



Response to Network Rail's Sussex Route Utilisation Strategy Draft for Consultation

August 2009

Passenger Focus is the independent national rail consumer watchdog. It is an executive non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Transport.

Our mission is to get the best deal for Britain's rail passengers. We have two main aims: to influence both long and short term decisions and issues that affect passengers; and to help passengers through advice, advocacy and empowerment.

With a strong emphasis on evidence-based campaigning and research, we ensure that we know what is happening on the ground. We use our knowledge to influence decisions on behalf of rail passengers and we work with the rail industry, other passenger groups and Government to secure journey improvements.

Our vision is to ensure that the rail industry and Government are always

‘putting rail passengers first’

This will be achieved through our mission of

‘getting the best deal for passengers’

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1. Executive summary

Passenger Focus commends the significant work and analysis that has gone into preparing the Sussex Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) Draft for Consultation¹.

The draft RUS clearly recognises the existing and future pressures on the Sussex route and sets out a strategy that, if fully implemented, will go some way towards addressing many of the significant challenges that it seeks to tackle in the period to 2019.

This response draws on an extensive research base including National Passenger Survey satisfaction scores for Sussex and Coast routes and a detailed study of the needs of 6251 passengers using Southern services. Dialogue with passengers and other stakeholders has also informed our thinking.

On the basis of the evidence and feedback from passengers, Passenger Focus considers that the key factors that the RUS must address are:

- **punctuality and reliability of the trains**
- **delivery of sufficient capacity, particularly sufficient seats and minimising overcrowding**
- **adequate frequency of trains to meet passenger needs, including later evenings and weekends**
- **journey time improvements.**

In addition, access to, facilities and security at stations and connections with other forms of transport need to be considered within the overall strategy. The RUS must also be mindful of the importance of the provision of information, particularly during disruption, and the way delays are handled. This is significant for both planned and reactive engineering work.

Passenger Focus supports many of the recommendations of the RUS and wishes to see early progress on implementation. However, there are a number of areas that we highlight for additional consideration as we believe that some aspects of the draft RUS require further development if the key passenger needs from the rail network are to be adequately addressed.

A series of recommendations are set out in section 2 below. Other parts of the response consider some general issues relating to the RUS analysis and passenger needs, before considering in more detail the specific options set out in the draft RUS.

¹ Network Rail, May 2009.

2. Recommendations

Analysis and investment

Passenger Focus recommends that a further review of demand should be undertaken, looking in detail at the key development locations in the South East Plan. We also advocate a review of the options that have a BCR of one or more and a reappraisal using DaSTs² and NATA Refresh³ methodologies to identify where gaps can be addressed and passenger benefits delivered.

Passenger Focus recommends early implementation of enhancements to infrastructure and operational practices to improve performance. We note that, beyond a realistic provision to ensure punctuality and reliability of services, there should be tangible efforts to utilise some of these benefits to speed up journey times rather than seeking the additional comfort of 'padding' within timetables.

Passenger Focus urges Network Rail and the train operators to press forward the case for investment and support of initiatives on the Sussex Route and, working in partnership with central Government, the Regional Transport Board, South East Development Agency, local authorities and the business sector, including other travel operators, to identify and secure sources of funding to support new infrastructure or rail-related local enhancements, ensuring that the wider benefits this will bring are recognised and included in appraisals and by shared funding.

Passenger Focus recommends that further detailed work on stations, access, car parking and interchange is agreed between Network Rail and Southern and a coherent and meaningful plan to take work forward is set out in the final Sussex RUS.

Passenger Focus has particular concern about the suggestion that the final layout of London Bridge might not provide 6 x 12 car platforms and it is our view that to settle for any less at an initial stage would be wholly unsatisfactory.

The need for and benefits from a Redhill Platform 0 suggest that this must be delivered, however the combination of benefits are assessed to make the case.

Capacity

Passenger Focus considers that the RUS should be guided by the objective that no passenger should stand, other than by choice, for over 20 minutes on a journey. That is, irrespective of whether a 'standing allowance' technically applies because of a train's stopping pattern.

The final RUS should replicate the seat utilisation analysis shown in figures 6.5 and 9.4 in the draft specifically for the high peak hour, to demonstrate the scale of capacity pressures on the the most intensively used services.

² Delivering a Sustainable Transport System, Department for Transport, November 2008.

³ New Approach to Appraisal: NATA Refresh, Department for Transport, April 2009.

Passenger Focus believes that means must be found to deliver the capacity required to meet demand and is resolutely opposed to any move to price off demand.

Passenger Focus believes that attention to capacity at times other than the peak is now overdue and, as it is neither effective nor efficient for passengers to endure crowding that could be easily remedied by enhancements to the train plan and timetable by using available resources, it is a legitimate issue for the RUS to consider.

Service patterns

Passenger Focus considers that a fundamental review of the Brighton Mainline timetable is considerably overdue and recommends that this should be carried out at the earliest opportunity.

Passenger Focus recommends that the option to divert one of the six extended Gatwick Express services to/from each of the East and West Coastways is explored and developed for the next possible timetable change, with the greatest priority given to the evening peak service to the East Coastway. Ideally this adjustment will include an option that provides passengers currently travelling on those extended Gatwick Express services with an alternative journey that includes stops at Clapham Junction and East Croydon. The role of the 442 trains in providing services to London Bridge should also be considered.

A review of the scope to alleviate Redhill corridor crowding is recommended by Passenger Focus.

Passenger Focus believes it important that inter-regional and orbital rail links are strengthened where they are deemed to be poor and established where they are currently missing to enable people to travel more easily between areas and without necessarily changing in London.

Engineering and access

Passenger Focus strongly advocates the provision of a seven day railway which is urgently required to meet the demands of passengers and reflect the functioning of the economy and society, as well as enable the industry to benefit from income streams that are currently lost either to other modes or from disincentives to travel, particularly at weekends. In particular, complete closure of four track routes or those with bi-directional signalling is unacceptable.

Where engineering work will disrupt service provision it is imperative that passengers are given high quality information about the impact and alternative options available to them, as far in advance as possible.

Passenger Focus considers that the final RUS should include assurances that Network Rail will work with train operators to reduce the use of rail replacement bus

services wherever possible. We would welcome formal commitment from the industry to sign up to the Passenger Focus pledge to reduce 'bustitution'.

Future needs

Passenger Focus recognises the clear merits of a new alignment and believes that this will be the only way in which solutions to the long term demand for rail journeys on the Sussex Route and beyond can be adequately met. We recommend that this option is taken forward, along with considerations of the needs of other parts of the wider South East in work on the forthcoming London and South East RUS.

Given the lead time for major rail projects, and recognising the considerable investment costs which would need to be planned for, alongside the identification and acquisition of land for the route, Passenger Focus advocates that work on a new alignment must be taken forward with the utmost urgency.

Passenger Focus notes that an infill electrification scheme on the Uckfield line would enhance operational efficiencies and flexibilities and recommends that this is reviewed periodically in line with any available funding.

Passenger Focus agrees that the RUS should support the safeguarding of routes of currently closed lines to facilitate re-opening as and when the demand requirements and funding possibilities make this a viable proposition within the future strategy for Sussex route.

3. Introduction

Passenger Focus welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Sussex Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) Draft for Consultation⁴.

The RUS is highly significant as it forms the framework for determining priorities for investment and spending, making the case not just for the needs of today but also a substantial period into the future.

We recognise that there is an established process for the creation of these Strategies and note that the route utilisation objective is defined as:

“the effective and efficient use and development of the capacity available on the network, consistent with funding that is, or is likely to become, available.”⁵

Passenger Focus supports the broad objectives behind the RUS process and welcomes the consultative approach adopted by Network Rail. We have used our membership of the Stakeholder Management Group and the Passenger Demand/Options Appraisal sub-group to provide a passenger voice in discussions on the future of the network in Sussex, seeking a strategy that will deliver the best outcomes for those who use and pay fares for the rail services delivered on it.

We commend the opportunities for involvement provided to other interested parties through the structure of Wider Stakeholder Group meetings held at key stages in the RUS process. We note, however, that some groups seek further opportunities to engage in more detail as the development work is carried out.

