

High Speed 2

Using passenger insight to aid High Speed 2 design

Foreword

Transport Focus aims to see passengers at the heart of all long-term planning. We welcome the commitment by HS2 to including future passengers' views in its work right from the beginning of the design process, which started three years ago.

In this report we share the findings from three areas of the research: payment and ticketing, luggage, and catering to find out what passengers really want from the railway of the future. We highlight improvements on current services that passengers think HS2 should consider to achieve 'brilliant basics' to improve the travel experience. We also

look at the role of technology and staff and how they can be used together to ensure stress-free journeys.

Members of the Customer Community have been pleased to see their ideas incorporated into HS2 documents as confirmation that they are being listened to and influencing developments. The community continues to engage with the project and provide a valuable source of feedback.

Anthony Smith

Chief executive, Transport Focus

Background

In 2014, HS2 teamed up with Transport Focus to discover what passengers want from the railway of the future in order to build this into the customer experience.

The Customer Community*

A panel of 38 rail passengers, made up of an equal gender split and a wide geographical spread. Passengers with disabilities, commuters, leisure and business travellers were also included.

New insights

The Customer Community gave views and ideas on a range of topics via workshops and an online community over the year. Here we look at payment and ticketing, luggage, and catering. All other research from this and previous years can be found [on our website](#).



Information design

*Previously called Passenger Panel

Key findings

- Future passengers continue to have high expectations for every touchpoint of the journey; a door-to-door experience.
- Panellists saw the potential for technology to enhance the customer experience and can see it playing a part throughout the entire journey.
- Technology cannot meet every passenger need and it is crucial that informed staff are present and visible as the face of HS2 to deliver outstanding customer service.
- HS2 needs to ensure that every new feature introduced serves a purpose and doesn't appear 'gimmicky'.

Payment and ticketing

The Customer Community had previously expressed frustration over buying tickets, explaining that it can be difficult to know that you are getting the best value. Community members expect train ticketing to 'go digital' as it is quick and convenient, but there must be a reliable backup and it must be seamless. Members were pleased to see that their ideas had been taken into account.



Reactions to HS2 payment and ticketing proposals

"I think HS2 has taken on many of the ideas we proposed, in particular having one ticket for your whole journey and being able to add on things like food and drinks. Maybe the purchase in advance of a beverage or food could carry a discount at time of booking."

- Members of the community like the idea of a 'travel wallet' where ticketing is paperless and passengers have everything they need for their journey (for example, tickets, maps and timetables) in one digital location.
- Members emphasise that passengers should easily be able to see which option is the best and cheapest for them.
- Members seek greater flexibility, for example being able to switch to another service without penalty.
- Members wondered whether tech-based ticketing solutions would exclude certain passengers who do not wish to adopt the digital 'travel wallet'. However members don't think it will be too great an issue as passengers will be more comfortable with technology by 2026.
- The value of well-informed staff cannot be underestimated.

Ticket office

There are no major concerns with HS2 having no ticket office on the basis that there are staff available to help passengers who may need additional support if the technology fails.

"If it really can be set up that a ticket can always be adapted to your needs, and picking the cheapest and best options is made easier, that would be amazing!"

"Being restricted on a certain train or route is so behind the times in an age where we can return/change anything. So many factors change fluidly that a ticket shouldn't be a worry."

"It will be the staff who will need to get it right first. A brand is a promise. Trust takes a lifetime to build and a moment to lose. It's the staff who will be charged with delivering a differentiated brand experience, not just great customer service."

Luggage

The Customer Community identified travelling with luggage as a main concern.

Carrying and manoeuvring heavy luggage, finding places to store it and keeping it safe are likely to result in negative emotions, such as stress and anxiety.

"During stage 1, I am already in a state of dread. I just want to be able to plan everything quickly and easily. I need to know exactly where I will be going and what I will be doing, especially so that carrying my luggage does not become difficult or painful. I dread having to rely on others."

"I don't think I have the physical strength to carry a large suitcase up and down flights of stairs or negotiate tight, busy corridors. I would try to plan as much as possible but there are always unknowns."



"Then towards the end of my journey, as my final destination point draws near I need prior notice of when I arrive. This could be as now, an onboard train announcement, but it would also be lovely to have a text alert on my mobile just in case I've dozed off by then"

What can HS2 do to improve this experience?

The Customer Community wants to feel **independent**, **in control** and **relaxed**. This could be achieved by:

- having correct information in advance of travelling (for example, knowing what the luggage provisions are for the entire journey) so passengers can make informed decisions and not have to worry
- ensuring stations are developed considering the additional needs of those travelling with luggage such as large toilet cubicles, availability of trolleys or clear signage
- a ticketing system that directs passengers to the best place to board
- friendly staff who can help with getting on and off the train
- providing secure storage space on the train with nearby seats so luggage can be easily accessed or checked on
- minimal unexpected changes such as last-minute platform alterations and service disruptions.

Catering

Food quality and good customer service are key factors in creating a memorable catering experience. 'Must-haves' are currently coffee and 'snacks', but passengers would also like healthier options and more choice for those with dietary requirements.

The community recognises that different passengers travelling on HS2 will have differing journey lengths, therefore catering requirements and expectations will vary.



Across all journey lengths, passengers want at least functional needs covered. Secondary to that are the emotional needs of taste, health and variety.

What do passengers want from HS2?

- Catering beyond 'basic' food is not deemed necessary on shorter journeys (30 minutes or less). Passengers are happy to buy food at the station, bring it with them or wait until the journey is over.
- Hot and cold food is necessary and expected for longer journeys, but passengers are worried about the smell food can produce.
- The prospect of a delivery service was met with some apprehension. For many, they simply cannot imagine that such a service would work flawlessly. Worries included causing delays, not receiving food, using up staff time and timing errors.

"On a journey of 90 - 120 minutes I am more likely to want a substantial cold or a full hot option. Full onboard, takeaway or supermarket ordering would all be appreciated."

"Sadly, I have never had any good food experiences on public transport in recent years. Nobody at all caters for the diet I now have to stick to."

What next?

Transport Focus is keen to carry on supporting passengers and will continue to work alongside HS2 for another year, aiming to provide valuable insights into the experiences of the everyday traveller.

Previous research can be found [on our website](#).



Contact Transport Focus

Any enquiries about this research should be addressed to:

Rosie Giles

Insight Advisor

e rosie.giles@transportfocus.org.uk

t 0300 123 0842

w www.transportfocus.org.uk

Fleetbank House
2-6 Salisbury Square
London
EC4Y 8JX

Transport Focus is the operating name of the Passengers' Council

Transport Focus is the independent consumer organisation representing the interests of:

- all users of England's motorways and major 'A' roads (the Strategic Road Network)
- rail passengers in Great Britain
- bus, coach and tram users across England outside London.

We work to make a difference for all transport users