

# Passenger Voice

## East of England

Independent national passenger watchdog



### 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



Anthony Smith

Anthony Smith, Passenger Focus chief executive, said: "Some trains currently running on these lines are at least 30 years old. Modern, comfortable 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."

research looked at passengers' views 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



Passengers comment on train design

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](http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk) or call 0300 123 0860.

### Passengers report satisfaction with their 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 (NPS). 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](http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk)

#### East of England

Train Operating Company (TOC)	Overall % satisfied	Passengers' satisfaction up	Passengers' satisfaction down
c2c	91	Cleanliness of the station	–
CrossCountry	85	Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand	–
East Midlands Trains	80	Connections with other forms of public transport	–
First Capital Connect	76	The comfort of the seating area	Punctuality/reliability
National Express East Anglia	76	–	Frequency of the trains
National Express East Coast	87	Facilities for car parking	Connections with other forms of public transport

## National Express rail future reviewed

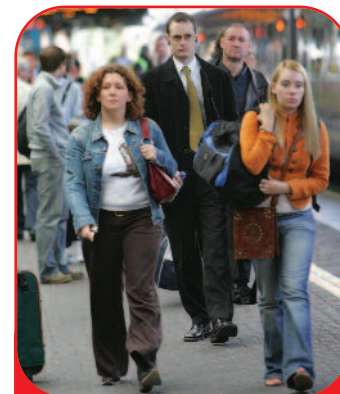
The future of a National Express-run franchise is under review following the company predicting that without a renegotiation of franchise arrangements it would have to hand back its East Coast business

**T**he 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 will be



**Promise: Passengers won't be disrupted**

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.

## Passenger Panel at the heart of c2c's decision-making

Passengers are helping to shape and improve the service they receive from train operator c2c through ongoing consultation with a passenger panel.

The c2c Passenger Panel has been running for over a year and a half. Supported

by both c2c and Passenger Focus, it has proved to be very useful in giving passengers a direct say in the service issues that affect them. Membership includes a good cross-section of c2c's passengers. Panel members use the opportunity to bring issues to c2c's

senior managers' attention, some from passengers who write directly to panel members.

A good example of what members do is provide feedback immediately after any service disruption, helping c2c to find ways to reduce the impact on passengers.

### News roundup

- **Norwich gate review**  
Passenger Focus is in discussions with National Express East Anglia about various issues to improve management of the automatic ticket barriers at Norwich station.

- **More room on trains**  
After years of waiting, passengers using Great Northern services from Cambridge, Royston, Hitchin and Stevenage now benefit from significant extra capacity delivered by First Capital Connect's new timetable. Passenger manager Guy Dangerfield said: "Having 12 coaches on some key trains is good news for passengers and standing on the peak Cambridge 'fasts' is much reduced, but it is crucial that plans are developed now to increase capacity further.

## New trains for busy routes

National Express East Anglia and the Government have agreed on plans to increase capacity on overcrowded routes. Passengers can look forward to new trains on the West Anglia and Stansted Express routes, while extra trains will be drafted in to give more seats on other lines.

In contrast to the West Anglia route, the long-term strategy for the Great Eastern Main Line is unclear. Passenger Focus will make sure that the needs of passengers in Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex are put forward when planning for Control Period Five (2014-2019) and the next Greater Anglia franchise.

## Opposition to seat reservation charges

The National Express £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. National Express says it is softening the blow by bringing back the 10% online booking discount for certain tickets when passengers use its website.