Passenger Focus is aware that recent global financial turmoil and the impact of the downturn in Britain inevitably places pressures on the funding available for rail. However, we make no apologies for having an aspirational vision of the future of the rail network in Sussex and emphasise that, as the draft RUS itself recognises, increases in passenger demand will undoubtedly continue. Any short-term falling off in rates of growth provides a real opportunity to catch up with pressures that have outstripped provision over recent years, investing in infrastructure that will assist with a fuller, faster recovery. This is particularly significant on this network which plays a major role in the economic powerhouse that is London and the South East.

Our response to this consultation is informed by liaison with stakeholders and user groups, our postbag and our extensive research base, including bespoke research with over 6000 passengers on existing Southern services commissioned by Passenger Focus.

⁴ Network Rail, May 2009.

⁵ Extract from ORR Guidelines on Route Utilisation Strategies, April 2009.

Structure of this submission

Our response to the consultation draft first sets out evidence from passenger research studies. We then make some general comments about a range of issues pertinent to this RUS before commenting in more detail on the content of the document.

4. Passenger Research and implications for the Sussex RUS

In this section we set out evidence of passenger perspectives on a range of issues that we believe the RUS needs to take into account if it is to deliver a strategy that meets the needs of rail users. We draw from:

- National Passenger Survey – factors relating to capacity and crowding, as well as drivers of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction
- Passenger priorities for improvement in South East region
- Passenger priorities research with passengers using Southern services
- Research into factors influencing passenger satisfaction with value for money

4.1 National Passenger Survey Spring 2009

4.1.1 Passenger satisfaction with sufficient room to sit or stand: NPS spring 2009

Operator	Peak	Weekday off-peak	Sunday
Southern: Sussex and Coast	46%	81%	63% (71)
Southern: Extended Gatwick Express	67%	n/a	n/a
Southern: Metro	39%	77%	67% (81)
FCC Thameslink South * morning peak	43%* (95)	62% (96)	n/a

(actual sample size where less than 100)

The table above illustrates clearly that passenger satisfaction with room to sit or stand is generally very low in the peak hours on all routes, with the exception of the Extended Gatwick Express. Although a third of these passengers still rate this factor poorly, it is notably higher than satisfaction on other services, where less than half of passengers are satisfied.

Only around two-thirds of passengers on Sundays are satisfied with the room to sit or stand, indicating that there is also a need to consider increasing capacity on these services too.

4.1.2 Passenger satisfaction with value for money: NPS spring 2009

Operator	Peak	Off-peak
Southern Sussex and Coast	24%	42%
Southern metro	19%	38%
First Capital Connect	25%	33%

Passenger satisfaction with value for money is low, particularly for passengers travelling in the peak. This indicates that any proposals to increase fares as a means to influence demand would be very unpopular.

4.1.3 Impact of December 2008 timetable changes on Sussex and Coast passengers

In the spring 2009 National Passenger Survey on Southern Sussex and Coast routes, which includes passengers on the East and West Coastway, Arun Valley, Redhill corridor and Brighton Mainline, 268 of 787 passengers noted a timetable change on their route. The impacts they reported were:

Journey time		Frequency of trains		Crowding
Longer	35%	Less frequent	34%	More 42%
Shorter	7%	More frequent	14%	Less 6%

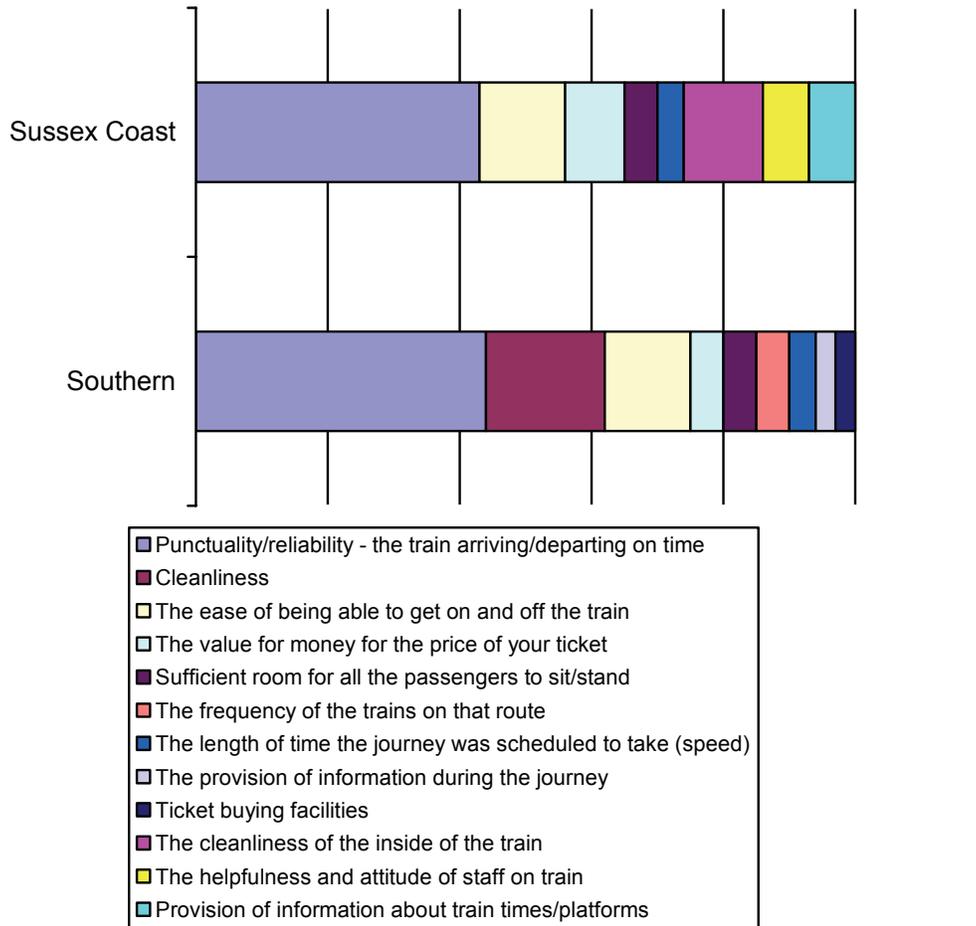
This indicates that there are substantial dis-benefits for a significant minority of passengers since the December 2008 timetable change. This confirms the feedback we have had from passengers on a range of routes.

4.1.4 Drivers of satisfaction and dissatisfaction

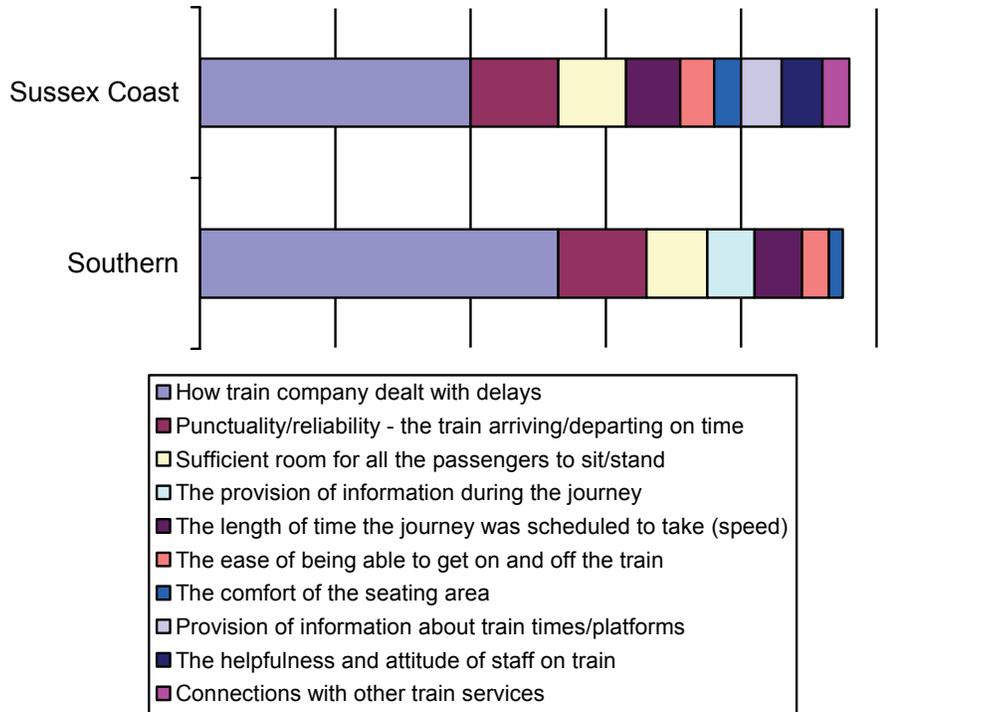
NPS results can also be analysed to determine what factors drive passenger satisfaction and dissatisfaction with their journeys. The graphs below show the significant drivers for Southern overall and for Sussex and Coast services.

