

Independent national passenger watchdog

Passenger Voice Rail



Summer 2010

South East

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London and South East rail under review

Passenger satisfaction scores for value for money on rail services travelling into London and around the South East are up a whopping eight points (43%). This follows many fare prices being frozen last January following on from the low-inflation rate in mid-2009.

Passengers in London and the South East have rated the region's railway as part of the independent watchdog's National Passenger Survey (NPS).

Passenger Focus's NPS, in which over 56,000 passengers participate each year, gives a clear indication of how satisfied passengers are with train companies travelling into the capital and around the South East.

c2c (91%) and Chiltern (91%) continue to be strong performers in the survey and passenger satisfaction with value for money increased for most of the region's operators thanks to many fares either dropping or being fixed last New Year. Following major problems on its Thameslink route in late 2009 to early 2010, First Capital Connect's (FCC)

score for managing disruption plummeted 10 points to only 24%. Overall, these results show a pretty good picture of the region's railway. As more trains arrive on time, Britain's rail passengers are becoming more satisfied.

The National Passenger Survey is one of the most cost effective ways of driving improvements for passengers. The results allow valuable comparisons between routes and train companies

Passenger Focus is now working with train companies to improve those areas passengers have identified as being problematic.



Rail meeting for Southern England Rail User Groups

Rail user groups from around Southern England have met with Passenger Focus to discuss capacity, engineering work and punctuality on the railway.

Passenger Focus hosted the one-day event for rail user groups (RUGs) and it was attended by around 50 representatives. The aim of the conference was to discuss key topics which effect all the RUGs in the South and give them an opportunity to network with other groups and industry representatives. The event also provided an opportunity for RUGs to discuss the work the industry is doing to improve passenger information during disruption and to highlight the further work required.

Charles Martin, Sutton Rail Users' Forum chair, commented on the event: "The conference left me greatly impressed with the work of Passenger Focus. The research, presented through the central themes of the 'right-time' railway, capacity and the seven-day railway, clearly demonstrated that the key drivers for rail passenger satisfaction are punctuality and reliability, and that the top priorities for improvement include the provision of sufficient trains at times people wish to travel. Best of all though, the comments of the guest speakers from National Express East Anglia and Network Rail suggested that the evidence is being listened to, is valued by the industry, and is informing the debate."

Spring 2010

Train Company	Overall satisfaction	Improvement in % satisfied or good since Spring 2009	Decline in % satisfied since Spring 2009
Great Britain result	83% up 2%	Value for money (8%)	Cleanliness of the outside of the train (2%)
Chiltern	91%	Value for money (8%)	Station facilities and services (8%)
First Capital Connect	76%	Value for money (7%)	How request to station staff was handled (10%) How well the train company handled delays (10%)
First Great Western	83%	How well the train company handled delays (9%)	Cleanliness of the outside of the train (5%)
Heathrow Connect	88%	Station facilities and services (10%)	How a request to station staff was handled (10%)
Heathrow Express	93%	Helpfulness and attitude of staff on the train (6%)	No significant decline
London Midland	86% (up 8%)	Train frequency (11%) Punctuality/reliability (11%) Value for money (11%)	No significant decline
Southeastern	81% (up 5%)	Helpfulness and attitude of staff on the train (18%)	No significant decline
Southern	84% (up 4%)	Value for money (10%)	No significant decline
South West Trains	85%	Value for money (7%)	Overall station environment (5%)

News roundup

Bad weather review

With summer already upon us, the winter's cold snap may seem a long time ago, but the disruption caused by snow is still fresh in Passenger Focus's minds - especially the chaotic disruption to those Eurostar passengers at Christmas.

Passenger Focus's rail director Ashwin Kumar has given evidence to the Department of Transport as part of its Winter Resilience Review. Ashwin spoke on passengers' experiences during the disruption and what the industry should do to help passengers during these unplanned-for events.

FCC satisfaction disappointment

Only 76% of First Capital Connect (FCC) passengers say they are satisfied overall with their train company, according to Passenger Focus's Spring 2010 National Passenger Survey.

Sharon Hedges, Passenger Focus manager, said: "Immediately before the survey FCC's services were very disrupted by cancellations and delays and passengers told us they were fed up. While FCC's overall passenger satisfaction score remained static, we are disappointed to see that their results are behind the overall London and South East score, which increased two percentage points to 82%.

"Passenger satisfaction with the way the company dealt with delays is now 24%, 8% points lower than the rest of the London and South East group.

"Our research found only 66% of passengers using the Southern Thameslink route were happy with their last journey - a score considerably lower than other parts of the FCC network. We have discussed increased investment and compensation for passengers and are now pressing the company to ensure performance improves and passengers are receiving a service worth paying for."



Southeastern high-speed service - short trains

Southeastern has reduced some of its high-speed trains from 12 to six carriages to reflect passenger demand on the service. The train company has been criticised by some passenger groups and the media that its premium fares and stations called at are deterring some passengers from trying the high speed service.

Despite this, the National Passenger Survey Spring 2010 results show that those passengers using the new services are happy. Southeastern's new high-speed services are

loved by those who can afford them - 95% overall satisfaction, with a good rating for value for money. This compares with Southeastern's overall score of 81%.

Tunde Olatunji, Passenger Focus manager in the South East commented: "Passengers tell us that value for money is a major concern. If passengers are not using this new high speed service because of the level of premium fares and the year-on-year above-inflation fare rises, Southeastern should look at the price passengers have to pay to encourage greater use."

New protection schemes

Passenger Focus has welcomed the teams set up by the British Transport Police (BTP) and Southern to tackle antisocial behaviour and low-level disorder on trains and at stations.

Sharon Hedges, Passenger Focus manager, said: "Passengers' safety and security is of paramount importance. This partnership between Southern and the BTP is a positive and welcome step towards preventing crime and helping passengers feel safe when they travel by train and through the station. We look forward to hearing more about the progress of the teams and any lessons to apply on the wider rail network."

Four teams of 32 Rail Neighbourhood Officers (RNOs) - specialist, accredited rail staff - will work side-by-side with BTP officers to reduce crime and the fear of crime at particular stations on the Southern network.

The RNOs are based at Purley, Croydon and Hove and will have the power to issue penalty notices for offences such as trespass and graffiti, seize alcohol and deal with antisocial behaviour.



Image courtesy of Southern

South East passengers feedback on disruption



The way train operating companies (TOCs) handle disruption consistently falls short of passengers' expectations.

In the Spring 2010 National Passenger Survey only 32% of passengers in London and the South East said they were happy with this aspect of train services. To provide constructive feedback from passengers to TOCs, Passenger Focus has set up a nationwide disruption panel with around 1000 passengers acting as reporters.

Southern is sharing reports across the organisation and ensuring that action is taken on them. The company has issued Blackber-

rys to front-line staff, which should transform their ability to respond to disruption. Conductors are being given an 'Announcing Guide' setting out the frequency and content of announcements during disruption. Telephone conference reviews after specific incidents will draw conclusions for future use and inform the work of the newly-formed Information Strategy Group.

Passenger manager Tunde Olatunji has been working with Southeastern to set up a steering group devoted to improving information during disruption, using the information from reports. He has

also had a meeting with c2c's customer service manager to review the generally favourable reports.

The heavy upgrade works on First Capital Connect (FCC) routes makes information even more of a priority for FCC passengers, and passenger manager Sharon Hedges welcomed the announcement of a £10m investment in information systems.

Passenger Focus executive Paul Bentley has analysed the reports for consistent themes and is presenting them to the National Express East Anglia customer service director.