

Annex C: RPC reference material

- Station Inspections 2004/05*
RPC Eastern England (April 2005)
- Barriers to interchange*
RPC North Western England & North Western Public Transport Users Forum (NWPTUF) (February 2005)
- No charge – An examination of station car parks policy in West Midlands 2003/2004*
RPC Midlands (March 2004)
- East Midlands station access guide 2004/05*
RPC Midlands (October 2004)
- Driving up stations standards – station inspection programme phase four*
RPC Midlands (October 2003)
- Action stations – station survey*
RPC North Western England (2002)
- Integrated transport station surveys*
RPC Eastern England (March 2002)
- Brief encounters – station survey*
RPC North Western England (2001)
- Driving up station standards*
RPC Eastern England (February 2000)
- Where is this? – an audit of station name signage*
London Transport Users Committee (March 2004)
- Whose station are you? – A survey of joint Underground/National Rail stations in London*
London Transport Users Committee (August 2004)
- Passenger transport interchanges in Scotland – a review of implementation of recommendations*
RPC Scotland (June 2003)
- Isle of Wight transport interchange study*
RPC Southern England & Wight Track (March 2003)
- London for the continent – a survey of public toilet provision at London's interchanges*
London Transport Users Committee (January 2003)
- Passenger transport interchanges in Scotland*
RPC Scotland (April 2001)
- Easing the trip – meeting the needs of disabled rail users*
London Transport Users Committee (March 2001)



RAIL PASSENGERS COUNCIL

What passengers want from stations

For further information about the work of the Rail Passengers Council and Committees please call 08453 022 022 or visit the RPC website at: www.railpassengers.org.uk

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Foreword

S tations are the gateway to the rail network for all passengers – and many passengers are dissatisfied with the current state of stations. Despite some of the high-profile major station makeovers in recent years and the modernisation of some other more humble locations, stations still have much catching up to do after decades of under-investment when almost all available funding went into keeping the trains running. We aspire to the highest standards for passengers at stations. In an ideal world, the interests of the rail industry would coincide with those of passengers. However, everything points to the fact that many station facilities often fall far short of what passengers can reasonably expect in the 21st century. For this reason the RPC network has always kept stations high on its list of priorities.

Rail passengers today have much wider experience of transport infrastructure than previous generations. They have seen what motorway services and airports can offer in the way of fixtures, fittings and facilities and, not unreasonably, want to enjoy many of the same when they travel by rail. Needs and expectations must be ranged to suit each particular type of station. Clearly it is not possible to provide every creature comfort at every wayside halt, but it is vital to examine the minimum facilities which each type of station should have and ensure that they are provided and properly maintained.

The industry has its views on what those facilities should be. To compare how these correspond with users' needs, the RPC went straight to passengers to seek out their aspirations, in line with one of our long-term goals of understanding the needs



and representing the views of passengers. The first-hand passenger feedback gleaned from this not only endorses and confirms the views which RPC has long held but also provides us with empirical evidence to strengthen our hand when discussing station matters with operators.

We shall also be using these results to identify further possible areas of research to ensure that passenger concerns about all aspects of stations – safety and security; car parking; lighting; seating and waiting accommodation; toilets; booking offices; information systems; retail outlets; cash machines; telephones and so on – are fully addressed.

A blue ink signature of Stewart Francis.

Stewart Francis
Chairman of the Rail Passengers Council

1 Introduction and background

Against a background of increasing emphasis on service provision, current franchise agreements between train operating companies (TOCs) and the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) do not specify the facilities which should be provided at stations.

The Rail Passengers Council (RPC) would like to be in a position to advise on passenger perceptions of current provisions and their priorities for the future.

Steer Davies Gleave was therefore commissioned to undertake research with the key objectives of:

- > identifying passengers' current perceptions of station facilities
- > assigning priorities to facilities/features at stations within each of the specified categories
- > identifying the additional needs of disabled passengers.

The study involved two elements: focus groups with passengers, and interviews with disabled passengers. The methodology of the research can be found in Annex A.

The RPC wants the recommended improvements highlighted in this report to be implemented at stations.

1.1 Station categories

National Rail stations are currently allocated to one of the six following categories:

- > A: National hub
- > B: Regional hub
- > C: Important feeder
- > D: Medium-sized staffed
- > E: Small staffed
- > F: Small unstaffed.

Different levels of facilities are then provided according to station size in terms of:

- > information provision
- > security
- > waiting rooms and shelters
- > platforms
- > footbridges and subways
- > transport integration
- > customer facilities
- > disabled access
- > general facilities.

Category A: National Hub

Number = 27

e.g. London Euston, Newcastle and Leeds

Category A stations are major termini providing access to major centres and connecting major cities across the UK. They contain, and are perceived to provide, the highest number of facilities of all station types. Some category A stations have been developed into 'flagship' stations, refurbished to serve the increasing demand and needs of passengers. A good example of this is the refurbishment of Manchester Piccadilly station to serve the needs of visitors to the Commonwealth Games (2002), as well as to cope with the demands of existing and potential business and leisure passengers.

The RPC sees category A stations as the gold standard with a proven level of facilities.

Category B: Regional hub

Number = 66

e.g. Cambridge, Oxford and Dundee

Category B stations or regional hub stations service important cities, towns or business centres.

Category C: Important feeder

Number = 255

e.g. Blackpool North, Hereford and Luton

Category C stations provide important

regional connections as well as having the capacity and facilities to serve large numbers of passengers.

Category D: Medium-sized staffed

Number = 312
e.g. Frome, Aylesbury and Aberystwyth
These stations serve local populations, acting as pick-up points and commuter stations.

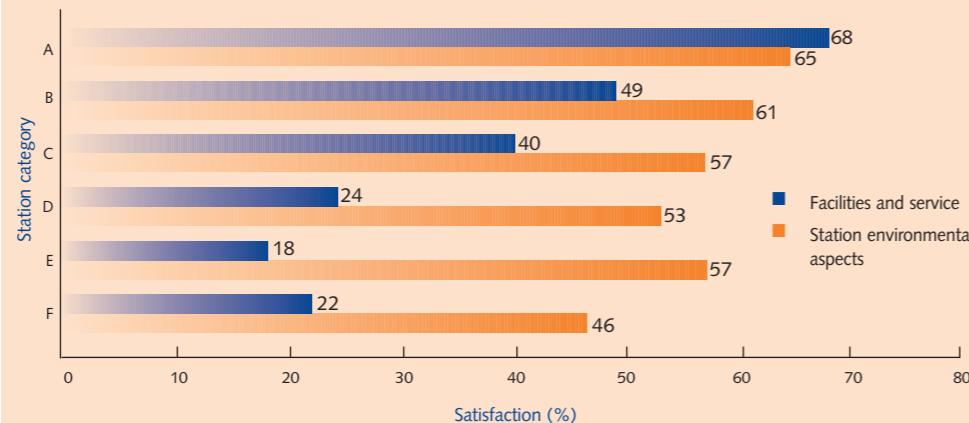
Category E: Small staffed

Number = 653
e.g. Iver, Treherbert and Sandy
These serve areas with smaller populations than C and D stations, and mainly act as pick-up points.

