Rail passengers' experiences and expectations of the East Anglia franchise

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transportfocus

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1 Management Summary

Background

Transport Focus (previously known as Passenger Focus) has carried out research to understand passengers' current experiences with Abellio Greater Anglia (AGA) and their aspirations for the new East Anglia franchise which is due to commence in October 2016. Qualitative research was undertaken comprising twelve focus groups and five 60 minute depth interviews. These were split into:

- ten two-hour focus groups among current users of the AGA network
- two 90-minute focus groups among lapsed and non-users
- five depth interviews among passengers with a range of disabilities.

Summary of findings

Data from the National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS)[1] indicate that 80 per cent of Abellio Greater Anglia passengers are satisfied with their journey overall and 77 per cent are satisfied with the punctuality and reliability of services. However, the current research set out to identify passengers' priority areas for improvement in the future. What emerged were key aspects of service delivery and improvements to stations and trains. Three key themes have been identified:

- improving reliability, especially for frequent users who rely most heavily on the franchise
- upgrading the rolling stock – a cause for concern on a number of routes
- enhancing facilities at certain stations to meet passenger expectations.

The principal findings of the research are summarised below:

Service provision

As indicated by the NRPS data, most passengers are broadly satisfied with the main elements of the train service but many consider there to be room for improvement. Commuters and those making time-critical journeys are most frustrated with Abellio Greater Anglia which is felt to have a poor record on punctuality and reliability. This is exacerbated by engineering works that have caused weekend disruption for as long as most can remember. The frequency of services is generally considered to be acceptable, especially on Inter City and Main Line routes. However, there are indications that demand for later last services from Liverpool Street is likely to increase in the near future.

Trains

Passengers tend to have largely negative views about much of the Abellio Greater Anglia rolling stock. Many trains lack basic facilities and provide a poor overall experience. Passengers assume the stock is coming to the end of its working life and want to see a marked improvement

[1] Autumn 2014

in the quality of the trains used on the franchise. They believe that investment in this area should be given high priority in order to improve their confidence in the service.

Capacity was also identified as a problem for some passengers on certain routes. Although some passengers will tolerate standing for shorter journeys many, especially commuters, object strongly to the lack of capacity on certain routes. The need to stand amplifies other negative experiences, particularly around punctuality, for those who feel they already get the worst deal by paying the highest prices.

Stations

Attitudes to stations are understandably mixed and passengers tend to adopt a pragmatic view of their experiences. The key themes to emerge from the research are:

- Liverpool Street is recognised to be the network flagship with many welcome features
- most accept that smaller stations will have facilities proportionate to their size
- there are minimum basic requirements that should be met at all stations
- additional investment is likely to be required at certain stations in the near future.

Station access

Although no major access problems are highlighted by the research, there are some concerns about parking facilities such as the cost and lack of sufficient spaces. This is seen as the responsibility of the Train Operating Company (TOC) and negative experiences feed into overall perceptions of the service. Increased investment in cycle parking is welcomed but more facilities are likely to be required in many areas to meet future demand.

Information

Under normal circumstances, the quantity of information provided is usually considered to be good at Inter City and Main Line stations. At smaller stations provision is in line with passengers' lower expectations. The key problem, highlighted by commuters and frequent users, is the quality of information available during disruption to services. This is often seen as inadequate.

A secondary issue is that information is not coordinated well enough across all channels, which can cause confusion and push passengers towards staff for clarity and reassurance to avoid anxiety about missing trains or boarding the wrong train. The increasing use of apps puts increased pressure on traditional information sources to be accurate and reliable but cannot substitute for them (since not all passengers are using apps).

1.1.1 Tickets and fares

The research identifies a number of gaps in passenger knowledge. Many passengers are unaware of the range of tickets available, especially those who travel less frequently or make journeys from rural or unstaffed stations. Commuters are often unaware or not taking advantage of the benefits offered by season tickets. Some, even if aware of the benefits, cannot take advantage of monthly or annual season ticket savings due to affordability. These tickets could address perceptions of poor value for money among those who spend most on fares and the operator should consider better promotion of their advantages and a scheme to make them affordable when employers do not provide interest-free loans.

NRPS data shows that Abellio Greater Anglia is rated poorly in relation to other TOCs in terms of passenger perceptions of value for money. This is not a strong theme to emerge from this project but some feel that other TOCs offer Advance fares with better savings when compared with the walk-up fare.

Staff

Increasing passenger use of technology is not considered to be an acceptable substitute for the role performed by staff, especially in terms of providing information. Staff emerge in a positive light from this research. The majority are felt to deliver against high expectations for their knowledge of services, fares and the network. Most passengers consider staff to be proactive, friendly and to do a good job in often difficult circumstances. There are two key areas where some would like to see improvements:

- greater staff visibility for reasons of safety and security and a sense of reassurance
- more accurate and up-to-date information, especially at times of unplanned disruption.

2 Background, research objectives and methodology

Background
Transport Focus wanted to understand passengers' current experiences with Abellio Greater Anglia (AGA) and their aspirations for the new East Anglia franchise due to start in October 2016. The findings of the research we have undertaken will inform discussions between Transport Focus and the Department for Transport (DfT) to ensure what passengers want to see in the new franchise is part of the franchise bidding process.

Objectives
Qualitative research was carried out in October and November 2014 to meet the following objectives:

- understand passengers' use and experience of the railways under the existing franchise
- explore passengers' awareness of the franchising process and their desire for engagement
- obtain passengers' aspirations for the new franchise including:
    - rolling stock
    - timetabling and information
    - station environment and facilities
    - ticketing and customer service
- obtain reactions towards the Annual Report to Customers issued by Abellio Greater Anglia
- explore the experiences and attitudes of current non rail users (including lapsed users)
- explore what the new franchise might offer to attract non-users back to the railway in future
- understand any specific issues affecting disabled passengers.

This report also incorporates further evidence collected by Transport Focus on satisfaction, namely the National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS), and *Rail Passengers' Priorities for Improvements*.

The research covers the five main routes in the franchise area (full route details at Appendix 3). These are Inter City (London to Norwich); Main Line (London to Ipswich plus branches); Rural (Ipswich to Felixstowe/Lowestoft and Norwich to Lowestoft/Great Yarmouth/Sheringham/-Cromer); Stansted and West Anglia Outer (London to Cambridge/Kings Lynn). Two further routes currently in the Greater Anglia franchise area (Metro and West Anglia Inner) are due to leave the franchise in May 2015 and transfer to Transport for London's control. They are thus deliberately excluded from this study and the abbreviated term 'West Anglia' used in this report refers only to the West Anglia Outer route.

Methodology

The qualitative research consisted of:

- ten 2-hour focus groups with rail users:
  - four in London, two in Norwich, two in Ipswich, one in Cambridge and one in Colchester
  - comprised of regular users (commuters) and business or leisure users
  - participants varied on the type of service used; life stage; age and gender
- two 90-minute focus groups with lapsed or non rail users:
  - one in Norwich and one in Cambridge
  - comprised of a mix of age and genders
- five individual depth interviews with disabled rail users:
  - three in Norwich and two in Cambridge
  - comprised of passengers with a mix of sight, hearing and mobility impairments.

The composition of the focus groups and depth interviews is shown below in Tables 2.1 and 2.2.

Table 2.1 Focus group compositions

Number	Location	User type	East Anglia route
1	London	Regular	Inter City
2	London	Less frequent	Main Line
3	London	Regular	West Anglia
4	London	Less frequent	Stansted
5	Norwich	Non-users	
6	Norwich	Regular	Rural
7	Norwich	Less frequent	Inter City
8	Colchester	Regular	Main Line
9	Ipswich	Less frequent	Rural
10	Ipswich	Regular	Main Line
11	Cambridge	Non-users	
12	Cambridge	Less frequent	West Anglia

Table 2.2 Depth interview compositions

Number	Location	Disability	Gender
1	Norwich	Hearing impaired	Male
2	Norwich	Mobility and hearing impaired	Male
3	Norwich	Vision impaired	Female
4	Cambridge	Vision impaired	Male
5	Cambridge	Mobility and vision impaired	Female

Structure of the report

This report describes the findings from the qualitative research and also draws upon other evidence collected by Transport Focus on satisfaction with AGA and priorities for improvement for the Greater Anglia franchise.[2,3] Section 3 outlines the quantitative evidence from the National Rail Passenger Survey and the Priorities for Improvement research carried out by Transport Focus. Section 4 outlines the results of the qualitative research and our conclusions are in Section 5. The user and non-user discussion guides are used in the research are included as an Appendix.

[2] http://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research/publications/rail-passengers-priorities-for-improvements-october-2014

[3] Main report: http://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research/publications/national-rail-passenger-survey-nrps-autumn-2014-main-report; AGA report: http://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research/publications/national-rail-passenger-survey-autumn-2014-train-operating-company-toc-reports-part-one-a-to-g

3 Passenger satisfaction and priorities for improvement – quantitative evidence base

Introduction
A key part of the study is to present what is known quantitatively about passenger satisfaction and priorities for improvement alongside the qualitative evidence collected from the focus groups and depth interviews. For this we have used data from the Autumn 2014 National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) and Transport Focus's Priorities for Improvement research findings that relate to the Abellio Greater Anglia (AGA) franchise area. The NRPS and Priorities research findings are useful for providing context to the qualitative research results discussed in the next section.

National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS)
The NRPS is a bi-annual survey carried out with rail passengers and asks about the journey they are currently making. This delivers a large sample of rail passengers nationally and a relatively large sample even when split by Train Operating Company (TOC). Results are available for the Autumn 2014 survey which was carried out between 2 September and 11 November 2014, a similar timeframe to the qualitative research.

Table 3.1 shows the sample sizes obtained for the AGA franchise area by route, journey purpose and gender. However the sub sample total by question does vary and for some questions the sample size is quite small. This is particularly an issue for 'Rural', 'Stansted' and 'Business' segments. In the tables that follow results are not given when the base is less than 50 and are instead marked with an asterisk.

Table 3.1 Sample sizes by East Anglia route segment (Autumn 2014)

		Route segment					Purpose			Gender	
(Per cent satisfied)	Overall	Inter City	Main Line	Rural	Stansted	West Anglia Outer	Commuter	Business	Leisure	Men	Women
Sample size	1807	417	657	167	119	447	733	179	728	733	862

The NRPS sample used for this analysis excludes those parts of the network (Metro and West Anglia Inner) that will transfer from the East Anglia franchise to Transport for London control in May 2015. The term 'West Anglia' in this analysis refers to the current West Anglia Outer route. As a result, certain figures quoted in this report may differ from the published AGA Autumn 2014 data. Additionally the split by purpose and gender excludes passengers on the Rural route segment and there are some missing data (not all respondents answer all the questions) which explains why these breakdowns do not sum to the overall total.

The NRPS collects data on 37 service factors, which have been grouped into the following categories in this report:

- Overall satisfaction (2) – overall satisfaction and value for money
- Journey factors (7)
- Train facilities (8)
- Station facilities (12)
- Customer service factors (8).

The latest satisfaction scores for the AGA franchise are shown below. Table 3.2 shows the satisfaction level (per cent satisfied) for each factor at an overall level and by route segment, journey purpose and gender. Satisfaction includes both ‘very’ and ‘fairly satisfied’ ratings. Table 3.3 shows the service factors ranked in order of overall satisfaction (per cent satisfied). Also shown is the service factor type: Overall, Journey, Train, Station and Customer service. These results are discussed later on in this section.

Table 3.2 Satisfaction by route segment, journey purpose and gender for Abellio Greater Anglia routes (Autumn 2014 NRPS)

(Per cent satisfied)	Overall	Route segment					Purpose			Gender	
		Inter City	Main Line	Rural	Stansted	West Anglia	Commuter	Business	Leisure	Men	Women
Overall											
Overall satisfaction with the journey	79	77	78	78	93	79	71	85	90	75	83
The value for money for the price of your ticket	34	43	29	44	32	35	21	38	51	29	36
Journey											
Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand	65	71	62	72	70	67	54	73	78	60	69
The frequency of the trains on that route	74	84	73	55	96	73	70	78	84	73	78
Punctuality/reliability (i.e. the train arriving/departing on time)	77	76	76	70	91	79	69	83	89	73	81
How well train company dealt with delays	35	47	30	*	*	43	25	*	50	29	41
The length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed)	81	78	81	77	86	82	75	84	89	78	84
The ease of being able to get on and off the train	78	69	77	83	97	82	75	79	83	76	79
Connections with other train services	71	71	71	58	85	72	64	74	85	66	77
Train Facilities											
Overall satisfaction with the train	72	72	70	74	91	73	63	79	83	67	76
The cleanliness of the inside of train	64	69	61	72	87	63	56	72	72	61	66
The cleanliness of the outside of train	62	57	62	60	89	61	58	69	65	58	66
Upkeep and repair of the train	57	51	53	64	90	58	51	54	68	51	61
The space for luggage on train	48	54	44	60	47	50	41	54	54	44	50
The toilet facilities on train	34	36	27	29	78	42	29	34	50	31	39
Your personal security whilst on board train	72	86	69	76	91	68	67	74	81	70	74
The comfort of the seating area on train	63	67	57	69	93	67	55	68	73	56	68

Table 3.2 (continued) Satisfaction by route segment, journey purpose and gender for Abellio Greater Anglia routes (Autumn 2014 NRPS)

		Route segment					Purpose			Gender	
(Per cent satisfied)	Overall	Inter City	Main Line	Rural	Stansted	West Anglia	Commuter	Business	Leisure	Men	Women
Station facilities											
Overall satisfaction with the station	78	82	82	65	87	72	74	82	85	77	81
Ticket buying facilities at the station	70	74	69	64	90	69	66	73	80	67	74
The upkeep/repair of the station buildings/platforms	67	72	71	59	71	60	63	70	76	66	70
Cleanliness of the station	74	77	78	64	78	67	69	76	82	75	74
The facilities and services at the station	55	59	57	55	68	49	51	60	61	53	57
The overall station environment	68	74	72	61	79	60	66	72	72	67	71
The provision of shelter facilities at the station	61	61	62	65	77	56	57	61	67	60	61
Availability of seating at the station	38	32	40	48	41	35	33	35	47	35	39
Connections with other forms of public transport	75	86	79	55	85	67	71	84	80	77	76
Facilities for car parking at the station	54	56	47	68	*	58	44	*	60	48	57
Your personal security whilst using the station	68	71	72	69	66	58	66	64	75	66	69
Facilities for bicycle parking at the station	60	*	62	69	*	54	56	*	65	55	63
Customer service											
The availability of staff at the station	61	65	61	61	71	57	58	67	62	57	64
The attitudes and helpfulness of station staff	74	80	73	86	73	70	68	80	80	68	77
Provision of information about train times/platforms	79	79	78	80	77	81	76	77	86	77	81
How request to station staff was handled	86	92	88	*	*	78	70	*	92	90	88
The availability of staff on the train	30	51	20	68	39	19	19	36	35	24	27
The helpfulness and attitude of staff on train	51	73	39	80	51	34	38	53	58	47	45
The provision of information during the journey	61	70	58	72	78	55	54	61	71	55	65
Usefulness of information during delays	40	49	40	*	*	*	33	*	51	43	37

Table 3.3 Summary of satisfaction with service factors (per cent satisfied) in order of satisfaction level for Abellio Greater Anglia routes overall (Autumn) 2014

Type	Service factor	Per cent satisfied
Customer	How request to station staff was handled	86
Journey	The length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed)	81
Customer	Provision of information about train times/platforms	79
Overall	Overall satisfaction with the journey	79
Journey	The ease of being able to get on and off	78
Journey	Punctuality/reliability (i.e. the train arriving/departing on time)	77
Station	Connections with other forms of public transport	75
Journey	The frequency of the trains on that route	74
Customer	The attitudes and helpfulness of station staff	74
Station	Cleanliness of the station	74
Train	Your personal security whilst on board train	72
Journey	Connections with other train services	71
Station	Ticket buying facilities at the station	70
Station	The overall station environment	68
Station	Your personal security whilst using the station	68
Station	The upkeep/repair of the station buildings/platforms	67
Journey	Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand	65
Train	The cleanliness of the inside of train	64
Train	The comfort of the seating area on train	63
Train	The cleanliness of the outside of train	62
Customer	The provision of information during the journey	61
Station	The provision of shelter facilities at the station	61
Customer	The availability of staff at the station	61
Station	Facilities for bicycle parking at the station	60
Train	Upkeep and repair of the train	57
Station	The facilities and services at the station	55
Station	Facilities for car parking at the station	54
Customer	The helpfulness and attitude of staff on train	51
Train	The space for luggage on train	48
Customer	Usefulness of information during delays	40
Station	Availability of seating at the station	38
Journey	How well train company dealt with delays	35
Train	The toilet facilities on train	34
Overall	The value for money for the price of your ticket	34
Customer	The availability of staff on the train	30

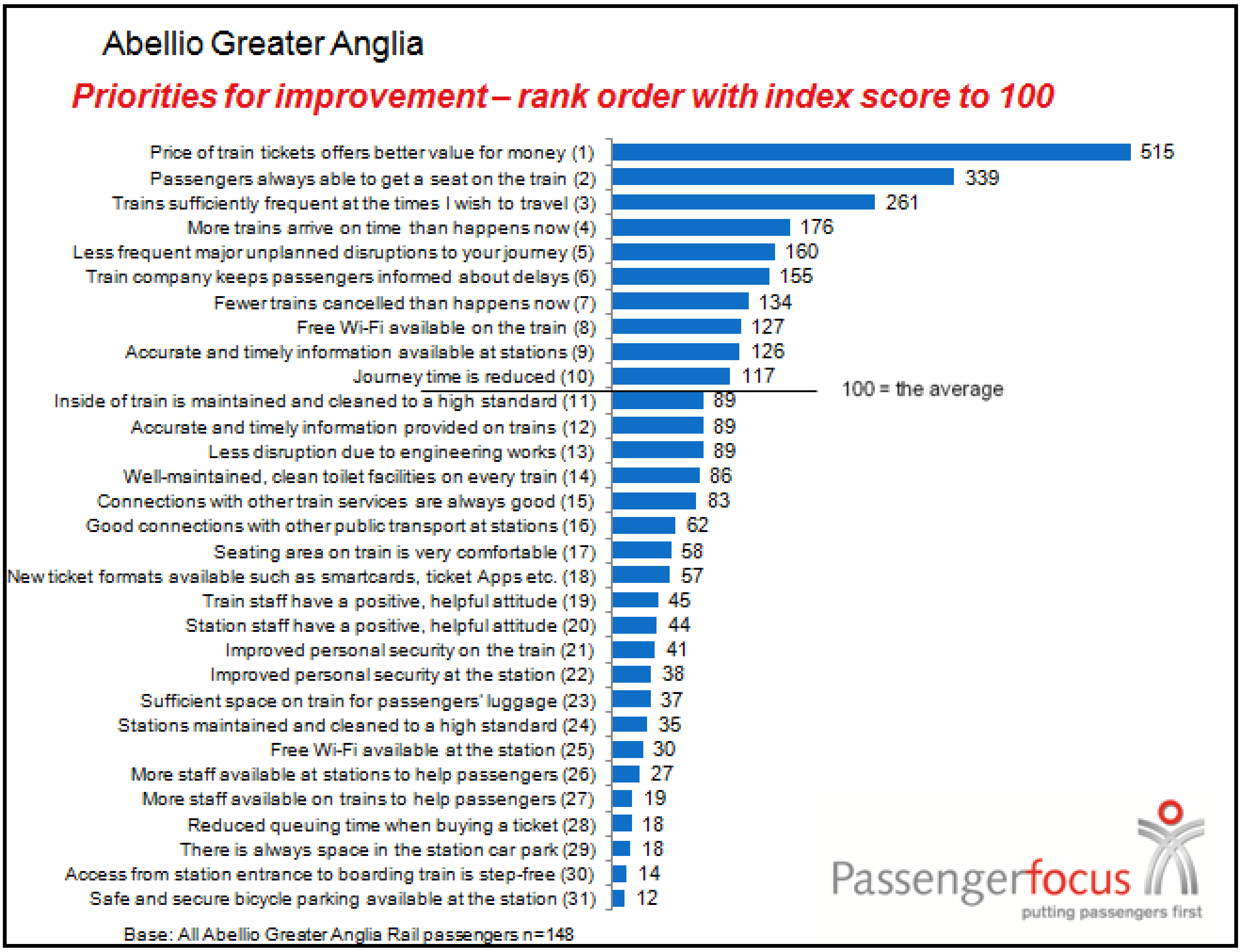
Passengers' Priorities for Improvement

As well as the NRPS, Transport Focus also conducts research into passengers' priorities for improvement. The latest survey, used here, was carried out in February/March 2014 and reported in October 2014.[4]

The priority scores are derived by calculating an index based on the 'max-diff' score (an econometric modelling trade-off technique developed to highlight priorities for improvement). The index allows an assessment to be made of how more or less important the improvement in a factor is, compared with an average score of 100. Those factors that have a score of over 100 have a higher priority for improvement than the average.

