

Passenger Voice

East of England

Independent national rail passenger watchdog



Thameslink

Passengers' views at the heart of decision making

Passenger Focus has worked with the Department for Transport (DfT) and London TravelWatch to ensure that passengers' views are put at the heart of the decisions made about the new trains to run on Thameslink routes. Passenger Focus manager Guy Dangerfield said: "In the research, passengers told us they want a spacious train that they can get in and out of easily, unlike the existing Thameslink rolling stock. They also want a step change in passenger information, going well beyond the destination and calling pattern now standard on new trains." Passenger Focus is pleased that these, and a number of other points we made to the DfT following the research, have been reflected in the specification.

Passenger Focus has also published another major report, 'Passenger needs

during Thameslink Programme construction: findings of qualitative research', which looks at what passengers are concerned about and how the rail industry can minimise disruption to best maintain passenger satisfaction while works are going on. Mr Dangerfield said: "Shining through was the message that passenger communication has a vital role to play in delivery of the Thameslink Programme. Getting the communications right, so that passengers do not feel that they are being kept in the dark, will be key to the rail industry meeting passengers' expectations during Thameslink



Cost cutting in East Anglia

National Express East Anglia has announced a programme of cost cutting that is likely to result in fewer staff being employed. Part of the programme sees the axe fall on the award-winning restaurant service on the London to Norwich route. Passenger Focus has warned National Express that it is concerned about staff cuts in front-line roles and others that will impact directly on the service passengers receive. We will look carefully at the impact on passenger satisfaction.

construction." The research was carried out jointly with First Capital Connect and Southeastern, and is available at www.passengerfocus.org.uk.

Passenger managers to work for better train services in the east of England

Passenger Focus has found record numbers of people across Great Britain are satisfied with their train journey

Launching the Autumn National Passenger Survey 2008 in the Winter 2009 Passenger Voice bulletin, the rail watchdog has reported that 83% of passengers are satisfied with their rail journey.

Although passengers rate their overall experience quite high, Passenger Focus has identified several areas where improvements must be made. Passenger Focus managers Paul Fullwood, Guy Dangerfield, Susan Tibbett and Tunde Olatunji will be working with train operators in the east of England to make certain passengers' concerns are addressed in 2009.

East of England

Train Operating Company (TOC)	Overall % satisfied	Passengers' satisfaction up	Passengers' satisfaction down
c2c	90	Helpfulness & attitude of staff on train	Ticket buying facilities
CrossCountry	84	Car-parking facilities	Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand
East Midlands Trains	81	Connections with other forms of public transport	Availability of staff on the train
First Capital Connect	77	How a request to station staff was handled	Connections with other forms of public transport
National Express East Anglia	77	Provision of information during the journey	Train frequency
National Express East Coast	88	How well the company dealt with delays	Connections with other forms of public transport

News roundup

• Ticket office cuts

First Capital Connect wants to reduce the opening hours of ticket offices at 28 stations. Passenger Focus will work with London TravelWatch to understand passengers' views about the proposals, which are subject to public consultation during January and February. It remains to be seen if the plans will be changed after the Department for Transport turned down part of South West Trains' proposals for cuts in opening hours.

• Small comfort on off-peak fares

Passenger Focus managed to persuade First Capital Connect to moderate a number of its proposed increases to Off-Peak Day Return fares, the old Cheap Day Return. For example, Luton to London will rise by 9.1 per cent rather than the intended 13.6 per cent, and Huntingdon to London will rise by 10 per cent rather than 15 per cent. These increases highlight the impact on passengers' purses and wallets as train companies strive to achieve the revenue assumed in their franchise bids.

• School journeys more expensive

Parents were up in arms when faced with doubling of First Capital Connect (FCC) season ticket prices for children to get to school. For example, Downham Market to Cambridge went up from £383 to £770. Passenger Focus urged transitional arrangements, but to no avail, with the stark message from FCC being that "the discount they had been getting was too generous for too long".

• Parking costs up

On top of the annual fare increases, passengers parking at National Express stations had to dig deeper into their pockets from January. For example, National Express has applied another 20% Peterborough – taking the daily charge to £12. We will be asking government to review the fact that car-park pricing continues to be unregulated, despite the train companies' effective monopoly at many stations.

Opinion-sounding for new bus role



Passenger Focus is progressing its bus, coach and tram work

Passenger Focus manager David Sidebottom and his colleagues has been laying the groundwork for our new bus passenger representation role by visiting a range of national stakeholder organisations as well as local authorities, Passenger Transport Executives and bus operators. He has sounded out their views on issues affecting passengers and the industry and what Passenger Focus's priorities should be, as well as fact finding about operations, routes and contractual arrangements.

Issues common to all are concessionary fares, punctuality and quality partnerships. Local authorities are looking carefully at the latter, and David has been talking about how Passenger Focus could influence them in the same way as rail passenger franchises. This would also entail a methodology for measuring their effectiveness.

Among visits in East Anglia, Passenger Focus board members have met Andy Campbell, the managing director of Stagecoach in Cambridgeshire to learn more about bus services in the region.

Rebuilding King's Cross station

Passenger Focus is carrying out research to understand passengers' needs and concerns about the redevelopment of King's Cross station, now underway. In a joint project with Network Rail, First Capital Connect, Grand Central, Hull Trains and National Express East Coast, we are probing views about aspects of the project, including arrangements on the small number of occasions when timetables will have to be amended, and



Passenger views sought

how the rail industry should communicate with passengers during the project.

Catering changes on East Coast

5 January saw changes to catering offered on National Express East Coast services. On many trains the traditional restaurant car has been replaced with a concept of at-seat dining in first class, with food still cooked to order on board many trains. Passenger Focus will be monitoring how the new style is received by passengers – consistent delivery of the 'offer' will be critical to its success.

New 'regional' area on Passenger Focus website

In February Passenger Focus will launch a new section on our website to show the work we are doing on behalf of passengers around the country. The new area of the site will show our work by region and nation, train operating

company, route and issues such as getting a seat or fares and ticketing. It will also feature Google Maps™ technology which will allow website users to view any Passenger Focus work with a specific geographic location.