4.1.4.1 Drivers of customer satisfaction Southern Sussex and Coast passengers– spring 2009

(Bar size shows relative importance due to factor)



4.1.4.2 Drivers of customer dissatisfaction Southern Sussex and Coast passengers– spring 2009 (Bar size shows relative importance due to factor)



The multi-variate analysis highlights a number of factors relevant to the RUS. It confirms that punctuality and reliability has an important role in both passenger satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Other matters that have a significant impact on passenger views are ease of getting on and off the train, sufficient room to sit or stand, the frequency of trains, length of journey and value for money. The RUS strategy needs to consider how future rail service provision will impact on these journey variables.

4.2 Research into passenger priorities

An examination of passenger priorities for improvement at the national and South East regional level also confirms the importance of frequency, punctuality and capacity factors which all rank in the top four priorities for improvement.

SE Rank	Attribute	GB Rank
1	Price of train tickets offer excellent value for money	1
2	Sufficient train services at times I use the train	2
3	At least 19 out of 20 trains arrive on time	3
4	Passengers are always able to get a seat on the train	4
5	Seating area on the train is very comfortable	9
	Sample 315. 51% of rail journeys are commuting, 10% for business, 39% for leisure purposes. Weighted priorities. Passenger Focus 2007.	

Similarly, research with 6251 passengers using Southern services found factors that the RUS will influence figured strongly in the overall importance to passengers as shown in the table below.

Importance ranking – Southern route based research - all routes total base 6251	% ranking very important or important
Punctuality/reliability of the train	82
Provision of Information about train times/platforms	81
Frequency of the trains on the route	80
Length of time the journey was scheduled to take	78
Value for money for price of ticket	77
Being able to get a seat on the train	76
Ticket buying facility	75
Personal Security – stations	73
Personal Security – train	73
Ease of getting to and from the Station	70
Connections other forms of transport	66
Not having to change trains	66
Ease of getting on/off train	62

4.3 Value for money

Research into the attributes that drive commuters' perceptions of value for money also evidences the importance of various factors that the RUS strategy will impact upon. It shows a top ten ranking of:

1. Punctuality/reliability of this train
2. Being able to get a seat on the train
3. You are kept informed of delays/journey changes
4. The train is not overcrowded
5. The journey is fast and direct
6. The train is clean
7. The stations used to board and exit are safe and well lit
8. The price of the ticket is cheap
9. Any ticket price increase is linked to the rate of inflation
10. The toilets are clean and in working order

4.4 Conclusions from passenger research and implications for the Sussex RUS

Considering all the evidence from the studies above together we can identify a number of first order 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, including later evenings and weekends**
- **journey time improvements**

Provision of information, particularly during disruption, and the way delays are handled are also significant issues for passengers.

Other factors that are of importance to passengers and relevant to the RUS are:

- **personal security at stations**
- **ease of getting to/from station**
- **not having to change trains**
- **connections with other forms of transport**
- **ticket buying facilities.**

5. General comments

Passenger Focus commends the significant work and analysis that has gone into preparing the draft strategy. The draft RUS clearly recognises the existing and future pressures on the Sussex route and sets out a strategy that, if fully implemented, will go some way towards addressing many of the significant challenges that it seeks to tackle in the period to 2019.

There are, however, a number of areas that we wish to highlight for additional consideration as we believe that some aspects of the draft RUS require further development if the key passenger needs from the rail network are to be adequately addressed.

A 'conservative' analysis

Whilst the work on the draft RUS has been thorough, the analysis that underpins the decision making framework is undoubtedly conservative in approach.

New drivers of policy have emerged over recent years. These notably include the recommendations of the Eddington Transport Study⁶ and the Stern Review⁷ and an increasing recognition of the impacts of and need to mitigate the effects of climate change. These drivers can clearly be seen in the Government's work on 'Delivering a Sustainable Transport System' (DaSTS)⁸ and in the planning and development policies adopted in the South East Plan.⁹

A new set of analysis tools has been developed through work to refresh the 'New Approach to Appraisal' (NATA)¹⁰ which will place value on wider social and environmental benefits. The government is promoting a range of interventions that will deliver modal shift and the South East Plan has encompassed sustainable development, whereby many more new homes will be located close to public transport facilities, with greater housing allocations adjacent to key regional hubs and spokes.

It is unfortunate, then, that the draft Sussex RUS, which is planning in detail for a ten year period and looking overall at a 30 year time horizon, has employed modelling and analysis that can already be seen to be out-dated.

⁶ Eddington, R. (2006), *The Eddington Transport Study*, London: TSO. <http://www.dft.gov.uk/about/strategy/eddingtontstudy/>

⁷ Stern, N. (2006) *The Economics of Climate Change: The Stern Review*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/independent_reviews/stern_review_economics_climate_change/sternreview_index.cfm

⁸ Delivering a Sustainable Transport System, Department for Transport, November 2008.

⁹ The south east plan - regional spatial strategy for the south east of England, GOSE May 2009.

¹⁰ NATA Refresh, Department for Transport, April 2009.

Use of the current Passenger Demand Forecasting Handbook, which is already under review to address known weaknesses, is assumed **on average** to have adequately predicted historic growth. Given the changed emphasis of the South East Plan development policies and other pressures towards modal shift, it seems evident that factors driving passenger demand upwards will have been underplayed, particularly at key locations such as Redhill/Reigate and Shoreham Harbour.

Importantly, given the new 'NATA' framework, the financial appraisals used in the draft RUS do not factor in the benefits to the wider policy agenda in which public transport is playing an increasingly significant part. In addition, there is a high bar set for schemes involving infrastructure investment, with a requirement for a high value for money Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of at least two. The limitations of this approach can be seen where schemes that would otherwise bring notable improvements to frequency and overcrowding, thus benefiting passengers, are not recommended in the strategy, even when there is an identified gap to be addressed.

Passenger Focus recommends that a further review of demand should be undertaken, looking in detail at the key development locations in the South East Plan. We also advocate a review of the options that have a BCR of one or more and a reappraisal using DaSTs and NATA Refresh methodologies to identify where gaps can be addressed and passenger benefits delivered.

Responsiveness to passenger needs

There are other questions to be asked about the process of development of the RUS. The draft RUS takes the starting points largely as given, despite some of the obvious inadequacies of the current timetable. The use of infrastructure and rolling stock is not currently in balance with passenger numbers and journey requirements and this is not efficient, effective or equitable. The gap analysis approach inevitably drives thinking down a linear path, with individual problems tending to be looked at mainly in isolation. A more holistic approach would provide a better understanding of overall demands and provide alternative, possibly better value, options for meeting them effectively and equitably.

Whilst it is recognised that major projects such as East London Line Extension and Thameslink are already demanding complex timetable planning, the need to better fit wider services to demand is pressing. Promises of improvements for 2015 and beyond are inadequate for passengers who are making difficult and uncomfortable journeys today.

Passenger Focus considers that a fundamental review of the Brighton Mainline timetable is considerably overdue and recommends that this should be carried out at the earliest opportunity.

The tools by which changes to journey patterns are assessed also need review. The Industry Stakeholder Management Group questioned whether the most important issues for passengers were captured by several of the analyses that were

undertaken. There was a view that the dis-benefit of breaking journeys or adding stops was possibly over-emphasised in certain situations.