Category F: Small unstaffed

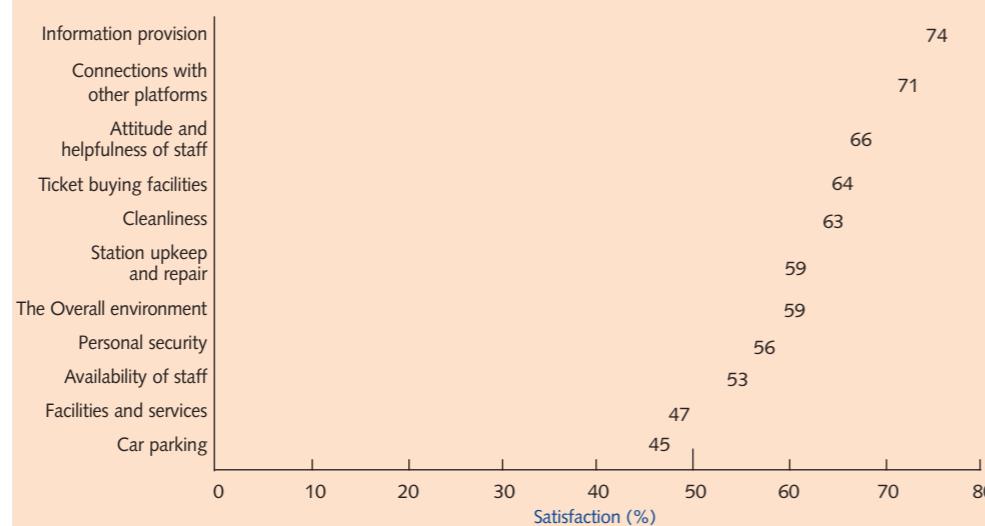
(Small unstaffed). Number = 1180
e.g. Matlock, Bridge of Allan and Hawarden
Small unstaffed stations are mainly found in

1 Satisfaction level with station facilities and environment

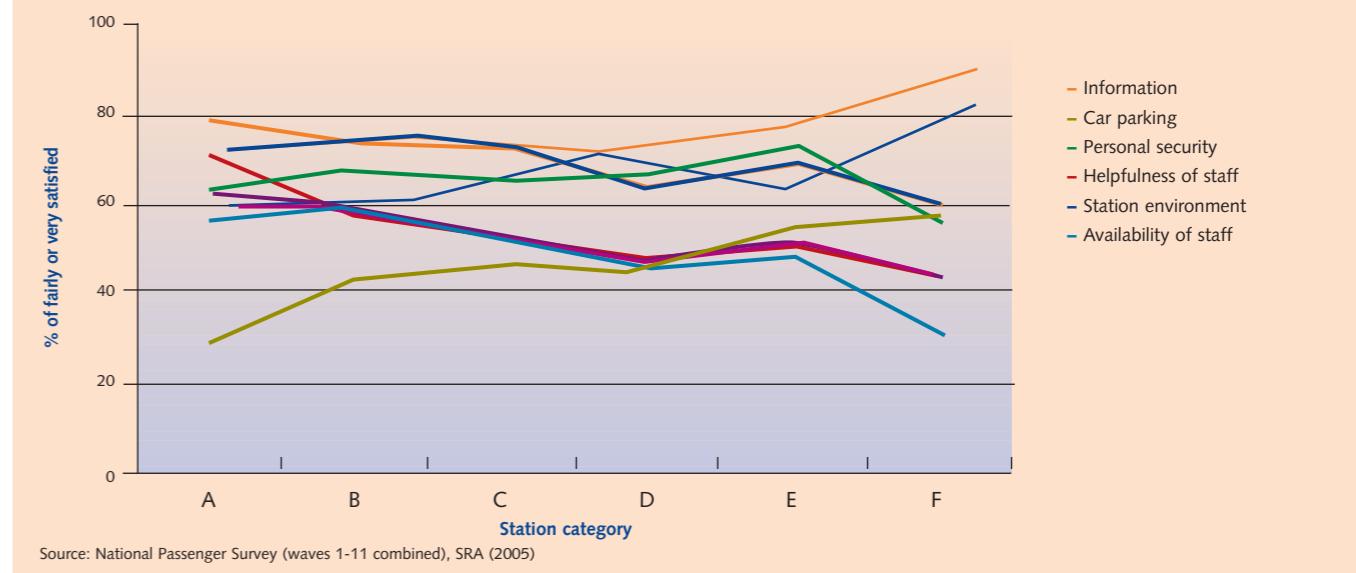


The chart shows those passengers very or fairly satisfied with a) the facilities and services at stations and b) average of environmental attributes including station upkeep and repair, friendliness of staff, personal security, cleanliness, station environment and availability of staff.
Source: National Passenger Survey (waves 1-11 combined), SRA (2005)

2 Average satisfaction with station facilities (all stations)



3 Satisfaction levels



low-population or rural areas. For this reason services may be infrequent.

1.2 Satisfaction with stations

Passenger satisfaction with stations (as demonstrated by the National Passenger Survey and highlighted in Table 1) varies depending on the category of station and the type of attribute.

There is a high level of satisfaction with category A stations but satisfaction with facilities is lower for smaller stations, with category D, E and F stations having very low satisfaction levels for facilities and services.

The pattern for environmental attributes, including staff, security and cleanliness, is somewhat different, with some smaller stations performing well.

1.3 Satisfaction with individual aspects of stations

The overall satisfaction with different station facilities and attributes is shown in Table 2, with highest

satisfaction for information provision. The lowest satisfaction levels were with availability of staff and car parking.

In view of the current lack of satisfaction with B-F stations, the National Audit Office (NAO) carried out a review of rail stations which is due to be published in Summer 2005.

1.4 Satisfaction with selected aspects of stations

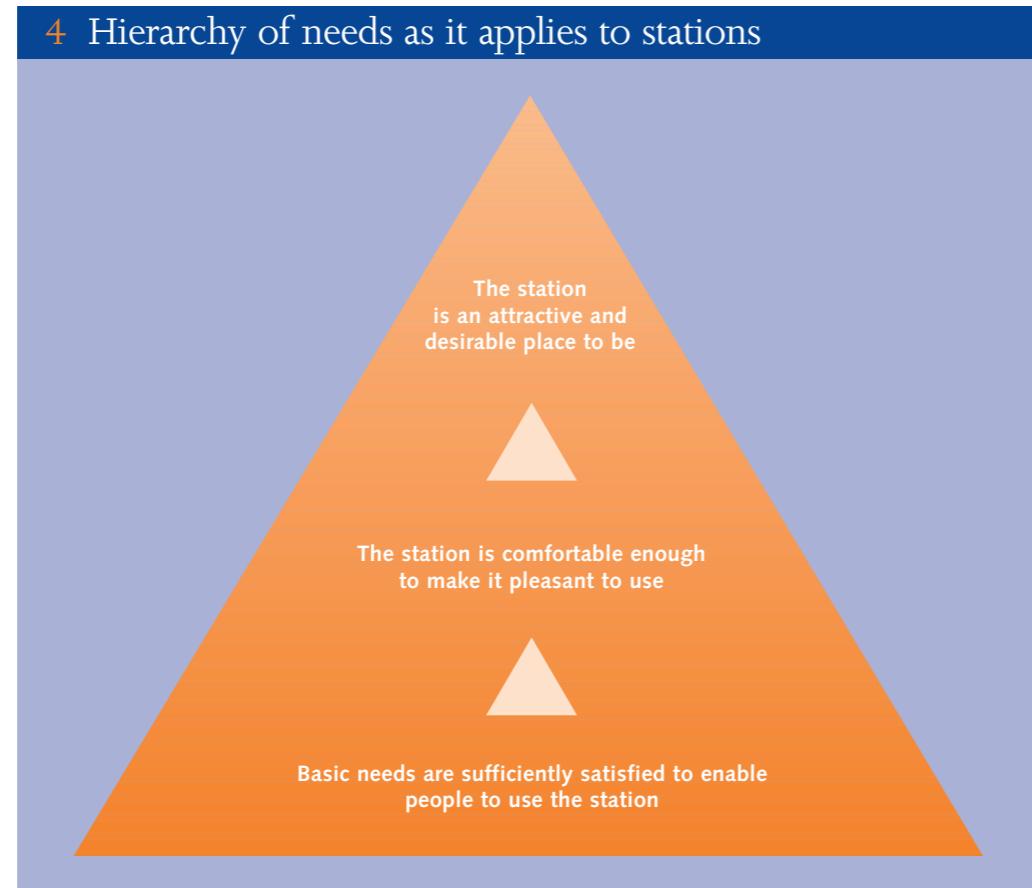
Satisfaction with a number of individual aspects of stations is compared by station category in Table 3.

