



HS2 Customer Community

December 2017

Seat Assurance Concept

Debrief 19/01/18

Panel Participation

Average participation in 16/17
88%

Task	Date	Participation
Workshop Feedback	11 th Oct – 3 rd Nov	88%
Design of Station Interiors	23 rd Oct – 1 st Dec	100%
Toilet Facilities in Stations	23 rd Oct – 1 st Dec	85%
Seat Assurance	1 st Dec – 12 th Jan	88%



Seat Assurance

🔗 Seat Assurance

You may remember the afternoon sessions in September's workshop. One of them was with a digital agency discussing future concepts such as seat assurance.

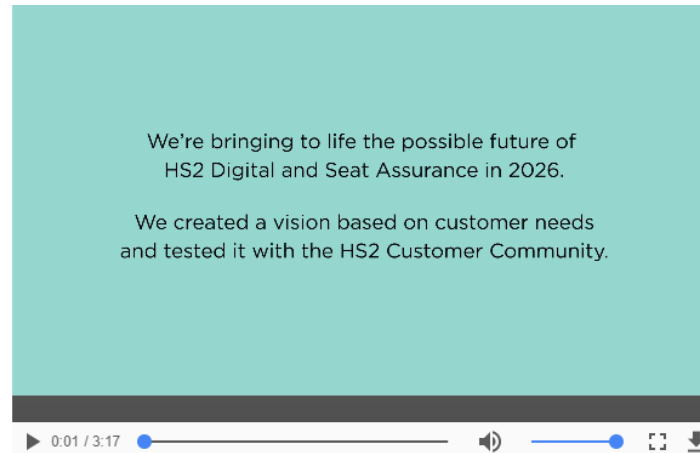
Based on the feedback you gave at the workshop, HS2 have developed a short video and would like to know what you think.

For this task, we would like you to watch the video and provide your thoughts on the ideas it covers. Make sure to turn the sound on!

Some things to consider:

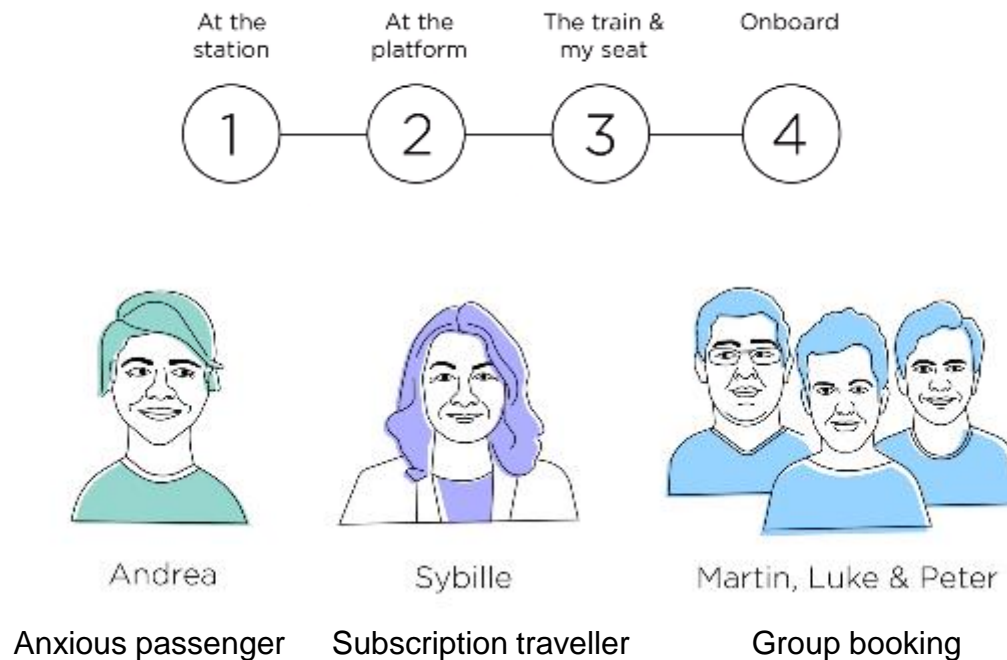
- Do you like/dislike what you see?
- Does it reflect the things you commented on?
- Is there anything missing?

You have until Friday 5th January to complete this task.



