

**Consumer-focused,  
evidence-based and  
useful: making a  
difference for  
transport users**

**Transport Focus  
Workplan 2016-17**



**April 2016**

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## **Making a difference for all transport users**

### **Boosting the voice of transport users**

The time has come to boost the influence of transport users over the major decisions that affect their services and roads. Transport Focus will help make it happen.

Our respected insight, policy and advocacy work guides government and industry decision-making. Everything we do is backed up by evidence, much of which we produce.

We provide comparative benchmarking with the National Rail Passenger Survey, the Bus Passenger Survey and other major tracker surveys. This year we will add a new survey of road user satisfaction to this stable, boosting the voice of users of England's motorways and major 'A' roads.

Major reviews and changes are underway into the way rail, bus and road services are financed, planned and delivered. Transport Focus is uniquely placed to ensure that the user voice is heard at the heart of these debates: our brand of advocacy is well respected. We must exploit this position to really help users.

### **We will strive to ensure every debate in the transport industry starts with the question 'what do users want and how do we know...?'**

Transport Focus can answer many of those questions and soon will be able to answer even more. All of our insight work is published.

As a direct result of our involvement, passengers are now better represented in the rail 'direct award' and competitive-tender franchise replacement processes. However, to date, our involvement with HS2 has been relatively low key. We now want to increase that involvement.

### **What is Transport Focus?**

We are the independent, statutory, consumer watchdog for Britain's rail passengers, bus, coach and tram passengers in England (outside London) and, since April 2015, all users (including freight, pedestrians, cyclists and other users) of England's motorways and major 'A' roads – the Strategic Road Network (SRN).

Transport Focus's statutory roots go back 59 years – we are 60 years old in 2017.

We have offices in London and Manchester and we have peripatetic workers and Board members spread across Great Britain. This includes a member appointed by each of the devolved governments for Scotland and Wales.

We aim to spend at least one third of our own budget on insight and research work.

### **Our three main principles**

- **Transport Focus strives to give all transport users as powerful a voice as those that provide transport services.**
- **We influence major decisions, always using evidence to back up our arguments.**
- **We make a difference, and we get things changed for the better.**

### **Devolution**

All of our work is used by governments and the transport industry across Great Britain to help shape services. However, continued devolution to Scotland and Wales, the rise of Transport for the North and the potential takeover of more rail services by Transport for London will have a growing effect on where and how we work. We have therefore set out detailed specific work in particular countries or regions only where it is focused on one area or funded by third parties in those areas.

### **Focus on performance**

All of our research indicates, unsurprisingly, that transport users' main need is for reliable, consistent performance from the train and bus companies and roads they use. Predictability is key.

We all base our lives around choices and assumptions about the transport we rely on. When that predictability is present we almost don't notice the journey. When it isn't it causes real problems. So, it is proper our work focuses on areas where problems are being caused for transport users.

We aim to be part of longer-term strategies and decisions that should improve reliability, boost capacity and improve resilience.

### **Rail passengers: main aims**

It now seems clear that the ongoing rebuilding and engineering works at and around London Bridge will cause issues for passengers for some time. The problems caused have thrown up issues around performance, information during disruption and compensation.

Our ambition is to see better information during planned and unplanned disruption and adequate compensation for passengers.

In addition, lessons learned from the works at Glasgow Queen Street, Reading, Bath and other major projects need to be built into (in partnership with London TravelWatch) the forthcoming Waterloo and Euston works.

We will continue to mediate in some 2500 'appeal' complaints where passengers and train companies have become deadlocked. Our ambition is to achieve to at least 70 per cent passenger satisfaction with the way we have dealt with their issue.

Longer term, the government and rail-industry planning processes for the 2019-24 spending period need to be radically re-focused on passengers – now the main overall funders of the day-to-day railway in England.

Our ambition is that any planning process is judged by those passengers involved as being successful in understanding and listening to the passenger voice. We will also pursue and develop the welcome boost to the passenger voice in the franchise replacement process – a key moment to build in improvements.

### **Bus passengers: main aims**

We aim to establish close working relationships in all six major conurbations outside London which replicates our membership of and work with the West Midlands Bus Alliance.

Our ambition is to help boost the number of passengers choosing bus and to improve satisfaction with current services. This is in the context of the overall size of the bus network shrinking, mainly as a result of reductions in local authority support for services. In addition, we aim to focus in depth on at least two major locations where bus passenger satisfaction is under stress from poor performance. We will understand why these problems have occurred and spread the lessons learnt from the root causes and the information issued during disruption.

