a seat is covered in this ticket price.” The fee applies only to passengers who book flexible standard-class tickets (Anytime, Off-Peak, Super Off-Peak). It will not apply if reserving a seat in first class or to anyone booking Advance tickets. NEXC says it is softening the blow by bringing back the 10% online booking discount for certain tickets for passengers using its website.



Guy Dangerfield

Early input to future rail plans

Passenger Focus is working to provide rail user groups with an early opportunity to help shape the scope of a 'second generation' Route Utilisation Strategy for London and the South East. An initial consultation meeting in July asked passengers to consider key issues and potential solutions to be fed into the steering group. Further input will be invited during the next stages of work.

Catering on CrossCountry examined

CrossCountry has analysed passengers' preferences for catering on its services, comparing the at-seat service with the 'shop' facility which was provided on Voyager trains. Passenger Focus research shows that getting

a seat is the number one priority for CrossCountry passengers and having to get up to buy refreshments can mean passengers run the risk of losing their seat. Many passengers also favour the at-seat service

because they are reluctant to leave luggage unattended. As Passenger Focus manager Sue Tibbett comments: “The important thing for passengers is that CrossCountry provides access to affordable, good quality refreshments on its long-distance services. We will be reviewing how this new at-seat service is received by passengers.”