

Independent national passenger watchdog

Passenger Voice Rail



Spring 2011

West Midlands

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Passengers score region's rail

Autumn 2010

Train company	Overall satisfaction	Most significant improvement in satisfaction since Autumn 2009	Decline in % satisfied since Autumn 2009
Great Britain result	84%	Value for money (4%)	No significant decline
Arriva Trains Wales	87%	Space for luggage (8%)	No significant decline
Chiltern Railways	90%	Helpfulness and attitude of staff on the train (9%)	The length of time the journey was scheduled to take (4%)
CrossCountry	84%	No significant improvement	The upkeep/repair of station buildings/platforms (5%)
London Midland	86%	The attitude and helpfulness of station staff; value for money (7%)	Upkeep and repair of the train; cleanliness of the inside of the train (5%)
Virgin Trains	90%	The frequency of trains (4%)	No significant decline
Wrexham & Shropshire	96%	Toilet facilities (19%)	Punctuality/Reliability (5%)



Planning for future rail

Passenger Focus has been meeting with rail user groups (RUGs) and passengers across the region to help inform its response to future plans for the railway in the West Midlands and Chilterns region.

Network Rail has published the West Midlands and Chilterns Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) draft for consultation, which sets out plans for the network over the next 30 years. Passenger numbers are expected to increase by 32% over the next 10 years alone.

In conjunction with Centro and Network Rail, Passenger Focus ran meetings with RUGs in Birmingham to outline future plans, passenger research and give them the opportunity to feedback.

Passenger Focus has now submitted its response to Network Rail with its recommendations including increasing capacity on the network, providing more frequent services, improving reliability of evening and weekend trains, investment in station facilities, improving transport connections and running faster services.

Network Rail will publish the final RUS in the Spring. Passenger Focus's submission can be found at www.passengerfocus.org.uk

Passenger Focus has published research which reveals how satisfied passengers travelling in the West Midlands and beyond are with the rail network.

Open-access operator Wrexham and Shropshire, which has now ceased services, was a top scorer with 96% of passengers satisfied. Sister company Chiltern Railways continued to be a strong performer with 90% of passengers happy with their overall service.

Almost 31,000 passengers have responded to the independent passenger watchdog's Autumn 2010 National Passenger Survey (NPS), which rates Great Britain's rail companies, train and station facilities.

For the first time, Passenger Focus has also published a breakdown of

passenger satisfaction scores for different routes within each train company. This shows, for example, that 90% of London Midland's passengers are satisfied on West Coast journeys compared with 84% of those on West Midlands routes.

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

Passenger Focus will work with London Midland, Chiltern, Virgin, CrossCountry and Arriva Trains Wales to address those areas of the rail service where passenger satisfaction is lower.

On the move

Passenger Focus's Manchester office
We can now be found at Passenger Focus, 7th Floor, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD.



Look to future rail

Passenger Focus has responded to Network Rail's draft West Coast Main Line (WCML) Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS), which sets out the priorities for rail investment between now and 2024.

As part of the consultation process, Passenger Focus and Network Rail have held meetings in Glasgow, Preston and London for rail user groups to discuss what the RUS should be addressing. The group discussions highlighted some key priorities, including capacity, connectivity and station improvements.

Feedback from these groups, together with other Passenger Focus research were used to inform the response to Network Rail.

Robert Samson, Passenger Focus manager, said: "Passenger Focus welcomes the opportunity to comment on the West Coast Main Line RUS. We support the broad thrust of what has been proposed. However, in our response, we stressed that the West Coast railway network will need to allow for continued passenger growth while addressing passenger priorities for improvement."

West Coast rail deal



Passenger Focus has called on the Government to ensure that the new West Coast franchise is based on passengers' needs and priorities.

Commenting on the launch of the process to re-let the West Coast rail franchise, currently run by Virgin Trains, Passenger Focus manager Robert Samson said:

"It is important that this process produces a deal that puts passengers' interests at its heart and builds on the high levels of satisfaction passengers currently report".

Passenger Focus has undertaken research to understand what existing West Coast passengers think needs to be improved. The findings will form the basis of Passenger Focus's discussions with the Government and companies vying to operate West Coast services from 2012 onwards.

High-speed progress

Passenger Focus is pleased to see continued progress on planning for a new high-speed line, connecting English cities in the north and south.

Anthony Smith, Passenger Focus chief executive, said: "All forecasts show that Britain's railways are only going to get busier. Government and industry must continue progress on this important project as new lines are critical to relieving overcrowding in the future. Putting longer-distance journeys onto these new lines will allow more trains to serve commuters and middle-distance passengers on the current network.

"Wherever this new line is built, there will be winners and losers. It is important that the Government and rail industry continue to discuss the implications of this decision with affected communities and addresses concerns."

News roundup

Complaints help

Passenger Focus's advice team has now secured more than £59,800 in compensation for passengers this financial year.

Where a passenger and a train company cannot resolve a complaint, the watchdog's passenger advice team will take on the case, where appropriate, in an effort to get a better outcome for the individual.

National Passenger Survey

If you want to know more about the results in the latest National Passenger Survey, go online at www.passengerfocus.org.uk/nps

Passenger Focus blog

Passenger Focus chief executive Anthony Smith regularly updates the Passenger Focus blog at <http://passengerfocus.blogspot.com/>

Virgin helps passengers save money

Passenger Focus has welcomed Virgin Trains' experiment with social media to highlight tips to passengers on getting cheaper fares on their rail travel.

Advertising in national newspapers pointed passengers to Facebook where they could receive advice on getting cheaper tickets.

Robert Samson, Passenger Focus manager, said: "There is capacity to attract more passengers to off-peak trains. This idea gives passengers the tricks and the tools to help them get the best deal for their journey."

Working with London Midland

Passenger Focus has been discussing with London Midland its concerns about the ongoing dispute between the operator and its train drivers over voluntary overtime.

As a consequence of the shortage of drivers on Sundays, passengers experienced disruption to their services at the weekend.

Jocelyn Pearson, Passenger Focus manager, said: "It is

unsustainable for the basic timetable to depend on voluntary overtime. All parties must get round the table and agree a long-term solution to this problem."

Meanwhile, Passenger Focus has also been consulting with passengers over proposed changes to London Midland's ticket office opening-hours and has made recommendations to the operator based on passengers' feedback.

Passengers count delays

Long-distance train company CrossCountry has worked with Passenger Focus to better-understand how delays affect passenger satisfaction.

Passenger Focus's research has found that commuter satisfaction with punctuality starts to drop as soon as a train is one minute late. Business and leisure passengers are a little more tolerant, being prepared to wait between four and six minutes.

The study also found that passengers' experience of delays tends to be more than that recorded by the industry as trains may be late at stations along the route, but make up time towards the end of the journey and arrive at the final station according to the timetable.

The findings have prompted Passenger Focus to call on the rail industry to review how it records 'on-time' trains and to measure punctuality along the route, not just at the final station.