We will make a major input to the forthcoming Buses Bill on behalf of passengers based on our recent work on trust, priorities for improvement and non-users. This bill could make the most significant changes for 30 years to the framework of the funding and delivery of bus services outside London: bus service franchising and other new arrangements.

Our ambition is to ensure that any new legislative arrangements for franchising or improved partnerships have user needs at their core, including the effective measurement of satisfaction.

### **Strategic Road Network users: main aims**

The welcome investment in the SRN over the next few years will involve major roadworks. We aim to ensure that users' needs and priorities are put at the forefront of how these works are planned, communicated, delivered and assessed.

Any measurement of satisfaction with the SRN must be done with awareness of what is happening on local roads. In the course of collecting satisfaction data on the

SRN we will also gather information on local roads which we will, in due course, make available.

Our ambition is to show that during major projects users know about reasons for works, timescales and the level of disruption, and are satisfied with the handling of the works.

On unplanned disruption we want to see fewer incidents, quicker clear-up times and better information. As part of this work, we will press for the publication of more data on these areas by Highways England and the Office of Rail and Road.

Planning for 2020-25 is underway. We will work to provide effective user input to the development of the Government investment plans for the SRN.

### **New insights**

Insight into the experiences, needs and priorities of transport users is the keystone of our work. Transport Focus is an evidence-based organisation. This year we will talk to over 140,000 transport users in the course of our insight and rail complaints handling work.

Much of our work this year will be focused on new, digital ways of gathering insight into transport users' views. We aim to gradually boost our social media engagement with users to help boost their voice and provide us with further evidence and insight.

We will also start to look in depth at 'emotional tracking' (how users feel about their journeys) and placing Transport Focus portals onto others' apps and information sources. We are trialling this with Abellio Greater Anglia and a bus operator at present.

In addition, we are going to build up a large-scale panel of transport users – allowing fast, cost-effective feedback on particular issues. The panel should help improve the value for money of taxpayer and industry spend on insight overall.

We will continue to strengthen and modernise the National Rail Passenger Survey the Bus and Tram Passenger Surveys and build the new Strategic Roads User Survey. We aim to ensure that any industry-wide duplication of insight work that exists (including rail company commissioned versions of NRPS) is reduced. We will look at developing lower-cost, online, 'always on' versions of all our tracker work – this will spread the reach and boost the usefulness of such work.

The NRPS, as an Official Statistic, also benefits from the input of our NRPS Stakeholder Forum which provides an opportunity for dialogue with the industry during the planned changes to NRPS over the next two years. An NRPS Experts Group is advising us on technical aspects of the updated methodology.

We aim to weave together all our insight work to provide a better understanding of the end-to-end journey and what drives choice.

The way we measure satisfaction among road users will be truly innovative. We will gather user views on their experiences of the SRN as close as possible to their actual journeys.

We aim to build a panel of over 20,000 car, van and HGV drivers and passengers. Using online maps we will steer panel members towards the SRN part of their journey and provide regular feedback to Highways England and other stakeholders. The survey will be extensively trialled this year prior to becoming a regulatory measure in due course.

### **In-depth reports: accessibility, personal security and more**

We also plan to make more use of our existing work to provide extra, in-depth insight into particular areas such as accessibility, personal security and other issues. We plan some three of such reports this year.

Accessibility is a key issue for some users. We generate the only large-scale quantitative research into the needs of transport users with disabilities or impairments – nearly one in four of the respondents to our Bus Passenger Survey classify themselves as disabled. Nearly one rail passenger in ten does the same. We do not yet know the figures for car use – we suspect the voice of disabled motorists has not really been heard clearly enough. We aim to use this data to inform debates and decisions in these areas.

Many other organisations work in this area and we should get involved where we can add value. We will continue the work of our Accessibility Panel this year but will have to review this in the light of long-term funding changes.

### **Funding shifts**

Transport Focus is sponsored by the Department for Transport (DfT), although operationally independent. The majority of our funding comes from DfT in the form of either 'core' year-to-year funding for a basic level of activities, or funding for additional work, such as additional input to franchise replacements.

The drive in public sector funding is to improve and modernise services as well as boosting digital delivery – we are looking hard at how we can do this. In addition, our core funding has (along with many other public sector organisations) been significantly reduced following the Spending Review 2015.