The latest results relating to the Abellio Greater Anglia franchise are shown in Table 3.4. Some categories used in the Priorities for Improvement research may not be directly comparable with NRPS.

Table 3.4 Priorities for improvement



[4] http://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research/publications/rail-passengers-priorities-for-improvements-october-2014

Discussion of quantitative evidence

Table 3.5 Overall satisfaction with the journey

(Per cent satisfied)	Overall	Route segment					Purpose			Gender	
		Inter City	Main Line	Rural	Stansted	West Anglia	Commuter	Business	Leisure	Men	Women
Overall satisfaction with the journey	79	77	78	78	93	79	71	85	90	75	83

Table 3.5 shows overall satisfaction levels split by route, journey purpose and gender. The overall satisfaction level is 79 per cent but varies by route segment. Stansted has by far the highest satisfaction level at 93 per cent. The other routes are lower but similar, ranging between the lowest at 77 per cent, Inter City, and 79 per cent, West Anglia. The scores also vary by journey purpose. Less frequent users have a much higher level of satisfaction than regular users. Leisure travellers have the highest level of satisfaction at 90 per cent, followed by business travellers at 85 per cent and commuters at 71 per cent. Women have a much higher satisfaction level than men, 83 per cent compared with 75 per cent.

In summary, Stansted route users, women and non-commuters are the most satisfied whilst commuters, men and passengers on routes other than Stansted are the least satisfied.

The tables below highlight the ten best and worst rated service features overall. A breakdown by route, purpose and gender is given in the next section.

Table 3.6 Top ten rated service factors

Type	Best rated service factors	Per cent satisfied
Customer	How request to station staff was handled	86
Journey	The length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed)	81
Customer	Provision of information about train times/platforms	79
Journey	The ease of being able to get on and off	78
Journey	Punctuality/reliability (i.e. the train arriving/departing on time)	77
Station	Connections with other forms of public transport	75
Journey	The frequency of the trains on that route	74
Customer	The attitudes and helpfulness of station staff	74
Station	Cleanliness of the station	74
Train	Your personal security whilst on board train	72

Table 3.6 above shows the best-rated service factors overall. The highest scoring is “How a request to station staff is handled” with 86 per cent satisfied. This is closely followed by “The length of time the journey is scheduled to take” (a proxy for speed) with 81 per cent satisfied. Other service factors that score highly include provision of train time and platform information, ease of being able to get on and off, punctuality/reliability and connections with other forms of public transport which all score 75 per cent or over. Other service factors scoring between 72 and 74 per cent are service frequency, attitudes and helpfulness of station staff, station cleanliness and personal security whilst on board the train. It is notable that speed, reliability and service frequency score relatively highly.

Table 3.7 Worst ten rated service factors

Type	Worst rated service factors	Per cent satisfied
Customer	The availability of staff on the train	30
Overall	The value for money for the price of your ticket	34
Train	The toilet facilities on train	34
Journey	How well train company dealt with delays	35
Station	Availability of seating at the station	38
Customer	Usefulness of information during delays	40
Train	The space for luggage on train	48
Customer	The helpfulness and attitude of staff on train	51
Station	Facilities for car parking at the station	54
Station	The facilities and services at the station	55

Table 3.7 above shows the worst rated service factors overall. Worst is availability of staff on the train with satisfaction at 30 per cent. However, it should be noted that many AGA trains operate with only a driver on board. Value for money and toilet facilities on train are also low at 34 per cent satisfied. How well the train company deals with delays, availability of seating at the station and usefulness of information during delays have scores of 40 per cent satisfied or less. Only 48 per cent are satisfied with space for luggage on the train. Thus key issues are the availability of on train staff, value for money, train toilets and dealing with delays.

Value for money is by far the most important factor in the Priorities for Improvement research followed by getting a seat and service frequency. The top ten areas for improvement from the Priorities research (since the index score is over 100) are:

- Value for money (index of 515 – over five times more important than the average)
- Ability to get a seat on the train (index of 339 – three times more important than average)
- Train frequency (index of 261 – over two and a half times as important than the average)
- Train punctuality (index of 176, so nearly twice as important than the average)
- Less frequent major unplanned disruptions to your journey (index of 160)
- Train company keeps passengers informed about delays (index of 155)
- Fewer trains cancelled than happens now (index of 134)
- Free Wi-Fi available on the train (index of 127)
- Accurate and timely information available at stations (index of 126)
- Journey time reduction (index of 117).

The Priorities work asks about 'ability to get a seat on the train' for which the closest measure in NRPS is the question about 'sufficient room for all the passengers to sit/stand'. In Table 3.3 this appears about half way down the list in terms of satisfaction in relation to the current journey.

It is important to put these journey-based results into context. Transport Focus recently carried out qualitative research into passenger confidence and trust[5] to explore the difference between passengers' perceptions of an individual journey compared to their overall perception of the railways in general. Evidence from that work suggests that journey-based levels of satisfaction, as measured by the National Rail Passenger Survey tend to be higher than other general surveys of rail usage, which are based on recall of cumulative past experience rather than focussing on a particular journey.

[5] (http://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research/publications/passenger-confidence--qualitative-research-august-2014)

4 Qualitative research findings

Introduction
The qualitative research results are considered under the following headings:

- Pre-journey
- Tickets and fares
- Stations and trains
- Service provision
- Aspirations
- Franchise process
- Annual Report to Customers
- Lapsed and non-users
- Disability issues.

Where relevant, NRPS scores and priority rankings are shown to put the qualitative research evidence into context.

Pre-journey

Journey planning
Passengers report using a range of websites and apps for journey planning purposes. However, there is minimal evidence of the Abellio Greater Anglia (AGA) website being used for this purpose. Some claim the reason for this is the assumption that it will only provide details of AGA services whereas other sites such as thetrainline.com and National Rail Enquiries will cover all TOCs. One passenger has discovered that the AGA site features very low on a Google search for train times and suggests this as a possible reason for non-use. Those using the AGA site feel it is more likely to provide specific information about live departures and platform details since the TOC is considered to be the most likely source of accurate information about its own services.

There is a further suggestion that various sites might occasionally be checked when shopping around for the cheapest fares. In spite of this price sensitivity, some passengers seem prepared to pay the booking fee charged by certain sites and appear unaware that this is not a standard feature of all online ticket retailers.

Overall, it seems that the AGA website is not regarded as a natural destination for journey planning purposes and tends to be used for ticket purchasing only when routed to it via the National Rail Enquiries site. Some younger passengers are aware that AGA has a Twitter feed and a few claim to follow it when making journeys with AGA.

"I might check in the mornings, more in winter months when they're likely to cancel trains before I leave the house" [London group, West Anglia passenger*]

*The first element of each quote attribution refers to where the group discussion was conducted, followed by details of AGA (route) usage information or the nature of the respondent's disability in the case of the depth interviews.

"I follow them [AGA] on Twitter, so whenever I know I've got to catch the train I normally check on there, they're normally quite good at Tweeting if there's something wrong"
[London, Stansted Express]

Station access

(Per cent satisfied)	Overall	Route segment					Purpose			Gender	
		Inter City	Main Line	Rural	Stansted	West Anglia	Commuter	Business	Leisure	Men	Women
Connections with other forms of public transport	75	86	79	55	85	67	71	84	80	77	76

The above table from NRPS shows overall satisfaction with connections with other forms of public transport at 75 per cent. This is highest for Inter City and Stansted services but lowest for Rural services. Commuters have much lower levels of satisfaction than business or leisure travellers. There is no significant difference by gender.

Passengers report using a number of different transport modes to access railway stations including car, bus and on foot. Some specific strengths and weaknesses were identified across the network but there were no major concerns or issues about station access. The majority of users feel there are good public transport options available to access stations and it is not a significant barrier to rail use among lapsed and non-users. Driving to stations outside London is generally felt to be easy although there are some issues with car parking (discussed later). Connecting journeys by public transport to London stations are also considered to be good. The focus groups conducted in central London included a small number of passengers who needed to travel across London to get to Liverpool Street on a frequent basis and they did not consider this to be a disincentive. The only minor issue highlighted was that Oyster readers are not conveniently situated when interchanging at Stratford between London Underground and AGA services.

Bus links to rail stations are generally felt to be good although a small minority identified a couple of specific problems. For example, in Peterborough, the bus connections do not work well for some passengers and the need to access the bus stop via a dark tunnel from the station is a barrier for one non-user. In Colchester, there is some concern that bus timetables are not well synchronised with train services, often resulting in a long wait and the perception of a poor connection.

"Last year they were going to cancel a route that goes near me and there was uproar about it. The bus services are quite good although I think they are more expensive than other places around"
[Ipswich, Rural]

"There's a five to seven minute window to get from the bus to the train and if you just miss one you're stuck there for 10 minutes or a quarter of an hour"
[Colchester, Main Line]

"Getting to the Station is my biggest problem. Once I'm there it's pleasant"
[Cambridge, Mobility/vision impaired]

Car parking

(Per cent satisfied)	Overall	Route segment					Purpose			Gender	
		Inter City	Main Line	Rural	Stansted	West Anglia	Commuter	Business	Leisure	Men	Women
Facilities for car parking at the station	54	56	47	68	*	58	44	*	60	48	57

The table above from NRPS shows that car parking facilities at stations has an overall satisfaction score of 54 per cent, which is one of the lowest scoring service factors (see Table 3.6). Car parking is rated particularly poorly for Main Line but relatively well for Rural services. This may be because there is more space available relative to demand at Rural stations and that parking may be more of a problem at busier city stations. Commuters are less satisfied than leisure travellers. Women are more satisfied than men.

Passengers in the qualitative research feel car parking is often a problem, especially at larger stations. The main problem is generally felt to be the cost but a lack of available spaces was noted in some locations. Parking rates are seen as unreasonable, especially by frequent users and commuters who claim the addition of a few pounds to their rail ticket can make the total journey cost prohibitive on a daily basis. A few have taken advantage of season ticket concessions if no realistic alternative access is available and many suggest that discounted car parking should be provided with certain types of tickets or for the most frequent users.

There is some discussion about whether car parks at stations should be owned by the TOC rather than other companies. It is felt this could allow the TOC to charge rates that would make rail travel more attractive to those wanting to drive to stations. This prompts some to explain that rates at certain station car parks 'force' them to find alternatives such as cheaper car parks further away from the station or parking in roads close to the station.

"A lot of the car parks are expensive because they're run by NCP rather than the train company. That shouldn't happen, the franchise should be responsible" [London, Main Line]

"It adds to the cost of your journey and that car park at Ipswich is just ludicrous" [Ipswich, Main Line]

In all cases, negative experiences of car parking at railway stations are seen as an extension of overall service provision and are potentially reflected in overall satisfaction levels with the TOC.

Some of the problems identified in relation to specific stations can be summarised as follows:

- At Norwich, both availability and cost of parking spaces is an issue. Many prefer to park in the Riverside car park adjacent to the station but this fills up quickly as it is cheaper

- At Colchester, some claim to prefer to park elsewhere to avoid the cost of parking at the station and others take the bus rather than drive to the station for this same reason

- There appear to be particular problems with car parking at Ipswich station with one passenger choosing to walk 30 minutes in each direction to and from the station to avoid using the car park, despite wanting to drive. Another says it is cheaper to take two taxis than to use the station car park

- At Cambridge station there are access issues caused by traffic problems on the A14 and sometimes circulation issues within the station area which represent a further disincentive to driving to the station. It is also observed by the disabled passengers interviewed that disabled parking spaces are often taken up by cars not displaying a Blue Badge and it is felt to be the responsibility of the TOC to enforce this more rigorously.

Cycle parking

		Route segment					Purpose			Gender	
(Per cent satisfied)	**Overall**	**Inter City**	**Main Line**	**Rural**	**Stansted**	**West Anglia**	**Commuter**	**Business**	**Leisure**	**Men**	**Women**
Facilities for bicycle parking at the station	60	*	62	69	*	54	56	*	65	55	63

The table above from NRPS shows that overall 60 per cent of respondents are satisfied with cycle parking facilities at stations. This is rated worse on West Anglia services but better on Rural services. As with car parking, leisure travellers are the most satisfied and commuters are the least satisfied. Women are more satisfied than men.

Opinions from the qualitative research towards facilities provided for cycle parking are mixed across the network. Liverpool Street is mentioned specifically as being good. Plenty of secure spaces are available, which is reassuring for those who want to leave bikes there when making train journeys. More facilities are felt to be needed elsewhere particularly at larger stations such as Stratford, Norwich and Cambridge. In spite of a large number of cycle parking spaces at Cambridge, provision is felt to be inadequate to cater for the large number of cyclists (presumably including the student population).

It is universally expected that cycle parking should be provided free of charge and, in conjunction with better facilities, will encourage more people to cycle to railway stations rather than using motorised transport. This is widely recognised as important and a step in the right direction in terms of sustainable transport, although it is accepted this will not be a practical option for all rail passengers.

"Stratford could do with more bike lock space. It's really frustrating because you can walk round for ages trying to find somewhere to lock your bike up" [London, Main Line]

Information

(Per cent satisfied)	Overall	Route segment					Purpose			Gender	
		Inter City	Main Line	Rural	Stansted	West Anglia	Commuter	Business	Leisure	Men	Women
Provision of information about train times/platforms	79	79	78	80	77	81	76	77	86	77	81
The provision of information during the journey	61	70	58	72	78	55	54	61	71	55	65
Usefulness of information during delays	40	49	40	*	*	*	33	*	51	43	37

General

The table above from NRPS shows satisfaction levels for different types of information provision. Although information about train times and platforms is rated well overall (79 per cent satisfied), commuters and business travellers are less satisfied compared with leisure users. There is very little difference by route but women are slightly more satisfied than men.

Provision of information during the journey is rated less well overall (61 per cent satisfied). Stansted, Rural and Inter City services score much higher whereas West Anglia and Main Line services are lower. Commuters are much less satisfied than business or leisure travellers. Women are more satisfied than men.

The usefulness of information during delays scores poorly - only 40 per cent are satisfied overall, although this factor is rated somewhat better on Inter City services. Commuters rate this very poorly but leisure travellers are less dissatisfied. Women are much less satisfied than men. In the Priorities for Improvement research, which uses a slightly different definition, 'the train company keeps passengers informed about delays' is the sixth most important area for improvement.

In the qualitative research regular passengers, and commuters in particular, are more likely to claim that the quality of information provided is inadequate for their needs. There is a perception that boards at stations often display incorrect information, especially during disruption. Less frequent users tend to find the quality of information provided more acceptable as sufficient details (such as calling points) are usually available to meet the needs of leisure passengers.

Views differ about the quantity of information available to passengers. Provision is felt to be comprehensive at larger Inter City and Main Line stations but more basic and minimal at certain smaller and Rural stations. Irrespective of the nature of any information provided, many comment that they would still be inclined to ask a member of staff for additional reassurance. This is especially true for less frequent users and those making unfamiliar journeys.

There is a broad consensus that better information on trains would be welcome, both in terms of the quantity and frequency of information and the clarity of announcements. There is evidence from the research to indicate that the increasing use of apps among rail passengers is putting increased pressure on the accuracy of traditional industry information sources. Those using apps are frequently aware of a lack of coordination between channels and desire greater consistency in the future.

Platform Details

This is occasionally identified as something that can lack synchronisation across the various channels used by passengers and can be a major source of frustration and anxiety.
This concern is driven by the worry about missing a train or boarding the wrong train. Some passengers refer to a high incidence of last-minute platform changes that are not always communicated accurately or consistently across the different information channels. This creates a lack of trust in the information being provided coupled with a need to seek reassurance from staff. This is especially inconvenient at larger stations where the distances between altered platforms can be considerable and the time required to get from one to another could easily result in missing the train. A separate problem has been identified at Liverpool Street where the last-minute announcement of the departure platform was described as leading to a "stampede of passengers" keen to board quickly in order to get a seat.

"At Liverpool Street you wait there for ages looking up at the screen then everyone starts legging it for the train" [London, Main Line]

When interchanging between trains, especially at larger stations, many express a desire to have information about platform details made available as far in advance as possible. This should ideally be in the form of an announcement from train staff who could include these details in the information provided to passengers when approaching the station.

"It will tell me on my app which platform the train is going from so I go to that platform and the screen says it's going from a different platform" [London, Inter City]

Tickets and fares

Ticketing

(Per cent satisfied)	Overall	Route segment					Purpose			Gender	
		Inter City	Main Line	Rural	Stansted	West Anglia	Commuter	Business	Leisure	Men	Women
Ticket buying facilities at the station	70	74	69	64	90	69	66	73	80	67	74

The NRPS data above shows that overall 70 per cent are satisfied with ticket buying facilities at stations. This is highest for Stansted and Inter City services and lowest for Rural services, which may reflect the different levels of ticket buying facilities at these stations. Leisure travellers are most satisfied and commuters least satisfied. Women are more satisfied than men.

