

# Essex Thameside Franchise

## What passengers want

Independent national passenger watchdog

January 2010

Passengerfocus  putting passengers first

The Essex Thameside franchise currently run by c2c will end in May 2011. Passenger Focus has offered advice and recommendations to the Government on what passengers want from the new Essex Thameside franchise. Our submission is based on research taken in September 2009 which covers the views of over 1000 c2c passengers on the Mainline and Tilbury Loop routes. We have also gathered views from passengers using the National Passenger Survey. The table below shows what passengers regard as priorities for improvement.



### Priorities for improvement

(1=highest priority and 14=lowest)

Punctuality/reliability of the train	1
Frequency of trains on the route	2
Value for money for the price of the ticket	3
Being able to get a seat on the train	4
Personal security at the station	5
The provision of information about train times /platforms during times of disruption	6
Length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed)	7
Personal security while on board the train	8
Ease of getting to/from the station	9
Facilities for car parking at the station	10
Connections with other forms of transport	11
Buying your ticket from a member of staff at the booking office	12
Facilities available at the station	13
Buying your ticket from a ticket machine	14

Passenger Focus Essex Thameside Passengers priorities research, September 2009

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Over the last 15 years, the c2c franchise has evolved from being the ‘miserable line’ to become one of the highest performing rail companies in the country both in terms of passenger satisfaction, punctuality and reliability. These high standards cannot be taken for granted and there are still some areas where passenger satisfaction should be higher, as well as clear priorities for improvement in the next franchise.

Passengers have told us that the areas they most want to see improved are:

- punctuality/reliability
- frequency of trains
- value for money
- being able to get a seat
- personal security
- information at times of disruption.

Based on our research, Passenger Focus’s key recommendations to

Government about the new Essex Thameside franchise include:

- **Punctuality and reliability** remains the top priority for passengers despite c2c being right at the top of the performance league. Given that c2c is already scoring so highly on the ‘public performance measure’ (PPM) measure, the time is now right to secure further improvement and make Essex Thameside Britain’s first ‘Right Time Railway’ by setting challenging targets

over a period of time for the proportion of trains that arrive at the 'right time'.

- **Overcrowding** is a problem at peak times and this is forecast to get worse. Related to this is **service frequency**, which passengers consistently tell us is one of their top priorities for improvement. Passengers also say they want later evening and weekend services. The new franchise must deliver additional peak capacity to address the expected growth in passenger numbers throughout the life of the franchise, as well as securing improvement to aspects of the current c2c timetable to meet passenger aspirations for higher frequency, later evening trains and improved weekend services.

- **Value for money** - ticket prices clearly need to be kept at an affordable

level but there are a number of other measures that can be taken to increase satisfaction with value for money, including direct debit schemes for annual season tickets and carnets for less frequent commuters. Ticket retailing such as smartcards should also be developed to meet passengers' needs and reduce queuing times.

- **Personal security** on c2c stations and trains does not compare favourably with other London and South East Train Operating Companies. We would therefore recommend as a priority the delivery of a strategy to improve passenger satisfaction with personal security while using the railway.

- Other improvements passengers would like to see are:
  - Improvements in the management of service

disruption and the provision of information to passengers by adhering to industry codes of practice

- The shortcomings identified with the Assisted Passenger Reservation Service (APRS) that help disabled passengers to make use of the rail network must be addressed as well as a commitment to make steady progress throughout the life of the franchise in making the network more accessible.

Further information about Passenger Focus's research and our full submission to Government about what passengers want from the Essex Thameside franchise are available at [www.passengerfocus.org.uk](http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk) and available on request by phoning **0300 123 0860**.



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**Contact us**

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