Seat Assurance Video

- The Community followed three different passenger bookings through their experience of the seat assurance concept



Overall, the video received positive reception from Community members

"I'm quite happy with the video and the mention of technology which was discussed during the session. In fact I would be **quite excited** knowing I can book everything even my coffee through my phone!"
– Female, 31-40, Commuter

"The ideas on the video are very positive and I find myself thinking **what a great future we have ahead**. The idea that we can connect and be contacted and advised almost frightens me, maybe it's my age. I love new technology and I know this is the future so **let's embrace it**."
– Female, 61-70, Leisure

"An app that gets to know me is great - a logical extension of the retail loyalty card tech - the more I can feel I am being **recognised and treated as an individual**, the more I potentially like investing my money and time as a customer."
– Male, 61-70, Commuter



"The idea of ordering and then adjusting in accordance to our ever changing demands and needs is an excellent step forward. This future is looking bright and this is **giving power back to the passengers** and will **enhance the experience** of all the users (hopefully)."
– Female, 41-50, Commuter

"My main concern was the app being unnecessary, "I've managed to find my train and seat up to now". But these ideas offer great **remedies to modern travel problems** and ways to **enhance our journeys**."
– Male, 31-40, Commuter

The Community liked the concept of seat assurance and being guaranteed a seat, however felt that it was a big promise to make and a challenge to deliver on

- Many felt that the promise of always getting a seat was a fantastic aspiration to deliver to passengers

What is Seat Assurance?

“To have a guaranteed reserved seat is a terrific innovation and will be really welcome.”
– Male, 61-70, Leisure

No matter when



No matter how

“How can you always be assured a seat when demand outstrips availability?”
– Female, 41-50, Business

- However they were sceptical about the logistics and implications of implementing this, and had many questions that the video did not answer:

- How will this work at peak times?
- Can I travel on a train if there are no seats left?
- What if I would prefer to stand?

“It sounds a lovely idea - but I don't know how it would work in practice e.g. if you tried to book a train and no seats were available would it not let you book? Or would it say you can book as long as you are happy standing?”
– Female, 24-30, Business

“Being guaranteed a seat is brilliant. However how will this work at peak times? For example, a large amount of people need to get on an 8:30 train - how will HS2 ensure that everyone can get on their train? I think if it came down to it commuters would be fine standing sometimes if it meant they could get to work on time. There would need to be an awful lot of trains to meet the demand and guarantee a seat within rush hour periods. If that can be done then great.”
– Female, 18-23, Commuter

“If seats are assured, and there is an opportunity to change seats, it follows that the journey will always be slightly underbooked. Surely this would have an adverse effect on the cost of travel. Would it even put an already expensive mode of transport out of a reach for some families?”
– Female, 71+, Leisure

Community members were impressed with the 'reminder to leave home' feature, where the app would advise the user when they should depart in order to catch their booked train

- Some members thought that this feature had real potential to be useful to passengers
 - They emphasised the importance of incorporating live data (e.g. local traffic information) to ensure the notifications are accurate
 - They suggested extending this to be a more personalised service, such as remembering your preferred route or how long you like to spend at the station before boarding
 - Suggestions also included it informing you before leaving whether there are free spaces in the station car park or added option to order a cab



“Getting reminder when to leave home - if this could work in real time taking into account traffic/remembering your location and preferred route/delays on tubes etc. that would be brilliant - also good to have it as push notification so that you don't have to go into the app for this.”

– Female, 18-23, Commuter

“Reminder I always find useful. There might be other 'lifestyles' too... how much time to arrive before meeting / time needed after / how much time preferred to spend at station before journey etc.?”

– Male, 61-70, Commuter

“I am not certain as to the value of a reminder time for leaving for the station. Even when HS2 has opened a manual check on traffic conditions or public transport operation would be much more reliable where someone is not close to the station. It might work reasonably well in a big city for most of the time but be of very limited use if in a rural area.”

– Male, 61-70, Leisure

- However, there were still concerns over how much one could rely on this to be accurate, particularly outside of big cities

Community members were keen to know the provision for those who choose not to use the app or even simply whose phone has run out of charge

“That all looks cool, provided you have a very charged up smartphone. What options will there be for those using non-smart phones who have run out of battery have a malfunctioning or broken phone slow or poor signal? Generally that all seems great, but there needs to be the same level of service and ease for those without the latest tech / with different needs or abilities.”

– Male, 23-30, Leisure

“I know in 2026 technology will be so much more advanced than it is now but I can’t help thinking that there will still be people not using modern tech and will want to book the old fashioned way at a ticket desk. What methods will be in place for people who don’t use these apps? For instance the person sat in a noisy carriage becoming anxious, how easy will it be for her to get a staff member’s attention, and the person who chose to sit in a different seat to do some work, how easy will that be to do without the app?”

