

Gates at stations prompt debate

Proposals to install ticket barriers at stations occasionally arouse fierce controversy

Passenger Focus supports the principle of gating but their introduction should be judged on a case-by-case basis to ensure paying passengers will benefit from their installation. It is clear that at some stations, such as Sheffield, the disadvantages may outweigh the benefits. In York careful consideration needs to be given to whether this is an appropriate solution.

In an ideal world, gates would be unnecessary. Gates slow passengers down, force them to juggle luggage and tickets as they go through and

create a sense of exclusion. However, automatic ticket gates are becoming an increasingly common feature at stations as train companies try to crack down on fare dodgers and protect revenue.

At York, Passenger Focus wants to ensure that Grand Central's clear, simple offer to buy your ticket on the train is preserved.

Passenger Focus continues to raise its concerns with National Express and East Midlands Trains about the installation of gates in York and Sheffield.



Gate controversy

Catering changes on National Express East Coast

Passenger Focus will be monitoring passenger reaction to the new catering 'offer' on National Express East Coast services following the elimination of most dining-car services. Key to the success of the new concept will be consistent, timely delivery.



Exploratory bus research

As part of its work to help define its new role, Passenger Focus is carrying out bus passenger satisfaction work in the Lincolnshire area. In collaboration with a research agency, Passenger Focus has been looking at how research will be scoped, how information will be gathered, how results will be used and presented, and what can be determined from the data that will help achieve improvements for passengers. The research should be completed



by the end of May.

Research has also been carried out in Nottingham and stakeholder interviews have been held with local operator Trent Barton, Nottingham City Council

and Nottinghamshire County Council to look into complaint-handling arrangements. Finally, work has been undertaken in Newark-on-Trent to look into the operation and

impact of the concessionary fares scheme on passengers, local authorities and operators. The scheme allows those over 60 to travel free on buses outside peak hours.

Significant improvements on East Midlands Trains

Headline figures for East Midlands Trains (EMT) in the Autumn 2008 National Passenger Survey were broadly unchanged, but there were significant improvements in scores for provision of information about trains/times at stations, upkeep/repair of the station buildings and platforms, connections with other forms of public transport, the overall station environment and the

cleanliness of train exteriors. Passenger satisfaction with value for money stands at 49% and the way EMT dealt with delays at 43%, both slightly below comparable Train Operating Companies.

The overall satisfaction score of 81% is being dragged down by the shortcomings of Norwich –Liverpool services, a recurrent theme of Passenger Voice.



Results of London Midland plan awaited

Passengers are hoping that an action plan by London Midland (LM) will end a period of sustained poor performance caused through a combination of timetable changes, infrastructure problems and poor train availability. The impact of short-notice cancellations and platform changes was exacerbated by poor communication.

Passenger Focus's Paul Fullwood

has raised these issues with LM, which is producing an action plan to be presented to the Department for Transport (DfT). As a 'thank you' to passengers and in recognition of these issues, LM has given three days' free travel to season-ticket holders between Northampton and London Euston and on the Marston Vale and Watford Abbey branches.

The National Passenger Survey revealed an overall satisfaction figure of 80%. Figures for the upkeep and repair of trains and the cleanliness of the interior of trains were up; but scores for six factors declined, including for ticket buying facilities and car-parking. Passengers' satisfaction with value for money remained at 46%.

Passenger perceptions of personal security

Anthony Smith, Passenger Focus chief executive has highlighted the importance of staff at stations and staff walking through the train at the Railway Community Safety Forum 2009 held recently.

Mr Smith presented Passenger Focus's latest document 'Passenger perceptions of personal security on the railways' at the



forum which explored how to reduce crime on Britain's railways. The national rail watchdog's document brings together all of Passenger Focus's research looking at safety and security at the station and on the train. The report notes that passenger satisfaction with security has increased over recent years but there is still room for improvement.

Mr Smith commented: "In the current climate where train companies are looking to reduce costs, the industry must be mindful that passengers want a staff presence on trains and at the station for security reasons. Staff are needed to provide advice, help for passengers with accessibility issues and can sell tickets. But importantly, passengers tell us staff offer a sense of security. CCTV, lighting and help points all go a long way to make passengers feel safer at stations, but a

staff presence is the one thing that really reassures passengers."

Within the report, Passenger Focus expresses its support for both the Secure Stations and Secure Car Parks schemes and welcomes the use of the National Passenger Survey to gauge passengers' perceptions of security at stations applying for accreditation. However, evidence highlights that not enough passengers know about the schemes, which may limit their effectiveness in changing passenger perceptions of personal security on the railway. Passenger Focus has therefore met with the Department for Transport to discuss how it can help the industry raise passenger awareness of the schemes and the benefits they can help deliver.

The Passenger Focus document 'Passenger perceptions of personal security on the railways' is available to download at: www.passengerfocus.org.uk