The qualitative research indicates there are gaps that need to be filled in terms of passenger knowledge and awareness of facilities available in relation to ticketing. Many are unaware of the different ticket options available to them, especially less frequent users. However, this also applies to some regular rail travellers including commuters who perhaps tend to buy the same ticket without considering other options available. This is a particular problem at smaller and Rural stations which are more likely to be unstaffed so the ability to buy different types of ticket is limited by passengers' knowledge of the tickets available or by the range that can be bought from a Ticket Vending Machine (TVM).

Attitudes towards TVMs and confidence in using them vary. There are frequent requests for more TVMs as an alternative to queuing at ticket offices at busy times, particularly at larger stations like Colchester and Ipswich.

During the course of discussions on ticketing, some passengers spontaneously raise the issue of revenue protection on the basis of fairness to fare-paying passengers. They view high profile staff as positive, along with initiatives to target fare-dodging (as opposed to passengers making innocent mistakes). There is a common feeling that more staff and/or ticket gates are needed to maximise the efficiency of revenue protection. There is a perception that neither is currently being used to best advantage across the AGA network.

"The barriers at Ipswich are a waste of time because at rush hour they open them all so you can just walk through because there's too much congestion so it defeats the object"
[Ipswich, Main Line]

Season tickets
Among the commuter groups, awareness of benefits available to annual season ticket holders is extremely low and restricted to the small minority of Gold Card holders represented in the research. Those using monthly or weekly tickets are surprised to learn about discounts available on other journeys and some appear unaware of the benefit of being able to make free journeys at weekends.

Most important is the lack of awareness of the extent of discount provided by a Gold Card, which most assume will be negligible after holidays and other absences from work. They are often amazed to learn that it is valid for 52 weeks for the cost of 40. Therefore communication should not just inform about ticket types but also promote Gold Card tickets more overtly to influence perceptions of overall value for money.

Notably, even when the benefits of an annual season ticket become known, passengers raise a number of practical difficulties. The main one is the large initial outlay involved, particularly for those making longer and more expensive commutes to London. For some, this is also a barrier to buying a monthly ticket rather than a weekly. Where employers offer a season ticket loan facility, many say they are reluctant to make such a commitment in case their circumstances change in the next 12 months.

A minor disadvantage of the Gold Card was identified by one user in the research who has experienced difficulties when attempting to take advantage of some of the benefits offered. Certain discounts are unavailable from a TVM and need staff to be present at a ticket office in order to sell the tickets and apply the discounts. Since staff availability, especially at smaller stations, is beyond the control of the passenger, this can feel like a penalty rather than a benefit.

Value for money

(Per cent satisfied)	Overall	Route segment					Purpose			Gender	
		Inter City	Main Line	Rural	Stansted	West Anglia	Commuter	Business	Leisure	Men	Women
The value for money for the price of your ticket	34	43	29	44	32	35	21	38	51	29	36

The table above from NRPS shows that only 34 per cent are satisfied with value for money. This is the second lowest scoring service factor and the area identified as most important from the

Priorities for Improvement research. Among a range of poor scores satisfaction is highest for Rural and Inter City and lowest for Main Line and Stansted services. Leisure travellers are more satisfied and commuters are least satisfied. Men are less satisfied than women.

NRPS data shows that rail users generally perceive rail fares to provide poor value for money. This is a generic industry issue rather than a problem that is felt to be specific to AGA and as such is not usually highlighted as a strongly negative theme in the qualitative research. It is exacerbated by passengers' uncertainty about how to obtain the cheapest fare for their journey.[6]

Although it was generally acknowledged in the qualitative research that the walk-up fare is likely to offer the worst value for money, some claim to do this regularly. Some are prepared to trade-off the higher fare against the inflexibility of making plans in advance that may change before the date of travel. Others claim that certain fares across the network seem to be somewhat arbitrary and believe there is minimal difference between the walk-up fare and booking the same journey in advance.

The majority did acknowledge that good deals are available if it is possible to book in advance, especially First Class travel at weekends. Advance tickets are known to have restrictions attached to them but are generally felt to be worthwhile given the cost-savings available. Although some feel that such savings are less generous than those available from other TOCs given the relatively short journeys on this franchise.

Stansted Express users tend to assume that the value for money available elsewhere on the network does not apply to this route. There is a perception of there being few, if any, special offers and there is uncertainty about whether Advance fares apply. It should be noted however that these issues are generally based on perceptions and a lack of knowledge rather than experience. Passengers also express a desire to use their Oyster card to Stansted Airport in order to avoid the need to queue for a ticket and to ensure they get the best price.

Value for money is not regarded as a critical issue for Rural routes represented in this research. Fares and, occasionally, annual fare increases are considered to be reasonable for the distances involved. This often creates a perception that there is minimal financial benefit in buying a ticket in advance and the main benefit of the Advance fare is the ability to use the Ticket On Departure facility from a TVM.

"I probably should take the time to look and make a comparison but my general assumption is that you don't save a lot. It's more about the convenience of not having to queue to buy your ticket" [Ipswich, Rural]

Some passengers are aware of a fare anomaly that has added a further complexity to the value for money equation. A number had found that it was cheaper to buy two separate tickets for journeys to London by splitting the fare at Manningtree. However, one or two passengers reported that AGA has become aware of this and has closed the loophole.

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[6] http://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research/publications/the-passenger-experience-the-full-research-report

“It’s cheaper to buy a ticket from Ipswich to Manningtree and from Manningtree to London than going from Ipswich to London” [Colchester, Main Line]

“My business realised that it was cheaper to get tickets from Norwich to Manningtree and Manningtree to London but Abellio cottoned on to it” [Norwich, Rural]

Stations, staff and trains

Stations

(Per cent satisfied)	Overall	Route segment					Purpose			Gender	
		Inter City	Main Line	Rural	Stansted	West Anglia	Commuter	Business	Leisure	Men	Women
Cleanliness of the station	74	77	78	64	78	67	69	76	82	75	74
The upkeep/repair of the station buildings/platforms	67	72	71	59	71	60	63	70	76	66	70
The overall station environment	68	74	72	61	79	60	66	72	72	67	71
The provision of shelter facilities at the station	61	61	62	65	77	56	57	61	67	60	61
The facilities and services at the station	55	59	57	55	68	49	51	60	61	53	57
Availability of seating at the station	38	32	40	48	41	35	33	35	47	35	39
Connections with other train services	71	71	71	58	85	72	64	74	85	66	77
Your personal security whilst using the station	68	71	72	69	66	58	66	64	75	66	69

The table above from NRPS shows satisfaction with various station facility factors. In terms of cleanliness, upkeep/repair, overall station environment, station facilities and services, and provision of shelter, Inter City, Main Line and Stansted services out-perform Rural and West Anglia services. However, Rural stations are rated relatively well for provision of shelter.

For availability of seating at station, Inter City services are rated relatively poorly. This may be due to the amount of seating available relative to larger passenger numbers. For connections with other train services, Rural services are rated worst and Stansted services are rated best overall. For these service factors, commuters are the least satisfied and usually leisure travellers are the most satisfied.

Satisfaction with personal security at the station is highest on Inter City and Main Line services and lowest on West Anglia services. On this measure, Rural services score higher than Stansted services. Commuters are slightly more satisfied than business users but leisure travellers have a much higher satisfaction level. For all these station facilities, women are more satisfied than men.

Perceptions of stations in the qualitative research are understandably mixed and dependent on individual passengers' expectations. However, most do have practical expectations of necessary facilities that are relative to station size. It is generally recognised that stations are a means to an end rather than being a destination in their own right and most passengers are prepared to evaluate them in this context. As such, it is relatively easy to identify a basic hierarchy that is felt to apply to stations. This relates to factors such as journey purpose and length of visit. The key requirements in this respect are the provision of shelter and the need for information, toilets and perhaps somewhere to buy a newspaper, a coffee or other refreshments. Other facilities felt to be welcome additions but not essential include Wi-Fi and cashpoints. The need and importance attached to these extras is linked to station size.

"All you want is for stations to be comfortable to wait at and have basic facilities such as a drink and snack kiosk and toilets" [London, Main Line]

"You don't exactly go to a train station to socialise so I don't expect an awful lot, you know, you just want to be able to grab a coffee and a newspaper" [Ipswich, Main Line]

Specifics

Liverpool Street is felt to exceed passengers' expectations of a railway station and is widely agreed to have been transformed by the recent redevelopment work. Passengers feel it is impressive even in comparison with other major London terminal stations. Liverpool Street is seen as a gateway to London with obvious importance and status and is regarded as the obvious flagship station for the AGA network.

In terms of facilities, Liverpool Street is considered to be excellent. It is thought to have an impressive range of retail outlets comprising everything a rail passenger and casual shopper might wish for. Liverpool Street is even occasionally considered to feel more like a shopping centre or social hub than a railway station. It is felt to have an exciting atmosphere and 'buzz' about it. The high volume of people using the station tends to make people feel safe, although the sheer size of the station and the crowds can be daunting for some, particularly those travelling at peak times.

"It's better than Paddington in terms of the choice of shops and bars and cafes and restaurants. You could go for a night out in Liverpool Street station!" [London, Inter City]

There is some evidence from the research to suggest that additional investment in larger stations is required across the network at a targeted and station specific level.

Norwich station is generally felt to have good facilities but the fact that some of these close before the last train frustrates some users. In spite of positive comments made in relation to the architecture of the building there is a general feeling that the station is always cold, which makes it feel inhospitable. The location of the toilets beyond the barriers is raised as a disadvantage by a minority.

"There's more to do at Norwich station but I don't think that the facilities that are available are open long enough to match the train times" [Norwich, Inter City]

Ipswich station is felt to be in need of some attention. It is often considered to be tired and unwelcoming with facilities that are inadequate given the volume of passengers using the station. During the focus groups the lack of seating was a particular issue, as was the inconvenient location of one of the catering facilities on one of the platforms.

Cambridge is felt to be typical of other larger stations on the network. The facilities at this station have recently been improved and it is seen as fit for purpose and meeting the needs of users. The recent addition of new platforms is felt to be welcome and makes the station easier for passengers to use.

"I haven't got any issues with Cambridge station; it's got toilets, ATMs and somewhere to get a snack" [Cambridge, West Anglia]

Despite regeneration associated with the Olympics and the local area, Stratford is felt to have relatively poor facilities. The platforms are criticized as exposed and lacking shelter from bad weather. Some express disappointment at the limited retail and catering facilities, most of which are located outside the station.

Passenger expectations of smaller stations are broadly in proportion with station size. They are generally realistic about the level of facilities available at stations such as Yarmouth, Lowestoft, Felixstowe and Sudbury. It is understood and accepted by the majority that the emphasis at such stations will be on functionality. The provision of toilets and basic refreshment facilities is welcomed but not always expected. Some are frustrated that toilets, where available, are often locked. Some of these stations are felt to be in need of updating. There is some desire for Wi-Fi to be provided, especially in areas where there is a lack of other hotspots in the vicinity.

"Sometimes you are at a station and need to go to the toilet and the staff don't even know where the keys are" [London, Main Line]

Staff

(Per cent satisfied)	Overall	Route segment					Purpose			Gender	
		Inter City	Main Line	Rural	Stansted	West Anglia	Commuter	Business	Leisure	Men	Women
The attitudes and helpfulness of station staff	74	80	73	86	73	70	68	80	80	68	77
The availability of staff at the station	61	65	61	61	71	57	58	67	62	57	64
The helpfulness and attitude of staff on train	51	73	39	80	51	34	38	53	58	47	45
The availability of staff on the train	30	51	20	68	39	19	19	36	35	24	27
How request to station staff was handled	86	92	88	*	*	78	70	*	92	90	88

The above table from NRPS shows satisfaction with staff availability and helpfulness. Satisfaction with how a request to station staff is handled is very high at 86 per cent. It is higher on Inter City and Main Line services but much lower on West Anglia services. Leisure travellers are much more satisfied than commuters.

Station staff score higher than on train staff for both availability and helpfulness. Overall, 61 per cent are satisfied with the availability of station staff but only 30 per cent are satisfied with availability of on train staff. However it is important to remember, as noted previously, that many AGA trains are Driver Only Operated (DOO). Satisfaction with availability of station staff is highest on Stansted and Inter City Services and lowest on the West Anglia route.

Satisfaction with availability of on train staff is highest on Inter City and Rural services where conductors are present and lowest on Main Line and West Anglia services, which are mainly DOO. Rural and Inter City score highest on satisfaction with helpfulness of station staff and West Anglia, Main Line and Stansted are rated the worst.

Satisfaction with helpfulness of on train staff is highest on Inter City and Rural services and lowest on West Anglia, Main Line and Stansted services. Commuters are less satisfied than business or leisure travellers with the availability and helpfulness of staff both on stations and trains. Women have a higher level of satisfaction with availability of staff on trains and at stations and helpfulness of station staff but slightly less for the helpfulness of on train staff.

The qualitative research identified overwhelming support and positive attitudes towards station staff. It is widely recognised that they often have a difficult job to do and a wide range of responsibilities to fulfil. Their primary role is perceived to be related to selling tickets and providing advice about different types of ticket to passengers. This is considered to be particularly important by less frequent users and those making unfamiliar journeys, or when a journey requires a complex route or ticket for any reason.

Staff are also required to resolve ticket problems, help with TVMs and to provide information. This is especially important at gated stations or during disruption. The increasing use of alternative information channels among rail users is not felt to be an acceptable substitute for these critical staff functions.

A visible staff presence is also seen as vital for promoting feelings of passenger safety and security. Just seeing someone provides the reassurance that some users need, especially late at night. A further important side to the security role is that it is felt to discourage anti-social behaviour and prevents trespass. Despatching trains is also recognised as a key function of station staff.

"You always need somebody. There's nothing better than getting on the platform and seeing someone you can ask rather than using your mobile to text or look online"
[London, West Anglia]

Staff on the Stansted route are felt to be particularly valuable due to an expectation that many passengers are likely to be infrequent users and more likely to need help or advice.

"People catching the Stansted Express are often going on holiday or coming back so you need staff there to help people who are not Londoners, as it were" [London, Stansted]

Positive experiences
Passengers generally feel that staff deliver against expectations of customer service and knowledge of the network. Most are thought to be helpful when needed. Indeed it was occasionally claimed that some train managers can be too friendly and keen to engage in conversation, especially on morning peak services. Experiences with staff at Liverpool Street are positive. They are felt to have good knowledge and helpful attitudes towards passengers. In fact, there are references to the fact that the station can occasionally feel overstaffed due to high numbers of staff often observed at the gates. One or two passengers also report positive experiences at Stratford where staff have been proactive and helpful when passengers require assistance.

"I've found they have always been very helpful. They can give you up to date, current information" [London, Inter City]

"If you have a query, say if you need to know what platform to be on, you can ask a member of staff and they usually know, don't they?" [Ipswich, Main Line]

Negative experiences
Negative experiences of staff are more difficult to identify. In the isolated examples outlined below, members of staff are not held accountable for the first two and the second two are not considered to be important transgressions.

It is felt that some station staff do not help out enough during unplanned disruption to services. On such occasions they are occasionally felt to be less visible rather than being proactive. However, passengers tend to give them the benefit of the doubt and think this might be as a result of them not having adequate information about what is happening.

There is some feeling that both station and on train staff are often not visible enough to provide sufficient reassurance for passengers. This is felt to be a particular issue when there is a need to deal with a disruptive passenger or to resolve conflicts to do with seat reservations and failure to observe the rules of the quiet carriage. The NRPS data indicate that satisfaction with the level of helpfulness of staff is lower among women than men so this may be a particularly important issue for women. The need for reassurance is also heightened after dark and for late night services. Although it is acknowledged that the use of CCTV may help on these occasions, it is not seen as a substitute for an adequate staff presence.

At Norwich there is a more mixed view towards staff. Less frequent users claim to have found them helpful; regular users are slightly less positive and have the impression that they are jaded and ‘battle weary’. One or two passengers claim to have noticed that staff are often talking among themselves at Colchester and at Tottenham Hale but the value of their role is not in doubt.

“It wouldn’t be just about staff presence; it would be about knowing that their role is to intervene and keep you safe” [Cambridge, Non/Lapsed user]

“Somebody sitting in an office can’t help me sitting on a train” [Cambridge, Non/Lapsed user]

“I’ve never seen staff on the train” [Cambridge, Non/Lapsed user]

“I think that some of the staff at Tottenham Hale are less professional, I don’t know whether they get away with it because it’s a smaller station maybe but that’s what I think”
[London, Stansted]

“People don’t always sit where they should and I don’t think that’s enforced enough”
[Norwich, Non/Lapsed user]

Trains

(Per cent satisfied)	Overall	Route segment					Purpose			Gender	
		Inter City	Main Line	Rural	Stansted	West Anglia	Commuter	Business	Leisure	Men	Women
Your personal security whilst on board train	72	86	69	76	91	68	67	74	81	70	74
The cleanliness of the inside of train	64	69	61	72	87	63	56	72	72	61	66
The cleanliness of the outside of train	62	57	62	60	89	61	58	69	65	58	66
The toilet facilities on train	34	36	27	29	78	42	29	34	50	31	39
The ease of being able to get on and off the train	78	69	77	83	97	82	75	79	83	76	79
The space for luggage on train	48	54	44	60	47	50	41	54	54	44	50
Upkeep and repair of the train	57	51	53	64	90	58	51	54	68	51	61

The above table from NRPS shows satisfaction with a range of train service factors. The ease of getting on and off has the highest level of satisfaction at 78 per cent. This is particularly high for Stansted services but lowest for Inter City services. Satisfaction with personal security on board the train is 72 per cent overall. Inter City and Stansted services score highest. West Anglia and Main Line services are lowest. Leisure travellers are most satisfied, commuters least.

Satisfaction with cleanliness is similar overall for inside and outside the train at 64 per cent and 62 per cent respectively, again with Stansted services rated most highly. Commuters rate cleanliness lowest and business passengers rate it most highly.

Only 57 per cent overall are satisfied with the upkeep and repair of the train. This is highest for Stansted at 90 per cent, followed by 64 per cent for Rural services. Other routes are rated below 60 per cent, with lowest scores for Inter City and Main Line services. Commuters have the lowest satisfaction level and leisure travellers are most satisfied.

On train toilet facilities is one of the worst rated service factors overall. Only 34 per cent are satisfied. Stansted services score highest and Main Line is lowest, followed closely by Rural services. Again commuters are least satisfied. For all these service factors, women are more satisfied than men.

From the focus groups, attitudes to the rolling stock used across the network are generally negative. Although passengers acknowledge that the fleet is mixed and experiences will therefore vary by route or journey, expectations tend to be low. There is a perception that the trains used by AGA are other TOCs' cast-offs, which leads some to conclude that they are getting a bad deal compared to other franchises with more modern rolling stock. Some users indicate that the age and quality of some of the rolling stock can cause trust issues.