Personal security and station environment follow very similar patterns and reflect the general trend of lower satisfaction ratings for smaller stations.

The two attributes which do not quite follow this pattern are car parking (which is best at category E and F stations), and helpfulness of staff, which is slightly higher for category E stations.

2 Summary and recommendations

4 Hierarchy of needs as it applies to stations



1.5 Hierarchy of needs

A useful way of considering the needs of station users is in terms of a hierarchy, along the lines of Maslow's well known "hierarchy of needs" (see Table 4). At the bottom of the hierarchy are the basic facilities and physical requirements needed to enable people to actually find, and use, the station.

Once these have been satisfied, passengers' attention is turned to what might be termed "comfort" factors which make the station more pleasant to use.

At the top of the hierarchy are the cosmetic or luxury elements which make the station more attractive to people.

One aim of this research was to identify what facilities and attributes fall into each level of the hierarchy, and how these might vary according to the type of passenger, the journey being made, and the way the station is being used. The implication is that anything at the base level is an essential which must apply to all stations. The comfort factors, on the other hand, could vary by station category.

2.1 Overview of needs

The basic needs of passengers do not differ significantly:

- > passengers need to be able to find the station and find their way around the station
- > they need to be able to get to the station and their platform
- > they need to feel safe
- > they need adequate light and shelter.

Not all stations appear to be meeting even these most basic of needs, with examples of poor signage perhaps most common.

Differences between passengers' requirements do start to appear once the basic needs have been met, with needs conditioned by factors such as the time at which the station is being used, how busy it is, whether it is after dark, how long the passenger is at the station, and how familiar they are with their journey. Even so, a good deal of common ground exists with, for example, the need for real-time information is pretty well universal, as compared with the which need for retail facilities, which do vary.

There are clear differences in the expectations for smaller versus larger stations, and a good deal of pragmatism about what can be expected at category F stations in particular. The purpose of some remote stations is similar to that of bus stops, in that they act as pick-up points. These just need basic facilities such as a simple shelter and seats, adequate lighting and real-time information. It is generally agreed that more comfortable waiting areas and retail facilities should be concentrated at busier stations in which people spend more time.

The D and E stations examined in this study are seen as commuter stations, and ones where there is a lack of basic facilities such as ticket machines, real-time information and waiting



rooms. Providing these were the focus of the discussions.

At the larger, category B and C stations, people start to think about making their environment more comfortable with the introduction of aspirational facilities such as plasma screens, wireless internet access and healthy food options. Flagship stations such as Manchester Piccadilly are seen as good role models for this.

The more specific priorities for stations are shown on page 10. The first categorises passenger needs based on a hierarchy, also highlighting some key differences between commuters (that is, passengers who are familiar with their journey, travel at busy times, and spend little time at the station unless there is disruption) and other passengers (characterised by less familiarity, travelling in the off-peak, and probably spending more time on the station). This is then followed by a summary of the recommended facilities provided at each station category, bearing in mind some of the practical limitations which inevitably exist.

5	1	2	3	4	5
Basic features	Universal features	Comfort features	Attractor features	Special features	
Essential features of all stations	Facilities which are expected by customers at all stations	Facilities which make the station easier or more comfortable and should ideally be at all stations	Facilities which help to attract people to busier stations	Facilities appropriate only to particular stations which help to make them special	
Reasonably safe and secure	Ramps	Bus stop	Travel info in the waiting area*	Airport lounge style waiting area	
Well lit	Car parking	Taxi ranks	Range of shops*	TV with news	
Basic shelter and seating	Signs to the trains	Cycle racks	Cash point	Office facilities	
Basic signage	Real-time information screens	Signs to facilities*	Baby changing facilities*	Luggage trolleys*	
	Real-time PA announcements	Station maps (visual)*	Escalators and travelators*		
	Timetables	Station maps (tactile)*	Lift*		
	Departure boards	Newsagent			
	Clocks	Kiosk			
	CCTV	Café*			
	Staff	Vending machine			
	Pay phone	Help point			
	Ticket machines	Booking office			
		Heated waiting room			
		Disabled access toilets*			
		Automatic doors*			



2.2 Passenger priorities

Features and facilities of stations are categorised in Table 5, based on overall passenger needs and expectations. All the facilities in levels one ("basic features") and two ("universal features") apply to all stations and passenger types.

Facilities marked with an asterix* are more relevant for less regular leisure or business passengers than daily commuters.

2.3 Additional needs of disabled passengers

Contrary to perceptions about the inaccessibility of the rail network it is clear that many disabled people currently use and enjoy travelling by rail. Although fundamental barriers exist for some passengers in wheelchairs such as

footbridges and steps into the station, these are currently overcome in various ways, from taking an alternative mode to opposite platforms at smaller stations to being escorted over the track by station staff, or using an alternative station. The only problem encountered was with the booking system of making sure staff are available at stations to help people onto and off trains.

For people with visual impairments and non-wheelchair users it was found that small changes to improve accessibility such as defining steps more clearly, introducing handrails on staircases, suitable flooring, ramps and automatic doors, could greatly improve the experience for most passengers. And not just for people with disabilities, but for older people, people with heavy shopping and people with buggies and small children.

Information provision was found to be fairly inadequate at smaller stations both for people with and without disabilities, making them all dependent on station staff to a certain extent. The introduction of real-time information would benefit all users. When real-time information is not provided, it is clear that visually impaired people rely heavily on platform announcements.

Station staff are extremely important to passengers to provide information and help. There is also the psychological benefit of an increased sense of security at night when stations are staffed. In this respect all thought that stations should be staffed or staffed for longer.

All of our disabled respondents agreed that increasing the level of provision at larger stations (A-C) including extra vigilant staff, tactile maps and accessible toilets, would enable them to travel more widely, visiting unfamiliar stations with more confidence.



