

Passenger Voice

London

Independent national passenger watchdog



Service information is key

Passengers expect to be informed of any disruption to services during the King's Cross re-development prompting calls for service updates

Passengers welcome the industry's intention to carry out the work without causing major disruption to train services but said they were concerned that fares would rise to pay for the major investment. Passenger Focus's research has found that passengers don't believe relocating toilets and shops is a big issue while works happen, but they do need signs and service information to be clear and up-to-date. Additionally, the industry should ensure a high standard of security and provide information on how passengers can



contact police during emergencies. The research looking at passenger needs during the station's redevelopment found that passengers expected to benefit from the planned work; they anticipated more services, relief from overcrowding, a more pleasant environment and better facilities for all passengers, including those with disabilities.

Both Passenger Focus and London

TravelWatch will monitor passenger satisfaction while works are happening. The research was commissioned by Passenger Focus, working in partnership with station owner and operator Network Rail, train operating companies which use the facility including First Capital Connect, National Express East Coast, Grand Central Railway and Hull Trains, as well as the British Transport Police.

Passenger Focus is now calling for the industry to deliver on promises that work will have minimum impact on services. It has also stressed the importance of keeping passengers informed of any disruption or alterations in journeys to, from and through the station.



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

London			
Train Operating Company (TOC)	Overall % satisfied	Passengers' satisfaction up	Passengers' satisfaction down
c2c	91	Cleanliness of the station	–
Chiltern	90	The helpfulness and attitude of staff on the train	The space for luggage
First Capital Connect	76	The comfort of the seating area	Punctuality/reliability
First Great Western	81	Punctuality/reliability	–
Heathrow Connect	90	–	–
Heathrow Express	92	Facilities for car parking	–
London Midland	78	Train toilet facilities	How well the train company dealt with delays
London Overground	75	Up keep and repair of the train	–
National Express East Anglia	76	–	Train frequency
Southeastern	76	–	How a request to station staff was handled
Southern	80	Connections with other forms of public transport	Punctuality/reliability
South West Trains	84	Connections with other train services	Train toilet facilities

Waterloo Travel Centre

Passenger Focus welcomes the fact that South West Trains (SWT) has chosen to consult with passengers before implementing proposals to close Waterloo Travel Centre and relocate the specialised staff to the ticket office. If SWT decides to go ahead with the plan, there will need to be a

formal request to the Department for Transport, but it's important that SWT considers passenger views. Jocelyn Pearson, Passenger Focus manager, said she was concerned that the plan to close the busy centre will force passengers into even longer ticket office queues.

Ms Pearson said: "If this goes ahead SWT should guarantee that they will meet the industry standard and ensure that passengers will not have to queue for more than five minutes at peak times and three minutes at other times. Passengers also need to know that staff will be available on the ground to answer questions and facilities will be provided for older passengers and disabled passengers who may struggle to stand in queues." Ms Pearson concluded: "SWT recognises that one of the important issues for passengers is the length of time it takes to buy a ticket and has agreed to share Waterloo queue monitoring data with Passenger Focus. We will be looking very carefully at the impact these proposals will have on passengers."

South Central deal made

Passenger Focus has welcomed the Government's decision to take into account passenger views in the South Central franchise arrangements

Passenger Focus spoke to over 6000 passengers about their priorities for the new franchise and, following extensive discussions with the Department for Transport, the watchdog is pleased to see many of the recommendations included in the deal.

Besides many new initiatives for improving information to passengers,

Southern has also signed up to provide increased capacity, more cycle and car-parking spaces, better security and later-evening trains. There is also a greater emphasis on monitoring performance with Passenger Focus's National Passenger Survey forming one of these key performance indicators.



Anthony Smith

Anthony Smith, Passenger Focus chief executive, said: "Passengers will welcome the continuity and opportunity this realistic franchise deal offers. Passengers told us they wanted more seats, more trains on time, more weekend and evening trains, visible staff and more information. However, Passenger Focus will continue to keep a close eye on off-peak, unregulated fares and peak-time overcrowding as well as how the timetable meets the needs of all passengers."

Rail plan input

Passenger Focus is working with Network Rail and London TravelWatch to provide rail user groups with an early opportunity to help shape the scope of a 'second generation' Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) for London and the South East.

The London and South East RUS will update some of the earlier RUSs and will cover the next 30 years. It will also give consideration to some of the longer-term and over-arching issues which have been identified in other strategies.

Passenger Focus has agreed to consult with rail user groups. An initial meeting held in early July asked passengers to consider the key issues which the strategy should address and potential solutions. These have now been fed in to the steering group. Passengers will have further opportunities for discussion and comment including a formal consultation period when a draft document is published during the winter.



Kent passengers can try the high-speed service

High-speed services for Kent passengers

Kent commuters have gained a new peak-hour route to London with the start of Southeastern high-speed services on weekdays between Ashford and St Pancras. A twice-hourly shuttle is also being run between Ebbsfleet and St Pancras.

The high-speed service is being trialled in passenger services before the introduction of the major timetable change from

December. Passenger Focus is pleased that Southeastern agreed to publish the draft timetable for consultation, and manager Tunde Olatunji has used feedback from passengers and stakeholders to prepare a formal response.

Passenger Focus recognises that as with all timetable changes, some passengers will benefit more than others. However, the overall impact is far less than

expected for a change of this magnitude. There are some concerns though, including removing the alternative fast services between Ashford and Charing Cross, which will increase off-peak journey times and may lead to overcrowding. Some Maidstone services are particularly affected and objection to the proposed changes is mounting. Passenger Focus has raised other concerns, including the cost of the high-speed supplement fare and the proposed charges for using Ebbsfleet car park.