"We can't trust them because they can't trust themselves with the age of the rolling stock" [Norwich, Rural]

"If you go to other places they're getting more modern trains – the Abellio ones all seem pretty ancient to me. It would be good to see something a bit more upmarket" [Cambridge, Vision impaired]

"I was on South West Trains last week, it's so much better and cleaner and more modern" [Norwich, Rural]

Many find the rolling stock to be old and tired, particularly on secondary routes where trains lack what are considered to be basic facilities such as power sockets, Wi-Fi, air conditioning, adequate space for buggies and even basic catering facilities such as a trolley service. Many trains are also felt to be dirty and in poor condition with seats that need to be repaired or replaced. On a positive note, the seats on some of the older trains are viewed as larger and more comfortable than on some of the newer stock.

"You can go to McDonald's and buy a 99p hamburger and get free Wi-Fi and it costs you nothing – you pay a hell of a lot of money to go on the train – I want free, dependable Wi-Fi" [Norwich, Rural]

"I've never seen a socket next to my seat for charging your phone, that wouldn't be a bad idea" [Norwich, Inter City]

"Until I moved to Suffolk, I'd never seen a train where you open the door yourself before" [Ipswich, Rural]

"You don't use the [on train] *toilets unless you are absolutely desperate"* [Norwich, Rural]

Route specifics

On Inter City and Main Line routes, better and newer trains are expected. This is felt to be particularly important for longer journeys and especially among those making journeys for business purposes. The rolling stock is felt to compare poorly with other TOCs', especially Virgin Trains and East Coast, although some recognise that this is not a like-for-like comparison. The planned upgrade or refurbishment of some of the older stock should help meet passenger needs but it is clear that passengers expect a better quality of on train experience for the future. The Stansted Express trains are recognised as being newer than the majority of the AGA fleet and therefore tend to be more positively regarded among users of this route; this is reflected in the higher NRPS scores. The most natural point of comparison for these trains however is other airport services such as the Heathrow Express and Gatwick Express and Stansted Express trains are felt to compare favourably. However, expectations on this route are also higher than for other parts of the network on the basis of what are viewed as the premium fares.

Seating

(Per cent satisfied)	Overall	Route segment					Purpose			Gender	
		Inter City	Main Line	Rural	Stansted	West Anglia	Commuter	Business	Leisure	Men	Women
Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand	65	71	62	72	70	67	54	73	78	60	69
The comfort of the seating area on train	63	67	57	69	93	67	55	68	73	56	68

The above table from NRPS shows the satisfaction with seating comfort and there being sufficient room to sit or stand. The overall level of satisfaction for these is similar at 65 per cent and 63 per cent respectively. It is notable that ability to get a seat is the second most important priority for improvement from the Priorities for Improvement research. For both measures, commuters and men are less satisfied than business or leisure travellers and women.

Issues identified in the qualitative research in relation to seating tend to be specific to the route or passenger type rather than across the whole franchise. The (in)ability to get a seat is a particular problem for London commuters, especially on Inter City and Main Line services. Many report that their main problem is getting a seat on the return journey from London and many have to stand for a significant part of their journey. The prospect of getting a later train is not attractive, primarily because of the possibility that they might not be able to get a seat on the next train anyway. The Stansted route is felt to be better in this respect as users claim it is always possible to get a seat.

"After a rubbish day at work you need to be able to get a seat, without thinking about how expensive the ticket was, you need to be able to be sat before Colchester" [Norwich, Inter City]

There are understandably fewer problems experienced by leisure users, who tend to make off-peak journeys when the trains are less busy. The only minor concern is that the lack of legroom causes inconvenience and discomfort on some trains.

"Stansted Express trains are 100 times better. They have seats in the doorways so there's always somewhere to sit, even if it's where the bags should go" [London, Inter City]

Standing

Most rail passengers object strongly to standing on trains as the common expectation is that having a valid ticket entitles them to a seat. Those who object most strongly are users who pay the highest fares and travel most frequently. In this research, London commuters express the highest levels of dissatisfaction about needing to stand since this is perceived to exacerbate the negative experiences of using the AGA franchise among those who feel they get the worst deal. Consequently, in certain circumstances, a small minority say they are prepared to risk travelling in a First Class compartment with a Standard ticket and one reluctantly pays a premium for a First Class season ticket to avoid the possibility of needing to stand.

A minority say they are prepared to tolerate standing but only for the short journeys of around 20 minutes or less and only if this is an occasional occurrence. The idea of a lower price ticket that only permits standing was raised spontaneously in two of the focus groups and suggested by the moderator in some of the other sessions. There is no real interest in the concept, which many find difficult to take seriously seeing it as impractical and impossible for the TOC to enforce.

The possibility of having to stand is a major disincentive to making journeys by rail for non-users. In addition to the obvious issues in relation to comfort, there is also a concern that standing on a train travelling at high speed compromises the safety of passengers.

"If you're going to have to stand why not have a standing section which is cheaper just like a third class" [Cambridge, West Anglia]

"I think if I don't get a seat I'd be thinking 'I've paid extra for this, I want a seat'. Yes, there's an expectation there definitely" [London, Stansted]

Service provision

(Per cent satisfied)	Overall	Route segment					Purpose			Gender	
		Inter City	Main Line	Rural	Stansted	West Anglia	Commuter	Business	Leisure	Men	Women
Punctuality/reliability (i.e. the train arriving/departing on time)	77	76	76	70	91	79	69	83	89	73	81

The table above from NRPS shows that 77 per cent overall are satisfied with punctuality/-reliability. This is one of the highest scoring service factors. However it is worth noting that from the Priorities for Improvement research, arriving on time is the fourth most important area for improvement. A related factor, less frequent major unplanned disruptions, is the fifth most important area of improvement and fewer train cancellations is seventh. Although overall satisfaction with reliability looks positive, there is other evidence to suggest that reliability is an issue, particularly for commuters. Satisfaction is lower on Rural services in particular, and for men.

In the focus groups, problems associated with poor service reliability were highlighted as an ongoing cause of dissatisfaction for many passengers, especially most frequent users. This is a particular problem for commuters whose journeys are likely to be time critical, especially in the morning peak and for some it is a source of almost daily frustration. Some commuters feel the franchise has a poor record of services often not running on time, which causes considerable disruption to daily routines.

Leisure users tend to be either less sensitive to reliability issues or more tolerant of them. This is mainly because they are not likely to be under the same time pressures as commuters and their rail usage patterns mean that disruption is experienced less frequently. There is however an important exception to this, which is a widespread awareness of planned engineering works on the network that cause major disruption at weekends and seem never-ending to some. It is occasionally recognised that these delays are caused by Network Rail rather than AGA, but such disruption can still exacerbate negativity among commuters even those making few rail journeys at the weekend.

Frequency and journey time

(Per cent satisfied)	Overall	Route segment					Purpose			Gender	
		Inter City	Main Line	Rural	Stansted	West Anglia	Commuter	Business	Leisure	Men	Women
The frequency of the trains on that route	74	84	73	55	96	73	70	78	84	73	78
The length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed)	81	78	81	77	86	82	75	84	89	78	84

The table above from NRPS shows satisfaction with service frequency and journey time. Overall 74 per cent are satisfied with frequency and 81 per cent are satisfied with journey time. These are two of the highest rated service factors although from the Priorities for Improvement research, frequency is the third and journey time the tenth most important improvement area. Satisfaction with frequency is highest on Inter City and Stansted services and lowest on Rural services, where it drops considerably. Satisfaction with journey time is highest on Stansted followed by Inter City, and lowest on Rural. For both measures, commuters are least satisfied with frequency. Women are more satisfied than men.

In the qualitative research, the frequency of trains was generally felt to range from very good to acceptable on Inter City, Stansted and Main Line routes which is almost regarded as a 'turn up and go' service during peak periods. A notable exception is the small minority who express surprise that there is only one service per hour from Braintree to London even at peak times.

This broad satisfaction with service frequency is only occasionally offset by a perception that the journey time on certain routes can feel longer than journeys of a similar length on other franchises. There is a belief that the AGA journey is likely to involve more stops.

"The perception is the journey can take forever because there are lots of little stations but the reality is that you get there when you were expecting to" [London, Main Line]

Services on Sundays on the other hand are felt to be very infrequent on certain routes but this tends to be understood, and tolerated even, when the challenge of engineering works is taken into account. Although a small minority suggest that more frequent services would be welcome, in our research this is not regarded as a particularly important need.

One area where improvement is felt to be required is for trains to run later from London. Passengers in Norwich mention that they would make use of this facility in order to be able to see a show in London without the need to stay overnight. It is recognised that these later services would probably be limited to Friday or Saturday evenings and this is felt to be acceptable. This is felt to be especially important by one or two who highlighted AGA marketing special rail fare packages to London including theatre performances. Later trains are also considered to be necessary to other destinations on the network such as Colchester and Stansted Airport. Many passengers are aware of the plans for some London Underground lines to run 24 hours and this is expected to strengthen the demand for AGA to provide later last-trains from London.

Dealing with delays

		Route segment					Purpose			Gender	
(Per cent satisfied)	**Overall**	**Inter City**	**Main Line**	**Rural**	**Stansted**	**West Anglia**	**Commuter**	**Business**	**Leisure**	**Men**	**Women**
How well train company dealt with delays	35	47	30	*	*	43	25	*	50	29	41

The table above from NRPS shows that only 35 per cent are satisfied overall with how AGA handles delays. Inter City and West Anglia services score most highly, although still under 50 per cent. The lowest rating is for Main Line services. Commuters and men have lower levels of satisfaction than leisure travellers and women.

Attitudes among passengers to the level of customer service provision by AGA are limited by a common lack of understanding of what this means in the context of a rail service. The general view is that passengers experience customer service infrequently and this tends not to be interpreted beyond interactions with staff. As previously explained, attitudes towards staff are generally positive so the perception is that the level of customer service provided by AGA tends to be good.

Few have any other experiences of anything that could constitute customer service. There are isolated examples of passengers making ‘Delay Repay’ claims, which compensate those who have experienced significant delays to services. Those who have made such claims found the process to be efficient although there is some dissatisfaction that vouchers issued cannot be used online, which limits access to discounted (Advance) tickets.

“They [‘Delay Repay’ vouchers] *are useless because you can’t use them on the cheap tickets”* [Norwich, Rural]

Franchise process

Spontaneous awareness

In the focus groups, passengers were asked what they knew about the franchising process. Subsequently they were given an A4 show card which explained this process (see Appendix). At a spontaneous level, almost all passengers have a vague or latent understanding of what the process involves. Some admit to having no awareness that a franchising process applies within the industry and a few claim to be aware of just some details. None have a clear idea of how this knowledge has been acquired but assume that it will have come from news coverage. This includes a few who recalled hearing details of Abellio being awarded the Greater Anglia franchise through local news channels. One or two referred to issues over the West Coast Main Line franchising process which became a high profile national news story.

Although passengers recognise this as being an issue of fundamental importance to them, the majority seem detached from the subject, perhaps because of a belief that that the process is largely invisible and conducted behind the scenes. A couple of passengers saw the process as wasteful and that it would be better for the industry to return to nationalisation. Importantly, consumer indifference appears to be explained by the assumption that the process has minimal impact on passengers, that one franchisee is much like any other and that there is no difference in service provision between one franchisee and another. This is often expressed in terms of rolling stock; the trains themselves are known to stay the same and the only thing to change is the livery. This has reinforced the perception that changes are cosmetic rather than meaningful from a passenger perspective.

It is assumed that franchising decisions are based on cost factors that will be beneficial to the government rather than service delivery issues that will improve the experience for passengers.

“All we care about at the end of the day is whether you can get from A to B and what is it going to cost us” [Cambridge, West Anglia]

"Whenever the franchise changes, to me they just change the name on the side of the train and the uniforms but not a lot else changes" [Ipswich, Rural]

Attitudes

On exposure to the details provided, many passengers feel that they should be involved in the process and be consulted, particularly the most regular users. Following earlier discussions in the focus groups regarding attitudes to Abellio Greater Anglia, passengers felt that their input to the franchising process could be used as a foundation for building relationships between them and the TOC. Although there is minimal claimed interest in the specifics of the process, understanding the details tends to reinforce the desire for it to be transparent. Some, mainly regular users, express an interest in online 'manifestos' from competing bidders that summarise the most relevant issues and benefits for passengers using the franchise. A sharper focus on passenger needs would help allay concerns that the government will focus on cost alone and award the contract to the lowest bidder.

It is uncertain whether this claimed interest in a higher degree of involvement, would overcome passengers' general apathy and reluctance to engage with the subject matter in practice. It was suggested that more effective promotion of the process via online channels, an app or leaflets and posters at stations and on trains could help engage passengers. Even those who do not want to be more heavily involved acknowledge the importance of the franchising process and feel that the decision and the reasons for it should be published and explained.

"We've had such a bad deal in East Anglia I think we have accepted it" [Norwich, Rural]

There are mixed views regarding the optimal length of the franchise. Some think the suggested period of seven to 10 years is too short as it will not be long enough for a TOC to get a return on any investment made in the franchise. Others are concerned that this will be too long in the event of the TOC not performing well. Some also question what measures are in place to remove a franchisee that fails to deliver against the commitments made in its bid or to retain one that is felt to be providing a good service for passengers.

Despite detailed discussion of the franchising process, passengers tend to be left with a feeling that while they would welcome greater involvement as end-users, they also expect that any input from them would have minimal influence over the decision-making process.

"They are on a hiding to nothing really, a franchise holder, because they are reliant on Network Rail to keep the track up to date and if the Government is specifying the trains then I'm not sure what the franchise holder can do" [Norwich, Inter City]

"It's difficult for them to commit to a long term investment when they are only going to be there for seven years, isn't it?" [Ipswich, Main Line]

"A company could have the franchise for a long time when they aren't delivering and what would stop somebody who is delivering a good service getting ousted after four years?" [London, Main Line]

“If you haven’t got long term ownership you’re not going to go spending a fortune on stuff to leave it for somebody else” [Cambridge, Vision impaired]

Abellio branding/relationship

Awareness of the Abellio brand name was quite strong across the passengers we spoke to in the research. This is not always the case with other TOCs, even among regular users. We hypothesise that this is likely to be due in part to the fact that platform and train announcements now tend to refer to Abellio Greater Anglia rather than just Greater Anglia. There is also evidence of occasional exposure to recent AGA advertising campaigns, although passengers were not able to recall specific content or communication details when probed.

In spite of this, the Abellio brand itself is unfamiliar to the majority. Some passengers associate the brand with buses, especially in the London area. One had heard that Abellio had just been successful with their bid to run the ScotRail franchise. Assumptions regarding the brand’s provenance are equally unclear. The majority think that the name sounds Italian and only a small number of users know that Abellio is a Dutch company. When this was revealed during the focus groups, the majority had positive spontaneous associations with public transport services in the Netherlands, which are perceived to be reliable and efficient. It is therefore hoped that some of these Dutch values will be translated by Abellio into the Greater Anglia franchise. Most feel that there is minimal evidence to suggest that this has been the case to date.

When probed further on the brand issue, there is no evidence of any strong positive or negative feelings towards the brand. In spite of this neutrality, Abellio is often felt to compare favourably with other brands in this sector. With the exception of Virgin Trains, few are able to accurately recall the names of other rail franchisees or correctly associate them with relevant networks. However, there are indications that Abellio Greater Anglia may have failed to capitalise on nascent signs of brand strengths among passengers using AGA services. The majority of users feel somewhat distanced from the brand and few claim to feel any sense of relationship between them as passengers and AGA as the service provider. There is also minimal evidence of passengers wanting to engage with the brand via social media, although this is typical of the industry and is likely to be more of a reflection of attitudes towards these channels rather than a manifestation of attitudes to the brand.

“I don’t distrust them and I don’t trust them. I don’t know anything about them” [Norwich, Lapsed/Non-user]

“To me trust is something you have to earn, people don’t give it to you, so for me Abellio have made a really good start and good luck to them but ask me about trust in five years’ time when they’re a proven entity” [Norwich, Inter City]

“The trains in Holland run quite efficiently and I can remember them saying they were going to bring the same model here but it didn’t really happen” [Ipswich, Main Line]

"Abellio are like the water company because you've got no choice. You have to be with Anglian Water, you pay them the money but you don't really have a relationship with them"
[Ipswich, Rural]

Obituary
As part of the focus groups, passengers were asked to complete a written exercise intended to provide an additional layer of understanding to their views about AGA services. This was in the form of writing an imaginary obituary notice for the current service provider in order to help identify the elements that would be missed in the event of another franchisee taking over (see below):

Obituary

Imagine that you are writing an obituary to appear in the newspaper. Imagine that the current Abellio Greater Anglia service has died, and you are writing an obituary about it.

- What was it like?
- What will be missed about it – What are the good things about the services provided by Abellio Greater Anglia train services? and which you want the future train company to continue to deliver and build on
- What will not be missed - What are the bad things about the services provided by Abellio Greater Anglia? What needs to be improved? What will not be missed?

Analysis of this exercise produces a diverse list of things that passengers would not miss. These current negative elements are dominated by service (un)reliability, rolling stock and (lack of) facilities. The themes most commonly identified are summarised in the illustration below:

There is a reasonable match between things that will not be missed and the service aspects that score highest as priorities for improvement, outlined and discussed in Section 3. The ability to get a seat on the train, train frequency, reliability and value for money are viewed as particularly important, although the latter was not a strong theme in the obituary exercise.
Some positives also emerge from this exercise, although mainly from less frequent users. These are the attributes that leisure users primarily would miss or would be concerned about losing under an alternative franchise arrangement.

The contrast between the positive and negatives identified in this exercise highlights the variation in the journey experiences of different passengers.

Aspirations
In order to enhance understanding of passengers' aspirations for a new franchise, passengers were asked to complete another written exercise in the form of a 'birth announcement' (see below). This highlighted what users feel should be the key features of a new franchise compared to the existing one.

Birth Announcement

Now imagine that you are writing a birth announcement to mark the arrival of a new rail franchise for the Greater Anglia area. This is your ideal train service and has everything you want/need – including innovation

What would it be it like? What are its characteristics/features? COVERING ANYTHING YOU THINK IS IMPORTANT

What would it be like?

What are its characteristics/features? Summarise key features required. What innovation would you like to see – something new and different?

