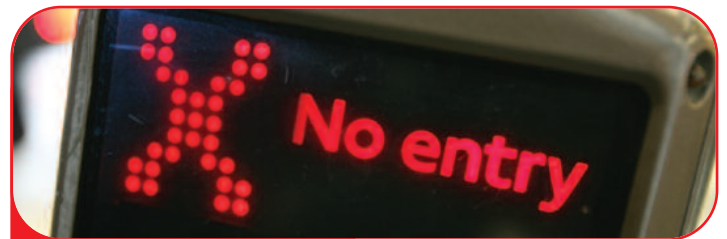


Gates at stations prompt debate

Proposals to install ticket barriers at stations occasionally arouse fierce controversy

Passenger Focus supports the principle of gating but their introduction should be judged on a case-by-case basis to ensure paying passengers will benefit from their installation. It is clear that at some stations, such as Sheffield, the disadvantages may outweigh the benefits. In York careful consideration needs to be given to whether this is an appropriate solution.

In an ideal world, gates would be unnecessary. Gates slow passengers down, force them to juggle luggage and tickets as they go through and create a sense of exclusion. However, automatic ticket gates are becoming an increasingly common feature at stations as train companies try to crack down on fare dodgers and protect revenue.



Gate controversy

At York, Passenger Focus would want to ensure that Grand Central's clear, simple offer to buy your ticket on the train is preserved. Passenger

Focus continues to raise its concerns with National Express and East Midlands Trains about the installation of gates in York and Sheffield.

Passengers outline rail priorities

Passenger Focus has undertaken extensive research in Yorkshire and the Humber to capture passenger priorities for improvements

The Yorkshire and Humber Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) will outline how Network Rail proposes to deliver a network capable of coping with the predicted growth in rail use over the next 10 years. Under the proposed strategy rail users could expect additional services, longer trains with more seats, as well as quicker journey times and better connections. The plan also includes options to carry out station upgrades such as

building new platforms and improving track layouts to increase capacity and reduce delays. Demand for rail commuting into important economic centres such as Leeds, Sheffield and Manchester has grown considerably in recent years. The RUS identifies what schemes and options need to be developed to help ease the pinch-points and improve rail services for passengers.

As part of the process, Passenger Focus has gathered information to inform how the RUS should be designed to meet future needs and expectations. Passenger Focus produced a formal response, based on extensive research involving stakeholders and passengers. The submission was based on comprehensive research with 3582 passengers. Passenger Focus also conducted specific research for this

RUS on two routes where significant changes to timetables and stopping patterns are proposed to alleviate crowding: the Calder Valley line and the Airedale line. These results are based on the views of 1521 passengers. Consultation was also held with relevant Rail User Groups.

Key recommendations reflect the aspirations of passengers in the Yorkshire and Humber region and include:

- Getting a seat
- Improved frequency
- Improved trains
- Better stations to cope with more passengers
- Improved car-parking.

Recognising that the issue of car-parking was not covered in appropriate detail in the RUS consultation document, Passenger Focus conducted extra research to help identify where car-parking provision at stations could be improved. It collated details of car-parking availability for passengers and highlighted stations where there are currently or predicted problems. Further research with non-rail users determined that a lack of available car parking is a deterrent. Passenger Focus is encouraging the rail industry to do more to address the problems passengers face in accessing the rail network. The final RUS is expected to be published this summer.



Rail future reviewed

Improving satisfaction with TPE starts to slow

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

Although 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 is disappointing and 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.



News roundup

- **Rail User Group conferences**
Passenger Focus 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.

- **Exploratory bus and tram research**

Stakeholder meetings have been held with South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive and the Passenger Transport Executive Group looking into how Passenger Focus might assume a complaint-handling role. Passenger Focus also chairs the Tram-Train Stakeholder Group. A trial scheme to run tram-trains between Sheffield and Huddersfield via Barnsley is expected to start in 2010 to test the feasibility of trams taking over operation of certain railway lines and running through city streets.

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