Improvements to journey times have only been assessed in relation to competition with road. This fails to recognise that many passengers seek shorter rail journeys for their own merits, including to and from London as well as on regional links.

The significance of the length of journey is notable in most of the passenger research cited in section four above. It was ranked as the fourth most important factor in the survey of 6251 passengers on Southern services, is the fifth most important driver of value for money for commuters and is a significant driver of dissatisfaction for Southern passengers. Passenger complaints about journey time are particularly evident on the Arun Valley, West and East Coastway and it is imperative that investment to achieve the identified reduction in journey times is delivered.

Significantly, even when all the interventions proposed by the draft Strategy have been implemented, the analysis indicates that passengers will still be standing. Figure 9.4¹¹ in the draft RUS illustrates that in the morning high peak hour to London there will be widespread standing on the Redhill corridor, lots of standing to Gatwick Airport and some standing to places as far out as Lewes and Polegate, in addition to pockets of pressure between Horsham and Christ's Hospital and Preston Park and Brighton. Capacity pressures on other services outside the immediate high peak can also be anticipated.

Passengers will legitimately question whether the Sussex RUS has delivered sufficient capacity to meet their needs. NPS survey results set out in section four above show low satisfaction with 'sufficient room for all the passengers to sit/stand' and other associated capacity factors in the peaks and this must be tackled.

Passenger Focus considers that the RUS should be guided by the objective that no passenger should stand, other than by choice, for over 20 minutes on a journey. That is, irrespective of whether a 'standing allowance' technically applies because of a train's stopping pattern.

It is self-evident that the greatest pressures will always be on the high peak as this is the time when most people have, or want, to travel. Incentives such as lower pricing to encourage a shift to the shoulder-peak will have a role in shaping demand but will not remove the need for capacity in the high peaks.

The final RUS should replicate the the seat utilisation analysis shown in figures 6.5¹² and 9.4 in the draft specifically for the high peak hour, to demonstrate the scale of capacity pressures on the the most intensively used services.

¹¹ P 141

¹² P 141

Passenger Focus believes that means must be found to deliver the capacity required to meet demand and is resolutely opposed to any move to price off demand.

Beyond the peak hours there is also evidence of capacity pressures on other services across the RUS area. Standing and crowding can be found on a range of services including; the first services after off-peak or railcard restrictions cease to apply, later and final trains in the evening, Saturdays and Sundays and during school holidays or special events. These pressures are primarily related to the operation of shorter trains during the off-peak and/or a reduction in frequency rather than overall network capacity.

Passenger Focus believes that attention to capacity at times other than the peak is now overdue and, as it is neither effective nor efficient for passengers to endure crowding that could be easily remedied by enhancements to the train plan and timetable by using available resources, it is a legitimate issue for the RUS to consider.

Balance of service patterns in relation to passenger needs

One of the more contentious issues for the Sussex route is the balance of provision between the dedicated Gatwick Express and other services including the core mainline, the Coastway branches and the Redhill corridor. The draft RUS takes as its starting point, without challenge, the December 2008 timetable introduced following decisions about the Implementation of the Brighton Mainline RUS.

It is well recognised that the service pattern developed is a compromise between competing needs and that the imposition of the Gatwick Express timetable as a starting point for planning has led to some extremely perverse consequences. The draft RUS itself notes as a key driver of available capacity:

“Constraints caused by the structure of the timetable (e.g the requirement to operate a Gatwick Express service on the Fast lines at a 15-minute frequency with a differing stopping pattern to other Fast line services and with extended turnaround times at Victoria”¹³

Loadings on many services indicate that this is an extreme example of the tail wagging the dog and equity as well as efficient use of resources demands an early review; whereby levels of passenger demand determine the allocation of scarce paths on a constrained network, along with train plans that ensure rolling stock is available for the routes and services that most require it.

Current allocations of rolling stock leave 56 class 460 carriages sitting in sidings whilst 442 trains run the extended Gatwick Express services to and from Brighton in the morning and evening peaks. Meanwhile, other services are operated with fewer

¹³ p 58, para 3.12.5 F

than the necessary number of carriages to meet demand, leaving passengers standing in cramped and uncomfortable conditions as far out as Polegate and Hove, and in other places, such as on the West London Line and Redhill corridor, actually unable to get on some trains at all.

The implications of the extended Gatwick Express serving stations to Brighton in the morning and evening peaks has meant a significant loss of connectivity to East Croydon and Clapham Junction, and fewer services to London Bridge.

Notwithstanding the results of the Origin and Destination survey¹⁴ of passengers affected by the extension of Gatwick Express services and the more fundamental review of the Brighton Mainline timetable we recommend above, it is clear that some changes to the timetable are urgently needed, including consideration of services to London Bridge. Passengers enduring chronic overcrowding day after day can not be expected to wait for a full timetable recast some six years down the line.

The East Coastway evening peak service exemplifies the artificially created imbalance that arises because of a requirement that a Gatwick Express service must run every 15 minutes from Victoria non-stop to Gatwick, then on to stations between Haywards Heath and Brighton. Changes to the timetable mean there is a lower frequency of trains from Victoria and an unbalanced departure pattern from London. Services are heavily loaded, not just with Coastway passengers but also those who need to use the remaining services that stop at Clapham Junction and East Croydon.

Similarly, the Redhill corridor pressures suggest that further consideration should be given to balancing the needs of airport passengers for a train waiting at the station rather than arriving already loaded with commuters, with the possibility of providing a Gatwick starter that could then route via Redhill corridor to provide the much needed additional capacity there. The advantage of a train waiting at the platform may far outweigh the inclusion of a stop or two for airport boarders.

Passenger Focus recommends that the option to divert one of the six extended Gatwick Express services to/from each of the East and West Coastways is explored and developed for the next possible timetable change, with the greatest priority given to the evening peak service to the East Coastway. Ideally this adjustment will include an option that provides passengers currently travelling on those extended Gatwick Express services with an alternative journey that includes stops at Clapham Junction and East Croydon. The role of the 442 trains in providing services to London Bridge should also be considered.

A review of the scope to to alleviate Redhill corridor crowding is recommended by Passenger Focus.

¹⁴ Research to be commissioned by Network Rail and part funded by Passenger Focus.

Geography, intra/inter-regional links and relationship with other RUSes

The Sussex RUS interfaces with a number of other RUS areas. This includes considerable interplay within South London and with Kent; for services beyond Bexhill to Ashford and on the Tonbridge to Redhill line. Other notable linkages occur via Gatwick to Redhill and Reading and on the West Coastway where Great Western and Southwest services operate or adjoin, especially around Southampton and Portsmouth.

Passenger Focus recognises the specific geographic focus of each RUS but notes the reality of train services and passenger journeys which move imperceptibly from one area to another. It is our view that a holistic approach is required when deciding future investment on the rail network, and we note that there are various options relevant to Sussex that have been taken forward in other RUSs.

The principal emphasis of the Sussex RUS, in line with the predominance of passenger journeys, is on travel to and from London. However, there are considerable demands for journeys across and within the RUS area (which are also promoted in the Regional Transport Strategy which emphasises links between key regional hubs) and to other regions. These journeys generally take longer and are less easy than travelling a comparable distance to London, and often require one or more changes.

Recent years have seen a distinct erosion of opportunities for orbital, inter-regional and international travel from the Sussex RUS area, despite passenger demands for these journeys. We note the loss of Cross-Country services east of Reading, the withdrawal of West London services south of East Croydon, the loss of direct links between Gatwick Airport and Tonbridge and the vast reduction in Eurostar services from Ashford. Passengers continue to voice concerns about the detrimental impact of these changes.

Passenger Focus believes it important that intra/inter-regional and orbital rail links are strengthened where they are deemed to be poor and established where they are currently missing to enable people to travel more easily between areas and without necessarily changing in London.

Onward travel within London

There is oblique reference in the draft RUS to pressures beyond the Sussex Route network. The adequacy of all modes within London to cope with the onward travel demands of passengers arriving at London stations is also relevant. It is important that industry partners work co-operatively with Transport for London (TfL) and other transport providers, especially the operators of underground and bus services, to ensure that adequate routes and means of dispersal from stations are in place to handle the increased passenger numbers heading on to other destinations.