– Female, 41-50, Leisure

- The Community had questions around the alternative offerings for those who would choose not to engage with the technology
 - How would they be able to access the same level of service?
 - Would passengers be disadvantaged for not using the app?

“As an older person I have a dislike of technology. Surprisingly I know some young people that do not like it either. Would it be absolutely essential to engage with the technology or would alternatives be in place? In some cases it would be difficult to see how alternatives could be provided. An example would be the alerts.”

– Female, 71+, Leisure

“The only thing is as this all really heavily on technology, what will be in place for those who are not heavily reliant on technology and may find these reminders intrusive.”

– Female, 18-23, Commuter



transportfocus

Community members were keen to know the provision for when the technology goes wrong

- As many passengers would engage with the technology offering and could be heavily reliant on it, the Community was interested to understand whether there was a contingency plan if there were technical issues



“The view from my seat on the main train from Derby to London St Pancras when the reservations computer broke. Tweet to East Midlands Trains brought the response ‘Thanks for the feedback’. What I am trying to say is that the system is important but it must be able to cope when things go wrong. The ideas in the video are great and will be wonderful if they work! I would need to see what happens when the system crashes which WILL happen.”

– Male, 51-60, Business

- Some emphasised the importance of good customer service in the face of technological failure
 - They reiterated the point that if promises are made to customers, they should have their expectations met and not be left disappointed

“Great app, meets lots of potential needs. I love the 'guaranteed always' seat approach... often the trick with guarantees is the fall back plan/resolution when it does not happen - customer service recovery wins me over for life!”

– Male, 61-70, Commuter

“The reservation process of seat descriptions need to be equally spot on - if I need a power source... I expect to have my own not potentially shared.”

– Male, 61-70, Commuter

The Community thought that being able to change a train booking provided passengers with the flexibility that modern life demanded... however they questioned whether this would be at an additional cost



- The concept of changing a booking, even at the last minute, was seen to be a great advantage and the Community wondered whether this would be possible without paying extra

“The idea of ordering and then adjusting in accordance to what our ever changing demands and needs is an excellent step forward.”
– Female, 41-50, Commuter

“I like the automatic assistant and think it's a great idea but only for the select few that would want that service. In terms of the flexibility for individuals plans changing, does this mean you can cancel your train free of charge? Or can just change it free of charge?”
– Male, 18-23, Leisure

“The auto booking of a later train is a nice feature so will HS2 not be charging for switching trains - great idea.”
– Male, 24-30, Leisure

- Some wondered whether it would be possible to interact with the app in a more manual way than demonstrated in the video by the personal assistant accessing the diary
- There were also questions around purchasing tickets outside the HS2 app and whether this level of flexibility would still apply

“Most of my meetings/appointments aren't in a Gmail Calendar or similar so if my meeting changes it's likely to be via text or e-mail. If there's a way to manually have an option like 'My plans have changed' and do that via the app easily I would much prefer that.”
– Female, 18-23, Commuter

“I would think that quite a few tickets will be purchased through a third party such as Train Line or another railway company. Someone in Southampton is likely to book the journey to London and to Birmingham in one single purchase. I wonder if they will have the same flexibility as compared to having used the HS2 app.”
– Male, 18-23, Leisure

The ability to split payment and tickets when booking group travel was seen as a real advantage

- The Community felt that this feature addressed and resolved current pain-points in group travel:

- Collecting and distributing paper tickets



“I really like the idea of being able to purchase a ticket for the group and send it to individual devices. This would make travelling in groups much easier so each person has access to their own ticket and doesn't have to rely on the token responsible friend in the group to keep a hold of everyone's tickets.”

– Female, 18-23, Business



- Sorting payment after purchasing

“Booking as a group but paying separately is really useful.”

– Male, 51-60, Business

“Really like the possibility of booking tickets for a group with the option of paying separately.”

– Female, 61-70, Business

“I also like that booking details are automatically forwarded for group bookings and that despite booking as a group you can pay separately, so I wouldn't have to rely on the individual who made the booking when travelling as a group.”

– Male, 18-23, Commuter

“The split bill concept is fab. I will always book something and then get the money back in driblets and drabs, this negates that entirely.”