We are already building our income from other sources, boosting our ability to make a difference as well as improving value for money for the taxpayer. For example, the

BPS is currently funded one third by bus operators, local authorities and us. As we secure more funding, additional projects will be added to this Workplan.

If you would like to discuss working with us in partnership please do get in touch. The majority of the work detailed in this Workplan is covered by DfT core funding. Additional funding for specific work funded by DfT or others is indicated as such.

## Improving today's transport user experience

### Bus users

- Work with bus operators and local authorities to use the results of the Bus Passenger Survey as an important measure of their success and of their customers' feedback.
- Take the results from our 2016 report *Bus passengers have their say: Trust, what to improve and using buses more* and work with the industry and local authorities to help boost use of buses and increase passenger satisfaction.
- Work in two areas with operators, Traffic Commissioners and local authorities to develop improvement action plans where poor performance is causing issues.
- Develop better working relationships with local authorities, bus operators and Traffic Commissioners in the six largest conurbations outside London to jointly improve BPS scores in those areas.
- Focus on the changing shape of transport in two or three particular areas (probably more rural locations) where reductions in local authority support to bus services has significantly altered the options facing people. Map the changes and extent of transport provision across scheduled bus services, 'on demand' transport, school transport, rail services (if any), patient transport and other generally accessible forms of transport. Use this work to advocate more joined-up and passenger-focused provision of transport services.

### Tram passengers

- Carry out and publish the 2016 Tram Passenger Survey. Use the results to pursue and boost passenger satisfaction.

### Road users

- Publish research into SRN user needs and experiences during incidents and roadworks, including information provision. Use that research to help reshape planning, operations and communication before, during and after major roadworks.
- Carry out and publish research into users' priorities for improvement to road surfaces. Use the results of that research to drive changes in planning and maintaining road surfaces.

- Publish research about HGV drivers' views on the preferred site and facilities available at the proposed permanent Operation Stack lorry park in Kent.
- Continue to monitor developments in the implementation of Operation Stack, including views on drivers' experiences of both Stack and the more frequently used Traffic Assessment Project queuing system.
- Publish work on the user experience of roadside facilities, including motorway service areas. Use that work to both improve the current experience and change thinking about longer-term planning of such facilities.
- Review how Highways England manages user contacts and complaints – we aim to help improve complaints handling satisfaction.
- Understand and publish the views of pedestrians, cyclists and other users of the SRN. Use this work to help focus Highways England and others on the needs of these users.

### **Rail users**

- Secure improved information during disruption and better compensation arrangements for passengers affected by rebuilding works at London Bridge and other parts of the country (for example, works on the Northern Hub and Glasgow Queen Street). Publish new research on compensation.
- Mediate in some 2500 'appeal' complaints achieving at least 70 per cent satisfaction with the way we dealt with the complaint.
- Identify and develop ways of boosting engagement with the new Northern and TransPennine Express franchises and promoting passenger interests in the transition to new franchise agreements (work funded via the new franchisees).
- Continue in-depth work with Great Western Railway (GWR) and Network Rail on current passenger issues and engineering works in particular (work funded via the GWR franchise 'direct award').
- Work with the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) to improve the quality of passenger information, in particular during disruption (funded by ATOC).
- Initial work with the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) to improve ticket retailing, including smartcards, building on the extensive series of research done by Transport Focus since 2012 (further work potentially funded by RDG).

## Making a long-term difference for transport users

### Road

- Ensure user views on priorities for improvement drive the investment plans set out in the second Road Investment Strategy (2020-25), both overall and for individual routes.  
This will include a user assessment of the suitability and usefulness of the measures used to track and measure Highways England's performance.
- Complete and publish work to identify road user priorities for Highways England's 18 route strategies – work funded by Highways England.
- Carry out and publish research into road users' experiences of using smart motorways, including sections of 'all-lane running'.
- Publish a review of existing research into driver behaviours and attitudes, including their impact on journey satisfaction and safety.

### Rail

- Boost the passenger voice in government and industry 2019-24 planning processes (some initial work plus additional input potentially funded by ORR and the industry).
- Help revolutionise and modernise rail ticketing (initial work with further possibly funded by RDG).
- Continue to provide insight and input to the upcoming South Western, West Midlands, West Coast, East Midlands, South Eastern and Wales and Borders rail franchise replacement processes plus the CrossCountry direct award (additional work funded by DfT).
- Develop the HS2 Passenger Panel, producing regular reports funded by HS2.
- Ensure the passenger voice is heard in any changes arising from the Shaw/Hendy/Bowe reviews of Network Rail.
- Work to ensure that the passenger voice is heard in the design of new rolling stock (work funded by train leasing companies, local authorities, manufacturers and, potentially, HS2).

