

Independent national passenger watchdog

# Passenger Voice Rail



Spring 2011

South East

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## Passenger watchdog takes closer look at passenger scores

### Autumn 2010

Train company	Overall satisfaction	Most significant improvement in satisfaction since Autumn 2009	Decline in % satisfied since Autumn 2009
Great Britain result	84%	Value for money (4%)	No significant decline
Chiltern Railways	90%	Helpfulness and attitude of staff on the train (9%)	The length of time the journey was scheduled to take (4%)
First Capital Connect	76%	No significant improvement	The cleanliness of the outside of the train (5%)
First Great Western	82%	Value for money; facilities for car parking (5%)	Station facilities and services; connections with other forms of public transport; overall environment (4%)
Heathrow Connect	92%	Value for money (9%)	No significant decline
Heathrow Express	93%	Value for money; the availability of staff on the train (12%)	Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand on the train (7%)
London Midland	86%	The attitude and helpfulness of station staff; value for money (7%)	Upkeep and repair of the train; cleanliness of the inside of the train (5%)
London Overground	85%	Upkeep and repair of the train (30%)	No significant decline
Southeastern	80%	Toilet facilities (13%)	No significant decline
Southern	82%	Facilities for car parking (8%)	Toilet facilities (8%)
South West Trains	87%	Personal security while using the station; personal security on the train (6%)	No significant decline

Passenger satisfaction with both train and station facilities on journeys to and from the capital is steadily creeping up.

Overall satisfaction in London and the South East stands at 83% according to the Autumn 2010 National Passenger Survey. However, for the first time Passenger Focus has also published a breakdown of passenger satisfaction scores for different routes within each train company.

Breaking the National Passenger Survey results down by routes marks a huge step forward in accountability and transparency. Passengers can now get a much better idea of how their train services compare with others run by their company, as well as those across Great Britain.

For example, on London Overground, 93% of passengers are satisfied with services on the Watford-Euston route, compared with 77% on the Gospel Oak-Barking journey.

The research found that among the best-scoring routes are Southeastern's high-speed with 94% of passengers satisfied. The lowest scores were observed on First Capital Connect's London-Bedford route and National Express East Anglia main line routes (not including intercity services).

Passenger Focus is now working with train companies to improve those areas where satisfaction is low.

## Fares and ticketing progress

Passenger Focus has been working with Southern on a number of improvements to fares and ticketing and has welcomed progress. A smartcard ticketing system will be piloted later in the year and a 'next generation' of ticket vending machines will introduce new functions and more information for passengers. New 'Ticket on Departure' machines have also been introduced.

Both Southern and First Capital Connect have introduced discounted season-ticket options where passengers who sign up to monthly direct debits can qualify for a month of free travel.

These developments should help improve passenger satisfaction with value for money and ticket buying options and we'll be following the next steps closely.





## Information quality

Passenger Focus has been critical of the way many train companies have provided information to passengers during heavy snow and cold temperatures. It has responded with an independent review of how the industry handled the disruption.

Passengers in the region not only faced delays and cancellations as a result of the severe winter weather, but also inadequate service updates, according to the independent watchdog's 'Passenger Information During Snow Disruption' report. It found several failings including online journey planners that did not reflect the contingency timetables in operation and station displays and online live-departure boards that did not always keep pace with events. National Rail Enquiries' (NRE) online real-time journey planner also showed incorrect information for some train operators.

Passenger Focus has met with Southern to explore failings in its systems and the train company admitted work needed to happen to improve passenger information.

Southeastern passengers fared very badly from the winter disruption but also from the lack of reliable passenger information. At times the emergency timetable was showing alongside the normal timetable causing confusion. The vehicles needed to clear ice were also unavailable due to scheduled maintenance. Both Network Rail and Southeastern have acknowledged the failures and have confirmed a series of actions aimed at taking forward the lessons learned.

Finally, having observed the information provided to First Capital Connect (FCC) passengers, passenger manager Sharon Hedges has met with FCC to present feedback.

## Rail plans on the table

Passenger Focus has provided feedback on industry's long-term plans for the London and South East rail network.

Rail User Groups (RUGs) from across the region took the opportunity to hear and feedback on latest long-term plans for the region's railway at a meeting joint-hosted by Passenger Focus, London TravelWatch and Network Rail.

Network Rail published a draft of the 'second generation' Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS)

for London and the South East and Passenger Focus has now responded to the consultation. Passenger research demonstrates a number of factors that the RUS must seek to address. These include:

- punctuality and reliability of the trains
- delivery of sufficient capacity, particularly sufficient seats and minimising overcrowding
- adequate frequency of trains to meet passenger needs
- passenger information.

## Performance scrutiny

Since the timetable changes in December 2009, Southeastern's performance has been on the decline to the point where in December 2010 it only narrowly avoided dropping below the 82% punctuality target on its 'High-speed and Mainlines' routes. Passenger Focus is disappointed that its overall punctuality score is propped up by good performance on the high-speed line and believes the distinct high-speed service should be separated from the other main line routes.

Passenger Focus has successfully called for Southeastern to publish the results of an independent audit reviewing the company's punctuality statistics to demonstrate to long-suffering season-ticket holders why compensation had been avoided. Under the compensation arrangements, passengers on Southeastern's 'High Speed and Mainlines' routes looking to renew their season tickets at the end of last year would have been entitled to a five percent discount if punctuality fell below 82%. According to industry figures, Southeastern's punctuality for these routes was 82.04%.

The audit has revealed that 'High speed and Mainlines' punctuality was above 82% because of good results on the high-speed line.

The Government has since announced Southeastern's franchise has been extended after meeting performance targets.

Tunde Olatunji, Passenger Focus manager, said: "The announcement confirming the two-year extension of Southeastern's franchise will be received with mixed feelings by those passengers who have seen a deterioration in performance, sharp fare increases and little or no compensation for the delays.

"However, the silver-lining for passengers who have felt aggrieved about the failure to get compensation last year is that the franchise extension has now included a consultation on changing the compensation arrangement to a system known as 'delay repay', where passengers are entitled to compensation for every journey delayed by more than 30 minutes.

"The extension of the high-speed service to Maidstone West is also welcome news."



### Thameslink progress

Passenger Focus has been keeping a close watch on the next steps in the Thameslink Programme and passenger manager Sharon Hedges recently met Network Rail for an update.

Network Rail will soon be announcing its plans to redevelop London Bridge station and will be seeking

views on the scheme. The transformation of the station and surrounding tracks will be the final phase of the Thameslink Programme which will mean a better station, longer trains and more frequent services on the Thameslink route.

For more information and the chance to comment, visit Network Rail's website: [www.networkrail.co.uk/thameslink](http://www.networkrail.co.uk/thameslink)