– Male, 31-40, Commuter

Interestingly, the prospect of having coffee pre-ordered was felt to be one step too far

- Although many of the features within the app that automated a previously manual task were favoured, many felt that this crossed the line between being useful and controlling
 - There were also concerns about how the personal assistant would know your wishes this time, or if it would make a potentially incorrect assumption based on last time
 - Some expressed a preference for the opportunity for human interaction

“Dislike the pre-ordering of coffee although some may like this capability. For those with a set routine it would probably be great. I'd **feel a little out of control** if my phone did everything for me like that.”
– Female, 18-23, Commuter

“I hope that passengers who have ordered one coffee through the app will not find a coffee ordered automatically the next time that they travel!”
– Male, 61-70, Leisure

“I personally wouldn't take advantage of functions like ordering a coffee. **I'm happy to do this in person.** It reminds me of in Wetherspoons where you can order your food from the seat by downloading an app - not sure how popular it is, but for me I would rather go up and order.”
– Female, 24-30, Business



- Some questioned the usefulness of this feature when considering all the provisions offered at stations and on board

“I'm not really sure the food and drink bit is necessary or effective. Stations are getting more and more integrated with a selection of food places both inside and outside the building, and I'd worry that the app would not have all the options, or I'd be cynical that it was steering you to company owned outlets.”
– Male, 51-60, Business

- Getting the basic features right should be a greater priority than the 'bells and whistles'

“There's no point having bells and whistles such as pre-booking coffee or finding friends if I can't even get on the train, which I will have *had* to book in advance.”
– Wheelchair user

The Community loved the idea of a passenger being able to 'lock' and 'track' their bike, without needing to keep it in view

- They thought that it addressed current concerns and anxieties around both storage and security

"I thought the bike docking and status ideas are inspired. We spend so much on bikes these days that we would naturally want to keep an eye on it."

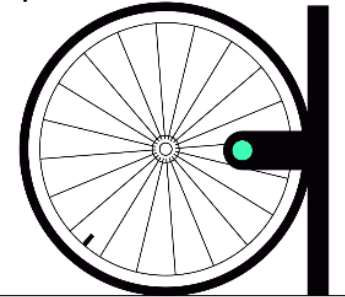
– Male, 31-40, Commuter



- Many suggested that this function would be extremely useful if extended to include luggage and pushchairs
 - Some stated that they would currently choose to stand with their luggage rather than finding a seat that was out of its reach
 - The ability to know the best places to board the train depending on your requirements was seen to be a great advantage for these passengers

"I think this should be available for luggage as well, as I always worry about the security of my luggage so if there was a system whereby you could 'dock' your luggage on the train in a similar way to docking your bike then I think would be really valuable."

– Male, 18-23, Commuter

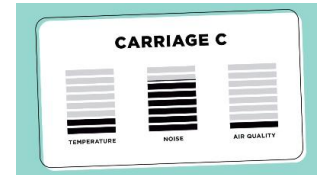


"Could you pre-book luggage space? That would be weight off my mind when travelling. Maybe a locker system or docking system could work. The viewing capability in particular is fantastic."

– Female, 18-23, Commuter

Community members were intrigued by the possibility of changing seats whilst on board – moving to get away from disruptive passengers

- Many felt that the option for an anxious traveller to subtly notify staff that they wished to change seats to move away from a group of noisy passengers was thoughtful and showed HS2's consideration for all potential passenger needs

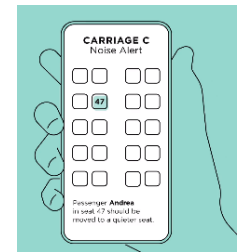


“This option is amazing for those who do want the help from on board staff, it is clear to me that HS2 really will cater to individual needs to make the whole community of passengers happy and that is really encouraging to see.”

– Female, 18-23, Commuter

“I really liked the seat assurance ideas demonstrated in the videos especially the moving people if things become too loud as well as understanding sometimes people are not in a rush all the time!”

– Community member with autism



- However, the Community raised some points of concern:
 - The system relies on passengers identifying themselves as anxious, which may be information that they do not wish to share
 - Additionally, some were interested to know if the same would be offered to those who have not indicated that they have special requirements



“Passengers could alert staff, even better if staff alerted first to be proactive. Moving me away from noisy passengers is potentially helpful, however I am still inconvenienced. Is it not about quietening them down for the benefit of the many that would be even better? Clearly, if passengers have special requirements then there is a need to accommodate these as well as general requirements.”

