

Passenger Voice North West

Independent national passenger watchdog



West Coast Route Utilisation Strategy underway

Passenger Focus is exploring passenger priorities for West Coast rail services as part of the biggest Rail Utilisation Strategy (RUS) Network Rail has undertaken to date

These strategies look at the future needs and potential development of the route and members of the Network Rail stakeholder management group (SMG) will analyse the current West Coast Main Line, looking at capacity, capability, infrastructure and performance. It will examine the gap between the current situation and aspirations for the route. It will

run in tandem with the West Midlands RUS.

Informal consultation will be undertaken throughout the rail industry and with the wider community to ensure passenger views and ideas are considered and where appropriate included. Passenger Focus has already run meetings in Crewe, Carlisle and Northampton between Network Rail and 39

rail user groups/community rail partnerships.

A follow-up event will be held later in the year when the SMG has considered the gaps and identified a range of possible solutions. Passenger Focus will undertake route-specific passenger research. It will underpin Passenger Focus's response to the draft consultation.



Passenger priorities under review

Passengers report satisfaction with 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

North West

Train Operating Company (TOC)	Overall % satisfied	Passengers' satisfaction up	Passengers' satisfaction down
East Midlands Trains	80	Connections with other forms of public transport	–
First TransPennine Express	87	Punctuality/reliability	How well the train company dealt with delays
London Midland	78	Train toilet facilities	How well the train company dealt with delays
Merseyrail	91	Personal security whilst using the station	Value for money
Northern	80	–	Train toilet facilities
Virgin Trains	86	Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand	Punctuality/reliability

Plan B boost for Manchester

Some of the Transport Innovation Fund (TIF) infrastructure projects, jeopardised by the rejection of congestion charging last December, look likely to be salvaged by a £1.535 billion package of funding from regional

and central sources. Work will resume on four of the priority projects, including extensions of the Metrolink tram network to Ashton-under-Lyne and East Didsbury. Additionally, 15 of the TIF schemes will be funded, though some will

have to be scaled back. Passenger Focus welcomes the rescue plan for projects that will bring substantial improvements to the passenger experience on busy transport corridors. It will work to put across passenger views during consultation on the various projects.

More trains needed

The independent passenger watchdog has taken up passengers' concerns about fares, ticketing, overcrowding and plans for more carriages with TransPennine Express (TPE)

Sue Tibbett, Passenger Focus manager, has been looking at the region's services and checking where passengers are struggling to get a seat, and possible solutions; how TPE plans to accommodate growth on its routes; how trains promised by government will help solve problems; and what can be done to improve information given to passengers during delays.

Because of the routes TPE runs, there are often large numbers of travellers on the

train at times when other companies' trains are less busy. Trains are particularly busy at weekends and around events like the York races, the Edinburgh Festival, football and other sporting fixtures. Despite investment to increase capacity, TPE faces a real and growing challenge to meet demand.

TPE has responded by pricing tickets in a way that encourages passengers to avoid travelling on services that are predicted to be busy. TPE is also looking at its



TPE capacity review

fares and retailing strategy in an attempt to address overcrowding.

The most pressing need, however, is for more trains on TPE routes to cope with increasing demand.

News roundup

- **Northern begins timetable consultation with rail users**

Northern has begun consultation with Passenger Focus on timetable changes for December 2010, and will be holding a stakeholder forum during the summer. Only very minor changes are expected this winter.

- **Party Conferences 2009**

Passenger Focus is planning to run events at GB political party conferences being held in Bournemouth, Brighton and Manchester later this year. Further information will be posted on the Passenger Focus website closer to the conferences.

If you would like to attend email matt.ayson@passengerfocus.org.uk

Cleaner trains and stations in Airedale

Passenger Focus is working with the rail industry on potential measures to improve the cleanliness of Northern's stations and trains. Responding to passenger concerns, Passenger Focus manager Kerry Williamson and Northern have launched a pilot project on the Leeds – Skipton line to try to improve standards.

A tour of the line with representatives of Northern and the cleaning contractor found stations were especially dirty in the late evenings and on Monday mornings. The line was also chosen because passenger satisfaction with train toilets scored particularly badly.

Before and after surveys will test the effectiveness of the remedial measures, and if they are successful, the scheme will be rolled out across other Northern lines.



Passengers want cleaner trains and stations

Watchdog joins rail tour

Passenger Focus spoke with Lord Andrew Adonis, Secretary of State for Transport, about passenger issues and concerns during his five-day railway tour of Great Britain (as Transport Minister). Passenger managers Sue Tibbett and Kerry Williamson discussed overcrowding and the positive passenger response to TransPennine Express's Class 185 trains. The Transport Secretary accepted the need for additional trains and a faster service. Kerry highlighted the age and condition of trains on some Northern services and the poor availability of information during disruption.

Virgin to improve disruption information

Train companies' failure to keep passengers informed about disruption is one of passengers' major gripes with the railway.

At Passenger Focus's suggestion, this problem and possible solutions will be discussed in depth at a Virgin Passenger Panel meeting. Virgin will create a scenario of a major route blockage,

and the panel will split into three groups to discuss what information they would expect/require at home preparing to travel, at the station and on the train. The outcomes will assist Virgin in planning how to improve this very important passenger requirement, and to ensure passengers are satisfied that they are being kept up to date

with timely, accurate, accessible information.



Passengers need information