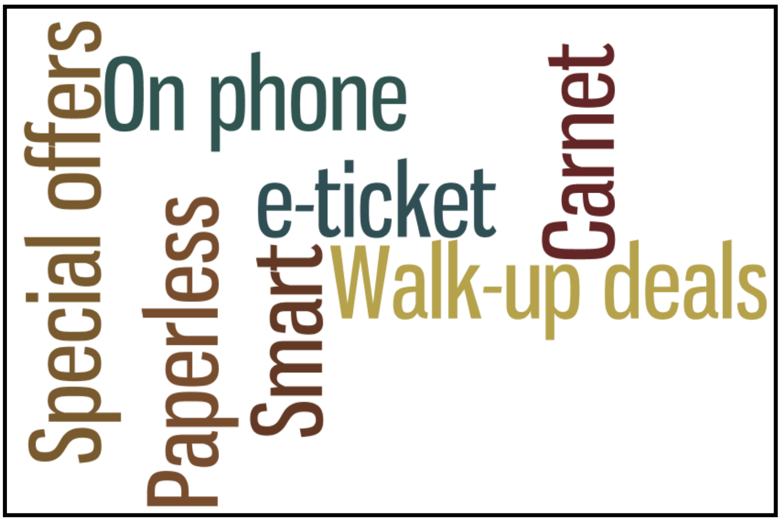
This exercise helped crystallise current areas of passenger dissatisfaction by producing a wish list for the future franchise. The key themes to emerge are focused on train and station related features are illustrated in the diagrams below:

Trains

Stations

The exercise also highlights themes that demonstrate a genuine interest in a TOC making a noticeable impact on the franchise for passengers. These fall into the broad categories of ticketing and relationships and can be summarised as follows:

Ticketing



Relationship

Innovation
Some spontaneous suggestions for innovations that passengers would like to see under a new franchise arrangement were made in the first focus groups. For the subsequent sessions the issue of innovation was raised by the moderator and added to the 'birth announcement' written exercise. Although this output covered a wide range of issues, the suggestions received fall into three broad categories: fundamental, added value and unlikely.

Fundamentals
This is an interesting group as it contains things that could be regarded as hygiene factors rather than innovations from a passenger perspective. These are also features that will make a difference to passengers' overall satisfaction with the journey experience. Most frequently requested in this category are:

- power sockets on trains
- Wi-Fi on trains and at stations
- better signal for mobile phones
- better lighting on trains and at stations
- blinds for train windows.

Added value

This group contains things that are expected to differentiate the TOC from other service providers and help establish a competitive advantage. Importantly, these are also factors that could be instrumental in helping the TOC to establish and build relationships with passengers:

- smart/e-ticketing similar to Oyster
- lowest fare guarantee via smart ticketing
- season ticket carriage to maximise chances of getting a seat
- family carriage for leisure users
- membership or loyalty scheme, especially for Inter City and Main Line
- recognise season ticket holders with free refreshments or newspapers.

Unlikely

This group contains suggestions made by only one or two passengers or those that are unlikely to be deliverable or make a significant contribution to passengers' perceptions of the journey experience or to the service provider in reality:

- television screens (news channel) – longer routes only
- reversible seats
- massage seats
- standing carriage for a reduced fare.

Annual Report to Customers

A copy of Abellio Greater Anglia's Annual Report to Customers was handed out during the focus groups and passengers were given five minutes to skim through the report before being invited to comment on it. The findings outlined in this section of the report should therefore be regarded as 'topline' rather than considered passenger feedback.

Initial reactions

None of the passengers in the focus groups were aware that Abellio Greater Anglia publishes an Annual Report to Customers and none had seen the report before. The title of it leads passengers to think it would be a company financial report, which creates expectations that the contents will be dry and boring. The customer focus of the report tends to be overlooked leading to low levels of spontaneous interest among passengers.

There is an expectation that the report will be biased and written from the company's viewpoint and the tone is expected to be patronising. If encountered in a rail environment, rather than in a focus group, most claim they will be unlikely to pick the report up or at best would flick through the contents rather than read it from cover to cover. A possible exception to this is as a way to help pass the time on long journeys. Most feel that the report should be available on the TOC's website but there is little appetite for it in any other context. In terms of initial impact therefore, the report is not sufficiently compelling in its current format to engage passengers and would need a significantly stronger 'hook' to do so.

"I'*m not going to sit here and read it unless the train's broken down and I've got nothing else to read"* [Norwich, Rural]

"An annual report is to boast about what you do as a company; it doesn't matter if it's real or not, you talk about all the good things you do" [Cambridge, Lapsed/Non-user]

Managing Director's message

This first page tends to reinforce stereotypical perceptions of TOCs rather than creating a positive initial impact:

- poor initial impression due to balance of text and visuals
- excess text means it will be skipped or dismissed altogether
- Jamie Burles, the managing director, has only been in the job for a few weeks, creating an immediate credibility problem for some
- expected to be full of insincere platitudes
- important to show the human face of the company nevertheless
- makes the report and TOC feel more accessible
- MD claims to welcome feedback but no contact details provided creating a credibility issue.

A message from the Managing Director

It gives me great pleasure to write the introduction for our latest Annual Report to Customers, just a few weeks after joining Abellio Greater Anglia as Managing Director.

I am immensely proud to lead the team. My aim is to build on the achievements of the last two years, to further improve performance and customer service standards. In doing so, we will be looking to engage even more effectively with our customers and stakeholders, to help us meet their aspirations. I'm especially keen to embed a positive, customer-focused ethos throughout our business, including enhanced customer communication and more benefits from our alliance with Network Rail, to deliver a better service for customers and communities on a consistent basis.

With that in mind, I'm glad to update you on how we are progressing on the issues that matter to customers and stakeholders across our network.

The past year has presented its challenges, notably when train service performance was adversely affected by the Autumn storms. However, as I hope you will see from the content in this report, we have continued to invest in improvements to your services. And as we approach the end of the current short franchise in July this year, our commitment and resolve to you, our valued customers, will continue to inspire us to carry on doing all we can to deliver consistent, reliable and improving train service performance and excellent customer service.

Looking further ahead, we recently agreed a Direct Award contract with the Department for Transport (DfT) to continue operation of the Greater Anglia franchise until October 2016. After listening to your feedback and consulting with our stakeholders about the Direct Award, I am really delighted that we have been able to agree the implementation of a number of positive customer benefits that form part of the new franchise, including improvements to rolling stock, new and additional train services providing extra capacity and further investment in customer service.

The DfT intends to let the long Greater Anglia franchise from October 2016 and as the pathway towards the longer franchise is developed, we will engage and consult with stakeholders and our customers about the priorities for the future. We are also firmly committed to maintaining our pivotal role in making the case for major upgrades to East Anglia's rail network in the longer term.

I hope you will find the annual report useful and informative and I would welcome your comments and feedback.

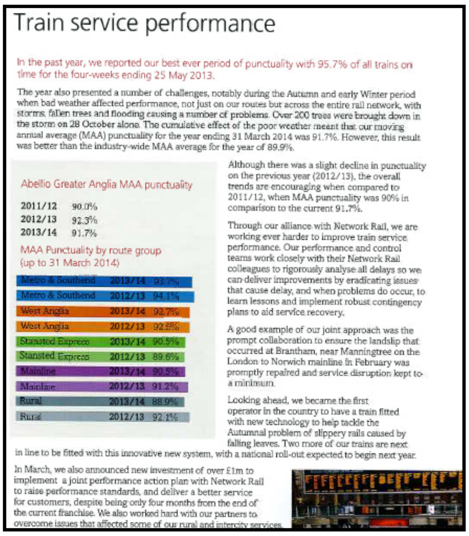
Jamie Burles
Managing Director
Abellio Greater Anglia

2 | Annual Report to Customers

Train service performance

Reactions suggest that it would be interesting to compare this data with the targets proposed in the original franchise bid:

- potentially interesting content since relevant to all
- natural inclination is towards summary graphic
- provides all the information that most would require
- text claimed to be irrelevant (likely due in part to limited time available to read the report)
- some younger passengers question legitimacy of data
- some assume the data will be manipulated to give a positive spin
- want a comparison of AGA versus other TOCs.



Train service performance

In the past year, we reported our best ever period of punctuality with 95.7% of all trains on time for the four-weeks ending 25 May 2013.

The year also presented a number of challenges, notably during the Autumn and early Winter period when bad weather affected performance, not just on our routes but across the entire rail network, with storms, fallen trees and flooding causing a number of problems. Over 200 trees were brought down in the storm on 28 October alone. The cumulative effect of the poor weather meant that our moving annual average (MAA) punctuality for the year ending 31 March 2014 was 91.7%. However, this result was better than the industry-wide MAA average for the year of 89.9%.

Abellio Greater Anglia MAA punctuality

2011/12	90.0%
2012/13	92.3%
2013/14	91.7%

MAA Punctuality by route group (up to 31 March 2014)

Metro & Southend	2013/14	93.7%
Metro & Southend	2012/13	94.1%
West Anglia	2013/14	92.7%
West Anglia	2012/13	92.6%
Stansted Express	2013/14	90.5%
Stansted Express	2012/13	89.6%
Mainline	2013/14	90.5%
Mainline	2012/13	91.2%
Rural	2013/14	88.9%
Rural	2012/13	92.1%

Although there was a slight decline in punctuality on the previous year (2012/13), the overall trends are encouraging when compared to 2011/12, when MAA punctuality was 90% in comparison to the current 91.7%.

Through our alliance with Network Rail, we are working ever harder to improve train service performance. Our performance and control teams work closely with their Network Rail colleagues to rigorously analyse all delays so we can deliver improvements by eradicating issues that cause delay, and when problems do occur, to learn lessons and implement robust contingency plans to aid service recovery.

A good example of our joint approach was the prompt collaboration to ensure the landslip that occurred at Brantham, near Manningtree on the London to Norwich mainline in February was promptly repaired and service disruption kept to a minimum.

Looking ahead, we became the first operator in the country to have a train fitted with new technology to help tackle the Autumnal problem of slippery rails caused by falling leaves. Two more of our trains are next in line to be fitted with this innovative new system, with a national roll-out expected to begin next year.

In March, we also announced new investment of over £1m to implement a joint performance action plan with Network Rail to raise performance standards, and deliver a better service for customers, despite being only four months from the end of the current franchise. We also worked hard with our partners to overcome issues that affected some of our rural and intercity services

Customer service

The honesty of showing the decline in Autumn satisfaction figures is appreciated among passengers who approve of this level of transparency.

- expect this section to be people-focused since it is about customer service
- readers gravitate towards visuals rather than text
- attention almost always dominated by NRPS data
- need to show source more clearly and explain it
- this will enhance credibility of the data source
- non-users find copy more informative and interesting.

Customer service

We have continued to work hard to raise customer service standards. Overall satisfaction amongst Abellio Greater Anglia's customers in the Autumn 2013 National Passenger Survey (NPS) was 80%, compared to 77% in the Spring 2013 survey.

In the Autumn 2013 survey, there was a decline in customer satisfaction across the rail industry compared to the equivalent Autumn 2012 survey, with bad weather a contributing factor.

However, the improvement we saw in the overall customer satisfaction for our Intercity route, with 91% of customers satisfied, is particularly encouraging and reflects some of the continuing efforts being made to further improve services.

We are working closely with our Customer Panel members who provide valuable input and feedback on issues such as timetables and service provision to better understand customers' needs and develop strategies for improvement.

NPS passenger satisfaction

Spring 2012	73%
Autumn 2012	83%
Spring 2013	77%
Autumn 2013	80%

Customer service training event.

Our comprehensive training programme for managers and customer service staff is continuing, following its success in improving customer service on the network. More than two-thirds of our colleagues completed the tailor-made service training programme during 2013, which is being extended further in 2014.

The December 2013 timetable featured some notable improvements for passengers at Manea (on the Ipswich to Peterborough line) and Sawbridgeworth, responding to customer and stakeholder aspirations.

A record 653,000 passengers travelled on our East Suffolk Line train services last year, an increase of 11.5% compared to 2012 and double the num-

Trains

Some are interested in this, having discussed the quality of the AGA rolling stock in the focus groups rather than because they have any interest in reading about trains per se.

- reasonable level of interest in the information on trains
- some dissatisfaction with current rolling stock
- this speaks to an area of current concern
- many interested in interior of proposed new train
- rows of 3+2 seating look narrow and uncomfortable
- would be cleaner to devote whole page to trains
- start the 'stations' section on next page.

Trains

Further progress has been made in improving the condition of our train fleet. As part of their regular planned maintenance some of our trains including the Mark III Intercity coaches are being repainted, as a precursor to more substantial improvements to the customer environment as part of our new contract to October 2016.

Our electric multiple unit (EMU) trains based at Ilford Depot are being improved with the help of a new cleaning product which is restoring the trains' exterior paintwork. The new product is applied by hand and strips away any build-up of contamination such as embedded brake dust which affects the bodyside.

In partnership with Eversholt Rail and Wabtec, one of our Class 321 trains operating services to Braintree, Chelmsford, Clacton, Colchester, Harwich, Ipswich and Southend has undergone a high-specification refurbishment and upgrade and is running in normal service on the Abellio Greater Anglia network for a year. During this period, we are seeking passenger views on the many new features, which showcase how the trains could be upgraded, to help shape plans for future rolling stock enhancements on our network.

New seating on a Class 321 train.

A similar initiative is also underway with Angel Trains to operate a "pilot" refurbished Class 317 train, which will be used to gain customer feedback and help prioritise possible future improvements to trains on the West Anglia routes between Ely, Cambridge, Bishops Stortford, Harlow, Hertford East, Enfield, Chingford and London.

An Intercity train in Abellio Greater Anglia colours.

The £3 million refurbishment and upgrade of our fleet of two carriage Class 156 trains, which are used mainly on services in Norfolk and Suffolk, is now complete.

Stations

Stations have continued to be the focus of an extensive programme of customer-focused upgrades across our region. Major station improvement schemes are underway and progressing well at three of our busiest stations - Bishop's Stortford, Cambridge and Chelmsford.

At Cambridge a £4.25m improvement will upgrade and renew the existing ticket hall, which will double in size and feature an open plan counter service, additional ticket vending machines and improvements to the customer information screens. New toilets are being built and other customer facilities enhanced. We are also working closely with Network Rail and CB1 developer Brookgate, to ensure that the proposals fit well with those for station square and the adjoining hotel and CyclePoint with capacity for 3,000 bikes.

Stations

This is felt to be legitimate content to include in the report but is bound to polarise opinions and levels of passenger interest on the basis of its perceived relevance.

- high level of claimed theoretical interest
- related to current satisfaction with station performance
- encouraging to read about upgrades and improvements
- evidence of lower enthusiasm for this in some locations
- less interested in news from other parts of the network
- probably due to perceived greater need at passengers' stations.

At Bishop's Stortford, work is continuing on the £1.8m redevelopment of the rail station, as part of the National Stations Improvement Programme (NSIP). This scheme will provide an open plan booking hall area, a new ticket office and better facilities for buying tickets, with more automatic ticket machines, upgraded waiting room facilities, new customer toilets, improved customer information systems, CCTV and better lighting. A new, secure cycle compound opened at the station last year, jointly funded by Hertfordshire County Council and Abellio Greater Anglia. This new facility increased cycle storage capacity at the station to 238 spaces.

Opening of Bishop's Stortford Cycle Compound.

Work is also progressing on the NSIP scheme to improve Chelmsford station, as part of a £3.2m investment in customer facilities. The works include a new ticket hall with an open plan counter service, new toilets, improved customer information systems and additional retail units. There will also be significant improvements to access for the London bound platform. An additional stair tower is being built, linked to the existing stair tower, which will enable a better flow of people, especially at peak times. Access to the London bound platform in the main ticket hall is also being rebuilt in order to improve the space in the ticket hall and extend the gate line.

CyclePoint at Chelmsford.

The new £680k CyclePoint at Chelmsford station with space for 1,000 bikes was opened in July 2013. Chelmsford is the first station in the region to benefit from CyclePoint which is a unique concept brought to the UK from the Netherlands by Abellio which combines secure cycle parking with increased capacity for cycles, supported by retail, cycle-hire and maintenance facilities in a single location for all cycle-related activity and parking at a station.

Passengers at Witham station are benefiting from improved facilities thanks to a project to install a brand new disabled toilet facility at the station. Similar new facilities have also been added at Audley End, Diss, Hockley and Lowestoft stations.

50 new benches - compliant with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act - have been installed at stations across our network. Other stations have received new station wheelchairs for use when providing assistance to passengers who have mobility problems.

We have also installed 24 new help point telephones at stations, offering passengers better access to train information and advice, especially at unstaffed stations where the help point is invaluable for giving passengers information about their train services.

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Marketing

It is possible that any potential interest in this subject matter was suppressed by the page formatting:

- minimal interest
- page positioning appears to indicate low importance
- sponsorship activity claimed to be of low relevance
- information on following page feels like an afterthought
- odd place to break page.

67 of our stations have now been accredited 'Secure Station' status for safety and security. The Secure Stations Scheme is directed by the Department for Transport and the British Transport Police and recognises good practice in implementing security measures at stations.

In a continuing and wide-ranging programme, cycle parking facilities are being improved at many stations, including secure compounds where entry is obtained via a key fob system.

Customers can now access free Wi-Fi in partnership with The Cloud at over 100 Abellio Greater Anglia stations.

Other specific improvements include:

- A programme to install new automatic ticket vending machines at Beccles, Saxmundham and Woodbridge on the East Suffolk Line and at North Walsham on the Norwich to Sheringham route was completed last year.
- A further extension to the car park at Diss station was opened, creating an additional 80 car parking spaces, by converting disused railway land and sidings to increase capacity.
- A range of improvements for our customers at Stratford station after completion of an overhaul of customer information, including new signage and a better public address system. Lighting and cleanliness has also been improved and new Oyster validators installed on platforms 9/10, 10A/11 and 12.
- New information screens installed at Tottenham Hale to integrate train and tube travel news for customers at this station, along with new ticket gates and other improvements.

Finally, through the adoption of a new Retail Strategy at stations we are working to improve facilities for customers offered by retail partners at stations. We recognise that customers' expectations of what they can purchase at stations are rising (as evidenced by research such as the National Passenger Survey), so the new approach is aimed at further raising standards across our network, providing benefits for rail passengers and retail tenants.

Marketing

We have continued to work with our key partners such as Visit East Anglia and Stansted Airport on attractive marketing initiatives.

Stansted Express welcomed supporters travelling to the Champions League final at Wembley Stadium last May between Borussia Dortmund and FC Bayern, handing out souvenir 'Fußball Kommt nach Hause' (Football's Coming Home) badges to arriving fans of the German finalists.

Stansted Express has also introduced a new Business Plus ticket, perfect for the business traveller looking for increased value and the benefits of First Class travel, when travelling to and from Stansted Airport. We have also developed a similar Business Plus ticket for customers on the Norwich to London mainline services.

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Community

Interest in Corporate Social Responsibility relates to the perceived personal or local benefit and there is no awareness of this type of activity at an unprompted level. Responses somewhat mixed across the research:

- welcomed AGA community engagement in principle
- should be online rather than used as a publicity vehicle
- resistance stronger when content felt to be irrelevant
- low interest in reading about news outside own immediate area
- some averse to hearing about AGA benevolence to others.

New low cost 7 Day and 30 Day advance tickets for travel on Stansted Express are proving very popular with over 20,000 of the latter sold in the first few weeks since launched. And in-bound passengers arriving at Stansted Airport can now purchase Visitor Oyster Cards for the first time from the Airport ticket office.

We are continuing to work closely with Visit East Anglia to promote travel and tourism in the region and the 2For1 London Attraction offers are proving as popular as ever. Mobile and Print-at-Home ticket options have also been extended, and a new Advance ticket and season products developed for our Cambridge to London route.