### Bus

- Work to ensure the forthcoming Buses Bill places user needs at its heart. The Bill represents the biggest opportunity for 30 years to shape how bus services outside London are financed, structured and controlled. The implications for

bus passengers, present and future, could be far-reaching.

While not taking a view on the effectiveness of various structural proposals, we are determined that passenger views on what constitutes a good service, trust in service provision and that most basic requirement – better punctuality – run through discussions on the Bill.

- Work with local authorities and operators on any changes arising from the Bill: proposed new franchising or enhanced partnership arrangements, for example.
- Help spread the use of passenger-focused smart ticketing for bus passengers (initial work plus additional funding possibly from DfT, local authorities and/or operators).

### **Coach passengers**

- Use knowledge gleaned from our road user and bus passenger work to help improve the quality of coach services.

## Understanding the needs of transport users – insight and research

### Bus users

- Amplify the voice of bus passengers, through bus passenger priorities research, trust research and the views of non-users. Reach at least 50,000 passengers via the Bus Passenger Survey (funded by us along with local authorities and bus companies).
- Redevelop a BPS proposal for the Scottish and Welsh governments and operators for further consideration (funded by government and bus companies).

### Tram passengers

- Carry out and publish the 2016 Tram Passenger Survey (funded by us, operators and local authorities).

### Road users

- Promote the voice of road users. Develop, trial and publish the first wave of the new Strategic Roads User Survey. We aim to involve some 5000 road users this year.
- Run the existing National Roads User Satisfaction Survey from April 2016, in parallel with its above-mentioned replacement.
- Publish HGV drivers' views on the proposed new Kent lorry park.
- Conduct research into HGV drivers' experiences of Operation Stack (when next invoked).
- Publish work on cyclists', pedestrians' and horse riders' requirements of the SRN.
- Publish work on users' views of roadworks, road surfaces, rest facilities and Highways England comment and complaints handling.
- Publish work on the 18 Highways England route strategies, smart motorways and driver behaviour.

### Rail passengers

- Carry out and publish two waves of National Rail Passenger Survey, engaging over 60,000 passengers in the process (funded by DfT).

- Publish research to inform franchise specifications (funded by DfT).
- Publish new work on passenger views on compensation in collaboration with ORR (funded by DfT/ORR).

### **Smart ticketing**

- Publish research on transport users and smart ticketing in the North of England (funded by DfT).
- Carry out and publish additional work on passengers and smart ticketing (funded by DfT, national governments and transport operators).

### **New insights**

- Develop low-cost, online, 'always on' versions of our main tracker surveys (rail, bus and tram - including the measurement of emotional reactions to journeys). This will require funding from third parties.
- Set up and pilot the use of our Transport User Panel. This will include users recruited to the new road user panel.
- Place and use Transport Focus links onto others' apps and information sources (rail, coach, tram and bus operators and infrastructure providers).

## Transparency – being more visible, measuring and reporting performance

### Communicate

- Continue to provide a useful and proactive 24-hour press office.
- Publish some 12 major reports and 12 e-newsletters for passengers and road users.
- Gradually expand our use of social media, and use technology to better boost the user voice – for example, reconfiguring our website, webinars, interactive websites and instant messaging.
- Increase access to and usefulness of our research data and explore new digital/media channels.

### Track

- We will continue to track:
  - the number of transport users we engage with through consultation, research and our contact team
  - stakeholder views of the effectiveness of Transport Focus
  - staff attitudes.

### Report

- Our Board will meet in public three times a year.
- We'll update our online data tool each quarter.
- We will publish:
  - minutes of the Board committees on Audit and Risk Assurance and Remuneration
  - minutes of Board and Management Team meetings
  - monthly performance and financial reports.
- We will produce an Annual Report on our performance, activity and expenditure.

## Staff and board

Transport Focus can only be as good as the people that work for us.

### Staff

There are currently 55 staff, mostly based in offices in London and Manchester. Six staff are peripatetic. Transport Focus has staff who are motivated, energetic and capable, with low turnover rates.

