

# Passenger Voice South East

Independent national passenger watchdog



## 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.



Photo: Courtesy of Southern Railway

## Bus pilot surveys



Passenger Focus is working with local operators and authorities in Southampton on a Bus Passenger Survey to test how this information can best be used to

improve services. Manager Jocelyn Pearson is also looking at what the implications will be for passengers when major changes to bus services in Oxford are introduced and is feeding into public transport plans designed to cope with the expansion of Milton Keynes.

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

### South East

Train Operating Company (TOC)	Overall % satisfied	Passengers' satisfaction up	Passengers' satisfaction down
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	–
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

# Passenger Focus looks at Sussex rail needs

Passenger Focus will be making a formal response to Network Rail's draft Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) for Sussex, before the deadline next month

These strategies look at the future needs and potential development of the route. Sharon Hedges, Passenger Focus manager, has been involved in the working group developing the RUS and has been considering the issues from a passenger perspective. Recent research into passenger priorities on the network was provided to the

group and will be used in the Passenger Focus submission on the proposed strategy. Setting the detailed framework for rail services to 2019 and beyond, the RUS forms the basis for investment decisions on infrastructure and identifies where additional or extended services should be provided to meet future demand.

Network Rail hosted a

briefing in Brighton for rail user groups, local authorities and other organisations – at which Sharon Hedges spoke. Sharon said it is important that local groups make their own submissions to put across their views.

Issues facing the RUS include accommodating developments on the East London Line, Thameslink and

from the South London RUS. In addition, there is only limited scope for squeezing much more capacity from a busy and congested network.

Some passengers have had issues with recent timetable changes but the industry view is that a major recast before completion of Thameslink work in 2015 is inappropriate. However, Passenger Focus is concerned that passengers will regard this as far too long to wait for improvements.

## Kent RUS – passenger priorities

Consultation on the Kent Rail Utilisation Strategy (RUS) has started, and Passenger Focus has been listening to passengers' views on what they wish for the Kent rail network. The forecast is for continued growth on top of some already busy and congested routes. Passenger Focus has carried out four route-based passenger surveys, asking over 3000 passengers to comment on

their current experiences and travel habits, their awareness of and future expectations for the high-speed services, as well as views on convenience and price.

Research showed that on all routes the top priorities for improvement were punctuality and reliability. These were closely followed by value for money, being able to get a seat and the frequency of services.



### News roundup

- **Early input**

Passenger Focus is working to provide rail user groups with an early opportunity to help shape the scope of a 'second generation' Route Utilisation Strategy for London and the South East. An initial consultation meeting in July asked passengers to consider key issues and potential solutions to be fed into the steering group.

- **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](mailto:matt.ayson@passengerfocus.org.uk)

## New 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 before the introduction of the major timetable change in 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. Key concerns include removing the alternative fast services between Ashford and Charing Cross, which will increase off-peak journey times and 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.