

Passenger Voice Rail

LONDON

Independent national passenger watchdog



Improvement plan for East Anglia

National Express East Anglia (NXEA) launched its new Service Improvement Plan in January 2010

Its centrepiece is a major deal agreed with the Department for Transport in April 2009 to boost rail capacity on Liverpool Street train services. From 2011 Stansted Airport and some Cambridge to Liverpool Street services will be operated by 120 new carriages and 68 refurbished carriages will also be added to East Anglia services. The 120 new carriages will be introduced in 2011, and the 68 refurbished carriages are being introduced on the Great Eastern Main Line route in two phases, December 2009 and December 2010.

Guy Dangerfield, Passenger Focus manager, said: "These 188 extra carriages are crucial to reducing overcrowding on NXEA".



Better service

Winter weather hits Southeastern

Southeastern services appeared to be among the most badly affected by the severe winter weather judging by the collapse in its punctuality record from 91.7% to 70%.

Tunde Olatunji, Passenger Focus manager, said: "It is essential that Network Rail and train operators do all they can to minimise disruption for passengers and keep them informed during these instances with accurate and timely information. Long term, the industry must learn lessons from its experience and ensure that passengers receive a better service during periods of bad weather in the future."

London Overground improves in Autumn NPS

Since London Overground took over London suburban services from Silverlink in November 2007, there has been a marked improvement in Passenger satisfaction according to Passenger Focus's Autumn 2009 National Passenger Survey (NPS). New trains have been gradually introduced since



July 2009, so their full impact is likely to be registered in the next NPS period. However, the latest survey has found that overall passenger satisfaction stands at 82%, improvements of 15 points for interior cleanliness; 14 points for provision of information; 13 points for upkeep and repair, and for exterior cleanliness; 12 points for the ease of getting on and off; and 10 points for sufficient room to sit/stand.

The NPS results can be viewed at www.passengerfocus.org.uk

London

Train Operating Company (TOC)	Overall % satisfied	Passengers' satisfaction up	Passengers' satisfaction down
c2c	90	Train toilet facilities	How request to station staff was handled
Chiltern Railways	91	Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand	-
First Capital Connect	75	The ease of being able to get on and off the train	-
First Great Western	82	Availability of staff on the train	-
Heathrow Connect	90	The attitudes and helpfulness of the staff at the station	-
Heathrow Express	93	Facilities for car parking	Station facilities and services
London Midland	87	Train toilet facilities	-
London Overground	82	Cleanliness of the inside of the train	How request to station staff was handled
National Express East Anglia	79	Personal security whilst using the station	Upkeep and repair of the train
Southeastern	80	-	Upkeep and repair of the train
Southern	82	Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand	-
South West Trains	86	Availability of staff on the train	Cleanliness of the inside of the train

New Oxford – London services

Chiltern Railways has announced a bold initiative – a £250 million plan to cut Marylebone – Birmingham journey times by 20% to 100 minutes and to rebuild the railway between Oxford and Bicester to allow a new service to London. Improvements to West Midlands journey times will begin in 2011, and the new line to Oxford is expected to open in 2013 subject to Transport & Works Act approval.

Julie Warburton, Passenger Focus manager, said: “This is good news for passengers who use Chiltern services and the railway generally, as it will give them more choice”.

Draft rail plan

Passenger Focus and London TravelWatch are working to ensure that passengers' needs will be addressed in the long-term planning for rail services in and around London and the South East.

The watchdogs are contributing to detailed work being undertaken on capacity and future demand for services into central London and a further study looking specifically at the needs in South Hampshire, which were not covered in the earlier South West study.

Following feedback from industry and passenger representatives, Network Rail is considering potential options before the groups meet again. A substantial amount of work remains to be done before a draft strategy is prepared for consultation later in the year.



Sussex RUS welcomed

Passenger Focus manager Sharon Hedges has welcomed the final version of Network Rail's Rail Utilisation Strategy (RUS) for Sussex, which sets out a 30-year vision for the county, eastern parts of Surrey and services running through south London. The fundamental challenge is a strategy to provide additional capacity, since routes into Victoria and London Bridge are expected to be at full capacity by 2020.

Passenger Focus interviewed 3000 passengers to feed their views and needs into the RUS. In response to the finding that overcrowding on peak services stopping at Clapham Junction is a serious issue, the RUS recommends stops at Clapham Junction for



Extra capacity needed

two to four Gatwick Express services which currently pass through during the morning and evening peaks, helping to reduce congestion for passengers.

“We're pleased to see the industry acknowledge this need,” commented Sharon Hedges, “but passengers need this to happen immediately and not have to wait for it to be phased in as a long-term solution. We urge the Department for Transport and Southern to make this a priority.”

FCC needs to improve service

First Capital Connect (FCC) has assured passengers that it is recruiting drivers, improving train reliability and upgrading information systems after three months of dreadful service on the Thameslink route.

Passenger Focus has raised passengers' concerns about poor service with Government and FCC management and has asked the operator to explain when issues will be resolved.

Passengers travelling on FCC Thameslink route have faced disruption since early November due to industrial action and severe weather conditions.

FCC has assured passengers that trains affected by snow damage are now repaired; modifications are currently being made to trains to ensure future disruption as a consequence of snow is minimised; and

more drivers are being recruited.

Passenger Focus still has concerns about the level of compensation offered to passengers where journeys were disrupted over recent months. The watchdog is also worried that, once again, information to passengers during disruption was poor.

Passenger Focus will be monitoring how FCC performs in coming months.

Consulting Essex Thameside passengers

Passenger Focus has asked 1000 c2c passengers what they want from the new franchise, which is expected to start on 30 May 2011 and run for at least 10 years. c2c is one of the best-performing franchises, with a relatively new fleet of trains which is very well looked after and has very high levels of punctuality. Passengers want more of the same and priorities for the future are more weekend and later-evening trains, being able to get a seat as well as improved security at the station and on the train.

The National Passenger Survey shows that satisfaction with personal security on c2c stations and trains does not compare well with other London and South East

train companies, and Passenger Focus recommends that this is prioritised in the new contract. Tunde Olatunji, Passenger Focus manager, said: “c2c has transformed the service from being the ‘miserable line’ to one of the highest-performing rail companies in the country, with top scores for passenger satisfaction. But passengers tell us the next train company cannot drop the ball and let things slip back to the days of late and unreliable services. Top of the Government and bidders' list should be punctual trains, reliable and frequent services, value for money fares and better security measures across the railway.”