

# Passenger Voice Rail

## YORKSHIRE & THE HUMBER

Independent national passenger watchdog

Passengerfocus  
putting passengers first

## Passengers rate TPE railway

First TransPennine Express's (TPE) passenger satisfaction scores moved in the right direction in Passenger Focus's Autumn 2009 National Passenger Survey. Overall satisfaction rose six points to a high score of 89%. There were increases in many train facility scores: availability of staff (nine points to 68%); punctuality/ reliability (seven points to 88%) and connections with other train services (six points to 81%). But given the state of the economy, the most remarkable rise was the value for money for the ticket price, which jumped 10 points to 63%.

Station scores too registered significant increases: the upkeep and repair of stations rose seven points to 80%. The current £12 million station improvement programme should translate into further rises

in satisfaction. Passenger Focus's National Passenger Survey can be viewed at [www.passengerfocus.org.uk](http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk)



### Yorkshire and The Humber

Train Operating Company (TOC)	Overall % satisfied	Passengers' satisfaction up	Passengers' satisfaction down
CrossCountry	85	Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand	Facilities for car parking
East Midlands Trains	84	Punctuality/reliability	-
First TransPennine Express	89	Value for money	-
Grand Central	95	-	-
National Express East Coast	89	Upkeep and repair of the train	-
Northern Rail	82	Provision of information about train times/platforms	-

## Expectations for new franchise

On 21 January Transport Secretary Andrew Adonis launched the consultation phase of the InterCity East Coast franchise. The watchdog has made suggestions

to government based on passenger feedback. The research will also be shared with potential bidders to highlight passenger requirements from the new operator.

Guy Dangerfield, Passenger Focus manager, said: "Passengers tell us that their top priority on this franchise is more punctual and reliable trains. Let's see more challenging targets set in the new deal, including a focus on 'right time' – not the 10-minute leeway which is currently in place."

## Small improvements at Northern

Overall satisfaction with Northern Rail remains unchanged at 82% in Passenger Focus's Autumn 2009 National Passenger Survey. Punctuality/reliability also sits at 81% but satisfaction with the provision of information at stations increased by five points.

Given that most Northern stations are unstaffed, information is particularly important, and Ashwin Kumar, Passenger Focus director, would like to see live running information rolled out to all stations: "New screens can be installed very cheaply and have the potential to transform the experience of waiting for a train".

## Extra capacity pleases passengers

The additional capacity provided by more seats and use of high speed trains on CrossCountry routes have raised passenger satisfaction, according to Passenger Focus's Autumn 2009 National Passenger Survey (NPS). The figure for sufficient room to sit/stand rose by 11 points and reflects the provision of 35% more seats on the train by the end of 2009, though the measure has still not eliminated

overcrowding on some weekend trains. Overall satisfaction stands at 85% but punctuality improved by five points to 85%.

CrossCountry is the only franchise which has no stations under its own management, and a fall of 11 points in satisfaction with car-parking facilities raises questions about the service the company is getting from other train companies.

## First NPS scores for Grand Central

As this is the first time the open-access operator Grand Central has participated in Passenger Focus's National Passenger Survey (NPS), the Autumn 2009 figures have no previous data for comparison. The NPS shows that Grand Central's difficult first few months are history,

with a raft of very good scores. Overall satisfaction is at 95% against a long-distance sector average of 87%. Many of its train passenger satisfaction figures are in the nineties including punctuality/reliability (96%), journey time (95%), sufficient room for passengers to sit/stand (95%).



## East Coast shake up

Big changes to the East Coast Main Line train timetable, which runs trains from London to Peterborough, Doncaster, Leeds, York, Newcastle and Edinburgh, are planned for May 2011. Passenger Focus encourages passengers to feed

in their views about the new timetables by visiting [www.eastcoast.co.uk/Eureka](http://www.eastcoast.co.uk/Eureka) Passenger manager Guy Dangerfield said: "This will be the biggest change to the East Coast timetable for many years and, as with most timetable

changes, there are winners and losers. As well as East Coast's trains to and from London, times for some CrossCountry, East Midlands Trains, First Capital Connect, First TransPennine Express, Grand Central, Hull Trains, Northern and ScotRail services may also change. If you use trains on the East Coast

Main Line, whichever company you travel with, don't miss the opportunity to have your say at [www.eastcoast.co.uk/Eureka](http://www.eastcoast.co.uk/Eureka)" As well as responding to the train company, please let Passenger Focus know what you are thinking at [www.passengerfocus.org.uk/contact-us/](http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/contact-us/)

## "Misleading" poster

TransPennine Express (TPE) agreed to remove a poster from its stations after Passenger Focus followed up a passenger complaint that it was misleading.

The poster, which encouraged Christmas shoppers to take the train, stated that there were 'no car-parking fees'. The complainant felt this was inaccurate because TPE does charge for parking at its stations.

TPE said the poster was to encourage people to use the train and that rail compares favourably with car-parking costs at the destination. However, the train operator acknowledged that it could be misinterpreted.



Passenger found poster misleading

## More trains still needed

Overcrowding is one of the key challenges facing the rail industry and sustained investment is needed to tackle the problem. However, passengers in the north of England demand something done now, says Passenger Focus manager Sue Tibbett.

The north of England has seen unprecedented growth in rail travel in recent years and the trend looks set to continue.

With Passenger Focus regularly receiving complaints about the lack of seats on busy services, the independent watchdog has been working hard to ensure that TransPennine Express (TPE) and Northern deploy

their train fleets as efficiently as possible.

The challenge is a general shortage of stock which means that operators cannot access the extra trains required to meet peak-time demand. TPE and Northern had hoped to have new diesel trains and carriages in passenger service in 2012 as part of the government's High Level Output Specification. However, with plans now underway to electrify certain routes in the North West, electric trains will now be required instead. While it frees up more diesel trains to strengthen services on other parts of the network, electric trains will not be available until 2014.

Sue recently spent a day at Bolton, Manchester Piccadilly and Leeds stations with fellow Passenger Focus manager Kerry Williamson talking to passengers and rail user group representatives about their experiences. Business passengers complained about their staff unable to board crowded trains and arriving late for work and families spoke about having to travel separately due to a lack of seats. Disabled passengers would not consider rail travel during peak hours.

A video with more information on this problem will be available on the Passenger Focus website soon.

## Hull Trains agrees to a bus service

When Hull Trains announced its plans to change the routing of its new earlier Sunday service from Hull to London in the December timetable, the Selby and District Rail Users Group contacted Passenger Focus.

The campaigners were unhappy that the service was diverted via Goole instead of Selby and Howden.

Passenger Focus contacted Hull Trains to raise concerns. The train operator agreed to provide a free bus transfer

until 31 January 2010, when it decided that the number of passengers using the service was too low to justify the costs.

Hull Trains changed the route because the signal-box south of Selby is not open early in the morning. It is working with Network Rail to resolve the issue.