We will continue to ensure that we have staff who want to work at Transport Focus by:

- working with them to ensure they continue to get the coaching, development and leadership they need to do their jobs and to progress
- making sure they clearly see how their work fits into Transport Focus's overall aims and objectives
- ensuring all staff are supported by responsive, engaged and capable line managers
- promoting diversity and equality in recruiting, retaining and developing staff to maintain broad access to opportunities across the organisation
- continuing to have a staff training and development budget
- making sure staff have the equipment they need to do their jobs
- making sure the organisation's processes support staff in their roles
- making sure we have clear, visible leadership for the organisation.

### Board

Transport Focus's Board is crucial to ensuring proper, proportionate governance for the organisation. Transport Focus currently has ten Board members. This includes one member appointed by each of the devolved governments for Scotland and Wales. All other appointments are made by the Secretary of State for Transport.

The Board, supported by staff within Transport Focus, will:

- provide oversight of progress against objectives and set those objectives in the first place
- oversee the corporate governance of the organisation including oversight of financial affairs, risk and remuneration
- challenge staff in a constructive way on the operation of the organisation discuss and set important media and policy lines the organisation takes on behalf of transport users.

## Priorities

We decided on the Workplan by asking these questions:

**1** Is the issue of direct concern to transport users?

- Do we have evidence it matters to them now or in the future?
- Is there proof of need/detriment?
- How many users are affected?

**2** Is it of direct concern to stakeholders?

- Do we have evidence it matters to them now or in the future?

**3** Does it add value to past, present or future work streams?

**4** Would the organisation lose credibility by not doing this?

**5** Is it timely?

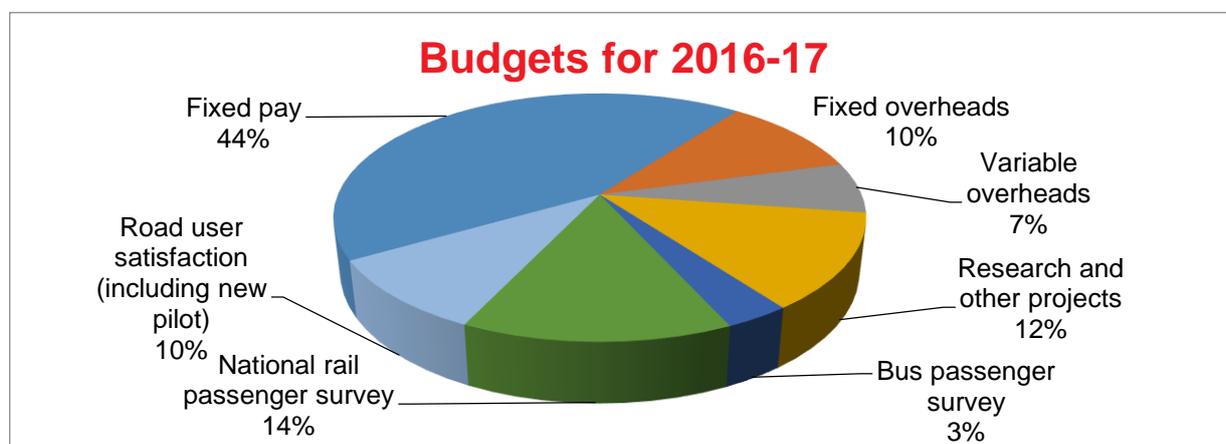
- Do we only get one chance?
- Have we already missed the opportunity to change or influence anything?

## Budget and funders in 2016-2017

Transport Focus's budget will be £3.84 million for passenger representation plus:

- National Rail and Bus Passenger surveys of £1.15m
- Strategic Road Network user representation (£1.15m)
- Road User Satisfaction Surveys inc new satisfaction measures pilot (£0.6m).

	2016-17		2015-16	
£000's	Budget		Forecast Outturn	
Fixed pay		2,911		2,812
Fixed overheads		698		703
Variable overheads		440		465
Total running costs		4,049		3,980
Research and other projects (net cost)		835		1,183
<b>Net operating costs</b>		<b>4,884</b>		<b>5,163</b>
National transport surveys:				
National Rail Passenger Survey	925		889	
Bus Passenger Survey (net cost)	225		225	
Road User Survey (including new pilot)	640		216	
Total national surveys		1,790		1,330
<b>Total net operating costs</b>		<b>6,674</b>		<b>6,493</b>
Additional projects funded by the Department for Transport and other stakeholders are included in the separate business plan for Transport Focus				



### Forecast outturn 2015-16