Network capability, engineering access and the seven day railway

Passenger Focus strongly advocates the provision of a seven day railway which is urgently required to meet the demands of passengers and reflect the functioning of the economy and society, as well as enable the industry to benefit from income streams that are currently lost either to other modes or from disincentives to travel, particularly at weekends. In particular, complete closure of four track routes or those with bi-directional signalling is unacceptable.

The importance of travel opportunities in the later evening and at weekends, especially Sundays, was a notable finding from our research and passenger feedback on requirements for the new South Central franchise¹⁵.

We expect Network Rail to rapidly deliver upon the stated intentions to speed up engineering works in all their forms, substantially cutting down on the possession times currently taken and enabling far greater access for passengers to the railway at the times they need it.

It is also important to achieve synergy whenever and wherever possible. Enhancements to railway infrastructure are often expensive and also disruptive of the timetable. It is therefore sensible and better value for money to combine them with renewals in the same area. Within the Sussex RUS area there are many opportunities for enhancements that have been identified. It is in the interest of passengers and stakeholders that Network Rail works to bring forward and synchronise schemes to enhance the capability and capacity of the network.

It is also vital that accurate forward planning and scheduling of works ensures that where a possession is taken, all aspects of work that can be planned in and executed are done. It is nonsensical to deal with just the track if, say, there are also signals and station works that will require attention within a foreseeable time frame. Similarly, works should be undertaken at all appropriate locations within a given blockade to maximise the outputs from any one possession.

Passenger Focus welcomes the recognition in the draft RUS that passengers prefer to journey by train, even if by a longer alternative route, than face bus substitution and the guidance that closing parallel routes or all stations in the same town but on different routes should be avoided.¹⁶ To minimise impact on passengers a 'whole route' approach is needed when planning possessions that affect trains running across more than one maintenance territory or where services on an adjoining route can provide alternatives.

¹⁵ Route based research. Identifying what passengers want from South Central, Passenger Focus, April 2008.

¹⁶ P 184, 9.8.4.

Where engineering work will disrupt service provision it is imperative that passengers are given high quality information about the impact and alternative options available to them, as far in advance as possible. We would welcome formal commitment from the industry to sign up to the Passenger Focus pledge to reduce 'bustitution'.

Passenger Focus considers that the final RUS should include a commitment that Network Rail will work with train operators to reduce the use of rail replacement bus services wherever possible.

Stations, car parking and interchange

Access to stations, including the importance of safe and direct walking and cycling routes, as well as the facilities and services available is important to passengers but receives little mention in the draft RUS. The analysis of station capacity, car parking and station access, in response to Gap E is disappointing. It focuses only on the largest stations, has little depth and fails to recognise the myriad of factors that can influence passenger perceptions of and usage of the rail network, let alone setting out meaningful plans to address these challenges. The significance of interchange opportunities is scarcely considered.

The role of Gatwick as the busiest airport rail station in Britain merits just one paragraph, despite the substantial reduction in Network Rail funding for a CP4 scheme that, utilising significant funding from BAA and working in partnership with them, would have transformed the station into an interchange facility for the 21st century.

Passenger Focus recommends that further detailed work on stations, access, car parking and interchange is agreed between Network Rail and Southern and a coherent and meaningful plan to take work forward is set out in the final Sussex RUS.

Other funders

Passenger Focus recognises that funding streams across the board have long been pressured and recent economic developments will only increase the difficulty of resourcing all aspects of rail. Nevertheless, the major role of rail in public transport provision, and as a tool to meet social, economic and environmental needs, means that many agencies and the wider community benefit from the services and infrastructure the network provides.

We note the particular role of other agencies in supporting schemes such as station travel plans, rail access and interchange opportunities.

Passenger Focus urges Network Rail and the train operators to press forward the case for investment and support of initiatives on the Sussex Route and, working in partnership with central Government, the Regional Transport

Board, South East Development Agency, local authorities and the business sector, including other travel operators, to identify and secure sources of funding to support new infrastructure or rail-related local enhancements, ensuring that the wider benefits this will bring are recognised and included in appraisals and by shared funding.

Electrification

The Network RUS has recently published proposals for future electrification of the network and the Government has announced how it intends to take this forward on two major routes.

Passenger Focus notes that an infill electrification scheme on the Uckfield line would enhance operational efficiencies and flexibilities and recommends that this is reviewed periodically in line with any available funding.

Implications of South Central franchise agreement

The award of the South Central franchise to GoVia has recently been announced¹⁷ and headline details of the agreement have been provided. However, the full details of the contract have yet to be made public and it is important that the final RUS is able to state clearly the implications of any changes that may arise as a result of proposals for the new franchise.

Beyond 2019: Planning for longer term needs to start now

The draft RUS notes that after all the strategy recommendations in the ten year period from 2009 have been implemented:

“Alongside the South London RUS recommendations this leaves a picture by 2019 of all Sussex Route area to Central London services, both suburban and main line, operating at 100% of available capacity. Incremental interventions to add small amounts of capacity tactically will be expended.”¹⁸

Options for further train lengthening beyond 12 carriages to 14 or 16 or moving to double-decker trains have been studied and found disruptive, inadequate and costly for what would only be another incremental addition to capacity on the route. The benefits that will be delivered from the eventual introduction of new signalling technology are expected to have a positive impact on capacity but not a major step change on available high peak paths all the way through to Victoria.

From this analysis, and in recognition of the longer term demand that will need to be accommodated, the draft RUS goes on to consider the role of a new line concluding:

“The advantage of this proposal would be that it would both generate significant capacity both on the new line itself for BML passengers and it would also provide

¹⁷ <http://www.dft.gov.uk/press/speechesstatements/statements/wmssouthcentralfran>

¹⁸ p151, 10.3.3.

*significant capacity benefits for suburban services which are also expected to be operating at full capacity in the same time period.*¹⁹

Passenger Focus recognises the clear merits of a new alignment and believes that this will be the only way in which solutions to the long term demand for rail journeys on the Sussex Route and beyond can be adequately met. We recommend that this option is taken forward, along with considerations of the needs of other parts of the wider South East in work on the forthcoming London and South East RUS.

Given the lead time for major rail projects, and recognising the considerable investment costs which would need to be planned for, alongside the identification and acquisition of land for the route, Passenger Focus advocates that work on a new alignment must be taken forward with the utmost urgency.

We note that from plans developed in the 1980s for a scheme dubbed Thameslink 2000, the anticipated date at which the Thameslink project will be 'substantially complete' is 2015. This suggests that there is absolutely no time to be lost in establishing a way forward and progressing all necessary requirements. Even then, it is apparent that full capacity on Sussex and South London routes will be reached, probably substantially in advance of the delivery of the new alignment proposed. This reinforces the need for a fundamental review of the Brighton Mainline timetable which will be one of the few opportunities to generate some additional (and probably almost literal) 'breathing space' on this congested network which will be desperately needed in the short-to-medium term.

¹⁹ p 154, 10.5.8.

6. Analysis of options

Our responses to these options are supported by the results of research with passengers undertaken to provide a passenger perspective on the content of the specification for the re-franchise of South Central rail services²⁰. In all, 6251 passenger questionnaires were completed for that response; the individual totals for routes specific to the Sussex RUS are:

Victoria to Brighton	892
Victoria to Redhill	726
London Bridge to Uckfield	750
Coastway West	772
Coastway East	796

The research is described in detail in the report *Route based research Identifying what passengers want from South Central*²¹.

6.1 Gap A - between committed capacity and forecast peak demand to/from London

Southern's peak score for Sussex and Coast in the Spring 2009 NPS for "sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand" was only 46% satisfied or good. It must be noted that the score is **sit/stand**, not just sit. Overall, the score was 64% with more than one passenger in five rating it in the category 'dissatisfied or poor'. It is clear that improvements in train capacity are essential.

Growth projections are very difficult to get right; some of the responses to the Kent RUS Draft for Consultation²² suggest that its estimates are too low. The current economic climate is making it even more difficult than usual to be anywhere near certain. Passengers accept that, but will expect Network Rail, First Capital Connect and Southern to make adequate plans based on recent, known, growth.