– Male, 61-70, Commuter

“Could there be a way to alert member of staff about someone who is perhaps violent or intimidating? That has been an issue in the past on trains I've travelled on.”

– Female, 18-23, Commuter

Community members were intrigued by the possibility of changing seats whilst on board – moving to a quieter area to do work

- Some of the Community saw value in the flexibility of being able to change seats throughout the course of the journey, whether that be to a quieter place to work, to access a power source etc.
 - The concept of ‘checking in’ and ‘checking out’ of a seat was seen to be favourable as it addresses a current issue on trains where it can be difficult to tell if an unoccupied reserved seat is available
 - There was also a suggestion of being able to ‘check in’ to another seat before leaving yours to avoid a fruitless journey to another carriage

“Moving to a quiet seat to work for a few minutes - sounds like a hot desk! Great idea if you're on a quieter train and the seat is available.”
– Female, 18-23, Commuter

“Checking out of one seat and into another is a good idea we discussed at the workshop. I've often moved away from my reserved seat to another for various reasons - **noisy or annoying passengers, to face the opposite way, to get a table or power socket, to spread out a newspaper, or even just nearer the front for a quick getaway at the destination if you're tight for time** - and feel guilty that there isn't a way to update the little display to say my previous seat is now free. Also if the app can tell you where else there are seats free that would mean you wouldn't necessarily need staff intervention, leaving the staff free to deal with other passengers. Could you reserve the alternative seat before moving, to avoid walking the length of the train to find someone else has beaten you to it?”
– Male, 51-60, Leisure

“What methods will be in place for people who don't use these apps? For instance the person sat in a noisy carriage becoming anxious, how easy will it be for her to get a staff members attention and the person who chose to sit in a different seat to do some work, how easy will that be to do without the app?”
– Female, 41-50, Leisure

- There was also confusion around how a passenger may benefit from this service if not using an app

What do Community members think has been missed? How could the video be improved?

- Some Community members felt that little thought had been given to those with accessibility requirements, e.g. wheelchair users, or this had not been reflected in the video
 - Will wheelchair users have the same promise of seat assurance as other passengers?

“What about wheelchair spaces? There are normally only two of these, at best, per train, and although my requirement is always declared on booking, I have, more than once, encountered the situation where the only available space(s) is/are already occupied, particularly on return journeys when my station is not where the train starts from. Will wheelchair users have the same assurance as other travellers? Will there be more wheelchair spaces available? It looks to me as if bicycle passengers, whom I encounter only very rarely, have been accorded a lot more attention than us wheelies. Always the afterthought.”

– Wheelchair user

“I don't think the fact that you can receive information on what train to take for your journey is particularly innovative as this is already available on apps such as City Mapper. Therefore, this concept will be pretty outdated and could be further improved by rating the environmental credentials of different journeys for example and the potential environmental, time and cost savings of travelling by HS2 compared to other modes of transport.”

– Male, 18-23, Commuter

- It was thought that some aspects could be even more forward-thinking and innovative, for example HS2 could aim to provide passengers with more information about their travel choices such as environmental, time and cost savings

“Keeping it simple and ad free is crucial. Don't want a station map with Starbucks plastered everywhere on it or whatever particular brand HS2 / the station had a sponsorship deal with, so many food and drink outlets in and around stations nowadays I would rather just decide myself than be forcibly marketed at. Using landmarks i.e. “turn left at WH Smiths” is more useful than “in 47.9 yards turn left.”

– Male, 24-30, Leisure

- Whilst many Community members liked the level of detail within the app, they didn't want to feel that their choices were being made for them e.g. encouraged to buy from certain partner vendors

Summary and Conclusions

- Community members were impressed by many of the concepts within the Seat Assurance video for their ability to make train travel on HS2 in the future easier and more enjoyable than today
- Certain features received great enthusiasm, such as split payment and bike docking
- The Community found the idea of being guaranteed a seat intriguing and aspirational, however couldn't understand how this could be executed without pricing some passengers out of the service
- Although they were in favour of many features, they expressed a desire to maintain a level of manual operation, to prevent taking too much control from the user
 - E.g. they were resistant to the automatic pre-ordering of coffee based on an assumption made by the personal assistant
- They felt that there was a lack of information within the video about how passengers who choose not engage with technology would benefit from the same level of service and choice offered to those who use the app
 - (e.g. promise of seat assurance, ability to change a booking at the last minute)
- The video also lacked content about how those with accessibility requirements could have the same assurance offered to other passengers