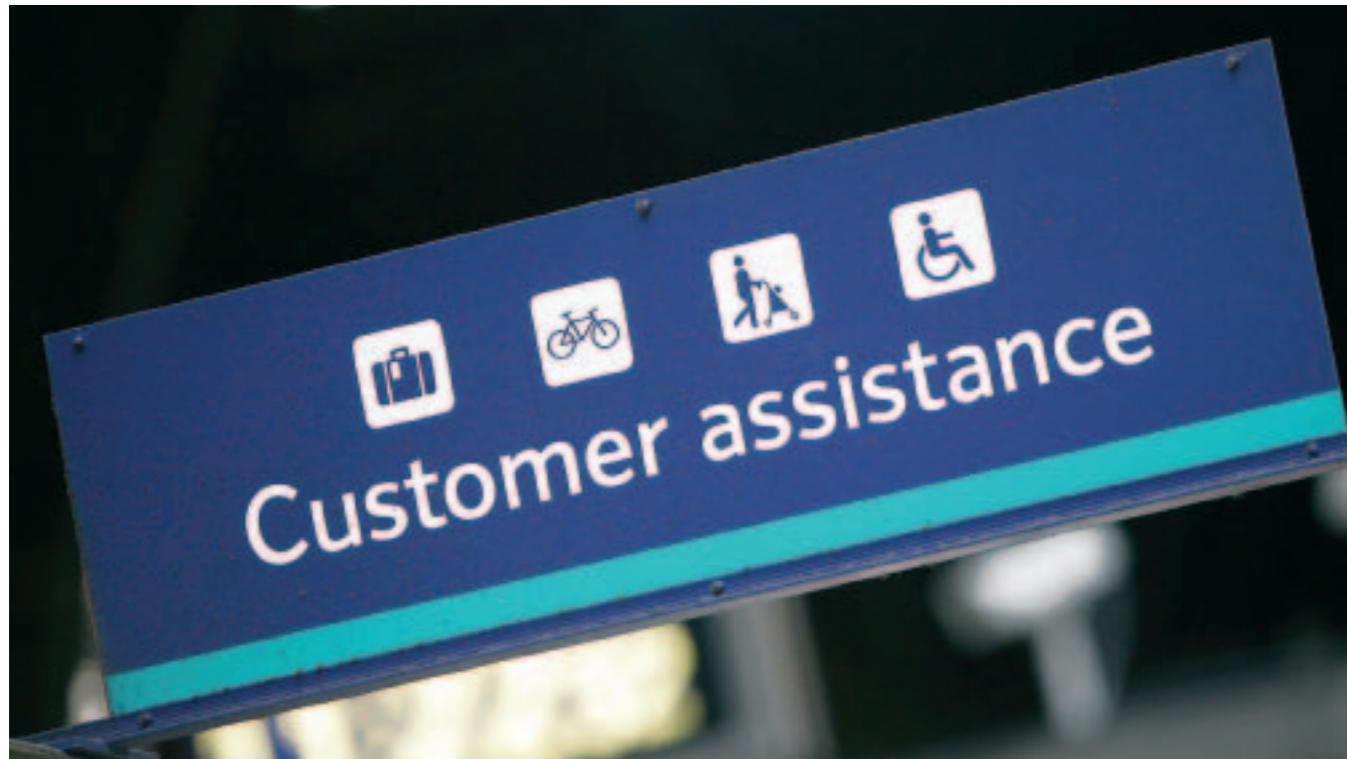
2.4 Station categories

Currently the station categorisations are used purely within the industry, but there could be a wider role for them in helping to provide passengers with a better idea of what to expect at a station they have never visited before. If network maps and timetables identified station categories, and there was consistent application of the standards, then passengers would know whether there was a car park, bus stop, newsagent or a café at the station and could prepare accordingly.

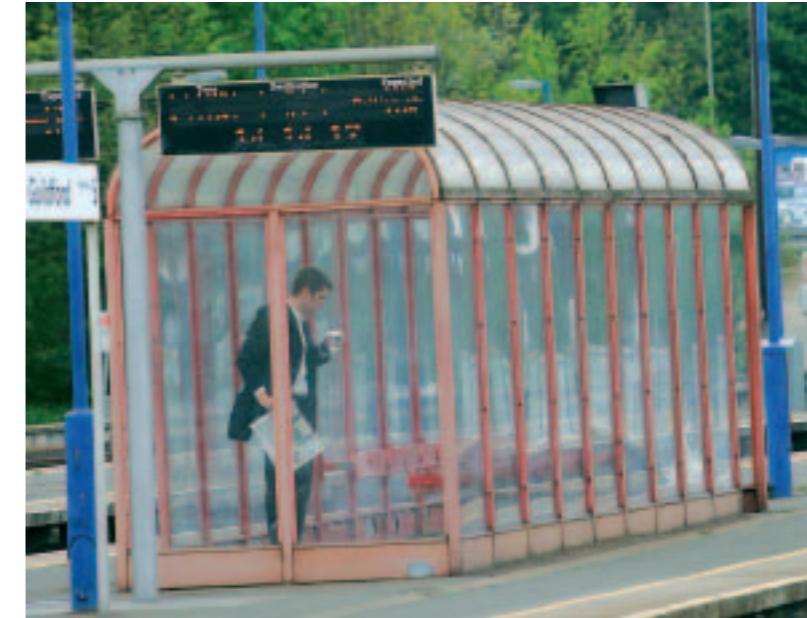
For the full potential of this application to be realised a full review of categorisations is necessary.

2.5 Recommended standards by station category

6 Station access	B	C	D	E	F
Signs to the station	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ramps	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	If possible
Disabled access to platforms	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	If possible
Car parking	Yes	Yes	Yes	If possible	If possible
Bus stop	Yes	Yes	Yes	If possible	If possible
Taxi ranks	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Cycle racks	Yes	If possible	If possible	If possible	If possible
Automatic doors	Yes	Yes	If possible	No	No
Escalators and travelators	Yes	Yes	If possible	No	No
Lift	Yes	If possible	No	No	No
Non-slip flooring	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	If possible
Information	B	C	D	E	F
Signs to the trains	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Real-time information screens	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	If possible
Real-time PA announcements	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Timetables	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	If possible
Departure boards	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	If possible
Signs to facilities	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Clocks	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Station maps (visual)	Yes	If possible	No	No	No
Station maps (tactile)	Yes	If possible	No	No	No
Travel information in the waiting area	Yes	If possible	No	No	No



7 Retail Facilities	B	C	D	E	F
Newsagent	Yes	Yes	Yes	If possible	If possible
Café	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Kiosk	Yes	Yes	If possible	No	No
Vending machine	Yes	Yes	Yes	If possible	No
Range of shops	Yes	Yes	If possible	If possible	No
Cash point	Yes	Yes	If possible	If possible	No
Security features	B	C	D	E	F
Adequate lighting	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
CCTV	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Station staffed	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	If possible
Pay phone	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Help point	If possible				
Ticketing	B	C	D	E	F
Ticket machines	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Booking office	Yes	Yes	Yes	If possible	No
Waiting facilities	B	C	D	E	F
Sheltered waiting/seating	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Waiting room	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Heated waiting room	Yes	Yes	If possible	If possible	No
Toilets	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Disabled access toilets	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Baby changing facilities	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Comfortable (airport lounge style) waiting area	Yes	No	No	No	No
TV with news	Yes	No	No	No	No
Office facilities	Yes	No	No	No	No
Luggage trolleys	Yes	If possible	No	No	No



3 Results: Station access

Most of the focus group participants accessed their starting station on foot, or by their own car. Only a small proportion of participants accessed the station by bus, or by other modes (taxi, cycle or being dropped off). This can be illustrated with responses to the RPC questionnaire shown in table 8.

During the focus group discussions it was revealed that the apparently high car/low bus mode to station was partly due to the fact that some (especially E and F) stations were not served by bus routes, and if they were, buses were not frequent enough to coincide with train departures.