6.1.1 Option 1.1 lengthen all peak trains on the Redhill to Victoria corridor to twelve cars

It is noted that Network Rail will work with Southern to agree the best 'operating solution'. Passengers will expect the best solution to improve their overall travel experience. The infrastructure and power supply works necessary must be undertaken, with proposals included in the final Sussex RUS.

²⁰ *A passenger focused franchise? What passengers want from South Central; Passenger Focus, April 2008.*

²¹ Passenger Focus, April 2008.

²² Network Rail, April 2009.

We agree with the conclusion that the highest priority for any available rolling stock within CP4 will be strengthening of some of the Redhill corridor to London Bridge services.

Implementation for the high peak hour during CP4 rather than CP5 should be the aim. Shoulder peak requirements should be planned for and implemented during CP5 as crowding levels demonstrate the need.

6.1.2 Option 1.2 provision of an additional hourly peak service on the Redhill to Victoria corridor

We agree that lengthening existing trains should be the first stage in providing additional capacity, but high peak pressures indicate that an additional service will inevitably be required and this should be provided to meet demand. See also our comments regarding option 2.1.

6.1.3 Option 2.1 train lengthening of high peak services between Tattenham Corner/Caterham and London termini

Given existing demand and projected growth, at the very least 'passive' accommodation of options to ensure all services can be operated as twelve-car trains should be planned for. Passenger Focus believes that in the long term all possible opportunities to enhance capacity on the routes between East Croydon and London termini must be taken. Passengers expect nothing else.

It is reported²³ that a number of existing peak hour trains are run as six coach despite the RUS assumption of lengthening from a baseline of eight. This position should be rectified.

6.1.4 Option 2.2 Uckfield to London Bridge peak arrivals to be strengthened to eight cars

Passengers on the route ranked²⁴ being able to get a seat fourth in importance in terms of service attributes. Although figure 6.5 (seat utilisation, 2019 base case) and figure 9.4 (seat utilisation, 2019 emerging strategy) in the Draft for Consultation exclude the line from Uckfield, they do show the very high levels of overcrowding between East Croydon and London Bridge. A local user group²⁵ reports consistent overcrowding, further down the line particularly on the short-formed services. Adding peak capacity in CP4 will be essential.

²³ East Surrey Transport Committee comments on Sussex RUS consultation.

²⁴ Route based research Identifying what passengers want from South Central, Passenger Focus, April 2008.

²⁵ Edenbridge and District Rail Travellers Association newsletters.

6.1.5 Option 2.3 Uckfield to London Bridge peak arrivals to be strengthened to ten cars

Additional capacity will be required to cater for projected growth. However, will ten car trains be required throughout the entire route? We note that the assessment of this option states “it is assumed that SDO is possible or that *vehicles are locked out of use*” (our italics). Locking vehicles out of use is undesirable. Elsewhere in the Draft for Consultation (for example in the assessment of option 1.1) the desirability of optimising rolling stock utilisation is mentioned. Would it be more cost-effective to strengthen services from an intermediate station? If that were possible, it would also remove the need to lengthen the platform at Uckfield and use SDO.

6.1.6 Option 3.1 lengthen Brighton Main Line - Victoria shoulder peak services to twelve cars

To help improve the value for money rating that passengers give the train service - always in the top two priorities for improvement - it is essential that on time trains provide enough seats.

Research²⁶ into the willingness of commuters to travel in the ‘shoulder’ peaks typically finds that passengers require incentives such as discounts in the region of 25-30% before they are willing to consider travelling earlier or later. However, an annual season ticket typically already offers a discount on the price of a cheap day return²⁷. Predicted growth in numbers travelling, coupled with the difficulty of persuading employers to move away from the traditional ‘nine to five’ approach to employment hours, means that it will be very difficult to produce a significant shift in demand to travel at the high peak.

Passenger Focus therefore agrees with the conclusion that additional capacity in the shoulder peaks and the use of ‘smart’ ticketing technology (not necessarily ‘smartcards’ as noted in paragraph 8.8.7 of the Kent Draft RUS) would not reduce the need for increased capacity in the high peak.

We note that current plans for Thameslink services during CP4 are to lengthen two trains from eight to twelve cars, but the Draft for Consultation does not recommend anything further for the Victoria service until CP5. Being able to get a seat ranked third in importance in our survey²⁸. Passengers will want reassurance that capacity will match the actual growth in demand when it is required, not at some proposed date.

²⁶ For example, ‘Edge of morning peak travel’, Consolidated, for Passenger Focus, October, 2006.

²⁷ For example, First Capital Connect Brighton to London Bridge, assuming 230 days use of an annual season ticket is approximately £13.60 per day; off-peak return £17.00 (Source: Avantix Traveller).

²⁸ Route based research Identifying what passengers want from South Central, Passenger Focus, April 2008.

6.1.7 Option 3.2 an additional train in each of the three peak hours between Brighton and Victoria

As stated in our comments on Option 2.1, in the long term all possible opportunities to enhance capacity on the routes into London termini must be taken. Passengers expect nothing else. However, we note that performance impacts in the high peak hour must be quantified. Theoretical timetable capacity must also be realistic and achievable in day to day operation.

Passengers will expect capacity is expanded to match demand as closely as possible, in terms of 'when' as well as 'how much'.

6.1.8 Option 3.3 some Gatwick Express services to call at East Croydon and Clapham Junction

Passenger Focus is very aware of the demand for the introduction in some Gatwick Express services of stops at East Croydon and Clapham Junction to replace those removed from other services in the December 2008 timetable. However, the impact of additional stops is not just the additional journey time, but includes the possibility of more crowding and the 'disturbance' factor of passengers joining or leaving a train.

We are contributing to the study currently being undertaken to establish the need for interchange opportunities at these stations and will expect the final RUS to use this evidence to formulate proposals that respond to passenger needs. These must include practical measures to overcome any other issues relating to inserting these additional stops should the evidence indicate that this is what is required.

See also our comments about the overall balance of service patterns in relation to passenger need in section five above.

Passengers will expect firm plans in the Final Sussex RUS.

6.2 Gap B - between current capacity and forecast peak demand on the Coastway routes

6.2.1 Option 4.1 lengthen high peak Southern services on the West Coastway to four cars

The growth experienced on the route since the December 2007 timetable change must not be stifled by failing to increase capacity, which must be adequate to provide attractive travelling conditions.

Passenger Focus believes that passengers will welcome the proposal to lengthen trains to four cars.

6.2.2 Option 4.2 lengthen Great Western peak services on the West Coastway to four cars

The lengthy route over which the Cardiff to Brighton service operates means that adequate resources for one stage of a journey could be a waste of resources for another. We note the possibility of changes to Great Western (GW) resourcing, and ask if timetabling options might be developed that could better match resources to demand so that the morning GW service can be strengthened. When all Southern's services are four cars, some relief might be provided over the busiest section of the route, although we note that the busiest train in the morning is already four cars.

Passengers will welcome the proposal to double the length of the GW train in the evening peak.

6.2.3 Option 4.4²⁹ lengthen Ashford to Brighton services to three cars

Stakeholders have made strong representations regarding the developments, particularly in Ore and Hastings, that they believe will drive strong growth in demand for this service. The introduction of domestic services over HS1 is another factor that could influence loadings on the route.

Passenger Focus believes that a 'watching brief' should be maintained, with proposals developed so that three-car trains can be introduced to anticipate growth in demand, and not after overcrowding has made the service unattractive.

6.2.4 Option 4.5 operate the Ashford to Brighton service as separate Ashford to Hastings and Hastings to Brighton services

Although this option appears to provide a much better match of capacity and resources with demand it has the disadvantage of introducing a change of trains. Our response here is linked to our comments about option 4.4. Growth in demand caused

²⁹ The RUS Draft for Consultation omits 4.3 from the numbering.

by the development and relocation of Hastings College will add to the need to maintain existing through services.

Passenger Focus agrees on the evidence currently available that the option should not be recommended.