Promotion of products such as Duo, Groupsave and the range of popular Advance tickets has continued apace, as part of the marketing development of good value fares for our customers.

Community

Working positively with the local communities across the region we serve is a key priority for us at Abellio Greater Anglia.

Examples of good practice helping to brighten-up our stations and improve the environment are the station murals created at Frinton-on-Sea, Hoveton & Wroxham and Reedham.

Our thriving station adopter scheme celebrated 10 years of support for the local rail operator last June, and community volunteers came together to commemorate the anniversary and share ideas and initiatives which have been successful at their stations. Adopters from the region were also congratulated at the annual Station Adopter Awards. Last year's winners were; Cantley, Colchester, Cromer, Frinton-on-Sea, Melton, Newport, Reedham, Shelford, Southminster, Thorpe-Le-Soken and Walton-on-the-Naze.

A newly decorated 'Brecks' train was launched in July. Abellio Greater Anglia and The Brecks Partnership 'wrapped' a Class 170 train used on the Norwich to Cambridge route through the Brecks in enticing images, to promote this area of Norfolk and Suffolk.

Abellio Greater Anglia has been integrally involved in the development of the East Anglian Rail Prospectus and the subsequent work to build the case for upgrades to the Great Eastern Main Line.

A new mural is unveiled at Hoveton & Wroxham station.

"It's nice to see [in the Community section] *that they have got involved"*
[Cambridge, West Anglia]

Our people/Connecting people
The majority view is that these sections feel a bit like ‘back-slapping’ and ‘padding’ at the end of the report.

- more appropriate content for a staff magazine
- could be included in the customer service section
- minimal interest among users and non-users
- content too thin to justify a dedicated section
- connecting people could be combined with Our people.


Connecting people

We've improved connections for onward travel at our stations with better bus, cycle and taxi integration.

We teamed up with Anglian Bus and Suffolk County Council through the East Suffolk Lines Community Rail Partnership to launch a new integrated rail and bus service linking Halesworth station with Southwold.

The launch of the Saffron Walden bus link.

A combined bus and train ticket has also been launched for residents and visitors to Saffron Walden, in collaboration with Essex County Council, Uttlesford District Council and local bus operators.

In partnership with Suffolk County Council, a major transport integration project was completed at Lowestoft station, greatly improving public transport connections and car parking.

15 stations on our network are now part of Bike & Go, the UK's first major station cycle hire programme. Providing low cost, rapid and convenient cycle rental, Bike & Go will be available at 50 stations across the Abellio-operated Greater Anglia, Merseyrail and Northern Rail networks. Customers can obtain more details at: www.bikeandgo.co.uk

Another pioneering initiative is our new Cab & Go taxi booking service, which has been extended to more stations after a successful pilot phase. Cab & Go is a new, free app and website which lets rail passengers book a taxi to or from the station.

For more information or to download the app visit www.abelliogreateranglia.co.uk/cabandgo or www.cabandgo.com

CAB&GO

Lowestoft's new Bike & Go scheme.

Awards
There are strong indications from positive responses to the layout of this page that this format should be used as the template for future Annual Reports.

- generally thought to be interesting (and surprising)
- shame it is tucked away on the inside back cover
- many passengers unlikely to get this far into the report
- majority of comments focus on presentation not content
- universally regarded as a considerable improvement
- bullet-point style felt to be more attractive and accessible
- much preferred to paragraphs of text.

“It’s nice to see people achieving awards” [Norwich, Inter City]


Awards

Abellio Greater Anglia won a number of rail and transport industry awards during the year ended 31 March 2014.

We're proud to receive such recognition for our 3,000 employees. The main awards include:

- Cross-Industry Partnership Award at the 2013 Rail Innovation Awards for impressive performance and customer service standards at the London 2012 Games;
- Judges' Special Award for gold performance in Summer 2012 at the 2013 National Rail Awards;
- Achievement in Customer Satisfaction Award at the 2013 British Quality Foundation's UK Excellence Awards;
- Three Cycle Rail Awards at the 2013 National Cycle Rail awards for Best Customer Service, Partnership Working and Station of the Year (for Chelmsford);
- Public Transport Operator of the Year Award at the 2014 London Transport Awards - Abellio Greater Anglia was recognised for ‘delivering significant improvements’ from February 2012;
- Gold Investor in People status for Abellio Greater Anglia's Customer Contact and Operations Teams and Silver for the Revenue Protection Team.

The Revenue Protection Team receiving the Investors In People Silver Award.

Summary – Annual Report to Customers
Overall, there is low enthusiasm from passengers for the Annual Report to Customers. It is not felt to be sufficiently customer focused and this is regarded as a missed opportunity. It fails to acknowledge commuter relationships and does not attempt to build relationships with less frequent users.

There is evidence to suggest that certain elements of the content have the potential to have a positive impact on perceptions of trust, most notably in terms of honesty in relation to performance information. Alongside more localised information, it is likely that greater transparency would help in some areas, such as the provision of comparisons with other TOCs and with targets set in the franchise bid. The lack of overall interest may relate to the perceived relevance of the content. It was widely felt that reporting by route could help in this respect.

"There's too much emphasis on them patting themselves on the back about how well they've done and it's only at the end that you get more human stories that are a bit more interesting" [London, Main Line]

"I don't care whether Bishop Stortford has got a combined train and bus ticket, the only thing that's of interest is the punctuality table and the customer satisfaction bit" [Ipswich, Main Line]

"Calling it an Annual Report makes me think that it will be full of statistics and that it would be boring so I wouldn't want to read it" [London, Main Line]

"It doesn't tell you how they have performed compared to what they said they were going to do when they took over the franchise, which would be interesting" [Ipswich, Main Line]

Lapsed and non-users

Modal influences

The lapsed and non-users represented in the research were recruited on the basis that they have relatively easy access to Abellio Greater Anglia rail services and are 'non-rejecters' of the possibility of making more frequent journeys by rail at some time in the future. In industry terms, these passengers are 'rail-available'. All are primarily car users and the perceived 'hassle' associated with making journeys by rail is their main reason to drive (although other factors also play a role).This group feel the main opportunity for making rail journeys in future was for leisure, although some lapsed users could make an occasional business trip.

On the basis of previous work we have conducted with this segment, attitudes expressed on this occasion were consistent with the 'typical' profile of those unfamiliar with making rail journeys. When asked what influences their chosen mode of travel, ease, length of the journey and cost are consistently identified as the most important factors. These considerations tend to make using a car the default choice on most occasions. Infrequent users of trains tends to regard journey-planning as a major disincentive and source of stress that is not a feature of most car journeys.

"I get in the car outside the house and drive to where I want to drive when I want to drive" [Norwich, Lapsed/Non-user]

Journey time is also an important factor. Travel time of two hours or more are the trigger for some to look at rail as an alternative to driving. Cost will then be taken into account and travelling by train is generally perceived to be relatively expensive, especially for multiple passengers travelling together. Non rail users are likely to consider train travel to be unreliable, comparing unfavourably in their minds to making journeys by car. There are rarely any weather conditions that will incline decisions in favour of travelling by train. Safety is a fundamental consideration but none have any reason to assume that making journeys by rail would be any safer than by road.

"If I have a journey to make that's two or two and a half hours long, that's when I suggest looking at train fares to see if it's more viable"
[Norwich, Lapsed/Non-user]

Rail barriers

A wide range of barriers to making journeys by rail was identified in these groups and a critical factor is the perceived lack of control over the travel environment, especially in direct comparison to travelling by car. The main barriers identified can be summarised as follows:

Total journey time and experience

As is often the case, non-users acknowledge that, point to point, journeys by rail are often quicker than by car. The barrier is the total journey time and the additional planning required to get to the departure station and from the arrival station to their final destination. The time taken for these elements of the journey is added to the scheduled time for the rail journey (plus any waiting time). Consequently, station access and egress can become an important additional barrier.

"You can jump straight into a nice dry and warm car outside your house and you can go where you need to go. Whereas if you've got to get from your house to the train station, it's either driving there or getting a taxi and then again at the other end because it's very unlikely that the train station is going to be outside of where you want to be" [Norwich, Lapsed/Non-user]

Access and egress

All non-users were recruited on the basis of having reasonable access to a station. Despite this, travelling to and on from a station can still be regarded as a significant hassle, especially in direct comparison to a car journey. This was claimed to make overall journey planning more complex since a considerable amount of co-ordination may be required. Even when a quick and reliable method of getting to the local railway station is available, travelling from the station can be more problematic since the modes required or on offer will vary according to the destination.

Integration and interchange

These issues are often perceived to be challenging by those unused to making journeys by rail and who are often less minded to use public transport as a whole. Planning is hampered by a lack of familiarity and the prospect of a journey not running smoothly can be extremely off-putting. This is also the case for more frequent rail users who know their way round the system. Interchanging is often cited as a major disincentive to rail travel, no matter whether within or between modes.

Timetable constraints
Timetables can be difficult to understand, especially for those not used to reading them. In addition, the implied or actual constraints that they represent can be a major barrier to choosing rail travel for non-users. The need to adhere to someone else's timetable can make public transport feel very inflexible and represents an unacceptable compromise for some non-users.

"If you go by train you're dictated by the time the train goes but if you go by car you can go when you like" [Cambridge, Lapsed/Non-user]

Poor value for money
Rail travel is often perceived among non-users to be expensive, especially for groups. This is partly due to media coverage of the industry but also because rail fares are viewed as a discretionary or 'luxury' cost on top of the 'essential' cost of running a car. This perception is exacerbated by the fact that the cost for multiple passengers travelling by rail where the combined ticket price for a long journey can be prohibitive for long journeys and is never likely to compare favourably with the financial and other benefits of making the same journey by car. For shorter journeys, four passengers sharing a taxi fare is seen as cheaper than four rail fares.

Personal Security
Concerns about personal security at stations and on trains is often a barrier for non-users, although it was not a strong theme in either focus group on this occasion. One passenger in Cambridge referred to a bad experience when making a journey by train in the past but much of the anxiety comes from not being able to predict or control the behaviour of other passengers. Concern most frequently relates to late night services and tends to be more of an issue for women, especially when travelling alone. Concerns can be allayed to a certain extent by security measures put in place and communicated by the TOC.

Negative rail perceptions and stereotypes
Certain barriers are generic to the industry rather than specific to the franchise or TOC. These perceptions and stereotypes reduce non-users inclination to make journeys by rail. For example:
- the belief that certain trains are likely to be overcrowded
- expectations that the service will be unreliable and that rolling stock will be of poor quality
- an impression that there will not be enough staff to provide the required level of service.

"Deep down if it was really terrible weather you'd like to take the train because probably it's the safest method, but because of unreliability (the leaves and everything) you could end up being stuck there for hours on end" [Norwich, Lapsed/Non-user]

"It doesn't give me a lot of confidence when I hear on the news the Eastern Region needs to spend four billion pounds to get up to standard. You think 'bloody hell it must be bad'" [Norwich, Lapsed/Non-user]

Promoting Rail

Although various features have been identified that may help to encourage consideration of rail among lapsed and non-users, the main challenge is likely to be entrenched mindsets rather than network specific issues. The main practical changes to consider can be summarised as follows:

Promote website planning tools

This could be beneficial as non-users are unlikely to be aware that planning tools exist. The research suggests that it may be to the advantage of the franchisee to promote their website and its functionality more widely among current users as well. Making non-users aware of the site alongside a message that focuses on the ease of using its planning tools, could help remove a potentially significant barrier to considering rail in future.

‘Try it for a day’ free rail ticket

The concept of a free rail ticket targeted at non-users was explored among these focus groups. The basic principle tended to be very positively received and reactions suggest that this tactic may be a cost effective ‘loss leader’ if it can be used to challenge preconceptions about rail travel.

Ongoing walk-up deals

The need to buy tickets in advance and therefore commit to plans can be a significant barrier. It removes the spontaneity from rail travel. This is especially true for leisure journeys and when making trips as a family or with children. Carefully targeted campaigns that provide competitively priced walk-up deals could trigger some to consider making journeys by rail as long. The offers must be shown to be more attractive than driving, for example when taking day trips to London.

Integrated packages

It may be possible to create end-to-end journey packages that provide the flexibility to combine rail tickets with the means of accessing the station at one end and onward travel at the other. This would need to provide the option to include car parking as well as including other public transport in order to maximise appeal among non-users and have the best chance of addressing concerns over the hassle seen to be associated with rail travel.

Reassurance through staff presence

Based on the positive experiences of more frequent users, it should be possible to reassure non-users about the quality and efficiency of staff at stations and on trains. However, the primary desire among non-user is for a visible staff presence at all times to allay security fears and challenge negative expectations.

“It wouldn’t be just about staff presence it would be about knowing that their role is to intervene and keep you safe” [Cambridge, Lapsed/Non-user]

Promote generic rail benefits

In the same way that there are some generic industry barriers, there are also a number of benefits that are generally considered to apply to rail travel over other modes of transport. It may be beneficial to highlight these in advertising or communications campaigns. Some examples are:

- the train being quicker for some journeys
- children can enjoy journeys more when not constrained in car seats for long periods of time
- it provides the opportunity to walk around while relaxing and socialising
- allows adults the freedom to drink alcohol before or during the journey
- business users can maximise the efficiency of their travel time by being able to work in a quiet and comfortable environment.

Reaction to NRPS (Spring 2014)

During these two focus groups, results from the Spring 2014 NRPS for Abellio Greater Anglia (see Figures 4.1 to 4.4) were handed out and participants were asked for their comments. Overall, nothing is considered to be outstanding in terms of performance and there are no major surprises that challenged perceptions of rail travel among lapsed/non-users. It was noted that most current AGA users are fairly satisfied overall and that certain metrics, such as speed, score well. However, this was offset by areas of poor performance such as value for money, on train toilets, car parking and the availability of on train staff. A few passengers observed that as the level of staff presence at stations is acceptable it may be preferable for some of these staff to be reallocated to trains.

"Most people are fairly satisfied you're not buying a diamond ring you're buying a train ticket" [Norwich, Lapsed/Non-user]

"It seems there are too many staff at the station so you could take one or two out of the station and put them on the train" [Norwich, Lapsed/Non-user]

Overall, the data shown during this element of the research broadly reinforces existing views and perceptions among lapsed/non-users, who recognised that these issues apply to rail in general rather than AGA specifically.

Figure 4.1 AGA NRPS satisfaction results (overall & station factors 1)

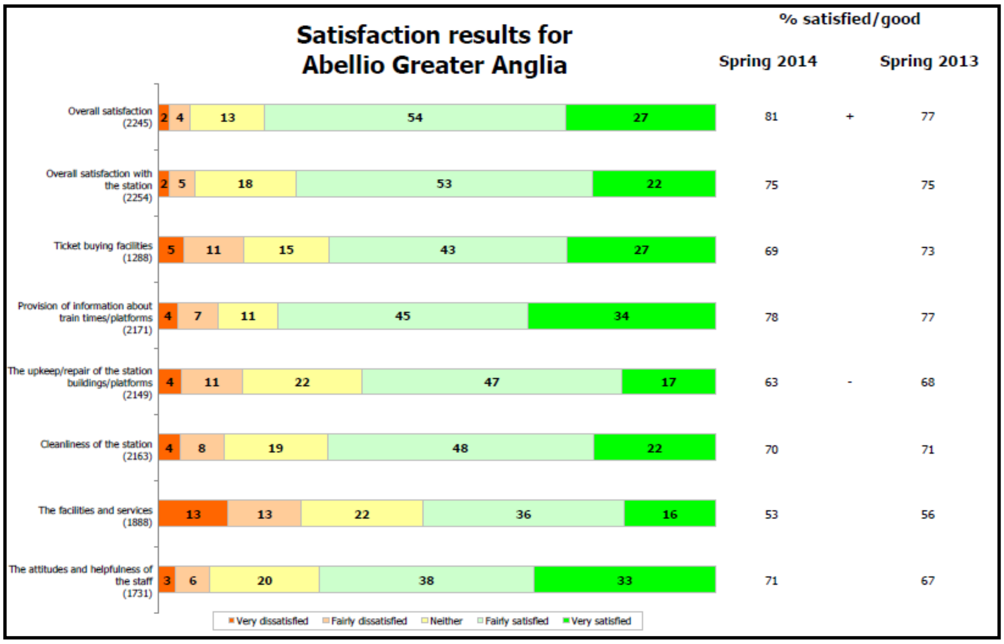


Figure 4.2 AGA NRPS satisfaction results (station factors 2)

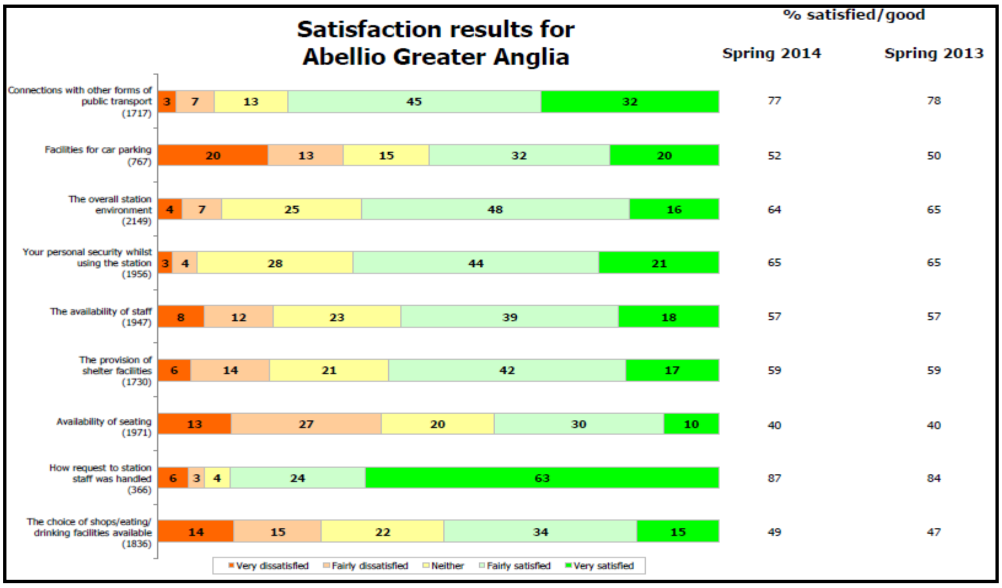


Figure 4.3 AGA NRPS satisfaction results (train factors 1)