3.1 Station access: modes

Car parks

Car parks at medium and small (D, E and F) stations were considered to be a benefit, particularly amongst frequent users such as commuters and business users. The main issues amongst car users were lack of car park capacity; car crime and personal security in car parks, especially at night.

"Hazel Grove's got parking but it's not secure parking. There are loads of cars broken into on that car park." Business user, Manchester

"The only thing about Wilmslow is it's got a bit of a dodgy passage from the (overflow) car park, which



is behind a sort of office block that you have to walk through to actually get onto the platform." Business user, Manchester

Older respondents in Cardiff were frustrated by the frequent inaccessibility of the Queen Street station car park because of its use by non-rail using shoppers. A priority for these users was the provision of parking exclusively for the use of rail travellers.

"The car park belongs to the train station but it's open to the general public. It's the cheapest place to park so everybody parks there and if you're using the facilities you very often can't park your car there and you've got to use one of the more expensive car parks quite a long way away." Older user, Cardiff

In contrast to Cardiff some commuters in the South East felt that their local station car park was being under-utilised because of prohibitive car parking charges and advocated a package deal with their season ticket.

"What you need is something with appropriate rates, a commuters' car park with reasonable rates for the whole day, done with your season ticket, maybe offer something off the season ticket – Hampton Court car park is almost empty." Commuter, Kingston

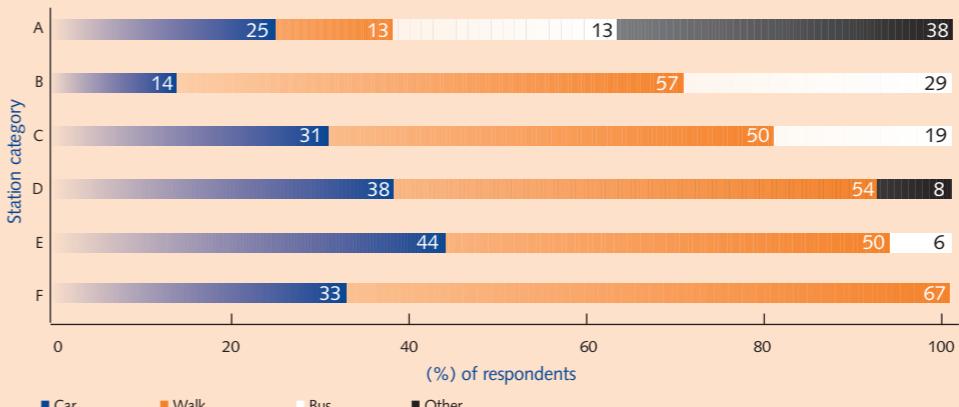
Public transport

In general, participants believed that access to larger (B and C) stations was very good, with convenient links to other transport including buses, taxis and other trains.

The main issues particularly among non-car users regarding access to smaller (E and F) stations were a lack of a regular bus service or bus stop serving stations and a lack of alternative bus routes to the rail service.

"They should also have the buses run in time with trains, when trains are going to leave. Because you often find that you get to a station and there's

8 How passengers normally reach the station



Source: RPC focus group stations questionnaire 2005

not a bus to take you to wherever you're going, at the smaller places." Local leisure user, Scotland

"My bus arrives in the train station at ten to nine, and my train doesn't leave until twenty five to ten, so I'm sat there for 45 minutes." Local leisure user, Scotland

"If they're going to cancel trains, they should have a bus for every station, so everybody can get into work." Local leisure user, Scotland

Cycle racks

There was a mixed reaction to the installation of cycle racks at stations. While some participants (particularly commuters) believe that they are an important facility to have, lack of adequate security or responsibility of station staff to look after them stops people from leaving their bikes at stations. Even the installation of CCTV and manned stations would not convince participants to leave their bikes at smaller stations. The only place where it was felt they could be left securely was at larger stations which are staffed and supervised by police, e.g. Glasgow Queen Street station.

The fear that property is not safe at stations is similar in some ways to the fear of car crime at stations.

In some cases the installation of cycle racks was considered to be an actual incentive to thieves.

"I wouldn't leave my bike there."
Young person, Scotland

"I don't know anyone that would leave their bike at a station." Business user, NW

"If they [thieves] take it then it's up to you, So there's no way I can trust leaving my bike with them if they say well, 'if it gets snatched it's not really our problem it's your belongings', so, they've contradicted themselves, trying to encourage people to leave bikes there."
Young person, Scotland

"When I don't get the train I cycle, but I still don't really use the train when I'm cycling, but some of my friends do. And they said there's no cycle racks or there's only a few, probably about three or four and that's about it. They leave bikes there, but sometimes there's nowhere to leave them."
Commuter, NW

"I think they're vital for a sufficient number of people. They might encourage more people to cycle." Commuter, SE

3.2 Station access: mobility-impaired

Rail users in each of the groups expressed concern at the relatively high proportion of particularly smaller (E and F) stations which have limited access to mobility-impaired passengers or wheelchair users because of the lack of ramps or lifts. For most people this was seen as a major priority which should be addressed before any of the other, more 'aspirational' facilities are considered.

"In this day and age there should be access to all stations. The buses all have to have lowered access and the shops have to have ramps."
Older user, Cardiff

Disabled respondents were asked if they had any particular difficulty accessing the stations they use most often and responses are summarised under the main issues below.

Footbridges

Footbridges cause the most serious obstacle to passengers who are wheelchair users: they make access difficult for people with visual impairments, restricted mobility and cognitive impairments as well as older people and people with buggies.

For people with more serious mobility difficulties, alternative access to platforms without crossing footbridges was undertaken using a variety of different methods including:

- > by road to the opposite platform
- > across the railway tracks accompanied by station staff
- > avoiding the station altogether and using an alternative means of transport to destination e.g. taxi, or a larger station with more facilities such as lifts.

"I work at a school for special needs, and sometimes we take the kids and we'll go from

Johnstone to Ayr, and that's our day out. So we have to go to Johnstone station and buy the ticket, but we can't take these kids over the bridge because some of them are in chairs and some of them won't take it, it's just too much, so you have to put everybody back on the bus and then drive all the way round to the other side to get the Ayr train." *Local leisure user, Scotland*

For the visually impaired, including partially sighted people, uneven flooring, lack of stair definition and handrails on staircases make access to platforms difficult.

"My visual impairment means that I can't judge how high things are and can't normally see where stairs start and end. At Leicester station the steps, coloured silver grey with black runners appear as 'one big black blob'."
Partially sighted respondent

Footbridges are especially a problem for passengers with more than one disability. Most people who are visually impaired would prefer to use a lift to a footbridge. However lifts are not always easy to find in the station or be operated without help.

"There is a lift at Arbroath station to the main road to exit the station, however passengers must be accompanied by station staff to use it and although the staff are helpful, I don't feel that I can ask because staff are always busy selling tickets. I would use a lift if I were able to operate it myself."

Visually impaired respondent

"I always book ahead to ensure there is someone available to take me across the tracks. I would not expect help to be available if I just 'turned up' but booking usually guarantees everything runs smoothly."

Wheelchair user

Automatic doors

Doors that have to be manually opened are

another obstacle to the visually impaired as it is not immediately obvious whether to push or pull them open, or whether one side of the door is locked.

Automatic doors are viewed as desirable for larger (B and C) stations in several of the groups, because of their perceived usefulness to disabled people especially when carrying luggage.