6.3 Gap C - between current capacity and forecast demand on key regional links

6.3.1 Option 5.1 lengthen selected North Downs services to four cars

Passenger Focus notes that there is a positive case to lengthen one service. The assessment mentions 'purchasing one additional vehicle', but no investment cost has been included. However, providing four cars for one service would require the provision of two two-car trains. The assessment of the option implies that the second set would be attached/detached when required. We question whether any such strengthening would be reliable, and how the additional set would be resourced.

Could there be a more immediate, if temporary, solution? The comments in 8.9.2 of the Draft for Consultation suggest that the crowding levels could be reduced by ensuring suitable luggage facilities are provided for airport passengers on the trains.

6.3.2 Option 5.2 extend Reading to Redhill services to Gatwick Airport

Given all the factors - the franchise commitment of Great Western, the better connectivity, especially for airport passengers and the likelihood of improved capacity at Redhill, Passenger Focus believes that passengers would prefer the extension of services to Gatwick Airport to changing trains at Redhill. However the scarce capacity on the Brighton Main Line requires a realistic approach to its allocation to services.

6.4 Gap D - between current journey times and stakeholders' aspirations for key regional links

6.4.1 Option 6.1 fast off-peak West Coastway service

Passengers rated faster journeys on this route as the top aspect of the train service for improvement in our survey³⁰. The Draft for Consultation notes the “particularly strong growthon the West Coastway line”, with significant growth since the December 2007 timetable recast. Passenger Focus has concerns with the suggestion that some stations could have their quantum of stops reduced in order to speed up journeys between Brighton and Portsmouth, believing that the growth shows the current mix of stopping and semi-fast services is attractive to passengers. Stakeholders have suggested that the market could be grown further. Proposals for a new chord at Eastleigh with direct access to Southampton Airport Parkway station have obvious implications for future timetable patterns.

We note that the proposed stops for the fast service that was modelled include Littlehampton, a diversion which would add significantly to journey times. Given the apparent growth potential of the route, and proposed developments to it, Passenger Focus believes that faster services should be provided by improvements to infrastructure and/or additional trains, not fewer stops by existing ones.

6.4.2 Options 6.2.1, divert Ashford services via a re-instated Willingdon Chord and 6.2.2, divert Ashford services via a re-instated Willingdon Chord and operate an additional Brighton - Hastings service

At present levels of demand, and because the first of these options would reduce the service for Eastbourne, the largest intermediate market, we are forced to concur with the conclusion that these options should not be recommended. However, the potential alignment for a chord near Willingdon should be safeguarded, should future developments require it.

The benefits of investment in infrastructure shown in Figure 8.1 of the Draft RUS clearly demonstrate that there are options to improve journey times on the East Coastway, some of which would also accrue to London services via the Brighton Mainline.

Passenger Focus recommends that improvement schemes to reduce journey times are identified and implemented at the earliest opportunity.

³⁰ Route based research Identifying what passengers want from South Central, Passenger Focus, April 2008.

6.5 Gap E - between existing station access and facilities and those likely to be required to meet forecast demand

The Draft for Consultation briefly discusses in chapter nine 'Emerging strategy to 2019' the schemes to improve capacity at East Croydon, Gatwick Airport and Victoria. It also discusses the situation regarding car parking capacity and its influence on train loadings.

The Draft for Consultation notes the stations at which enhancements and renewals are planned, including car park enhancements. Figure two in Appendix B provides brief details of station schemes.

Passenger Focus believes that passengers are dissatisfied with station facilities. The latest NPS results for Sussex and Coast routes show that facilities and services at Southern's stations scored only 52% 'satisfied or good' and, whilst the overall station environment scored 73%, more than one in four passengers scored this factor as 'dissatisfied or poor'. These scores are well below the overall satisfaction level of 91%, and show the need to improve Southern's stations.

Increasingly, improvements at some stations are raising passengers' expectations of the range and standard of facilities and the overall environment at stations. Gap E should be expanded to include **all** aspects of the station, not just capacity.

Car parking

Dissatisfaction with car parking provision at stations is common; the overall NPS score for London and South East TOCs is only 41% satisfied, the lowest result for any station facility. Southern's score for Sussex and Coast routes is similar, 46% of passengers rate their opinion of car parking facilities as 'satisfied or good' whilst a further 43% rate this as 'dissatisfied or poor'.

Passenger Focus has undertaken various pieces of research into car parking; the work includes surveys for the Scotland RUS³¹ at a time charging was being proposed, and *Getting to the station*³² which reported on work done to try to analyse how inadequate car parking capacity suppressed demand for off-peak services. It is felt that the availability of car parking can have far-reaching effects on patronage at certain stations, by skewing demand in favour of stations which have car park spaces available in the morning peak. Other factors are felt to act by artificially stimulating demand at some stations, and depressing it at others.

Further work should be undertaken to properly understand the issue and the potential to use car parking provision to actively manage demand from stations where passenger numbers exceed supply to others with spare capacity. It is clear that passengers require expansion of station car parking to meet their requirements.

³¹ Passenger Focus's response to Network Rail's Scotland RUS Draft for Consultation. Nov. 2006.

³² SDG for Passenger Focus, March, 2007.

Network Rail and Southern should commit to undertake detailed work to analyse and understand the car parking pressures and access needs at stations both now and in the future. There should be a commitment in the final RUS to a programme of work to build upon the increase in car parking contracted to be provided in the new franchise, in conjunction with schemes to improve and widen access to stations more generally.

6.6 Gap F - between current performance and the targets for CP4

In the Spring 2009 NPS passengers on Sussex and Coast routes gave Southern a score of 76% 'satisfied or good' for punctuality and reliability. That result is four percentage points lower than the national average, and three percentage points lower than the average for train companies in the South East. Significantly, that score was six points down on Autumn 2008. Passengers rate punctuality and reliability as extremely important to them.

Importance of punctuality and reliability³³

Mean score (out of 5)	Brighton - Victoria	Coastway West	Coastway East	Redhill - Victoria
Punctuality and reliability	4.59	4.72	4.76	4.76
Rank	5	1	1	1

We note the infrastructure schemes discussed in the Draft for Consultation, and that they are often incremental; taken together several small projects, such as linespeed improvements, can produce worthwhile savings in journey times. The cost of bigger schemes must be off-set by the value of all the benefits. The draft RUS mentions the appraisal of platform '0' at Redhill; it is essential that all the benefits of its obvious value in improving performance and utilisation of rolling stock are captured.

The option for reducing signalling headways along the Arun Valley line³⁴, with improved journey times and resilience would be welcomed by passengers. Every opportunity to increase network capability during renewal schemes should be taken. Not only would that help improve performance, but it would also be more efficient for Network Rail by reducing the number of engineering works. More importantly for passengers, the improvements would come with less disruption to train services.

Passengers expect measures that significantly improve the punctuality and reliability of services in the Sussex RUS area will be identified in the Final RUS and implemented as soon as possible.

Passenger Focus recommends early implementation of enhancements to infrastructure and operational practices to improve performance. We note that, beyond a realistic provision to ensure punctuality and reliability of services, there should be tangible efforts to utilise some of these benefits to speed up journey times rather than seeking the additional comfort of 'padding' within timetables.

³³ Route based research Identifying what passengers want from South Central, Passenger Focus, April 2008.

³⁴ Sussex RUS Draft for Consultation chapter 3, and section 8.12.

6.7 Gap G - between current network availability and aspirations for increased access

Passengers accept that some disruption is inevitable from time to time because of the need to maintain and improve the railway. Engineering works have a widespread impact on passengers. Our research in 2003³⁵ found that planned engineering works had delayed two in five passengers over the previous year, with one in ten experiencing six or more delays.

Passengers have made it very clear that they prefer to travel by train and not by rail replacement bus. 66% of passengers stated that they preferred to travel by train over a diversionary route.

“They have paid for a train service and made the choice to travel by train and this is what they prefer and expect.”³⁶

The expansion of the so-called 24/7 lifestyle has led to more travel on Sundays and also at earlier and later times of the day. The effect of those demands has been two-fold, firstly, pressure for more trains in the timetable, secondly, less time available for engineering work.

Our survey³⁷ showed that there is more demand for later evening trains than there is for earlier morning trains. Demand is greater for later weekend trains, adding to the pressure on Network Rail’s engineering access. Although the percentages are low, it is clear that there is demand for services later in the evening than at present.