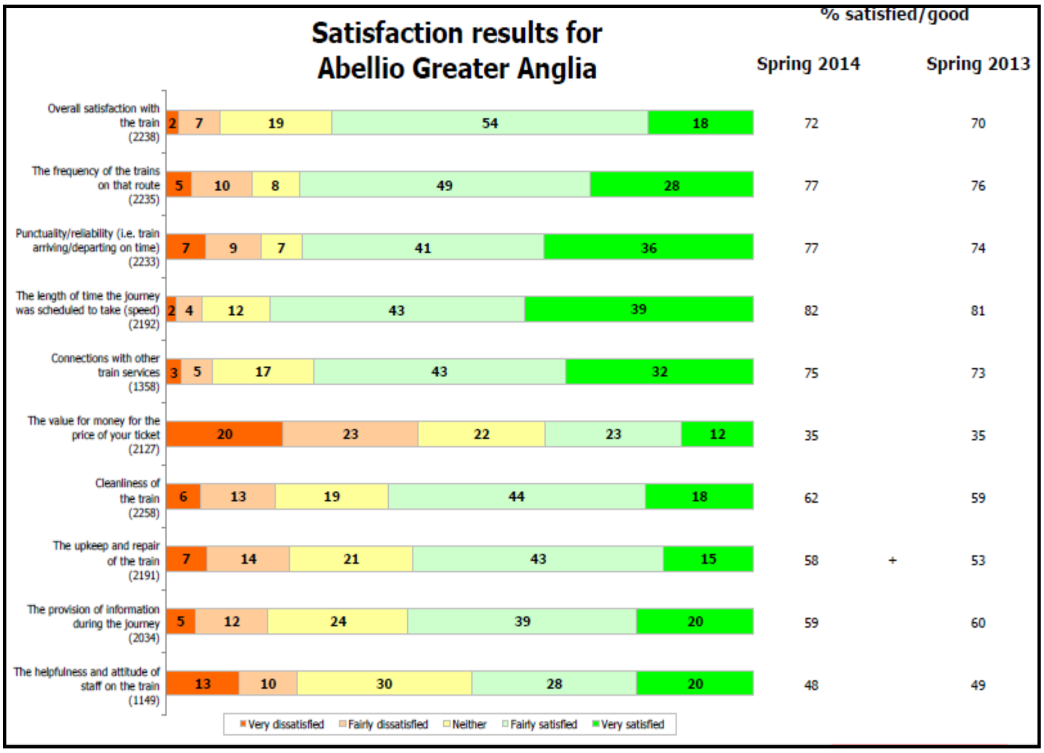
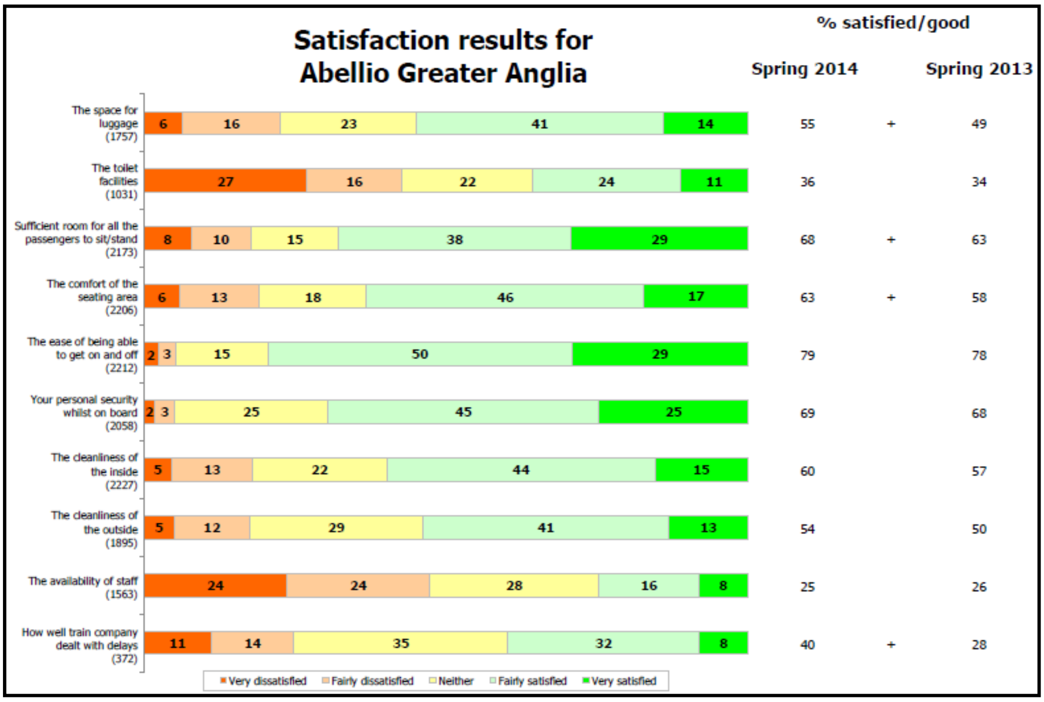


Figure 4.4 AGA NRPS satisfaction results (train factors 2)



Other Issues
Given the feedback from passengers on the franchise process and the Annual Report to Customers, it is unsurprising that lapsed/non-users show a similar lack of engagement with these issues. As with more frequent travellers, non-users viewed the franchising process as an issue of low interest and relevance. However, they understood why it is important for passengers to be able to take part in the consultation process.

The Annual Report to Customers was greeted with total indifference. It was difficult to elicit meaningful responses from lapsed/non-user see themselves as being outside its target market However, they acknowledge the potential usefulness of the report for frequent AGA users and assume that certain sections of it would be of some interest to passengers.

Disability issues

Overview
Barriers to rail travel are always exacerbated for passengers with disabilities who want to be as independent as possible when making journeys. Typically, the disabled users we spoke to tend to do as much pre-planning of their journey as possible using apps and websites to familiarise themselves with the necessary details in advance.

"I just look in the morning [at AGA website] *when I get up just to see how they are running"*
[Cambridge, Vision impaired]

These disabled passengers are generally less frequent rail users and may use the train just two or three times a month. Their views are broadly similar to other less frequent users. They are generally positive about most aspects of AGA's service provision and especially so about staff, who they feel are always helpful when their help has been required. Personal safety issues are often high on their agenda. This is particularly important for an elderly passenger who would not travel at night without the reassurance provided by having a member of staff on every train.

"I think on trains you can feel a bit uncomfortable if you're sat in a coach on your own"
[Cambridge, Mobility impaired]

Driving to Cambridge station is felt to be a problem by both passengers from this area due to busy traffic conditions on the A14 and difficulties parking at the station. Blue Badge parking restrictions are not enforced, which exacerbates access problems for disabled passengers.

Vision impaired

In spite of their inclination for pre-planning, journeys are often challenging for vision-impaired passengers. One issue is the difficulty in using information screens at stations. The height of the screens is often a problem which makes using them difficult, exacerbated when the information displayed occasionally flickers. Lower screens would be beneficial in order to avoid having to find a member of staff or ask other passengers for help in order to get the information required.

"If it's a big station, even in Norwich sometimes, it can be a bit of a problem but there's always someone to ask" [Norwich, Vision impaired]

Buying tickets from TVMs is also as being difficult, particularly where the text is in green on a black background which those with certain types of vision impairment can find difficult to read. It is recommended that higher contrast colours such as yellow and black should be used instead to overcome this problem. One passenger commented that lights on trains tend not to be bright enough for him to see well, although this is not felt to be a problem by other vision-impaired passengers.

Mobility impaired

Getting on and off trains is identified as a major problem for users with mobility issues. This is typically caused by the gap between the train and the platform, which often needs a large step up, down and/or across. This is perceived to be a particular problem at Liverpool Street but not so much at other stations, where the height of the train and platform are more aligned. At Liverpool Street, those with mobility impairments say they often need to ask for assistance from other passengers.

"I have a problem at Liverpool Street. Sometimes there's a step down to the platform but there's always somebody on the train to give you a hand. But at Cambridge they seem to run flat with the platform so I'm alright getting on and off there" [Cambridge, Mobility impaired]

Lifts not working can be a particular cause of concern and anxiety to those with mobility problems as they rely on 'accessible' stations. If not, these passengers may have considerable difficulty using steps instead of the lift. This is cited as a particular problem accessing Platform 8 at Cambridge where the lifts are felt to be unreliable on the basis of past experiences.

The passenger with mobility problems in Cambridge reports that others not displaying a Blue Badge often misuse the disabled parking spaces at Cambridge station. Enforcement by station staff is felt to be inadequate.

"It's annoying if you're trying to find a disabled parking space and they're taken up with people that have not got Blue Badges" [Cambridge, Vision impaired]

Hearing impaired

The passenger with a hearing impairment has lower level concerns than the other disabled passengers interviewed. Issues are restricted to a specific element of information provision. This passenger finds that audio announcements are often difficult to hear although this is not considered to be a major issue as he is able to rely on information screens instead. His main concern is not so much to do with the fact that he does not have access to the information he needs but focuses on a reluctance to rely on others for help.

“What I don’t hear I can see on the screen”
[Norwich, Hearing impaired]

5 Conclusions

Passenger experience
Experiences are understandably mixed across the range of passengers we spoke to. Nevertheless it is possible to find sufficient consistencies in the findings to build a picture of experiences that apply to the majority of passengers for most journeys made:

Commuters feel they get a worse deal than leisure users. This is unsurprising and is consistent with previous research in this area. Poor service reliability is more of a problem for those making time-critical journeys on a frequent or daily basis. Commuters feel that they are penalised by paying the highest fares to travel on trains that are most likely to be crowded. Problems are expected to get worse rather than better, with passenger numbers widely anticipated to rise in the future. Increased peak capacity would alleviate seating problems. While there is no simple solution, the inability to get a seat is a major cause of dissatisfaction, especially for commuters.

Apart from the Stansted route, satisfaction with the trains employed on the AGA franchise is low. Many are considered to be at the end of serviceable life. There are mixed views on the experience at stations but the expectation is that basic facilities including shelter and information should be provided at all. Specific issues with some stations identified in the research suggest that there will be wider needs to address across the network.

Frequent users often have attitudes of resigned acceptance, especially when they have no realistic alternative available to them, such as those who commute longer distances into London. Some problems are felt to be generic rather than TOC specific so although Abellio Greater Anglia is the focus of some negative emotions, many see it is ultimately for the industry to address. Attitudes to fares are an illustration of this issue. Rail travel as a whole is often perceived to be expensive per mile travelled and to represent poor value for money. However, this theme is less strong among the passengers we spoke to, perhaps with the exception of commuters, than might have been expected from the quantitative data available.

Areas for improvement
This research indicates that there is room for progress on certain ‘acid test’ elements of the operation. The priorities for future improvements under a new franchise should be delivery of key aspects of service delivery and enhancements to trains and stations. Three key themes have emerged:

Service reliability and punctuality for frequent users
This is a critical area for commuters, who are the most demanding passenger group for the franchise holder. Performance improvements during peak hours will have knock-on benefits for the wider passenger base.

Rolling stock
Some of the rolling stock is a cause for concern. This has potential to become a strong driver of dissatisfaction. The upgrades indicated in the Annual Report to Customers are likely to be critical to the success of the new franchise. However further improvements will be required to meet passengers' expectations.

Upgrade and refurbishment
Certain station facilities need improving and upgrading. Although this is not a key spontaneous issue for most, it is easy to identify a wide range of future needs from the focus groups conducted amongst current passengers.

Trust
Establishing trust among passengers is about consistent delivery on the key performance metrics and not just an absence of negatives. At present there is little evidence that passengers hold any overt allegiance or emotional attachment to the Abellio Greater Anglia brand. This is not surprising or unusual in the context of rail franchises but there are limited signs that AGA may not have made the most of opportunities to be proactive in this respect. There is certainly no sense of relationship between passengers and the franchise or the AGA brand. This is not something that passengers currently look for or expect so the onus is on the franchisee to make it happen.

There are differing views on the issue of trust depending on frequency of use and journey purpose. There are some signs of latent trust among leisure users who are more likely to feel that their needs during less frequent, off-peak travel are being met by AGA. Trust needs to be earned through the provision of a consistently high level of service delivery for commuters.

Franchising process and Annual Report to Customers
Interest in the franchising process tends to be at a theoretical level only. Passengers claim to be interested when provided with details in a focus group but translating this into real-world, genuine enthusiasm is likely to be challenging. Passengers may be interested in having access to bidders' commitments at the time that the franchise is re-tendered.

Levels of enthusiasm for more involvement in the franchising process tend to be muted by the perceived lack of impact that passenger input would produce. One of the main concerns about the franchising process is the prospect of losing a franchisee that passengers feel is performing well because the Government makes a decision based on a different agenda. In the light of this, passengers may be interested in having access to bidders' commitments at the time that the franchise is re-tendered.

Passenger interest in an Annual Report to Customers is similarly subdued, even when it is demonstrated that this is specifically targeted at passengers rather than shareholders. However, there may be some potential to use this as a vehicle to assess the TOC’s performance on an ongoing basis in a way that is transparent, relevant and easily accessible to passengers. Much of the content would be considered more interesting and valid if it could be used as a way to compare the performance of the franchisee with that of other TOCs. Such a comparison could put passengers in a stronger position to feel that they have more informed views on the franchise process and the bidders. There may be an opportunity for passengers to use the report to hold the TOC to account over claims or promises made at the time of bidding for the franchise.

6 Further information

For further information about Transport Focus and our work on the East Anglia franchise please contact:

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Appendix 1 - Discussion guides

USER DISCUSSION GUIDE
Passenger Focus East Anglia Franchise
Focus Group Topic Guide – Users Final
October/November 2014

This guide is intended to act as an aide-memoire for the researcher. It will act as a checklist that all questions have been covered, and it may not be necessary to ask all the questions listed below, as many of the topics are likely to arise during discussions.

Objective to understand existing and potential passengers' use and experience of the railways under the existing Greater Anglia franchise, their frustrations and their aspirations for the future East Anglia franchise

Introduction

- Introduce self/ AECOM independent research agency.
- (Leave until end of A3 to mention we are working for PF). Conducting research on behalf of Passenger Focus, the independent watchdog for rail and bus passengers.
- Purpose of group is to talk about use of and attitudes towards current Abellio Greater Anglia train services and to explore passengers' aspirations for the future. Use showcard of network and explain that all discussions should be about train journeys on this network. Emphasise confidentiality – point out recording group and that tape will not be passed on to anyone for moderator use only so we report the facts and do not miss anything out. Please speak clearly and one at a time
- Explain presence of observer(s) if appropriate
- Rules
  - Turn mobiles off please.
  - Point out toilets and refreshments areas.
  - Emphasise there are no right wrong answers – everyone has valid view – everyone will be given an opportunity to give their view and that most people enjoy the process. May stop people if they are talking about something moderator knows want to discuss at a later point – don't be upset, will come back to them/that point later.

Approx Timings cumulative

A1 Warm up

- First name (can be made up)
- How often do you use Abellio Greater Anglia Services? What for (Commuting/Business/Leisure & where from to)

5 mins (5)

A2 - Existing Use and Experiences

What train journeys do you make on Abellio Greater Anglia services?
Where to/from, what time
How frequently?

What for - purpose of the journey?
Who else do you travel with?
Why do you use train?

What other modes could you use?
Stages of the Journey
How do you get to the station?

- What's it like to get to the station by bus? What's the interchange like? How far to walk?
- What's car parking like at the station if you (wanted to) go by car?
- What are cycle facilities like?

How do you find out about when train services operate? Do you use any information sources before/during the journey? What? What is good/bad?

- Have you used the AGA website? What's it like?
- Do you use an app? Whose?

Which stations do you use?
What are they like in terms of facilities provided? (Origin & Destination Station Separately) – staff/ information/ announcements/ help points PROBE for usefulness if/when station unstaffed/ ticket machines/ toilets/ shops/ waiting rooms/ shelters and seating on platforms/– are these appropriate – what is good/bad? What could be improved?

Do you see many staff – on train/at station - what do they do? What are your impressions of these staff? Are they needed? What would it be like if they were not there?
Announcements/information displays on trains
Personal safety – what makes you feel safe/unsafe (staff presence, CCTV, carriage layout)? And what about staff safety? Is that something you've thought about/concerns you

Do you ever have to change trains? Where – what is that like – good/bad/ what could be improved?

How do you know when train will turn up? Are there enough trains at the time you want to travel? – how about timing of first /last services?

Does the train come when it should – how reliable is it? What is it like to wait at the station if you need to?

Is the journey time acceptable? How might it be improved?

What type of train do you use? How crowded is it? Can you get a seat? Seat Comfort? Seat layout (2+2/3+2) Is it easy to stand if necessary? Is it clean – inside/outside – is this important? What other facilities does it/should it have (catering/wifi/power sockets/toilets)?

What ticket do you use? What type is it? Is it easy to get? Why this ticket type? Would you like

different ticket?
How about the price is this good value for money? What is ‘value for money’? What makes a fare ‘good value’? How easy is it to get good priced tickets?
Experience of compensation and/or Delay Repay; any issues with repeated delays under 30 minutes
Experience of Revenue Protection; how does it make them feel; attitudes to ticketless travel; how to deal with ‘honest mistakes’?

When you arrive at your destination station, what are your requirements? Does this differ from your departure station? How good is the destination station you use most? How about for a station you have not been to before? What information do you require at the station? What are the onward connections like (bus/taxi/cycle hire)? What facilities do you require at your destination station? Toilets/ wifi/ refreshments? How do these differ from facilities at you departure station? Why?

What method of travel do you generally use for your onward journey? What affects what method you choose? Time of day/ destination/ journey purpose?

Are there journeys you would like to make by train but cannot – why?

What do you know about Abellio Greater Anglia as a company? Where do you get that information/impression from? Do they play any role in your or other communities along the line? What do you think AGA knows about you? How do they get that information?

Would you say you have a relationship with Abellio Greater Anglia?
How would you describe this relationship? Is it good/bad/indifferent? Is it ‘just another train service’ or is there something special about it? How would you describe it? What could be improved?

Would you say you trusted Abellio Greater Anglia? Why (not)? In what way do you (not) trust them? Can you trust Abellio Greater Anglia to deliver a reliable train service? Why? Is this important? Can you trust Abellio Greater Anglia to help when services do not go to plan? Why? Is this important? Do you have trust in them generally?

What frustrates you most about using Abellio GA services?
What would you like to see improved?

35 mins (40)

Projective Technique – Obituary Announcement

- Imagine that you are writing an obituary to appear in the newspaper. Imagine that the current Abellio Greater Anglia service has died, and you are writing an obituary about it
- What was it like? What were its characteristics / features?
- Will it be missed? What will be missed about it? What are the good things about Abellio Greater Anglia train services for your journeys and which you want the future train company to continue to deliver and build on?
- What are the bad things about the services provided by Abellio Greater Anglia? What needs to be improved? What will not be missed?