"Wide entrances/exits into the station with automatic doors are a big benefit to people with disabilities." *Partially sighted and restricted mobility respondent*

Floor surfaces

A high proportion of disabled respondents found floor surfaces in stations unsuitable and "not good for walking". Even non-slip flooring is a large benefit for people with all types of disabilities because it makes them feel more secure underfoot. Ramps are also useful.

3.3 Passengers with disabilities

The priorities of passengers with disabilities are highlighted in Table 9. All of the disabled respondents were reliant on station staff to some degree. People with severe mobility impairments alert the station staff before they arrive at the station or on upon arrival at the station they are travelling from so that they can get the necessary help they require to get

on and off the train. People with visual impairments are often reliant on staff for information.

"The station staff are very helpful when they are on hand to ask. For this reason, I would like the stations to be staffed for longer."

Disabled passenger

3.4 Security

Security both in and outside the station is a high priority for passengers with fear of or direct experience of car crime and a low perception of personal security in and around station entrances and exits, especially so at night. Commuters and business passengers feel that some smaller stations are "lonely places" and that leaving them at night is "dangerous". Other participants do not use train services at all at night because this is considered "too risky".

The main concerns with travelling at night can be summed up as:

- > no staff or supervision at the station when returning home late
- > ticket office is closed
- > gangs of youths hanging around the station or in waiting rooms drinking
- > lack of people
- > lack of adequate lighting at station and in car parks
- > bushes and foliage along walkways/exits.

9 Priorities for stations (all sizes)

	Visual impairment	Restricted mobility*	Wheelchair user	Cognitive impairment
Trained staff assistance	VITAL	VITAL	VITAL	VITAL
Ramps	NICE TO HAVE	NICE TO HAVE	VITAL	NICE TO HAVE
Lifts	NICE TO HAVE	VITAL	VITAL	NICE TO HAVE
White stripes on stairs, escalators and travelators	VITAL	NICE TO HAVE	N/A	VITAL
Handrails on stairs	VITAL	VITAL	VITAL	NICE TO HAVE
Automatic doors	VITAL	VITAL	VITAL	NICE TO HAVE
An even, non-slip floor surface	VITAL	VITAL	VITAL	VITAL

* Includes older people, people with young children and people with heavy baggage who are seen to be struggling

4 Results: Buying a ticket



Booking offices and ticket machines

Participants said that some category D stations had part-time ticket offices which were open for a limited time as well as ticket machines. It was felt that ticket machines were only useful on their own if they worked and if they gave change. Most E and F stations were perceived to have no facilities for buying tickets including no booking office, ticket barrier or ticket machine. Some E stations (e.g. Guide Bridge, Cardonald) are staffed during peak hours and it is possible to buy a ticket (typical hours are 8.00-15.00 Mon-Sat); however it is not possible to buy a ticket out of office hours because there is no ticket machine.

A focus group representing Scotland considered it was normal practice to buy a ticket from a conductor on board a train, whereas groups held in other parts of the UK did not think this would be possible. Although participants wanted to have the option of buying a ticket on the train, they believed that not being 'forced' to buy a ticket at the start of a journey encouraged people to fare dodge. Participants felt 'cheated' when they heard people saying



they had not bought a ticket and felt that the train operators were losing revenue because of this.

Some participants felt that buying a ticket at their destination was sometimes intimidating. Others saw them as a further waste of precious commuter time. Cash machines which do not charge for withdrawals, alongside ticket machines, were also thought to be a good idea.

"The Kingston ticket machine doesn't take credit cards or any notes that are more than a day old...." Evening user, South East

"Berrylands doesn't even have a ticket machine – just a permission to travel thing. That's really annoying because when you get to Waterloo and you're late you have to queue for a ticket." Commuter, South East

"You can't pay at the actual bit where you're supposed to because there's no one there. There's sometimes no conductor, so you're not paying at all, which is good!"

Local leisure user, Scotland

5 Results: Waiting for the train

Results from the RPC focus group questionnaires show that participants spend on average 7 to 8 minutes at the station prior to departure. Analysis of (unprompted) activities undertaken during this time involved the use of station facilities including information provision, waiting and retail facilities. Responses to the question "What do you usually do at the station prior to departure?" are shown in table 10.

'confidence' to use other station facilities such as cafés and shops.

Signs to platforms (knowing where to go)

Smaller stations (D to F) lack clear information telling passengers which platform serves their destination, which had led to confusion amongst some participants in the past. At some stations the only way of getting information about which platform to wait on is from station maps displayed in the station. These were described by one younger user as "tiny" and "difficult to understand" in the context of the journey they wanted to make. For example, they would have to try and work out where the train was going before getting onto the right platform. Participants thought that information regarding which platforms served particular destinations should be displayed more clearly (on departure boards) rather than on maps.

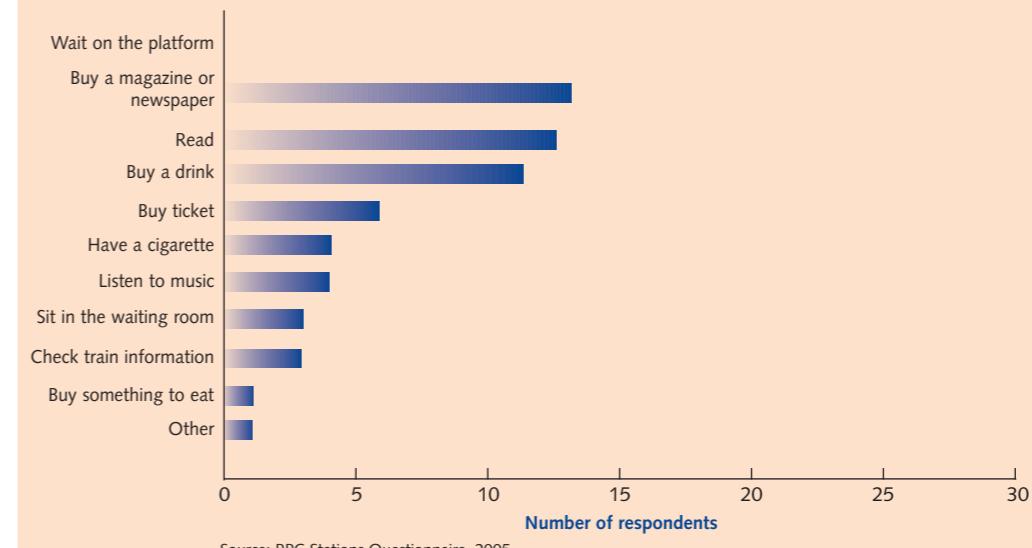
"It should be clearly stated which train goes which way. (At the moment) it's just on maps, and the maps are always tiny, so you have to stand there and try and work out where it goes and everything... then you realise that you're at the wrong platform and then the trains go..." Younger user, Scotland

5.1 Information

Information at larger stations (B and C)

In general, larger (B and C) stations were perceived to have a higher level of information provision than medium-sized and small stations (D, E and F). Information at larger stations was also considered to be clearer in terms of directing passengers to trains (knowing where to go) and informing them of train times (knowing when you are going to get there). This included real-time information, departure and arrival times, and directions to different parts of the station to access services and facilities. Having a high level of travel information gave participants more

10 What passengers usually do prior to departure



"I've done that ... stand on one side for ages and realised it should have been the other, there's nothing that tells you that." Younger user, Scotland

5.2 Visually/mobility impaired

Visually

Participants who were mobility or visually impaired tended to be very familiar with the layout of their home station because it is the station they used most regularly. For this reason it was thought that facilities such as tactile maps should be concentrated on larger stations where it is more likely that such passengers might become lost.