Demand for later evening services (base)

Last train 1.30 or later	Brighton - Victoria (892)	Coastway West (772)	Coastway East (796)	Redhill - Victoria (726)
Weekdays	9.4%	6.8%	5.8%	10.8%
Weekends	12.2%	11.9%	9.9%	14.9%

Passenger Focus requires Network Rail and train operators to consider ways to respond to the demand for additional services at times that have been traditionally safeguarded for engineering work. We note the brief discussion in the draft RUS of measures to increase access to the network for passengers; the Final RUS must include firm proposals. Passengers will expect firm plans, not ‘likely’ ones.

³⁵ Passengers’ attitudes towards engineering works; RPC, August 2003.

³⁶ Passengers’ attitudes towards engineering works; RPC, August 2003.

³⁷ Route based research Identifying what passengers want from South Central; Passenger Focus, April 2008.

6.8 Gap H - between the current capability of Channel Tunnel freight route 3 and aspiration for improved capability

Although, as far as passengers are concerned, this gap is not of obvious importance, it is, of course, linked to the previous two gaps - performance and the 'seven day railway'. The proposed works between Tonbridge and Redhill, by creating an alternative route for Channel Tunnel freight trains, will help meet both those gaps.

Passengers will welcome options which will improve the resilience of the railway network, and provide alternative routes for use at times of disruption or when routes are blocked for engineering work.

7. Summary table of Passenger Focus' responses to RUS options

Gap	Option	Consider further	Passenger Focus opinion Focus opinion
A	1.1	High peak only.	High peak in CP4 Plan to lengthen all in CP5.
A	1.2	High peak only.	Agree.
A	2.1	Implement in CP5.	Plan to use all opportunities including 12-car at London Bridge.
A	2.2	Implement in CP4.	Essential.
A	2.3	Implement in CP5.	No, in CP4.
A	3.1	Implement in CP5.	No, as soon as required.
A	3.2	Further work required.	Must be timely as well as sufficient.
A	3.3	Further work required.	Firm plans required.
B	4.1	Four additional vehicles.	Agree.
B	4.2	Lengthen evening train, not morning.	Consider further.
B	4.4	Not recommended.	Keep under review.
B	4.5	Not recommended.	Agree.
C	5.1	Only one train.	Not convinced plan is workable.
C	5.2	Further work required.	Agree.
D	6.1	Not recommended, but further options being considered.	Consider all proposals for the route; fast train must be an additional service.
D	6.2.1	Not recommended.	Agree, but safeguard route.
D	6.2.2	Not recommended.	
E	various	Under development with TOCs and stakeholders.	Must improve all aspects of stations; a commitment by Network Rail and Southern should be set out in final RUS to analyse in detail the car parking pressures and access needs and identify opportunities to address these.
F	various	Route by route proposals.	Passengers expect improvements.
G	various	Likely options in final RUS.	Plans must be firm.
H	two	Outline costs in final RUS.	Passengers expect improved network capability.

8. Final comments on the Emerging strategy to 2019 and beyond

Passenger Focus believes that implementation of all the interventions set out in the emerging strategy in the draft RUS will be needed to deliver the capacity required in the period to 2019 and in some cases, as we set out in our general comments and analysis of the options, additional measures will be required.

The pressures of a congested network are apparent now and will grow. Passenger Focus believes that there must be an early review of the allocation of network and train resources to align this much more closely with passenger need and this must be done soon and in addition to any other measures to increase capacity.

Passenger Focus has particular concern about the suggestion that the final layout of London Bridge might not provide 6 x 12 car platforms and it is our view that to settle for any less at an initial stage would be wholly unsatisfactory. This level of capacity is already an identifiable need and to commit major investment and impose such significant disruption without delivering what is known to be necessary will be not only short-sighted but will expose Network Rail, the Department of Transport and, ultimately, the Government to criticism, if not mockery, for inadequate planning and an inevitably more expensive requirement to put that failure right.

In the interim, in advance of the commencement of London Bridge works, it is imperative that Network Rail commits to deliver the number of paths upon which extensive planning has already been undertaken. The threat of any further loss of paths will have severe impacts on what is already a challenging basis for delivery of capacity in the intervening years. Other concerns about the impact of the Southeastern timetable for December 2009 on services towards Brighton will be addressed through other channels but are indicative of the additional problems that could occur without adherence to the availability of paths previously indicated.

The need for and benefits from a Redhill Platform 0 suggest that this must be delivered, however the combination of benefits are assessed to make the case. It is another example of deliver and reap the benefits now and over the long-term, rather than suffer the inefficiencies and inadequacies that delaying it will impose.

Passenger Focus agrees that the RUS should support the safeguarding of routes of currently closed lines to facilitate re-opening as and when the demand requirements and funding possibilities make this a viable proposition within the future strategy for Sussex route.

The question of who the Sussex RUS ultimately benefits and where pressures remain merits further consideration. Arguably, there is little in the document for Coastway or Arun Valley passengers and over the time-frame of the RUS the need for new solutions to their needs will remain. Pressures on the high peak hour

between the BML south of Three Bridges to Victoria are significant. If the additional high peak path cannot be timetabled a real challenge will have to be addressed.

Beyond 2019 a radical solution will be required and planning for that must start now.

Appendix A: Consultation on the draft Sussex RUS

Passenger Focus took a new approach to consultation on the draft Sussex RUS in light of the welcome, increasingly open approach by Network Rail and the several opportunities provided for a Wider Stakeholder Group (WSG) to attend briefings and exhibitions to enable input during the RUS process. At an early stage Passenger Focus reviewed the invitation list for WSG events, made suggestions for additions to Network Rail and notified directly those rail user groups not initially included.

WSG meetings were attended by Passenger Focus and we also made a presentation setting out our research evidence and initial thoughts on the draft RUS at the consultation stage event held in Brighton in June. We urged all interested parties to respond directly to the RUS consultation to keep local issues on the agenda but recommended a focus on key priorities and the most effective means of delivery to address them.

Views on the RUS consultation document and a range of issues relating to it were discussed with passenger groups and stakeholders through formal and informal meetings as well as email and telephone contact. Various responses to the consultation copied to Passenger Focus were also considered.

Information about the Sussex RUS and the consultation process was also promoted widely on our website and through our stakeholder magazine, Passenger Voice South East, in issues published in summer and autumn 2008 and summer 2009.

Organisations and individuals with whom we had direct contact during the process included:

(* copy of formal consultation response received)

Railway supporter groups

Arun Valley Community Rail Partnership*
Bexhill Rail Action Group*
Brighton Line Commuters
East Coastway Commuters Group
East Surrey Transport Committee*
Hassocks Rail Users Group*
Redhill, Reigate and District Rail Users Group
South Hampshire Rail Users' Group*

MPs

Norman Baker
Nigel Waterson

Stakeholders

British Airports Authority
Gatwick Airport Consultative Committee (GATCOM)
East Sussex County Council* and second tier authorities

London TravelWatch*
South East England Partnership Board/Regional Transport Board*
Sussex Community Rail Partnership
West Sussex County Council

Appendix B: Bibliography

A passenger focused franchise? What passengers want from South Central <i>Passenger Focus</i>	April 2008
Connecting Communities Expanding Access to the Rail Network <i>ATOC</i>	June 2009
Edge of morning peak travel <i>Consolidated, for Passenger Focus</i>	October 2006
Getting to the station <i>London TravelWatch</i>	April 2006
Getting to the station <i>Passenger Focus</i>	March 2007
Lewes - Uckfield - a case unanswered <i>Wealden Line Campaign</i>	2009
Mayor's Transport Strategy <i>Mayor of London</i>	May 2009
Passengers' attitudes towards engineering works <i>Rail Passengers Council</i>	August 2003
Review and Analysis of the 2008 Lewes - Uckfield Railway Line Study <i>Wealden Line Campaign</i>	April 2009
Route based research Identifying what passengers want from South Central <i>Passenger Focus</i>	April 2008
South London Route Utilisation Strategy <i>Network Rail</i>	March 2008



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