Review what people have said

5 min (45)

A3 Awareness of the franchising process and desire for engagement

Are you aware of The Rail Franchising Process? What do you know? (short unprompted discussion)

- Read Out and Pass around bullet point summary showcard (A4 in size)
- Although the track is owned by Network Rail the train services are divided into territories which can be run by different companies. A timeframe is set for each territory to be managed eg 7-10 years - this is the franchise period.
- Before a franchise is awarded the Department for Transport (DfT) reviews the operation of the current franchise and the market for rail travel in the area. Then a consultation process takes place in order to understand the needs of passengers. Passengers are able to contact the authorities involved to give their views on the service and suggestions for the future as well as participate in focus groups like this.
- The Government then sends out a service specification to transport companies with guidelines on what the service should include for a particular area which is informed by the consultation.
- Transport companies then bid for the franchise by putting forward proposals for how they would run the railway. Depending on the franchise, they either say how much they will pay for the right to run the service or state the level of subsidy they would require from the government.
- The government then assesses the bids based on what they offer to the passenger and the financial forecasts. It awards the franchise to the bid it views as the best.
- When the contract is agreed there are clauses written in to ensure the provider runs the contract as they promised to do so in their bid. This may include performance targets, quality promises and financial penalties where these are not met.
- If the franchisee makes a profit, they can decide to reinvest that to develop the business further and/or pay their shareholders a dividend.

Is this a good process? What is good? what is bad? Does it promote competition? Is competition good?
As a passenger are you interested in this process? Why? Why not?
What is of interest to you?
Do you think it is important that you as passenger are consulted? Why? Why not? If not you, who?
If so what aspects are most important to you to be consulted on?
How would you like to be consulted? How should you be told what? And how would you like to contribute views?
eg posters, online social media, email, drop-in sessions, local meetings, surveys, local news media – which methods are important to you to exchange information?
How would you expect company/government/authority to respond to comments from existing and potential passengers?
Who else should be consulted? What about local authorities, MPs, user groups, other transport (bus) companies, Passenger Focus? MENTION HERE WE ARE WORKING FOR PASSENGER FOCUS

10 min (55)

A4 - Aspirations for the new franchise Projective Technique – Birth Announcement

Imagine that you are writing a birth announcement to mark the arrival of a new rail franchise for the Greater Anglia area. This is your ideal train service and has everything you want/need. What Innovations you would like to see- something new & different covering customer service, technology and gadgets, new forms of information?

- What would it be like? What would be its characteristics / features? Covering anything you think is important but might include the following
- type of trains/crowding/facilities/cleanliness
- timetable/frequency
- journey time & reliability
- stations including interchange with other modes
- information
- ticket types
- staff
- customer service
- prices
- relationship with passengers (inc passenger panels and other opportunities to get passenger view taken on board)
- What Innovations would you like to see – anything new or different

Review what people have said then probe for (if not raised in discussion):

- Rolling Stock – including seat including seat availability issues – should they always get a seat – is it acceptable to stand? – seating layout/comfort what facilities should be on board (toilets/catering/power sockets/wi-fi)? Do they realise that rolling stock is ultimately specified and procured by DfT not the TOC? Does this matter?

- Timetabling – is the service frequency acceptable? Are journey times acceptable? Is reliability an issue? First and last trains?
- Stations - What should stations be like – environment and facilities – what types of shop would you like to see at stations – how about getting to the station – transfer from public transport & car parking
- Car parking/cycle storage at stations – How much parking provision do you expect at stations? Should all stations have parking? Why/ why not? Which should/ which shouldn't? What do you expect to pay? NB: Differentiate car/motorcycle/cycle. Why that price? CHECK expectation versus desirable cost. Do you think it's right that you have to pay to park at stations?
- Information requirements – what do you need? Work through this before getting to station/ at station but before boarding train/ on train/ once at destination station? Where should this information be? Announcements/screens. How would people find out about their journeys before/during travel? including handling of delays. Website/mobile apps. Onward connections at destination station
- Ticketing issues – what types of tickets should be available – How obtained? Prices? Any thoughts on new products eg SMART where tickets are held on an electronic card or Carnet – books for say 10 single journey tickets? Why are they a good/ bad idea? Expectation of loyalty bonus/rewards for frequent travellers. Interest in buying Advance tickets for a time band (eg 2 hours) rather than a specific train
- What level of customer service expected – level of staff presence – where? Attitudes including delay handling, compensation & complaint handing (inc. commuters' attitudes to Delay Repay and lack of compensation for repeated short delays (less than 30 mins)
- Interactions/communications with the train operating company – how important is this felt to be? Channels needed? Which method of communicating with you will be most / least effective? Which will you take notice of? How will this help to build a sense of relationship with Abellio Greater Anglia? How would you expect them to talk to you (formal, casual, businesslike, light-hearted, tone of voice etc)?
- Innovations – anything new and different?

- 30 mins (85)

A5 Reactions towards promises in the Customer Report issued by Abellio Greater Anglia

NOTE Purpose is to use this as stimulus to elicit comments on adequacy or otherwise of the promises and tease out further aspirations for the new franchise; it is not a detailed test of the report per se although top level feedback potentially useful for new franchisee in designing their report.

Hand out copy of Customer Report to everyone.
We will have a look at this document in quite a bit of detail so please spend 5 minutes looking through it.

WHILST RESPONDENTS READ IT , TALK TO OBSERVERS TO SEE IF THERE ARE ANY ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS.
Have you seen this before? Where? When?

What are people's impressions of it? What is this telling you? What is good/bad about it? Why do you think they produce this? Is that good or bad?

- Now lets go through each section in more detail.
- Flick through them as and when they are discussed.
- For each section ask – what does this tell you – is this good/bad
- Message from the managing Director
- Train Service performance
- Customer Service
- Trains
- Stations
- Marketing
- Community
- Our People
- Connecting People
- Awards
- What about the format of the report - size/colours/pictures?
- Overall what do people think of the document?
- What is it telling you?
- What is good about it?
- What is bad about it?
- What's missing?
- Could it be improved – if so how? Preference for alternative formats/media

Is it OK at AGA aggregate level? Interest in data by eg line or station? Or data on a specific train's performance over time?

How does Customer Report fit in with Passenger Charter? Are they aware of Passenger Charter? What 'rights' for passengers should be specified in the Passenger Charter?
Does this help build a relationship with AGA? If not, what would?
Does it help passengers to understand the problems facing the railway? Why (not)?
Is this of value in holding the TOC to account for its performance?

20 min (105)

A6 Timetabling ONLY IF TIME PERMITS...

Suppose that on the route you use most regularly there is a train from your station at 10, 30 and 50 minutes past every hour all day, apart from at 1130 when it must leave at 1132 (because it's the only way to get a freight train to where it needs to go).

Should the train company keep the timetable ‘tidy’ and publicly advertise the 1132 as running at 1130

OR

Should they be completely honest and advertise it as 1132?
Why?

PROBE what should the platform indicators show? True Time implying train is 2 mins late or regular interval time but left wondering why it had not turned up?

2 min (107)

A7 Sum Up

To sum up thinking about the Abellio Greater Anglia train services you use now -
Are there any other things that you think are really good about the current service?
And any things that really need to be improved?

Imagine on leaving this focus group you meet a member of the Abellio Greater Anglia management in the lift. What one thing would you raise with them?

Thank everyone for their time

13 min (120)

NON-USER DISCUSSION GUIDE
Passenger Focus East Anglia Franchise
Focus Group Topic Guide – Non-users Draft V5 (3/11)
October/November 2014

This guide is intended to act as an aide-memoire for the researcher. It will act as a checklist that all questions have been covered, and it may not be necessary to ask all the questions listed below, as many of the topics are likely to arise during discussions.

Objective to understand existing and potential passengers' use and experience of the railways under the existing Greater Anglia franchise, their frustrations and their aspirations for the future East Anglia franchise

Introduction

- Introduce self/ AECOM independent research agency.
- Conducting research on behalf of Passenger Focus, the independent watchdog for rail and bus passengers.
- (Leave until end of A8 to mention we are working for PF).Purpose of group is to talk about potential use of and attitudes of non/infrequent users of Abellio Greater Anglia train services and to explore aspirations for the future. Mention that we're also doing groups with users so we get both perspectives.
- Emphasise confidentiality – point out recording group and that tape will not be passed on to anyone for moderator use only so we report the facts and do not miss anything out. Please speak clearly and one at a time
- Explain presence of observer(s) if appropriate
- Rules
  - Turn mobiles off please.
  - Point out toilets and refreshments areas.
  - Emphasise there are no right wrong answers – everyone has valid view – everyone will be given an opportunity to give their view and that most people enjoy the process. May stop people if they are talking about something moderator knows want to discuss at a later point – don't be upset, will come back to them/that point later.

Approx Timings cumulative

A1 - Warm up

- First name (can be made up)
- How did you get here tonight?

5 mins (5)

A2 – Existing Journeys Made

What type of journeys do you currently make?
How do you make those journeys?
Where to/from, what time
How frequently?
What for - purpose of the journey?

Who do you travel with?

10 mins (15)

-
-

A3 – Mode Choice

- How do you choose which mode of transport to use (e.g. car/rail/bus/coach)?
- In choosing to use a particular mode of travel what are the key factors you take into account?(unprompted)
- Probe the importance of the following and how the modes differ:
  - Fares/Cost
  - Reliability of journey
  - Frequency of services/day of week/time of day/holidays/weather
  - Getting to/from public transport – parking?
  - Journey time
  - Information provision – before / during journey
  - Seating availability / type
  - Cleanliness of mode
  - Convenience/flexibility
  - Personal Safety/security
  - Comfort
  - Travelling with others
  - Ability to Work
  - Other?
- Does this vary for different journeys – for example commute, business, leisure/different distances?

  CAR USERS
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of using car (if any) compared with train, bus or coach for your journeys? Unprompted

  BUS/COACH USERS
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of using bus/coach (if any) compared with train (or car) for your journeys? Unprompted
- ALL
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of using rail
- Would the ability to undertake another activity (eg work, read a book) whilst travelling be valuable to you? Is this a factor that might encourage you to use train?

15 min (30)

A4 –Past Use and Experiences

Use showcard of network and explain that all discussion from here on should be about (potential) train journeys on the Abellio Great Anglia network.

- Have you ever used Abellio Greater Anglia train services? (yes/ no, how recently?)
- What types of journeys have you made on Abellio Greater Anglia services (commute, business, leisure).

- Which routes have you used on the Abellio Greater Anglia network? (e.g. which stations to and from)
- Is there any aspect of the Abellio Greater Anglia service that you particularly like(d)? (Probe reasons why, on which types of journeys / particular routes etc?)
- Is there any aspect of the Abellio Greater Anglia service that you particularly dislike(d)? (Probe reasons why, on which types of journeys / particular routes etc?)
- For lapsed users - Why did you stop using Abellio Greater Anglia Services? – was this a sudden or gradual decision? Did anything in particular cause this to happen?

10 mins (40)

A5 - Relationship with Abellio Greater Anglia

What do you know about Abellio Greater Anglia as a company? Where do you get that information/impression from? Do they play any role in your or other communities along the line? What do you think AGA knows about you? How do they get that information?

Would you say you have a relationship with Abellio Greater Anglia? (LESS IMPORTANT FOR NUs)
How would you describe this relationship? Is it good/bad/indifferent? Is it 'just another train service' or is there something special about it? How would you describe it? What could be improved?

Would you say you trusted Abellio Greater Anglia? Why (not)? In what way do you (not) trust them? Can you trust Abellio Greater Anglia to deliver a reliable train service? Why? Is this important? Can you trust Abellio Greater Anglia to help when services do not go to plan? Why? Is this important? Do you have trust in them generally?

10 mins (50)

A6 - Switching to Abellio Greater Anglia

- Is there anything that would encourage you to switch to using Abellio Greater Anglia train services?
- Imagine a time in the future where you are using Abellio Greater Anglia train services. What would have had to happen to make you do this?
- How would you plan a journey by rail?
- How easy do you think it would be to find out out information and plan a journey you want to make by train? Are you aware of any journey planning websites/apps eg AGA/NRE etc
- What are the key issues for you accessing rail services?
- Would a 'try it for a day' free rail ticket make a difference to your likelihood of using AGA?
- Are there journeys you would like to make by train but cannot – Why? Where to/from?

10mins (60)

A7 How does Abellio Greater Anglia perform?

Hand out show card showing current Abellio Greater Anglia Scores

Passenger Focus carry out an independent survey of how satisfied passengers are with rail services. This handout shows the latest scores for Abellio Greater Anglia.

What do you think of these?
What is good?
What is bad
Does any of this surprise you?
Do these match your perceptions of what the train service might be like?
What do these scores make you think about the train services operated by Abellio Greater Anglia?
Are you more or less likely to travel by Abellio Greater Anglia?

10 mins (70)

A8 Awareness of the franchising process and desire for engagement

Are you aware of The Rail Franchising Process? What do you know? (short unprompted discussion)

- Read Out and Pass around bullet point summary showcard (A4 in size)
- Although the track is owned by Network Rail the train services are divided into territories which can be run by different companies. A timeframe is set for each territory to be managed eg 7-10 years - this is the franchise period.
- Before a franchise is awarded the Department for Transport (DfT) reviews the operation of the current franchise and the market for rail travel in the area. Then a consultation process takes place in order to understand the needs of passengers. Passengers are able to contact the authorities involved to give their views on the service and suggestions for the future as well as participate in focus groups like this.
- The Government then sends out a service specification to transport companies with guidelines on what the service should include for a particular area which is informed by the consultation.
- Transport companies then bid for the franchise by putting forward proposals for how they would run the railway. Depending on the franchise, they either say how much they will pay for the right to run the service or state the level of subsidy they would require from the government.
- The government then assesses the bids based on what they offer to the passenger and the financial forecasts. It awards the franchise to the bid it views as the best.
- When the contract is agreed there are clauses written in to ensure the provider runs the contract as they promised to do so in their bid. This may include performance targets, quality promises and financial penalties where these are not met.
- If the franchisee makes a profit, they can decide to reinvest that to develop the business further and/or pay their shareholders a dividend.

Is this a good process? What is good? what is bad? Does it promote competition? Is competition good?
As a potential passenger are you interested in this process? Why? Why not?
What is of interest to you?
Do you think it is important that you as a potential passenger & passengers are consulted? Why? Why not? If not you, who?
If so what aspects are most important to you to be consulted on?
How would you like to be consulted? How should you be told what? and how would you like to contribute views?
eg posters, online social media, email, drop-in sessions, local meetings, surveys, local news media – which methods are important to you to exchange information?
How would you expect company/government/authority to respond to comments from existing and potential passengers?

Who else should be consulted? What about local authorities, MPs, user groups, other transport (bus) companies, Passenger Focus? MENTION HERE WE ARE WORKING FOR PASSENGER FOCUS

10 min (80)

A9 Reactions towards the Customer Report issued by Abellio Greater Anglia

NOTE Purpose is to use this as stimulus to elicit comments on adequacy or otherwise of the promises and tease out further aspirations for the new franchise; it is not a detailed test of the report per se

Hand out copy of Customer Report to everyone.
We will have a look at this document in quite a bit of detail so please spend 5 minutes looking through it.

WHILST RESPONDENTS READ IT , TALK TO OBSERVERS TO SEE IF THERE ARE ANY ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS.

Have you seen this before? Where? When?

What are people's impressions of it? What is this telling you? What is good/bad about it?
Why do you think they produce this? Is that good or bad?

- Now lets go through each section in more detail.
- Flick through them as and when they are discussed.
- For each section ask – what does this tell you – is this good/bad
- Message from the managing Director
- Train Service performance
- Customer Service
- Trains
- Stations
- Marketing
- Community
- Our People
- Connecting People
- Awards
- What about the format of the report - size/colours/pictures?
- Overall what do people think of the document?
- What is it telling you?
- What is good about it?
- What is bad about it?
- What's missing?
- Could it be improved – if so how? Preference for alternative formats/media
- Is it OK at AGA aggregate level? Interest in data by eg line or station? Or data on a specific train's performance over time?

- How does Customer Report fit in with Passenger Charter? Are they aware of Passenger Charter? What 'rights' for passengers should be specified in the Passenger Charter?

- Does this help build a relationship with AGA? If not, what would?
- Does it help passengers to understand the problems facing the railway? Why (not)?
- Is this of value in holding the TOC to account for its performance?

10min (90)

A10 Sum Up

- To recap Why do you use your chosen mode (car/bus/coach) instead of Abellio Greater Anglia?
- To sum up what if anything would make you use Abellio Greater Anglia train services
- Is there anything in particular you think need to be improved?
- Are there things that you like about the current service?

ASK RESPONDENTS TO THINK ABOUT THE FOLLOWING: Imagine on leaving this focus group you meet a member of the Abellio Greater Anglia management in the lift. What is the most important thing that would make you think about using Abellio Great Anglia train services?

Thank everyone for their time

10 min (100)

Appendix 2 - Rail franchise process showcard

- Although the track is owned by Network Rail the train services are divided into territories which can be run by different companies. A timeframe is set for each territory to be managed eg 7-10 years - this is the franchise period

- Before a franchise is awarded the Department for Transport (DfT) reviews the operation of the current franchise and the market for rail travel in the area. Then a consultation process takes place in order to understand the needs of passengers. Passengers are able to contact the authorities involved to give their views on the service and suggestions for the future as well as participate in focus groups like this

- The Government then sends out a service specification to transport companies with guidelines on what the service should include for a particular area which is informed by the consultation

- Transport companies then bid for the franchise by putting forward proposals for how they would run the railway. Depending on the franchise, they either say how much they will pay for the right to run the service or state the level of subsidy they would require from the government

- The government then assesses the bids based on what they offer to the passenger and the financial forecasts. It awards the franchise to the bid it views as the best

- When the contract is agreed there are clauses written in to ensure the provider runs the contract as they promised to do so in their bid. This may include performance targets, quality promises and financial penalties where these are not met

- If the franchisee makes a profit, they can decide to reinvest that to develop the business further and/or pay their shareholders a dividend.

Appendix 3 - NRPS route definitions

NB: These route definitions are used for NRPS. Respondents in this research were recruited on the basis of making any journeys on these routes rather than between the specific locations listed below.

Abellio Greater Anglia:
Intercity London – Norwich journeys, plus a few shorter workings (like an early morning Colchester to Norwich service)

Abellio Greater Anglia: Main line
Journeys on outer suburban Great Eastern services London – Ipswich, plus branches to Harwich, Clacton, Walton, Sudbury, Southminster and Braintree. Also includes journeys on London – Southend Victoria service

Abellio Greater Anglia: Rural
Journeys on Ipswich-Felixstowe, Lowestoft, Cambridge and Peterborough rail lines, plus Norwich to Lowestoft, Yarmouth, Sheringham and Cambridge

Abellio Greater Anglia: Stansted
Journeys on the Stansted Express on Abellio Greater Anglia trains which start or end at Stansted Airport where the passenger has an origin or destination of the airport

Abellio Greater Anglia: West Anglia outer
Journeys on London – Hertford East, London – Cambridge, London – King's Lynn and Cambridge – King's Lynn routes. Also passengers using Stansted Express for journeys that do not involve travelling to or from Stansted Airport

These routes were excluded from this research:

Abellio Greater Anglia: Metro
Journeys on London – Shenfield metro service

Abellio Greater Anglia: West Anglia inner
Journeys on routes London – Enfield Town, London – Chingford, London – Cheshunt and Romford – Upminster

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Transport Focus is the operating name of the Passengers' Council.