"It would be a good idea to concentrate facilities for the disabled such as tactile maps and better information provision at larger stations such as London stations, or interchange stations which would make them easier to use." Visually impaired respondent

"I am just about able to see the older style white on black flip-over departure boards and electronic departure information if it is large, or brightly lit on a clearly defined background. If train timetables are big I can read them. However, I will generally ask station staff for information if there is anyone available."

Partially sighted respondent

Large digital clocks are easier to see than the round analogue clocks whose hands are too slim to be seen by partially sighted people.

Real-time information (knowing when you are going to get there)

Real-time information in the form of TV or dot matrix style screens was provided on the platforms of most B and C stations and some (but not all) D stations, but was not found to be provided at E or F stations.

Real-time information at smaller stations (D, E and F) is considered to be a high priority by all groups, the primary benefit of which were being informed of delays and knowing when you would arrive at your destination. This information was considered to be essential in today's environment and especially when there was no other perceived way of getting the information; i.e. when booking offices are shut.

"It's not just for the big stations. If you turn up at a station and there's only one train an hour and it's not running then you should get that at every station really....If you go down to London they have it at even the smallest stations." Commuter, NW

"To tell you if that train's on time, or there's a delay." Local leisure user, Scotland

One visually impaired participant said that he did benefit indirectly from their implementation because he could ask a fellow passenger what it said. Real-time information screens do not directly benefit people with visual impairments as they are unable to see the text.

"The introduction of real-time TV style departure screens has been an indirect benefit to me because I can ask people what is displayed on them."

Visually impaired respondent

Platform announcements

Station announcements were described as often difficult to hear, sometimes because they come from a larger station some distance away. Help Points were found not to be used 'at all' to obtain train information.

"There is one of those speaker phone things, but you can never hear it, because it's coming from Glasgow Central all the way down the track."

Local leisure user, Scotland

For visually impaired people platform announcements are extremely important and they tend to hear them more clearly than most other people. If the PA

11 Waiting for a train: mobility-impaired priorities

Priorities for stations (all sizes)	Visual impairment	Restricted mobility*	Wheelchair user	Cognitive impairment
Staff assistance	VITAL	VITAL	VITAL	VITAL
Help Points	VITAL	VITAL	VITAL	VITAL
Platform announcements	VITAL	VITAL	VITAL	VITAL
Digital clocks	NICE TO HAVE	NICE TO HAVE	NICE TO HAVE	NICE TO HAVE
Real-time information	VITAL	NICE TO HAVE	VITAL	VITAL
Clearly defined station information (large print, white on black or orange lights on black)	VITAL	NICE TO HAVE	NICE TO HAVE	NICE TO HAVE

* Includes older people, people with young children and people with heavy baggage who are seen to be struggling

system is not good, however, the level of background noise at larger stations can make announcements harder to hear.

5.3 Retail facilities

The primary retail facility expected is a newsagent, which is seen as vital for all but the smallest stations. Even here, some kind of peak-hour provision is called for.

Refreshments, albeit incorporated into a waiting room or, on smaller stations, in the form of a vending machine, are seen as vital for many rail users. While there was an acceptance that the 'bus stop' style F stations which merely have a platform with sheltered seating would be too small to accommodate a refreshment kiosk, there is now an expectation that D category stations and above would provide a facility, at least in peak hours.

An issue for partially sighted customers is the need for better information to be forthcoming about ingredients and the range of products available. There is a tendency for self-service to be taken for granted, even though staff are available, and some reluctance to answer questions or provide physical help (e.g. with carrying drinks or helping with selection) is encountered by disabled passengers.

Table 12 shows responses to the question: 'If station facilities currently don't satisfy your requirements, what facilities would you like to have?'

5.4 Waiting rooms

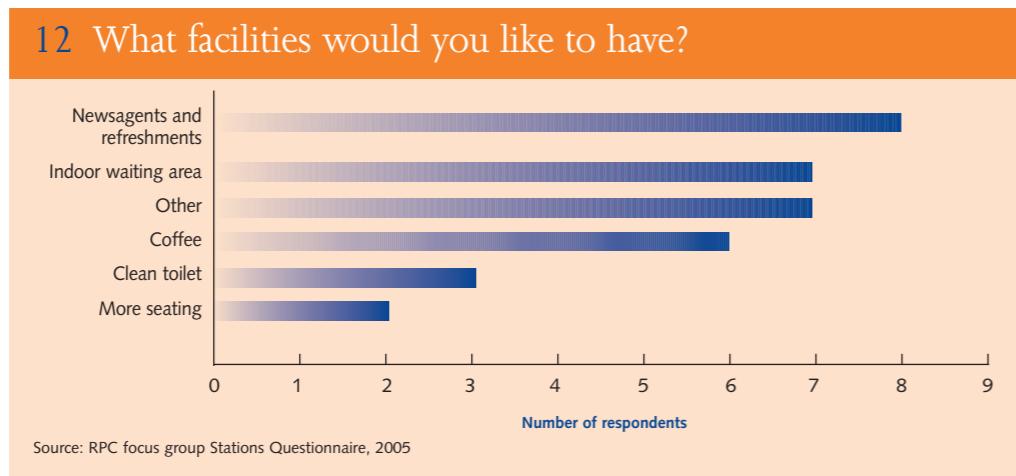
Waiting rooms of various types and quality were found at all station categories. They were considered to be an important facility for all station types but most important at stations where you might have to wait longer for a train. In general, waiting rooms were found to be inadequate because they were too cold, or not accessible because locked.

A large B station e.g. Manchester Airport and Victoria, waiting rooms were considered to be very important because one might typically be spending a longer time at the station. Participants wanted somewhere warm, comfortable and more inviting to wait for trains at this size of station, preferably on platforms. A similar level of service provision to airport lounges in terms of cleanliness and comfort is considered appropriate for B size stations.

The main benefits of better waiting facilities were described as the ability to relax, do some work, and get to the station a bit earlier to ensure that trains are not missed.

At smaller stations waiting rooms are considered to be important but impractical in terms of being able to cater for all peak travellers at once. Improving waiting facilities involved extending outside sheltered waiting areas and providing coffee-vending machines. Station categories D to F were considered to

Annex A: Methodology



be 'pick-up points' only, so waiting facilities were not expected to be of as high a standard as that of larger interchange stations.

For these stations participants thought that if comfortable seating were to be introduced, it would be vandalised, therefore heated waiting rooms with plain hard seats were considered adequate. Participants thought that waiting rooms should be regularly checked by station staff.

5.5 Additional facilities

Toilets

Generally people did not use the toilets at medium and small stations because they were perceived to be of low quality, or people did not know about them (not adequately signed). People typically waited until they reached a larger station (e.g. Manchester Piccadilly, Glasgow Queen Street) and used toilet facilities there. However, toilets were considered to be an important priority for evening travellers or people with small children, and for this reason baby changing facilities should also be available.

Participants would only use toilets if they were much cleaner and warmer than they are now. Most are prepared to pay a small fee for a much

cleaner, staffed facility. Some participants thought a staffed toilet at smaller stations might be possible if it was inside the station near to the booking office.

Cash machine

Cash machines not charging for withdrawals are considered to be necessary for people who might need to operate the facility to buy a ticket or pay for a taxi home from the station.

Luggage trolleys

Luggage trolleys are thought to be important to have on hand at major interchange and airport stations.

