

# Improving satisfaction with TPE starts to slow

National Passenger Survey results show TransPennine Express (TPE) is receiving mixed feedback

**A**lthough satisfaction remains above all benchmarks set for the franchise, there have been no significant improvements in the Autumn 2008 National Passenger Survey (NPS).

Passenger satisfaction now stands at 83%, indicating work needs to happen if TPE is going to make the 90% target it sets in its latest business plan. This suggests that the halo effect in ratings, when the new fleet of Class 185 trains was introduced and £12 million was invested in

station improvements, is now wearing off. Passengers are used to the new trains and improved stations and now their expectations may be even higher.

Compared with other operators in the North East, overall satisfaction with TPE is declining. Overall satisfaction with Northern Rail has levelled at 82%, CrossCountry has improved to 84% and National Express East Coast has also improved with passengers reporting 88% satisfaction. There is a similar pattern of



satisfaction with punctuality and reliability.

Detailed NPS results tell us that passengers are least satisfied with crowding

on north TransPennine journeys, where the train operator is also perceived to be the least effective at dealing with delays.

## Slight improvement on CrossCountry trains

**S**pring 2008 saw the first set of National Passenger Survey (NPS) results for the reprofiled CrossCountry franchise. Comparisons and trends across time are difficult as CrossCountry has taken on some routes from Central Trains and lost routes between the North West and Scotland, but overall there are slight improvements, with overall passenger satisfaction now at 84%.

Overall satisfaction is now better than most of the other long-distance operators after several years of running behind – passenger satisfaction with long-distance operators has been dropping since 2006.

For train attributes, NPS scores have been going down for CrossCountry since peaks in 2006/7 – but CrossCountry has reversed this in the latest wave.

Comparing CrossCountry with other long-distance operators, room to sit and stand remains the key issue for passengers. On this aspect there has been a significant decline in satisfaction amongst passengers to only 59% – the lowest satisfaction rating amongst long-distance operators. There are plans to improve capacity as part of the franchise terms which should help to address this concern and improve NPS results. There have been significant

improvements in passenger satisfaction with station cleanliness and car-parking facilities. However, CrossCountry is the only franchised operator not directly responsible for any stations on its routes.

CrossCountry scores below other long-distance operators on many measures, however overall satisfaction with CrossCountry is improving. Passenger Focus is encouraging CrossCountry to consider NPS results by route or business areas so that more detailed results can be produced which highlight particular areas of improvement or concern for passengers.

# Exploratory bus research in the North East

As part of its work to help define its new role, Passenger Focus is carrying out bus passenger satisfaction work in the Tyne & Wear Passenger Transport Executive area. In collaboration with a research agency, Passenger

Focus has been looking at how research will be scoped, how information will be gathered in the field, 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 Hartlepool 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.



## 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](http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk)

### News roundup

- **Rail User Group conferences**  
Passenger Focus has organised and chaired regional conferences to give Rail User Groups the opportunity to speak to train operating companies and Network Rail about their plans. Conferences were held for Yorkshire and the North East at York on 7 March and for the North West at Preston on 21 March.

- **Give us your feedback**  
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[krista.hamblin@passengerfocus.org.uk](mailto:krista.hamblin@passengerfocus.org.uk)

## Northern Rail NPS results are encouraging

There was some good passenger feedback on Northern services in the Autumn 2008 National Passenger Survey (NPS) with speed of journey achieving the best overall satisfaction rate at 85%. The survey showed passenger satisfaction had improved on sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand and cleanliness of train interiors. Overall satisfaction with Northern services was 82%.

Results are encouraging, but there is still much room for improvement. Satisfaction with the way delays are dealt with remains the lowest score at 34%, and toilets were little better at 36%. Percentages for train cleanliness and upkeep trail badly in both national and regional comparisons, as does provision of information.



Ageing rolling stock on some lines is a handicap, but Passenger Focus manager Kerry Williamson will be working with Northern to see what can be done to improve cleanliness pending arrival of new trains. The manner in which delays are handled will also be examined.

The latest National Passenger Survey can be downloaded from [www.passengerfocus.org.uk/nps](http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/nps)