

Mr. Paul Plummer
Chief Executive
Rail Delivery Group
2nd Floor
200 Aldersgate Street
London, EC1A 4HD

Transport Focus, Fleetbank House
2-6 Salisbury Square, London, EC4Y 8JX
w www.transportfocus.org.uk
t 0300 123 0840 f 0207 583 9848
e info@transportfocus.org.uk
direct 0300 123 0859
e anthony.smith@transportfocus.org.uk

28 November 2017

Our Ref: AS/2017/2019



T-12 Informed Traveller

Transport Focus is concerned that the focus on T-12 is slipping in some areas. We welcome the investment going into maintaining and improving Britain's railways. We also acknowledge that such valuable improvements for the future often come at the cost of disruption to today's passengers. Needless to say passengers do not like this disruption but, as we have seen from our research¹, the provision of timely, accurate information can help to minimise disruption and offset any frustration caused.

All our research shows that passengers expect as much notice as possible of planned engineering works. At the very latest they expect to be told about disruption when planning a journey and booking a ticket.

This is acknowledged by the industry. Network Rail's Licence requires it to provide "appropriate, accurate and timely information on relevant changes [to the timetable] to train operators". Timely, in this respect, is defined as not less than 12 weeks (T-12) before the date such changes are to have effect.

However, this is not consistently being met and we have seen numerous short-notice changes being made to the timetable within the 12-week timeframe.

The attached document sets out the results of a brief analysis into the provision of

¹ Rail passengers' experiences and priorities during engineering works. 2012. Passenger Focus
Planned rail engineering work – the passenger perspective, December 2015. Transport Focus
Rail passengers' experiences and priorities during engineering works. October 2017. Transport Focus



journey information in the run-up to Christmas. This is by way of a 'snapshot' rather than a formal piece of research but it still, nonetheless, highlights a number of problems in the way information has been provided.

This has a very real impact on passengers. People need to know what the railway is doing so they can book tickets for events, organise family occasions or even to decide whether to travel or not. If changes are made after T-12, it means some passengers will have made decisions on the basis of what they believed to be accurate information – only to be caught out. In the worst case this could result in passengers being stranded when they turn up for a train that is no longer running.

Failure to finalise the timetable also prevents the release of Advance Purchase tickets – for many people the only affordable means of travelling longer distances. All the established advice is to 'book early' for the best deals. And yet, if the timetable has not been finalised these fares are not available and only the more expensive 'walk up' tickets can be bought. Moreover, it is not always clear from journey planners whether these fares have been released and simply sold out or whether (and when) they will be released. This is particularly important at Christmas as people like to plan visits to friends and family well in advance and want access to the cheapest fares when doing so.

This has implications for passenger satisfaction and trust. Being forced to change plans can be very frustrating and breeds a sense of distrust in the railway. It also raises consumer rights issues: were passengers misled into buying something they would not otherwise have purchased?

T-12 requires train companies and Network Rail to work seamlessly together. However, we are concerned that the focus is slipping in some areas and that there are systemic issues that need addressing.

We believe there is a need for a network-wide review of the process and that RDG is in the best position to co-ordinate this.

We believe that this review should focus on:

- Ensuring that planned engineering work is finalised in sufficient time for train operators to 'bid' timetable changes 18 weeks in advance. Our understanding is that there is a strong correlation between not bidding at T-18 and not achieving T-12.
- Whether staffing resources (for both Network Rail and TOC) are sufficient to meet deadlines. The volume of engineering work has increased, have staff resources kept pace? This should not only include staffing levels needed to meet T-18/T-12 deadlines but also the availability of trained staff capable of 'fire-fighting' when legitimate short-notice changes are required or, for whatever reason, T-18 has been missed.



- A commitment to ensure that when timetable data in the public domain within T-12 is known to be wrong it must either be suppressed or 'flagged' to passengers as wrong. In our view that must happen 'at source' when it emerges from the System Operator so that it is visible to passengers planning journeys using National Rail Enquires, a train company website or through a third-party retailer.
- Ensuring that when timetables do change within the T-12 period TOCs/third party retailers are proactive in notifying passengers who have bought tickets, including taking reasonable steps to publicise the change where those who have bought tickets at a station without leaving an email address or phone number might see it.

We believe that T-12 is an important issue for passengers and that RDG is probably best placed to coordinate an industry-wide initiative to improve it. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Anthony Smith
Chief executive

CC: Dan Moore, Department for Transport
Stephanie Tobyn, Office of Rail and Road

etc.