It was thought that station staff should offer assistance to mobility impaired people if they were seen to be struggling with heavy luggage, or small children.

The study involved two elements: focus groups with passengers, and interviews with disabled passengers.

Focus groups

A series of focus groups was undertaken with rail users in four regions, as shown in Table 13.

An average of eight respondents attended each of the groups. Rail users were recruited at stations and on street, using a recruitment questionnaire.

Quotas were applied to ensure both an even gender split and a reasonable spread of station category usage, so that each of the three categories to be covered in the groups was well represented in terms of recent usage by at least two members of the group. The sessions each lasted approximately 1½ hours and were tape-recorded.

In-depth interviews

Eight in-depth interviews were conducted by telephone with disabled rail users (or their carers), each interview lasting approximately 30 minutes.

Respondents were recruited from a list supplied by Tripscope.

The eight respondents were spread geographically and were selected to be representative both in terms of types of disability and categories of station used. Table 14 summarises the sample.

Methodology – discussion format

Initially, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire provided by RPC relating to frequency of travel, stations used, facilities provided and priorities for improvement.

The second part of the discussion involved generating lists of facilities at each of the station types used by the respondents at each stage of their visit to the station: arrival, buying a ticket and waiting for the train:

- > which are currently provided
- > which should be provided.

Respondents were encouraged to consider their usage of stations in different weather, time of day and journey type conditions, including travelling with children, at night, when the service is disrupted, etc.

Stimulus material in the form of A5 cards was provided, showing, on one side, the name of a facility currently provided at some stations (e.g. pay phone, Help Point, lift) and, on the other side, a visual image of this facility. This helped to stimulate discussion and to ensure that all the current range of facilities was considered for each station category.

The facilities listed were then assigned importance for the type of station under consideration, those which were considered to be 'nice to have' (rather than 'vital' or 'pie in the sky') were taken forward to a resource allocation exercise undertaken on an individual basis by respondents at the end of the discussion.

During the focus groups respondents were also asked to complete a questionnaire in which they

- > listed those facilities which they perceived were currently provided at stations in each of the three station categories the group was dealing with
- > named the stations in each of the three categories with which they were most familiar
- > stated how frequently they used each of those stations
- > described the usual journey purpose and travelling companions when using those stations.

Annex B: Stations questionnaire

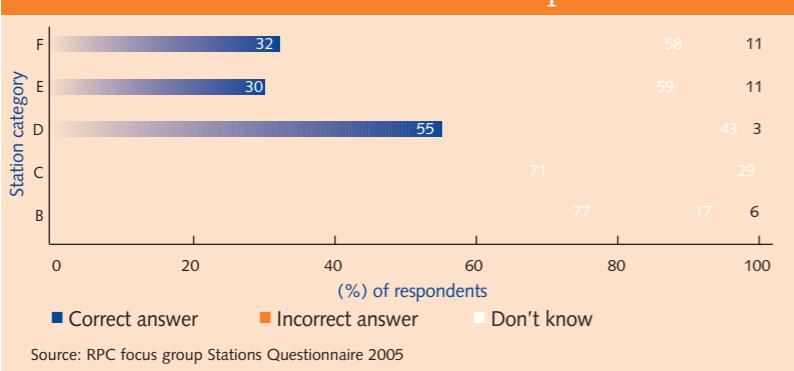
13 Focus group format

Southern (Kingston)	North West (Manchester)	Scotland (Glasgow)	Great Western (Cardiff)
Commuters B, C, E stations	Commuters B, D, E stations	Local leisure users C, D, E stations	Older users C, E, F stations
Evening users B, C, E stations	Business users B, D, E stations	Young people C, D, E stations	Infrequent leisure users C, E, F stations

14 Focus group format

	Region	Disability	Station categories
1	North Eastern	Restricted mobility	E
2	Scotland	Visually impaired	D
3	Scotland	Learning difficulties	B
4	Midlands	Visually impaired	E
5	Southern	Learning difficulties	B, C, D
6	Southern	Visual impaired	B, C
7	Southern	Wheelchair user	E, F
8	Great Western	Wheelchair user	C, D, F

15 Awareness of station facilities provided

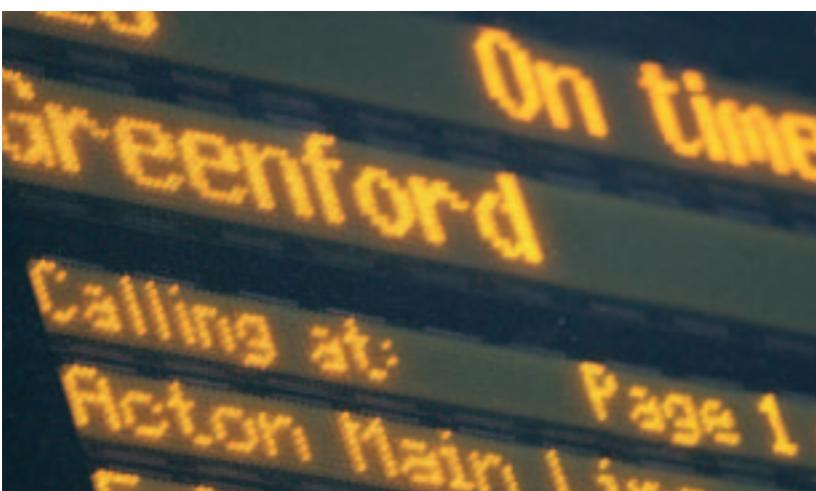


Awareness of facilities

Participants were asked whether the following range of facilities were available at the stations listed (B to F).

- > CCTV
- > Disabled toilets
- > Real-time information
- > Platform announcements
- > Car parks
- > Help Point
- > Sheltered areas on platforms
- > Toilets
- > Cycle racks
- > Non-slip floor surfaces
- > Waiting Room
- > Tactile station maps.

Participants' perceptions of facilities often did not match the list of facilities which were supposed to be present, either because they were unaware of them, or they were not actually there (see Table 15). Answers which were "correct" or "incorrect" seem to correlate to station size, i.e. the smaller the station, the larger the mismatch between facilities people thought were present and those that should be provided.



Q1 What is the purpose of your journey?

- 1 To/from work
- 2 To/from college/university
- 3 Shopping
- 4 For business
- 5 Leisure day trip
- 6 Leisure evening trip
- 7 Sport or entertainment
- 8 Visiting friends or relations
- 9 Other leisure
- 10 Other (please write in)

Q7 And how do you usually travel onwards from the station where your train journey ends?

- 1 Car
- 2 Walk
- 3 Another train
- 4 Bus
- 5 Other (please write in)

Q13 What are the three best things about your station?

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____

Q14 What are the three worst things about your station?

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____

Q15 Do you have a car available which you could have used for this journey?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

Q16 Which age group are you in?

- 1 Under 18
- 2 18-24
- 3 25-34
- 4 35-44
- 5 45-54
- 6 55-59
- 7 60-64
- 8 65+

Q17 Are you?

- 1 Employed full time
- 2 Employed part time
- 3 Full time student
- 4 Retired
- 5 Self employed
- 6 Full time looking after home
- 7 Looking for work

Q11 Do you have a choice of stations? And if so, why do you choose to use this specific one?

(please write in)

Q12 Do the facilities at your station satisfy your requirements?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

If no, what facilities would you like to have?

Q18 What is your home postcode (if UK resident)?

Thank you for your help