Great Western rail franchise: consultation response

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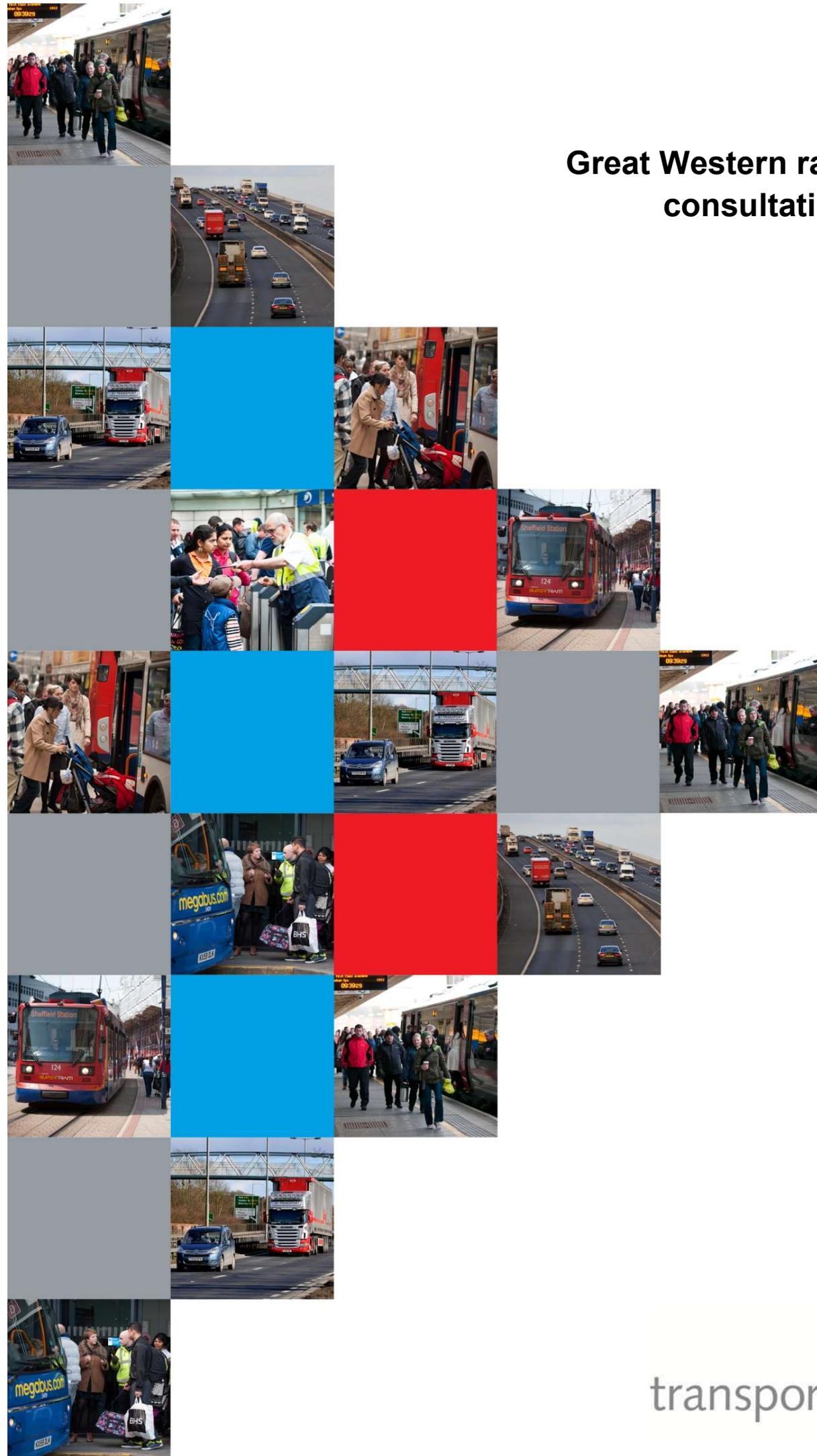
transportfocus

Contents

1. Transport Focus

Transport Focus is the independent public body set up by the Government to protect the interests of Britain's rail passengers, England's bus and tram passengers outside London, and coach passengers in England on scheduled domestic services. Since March 2015 we have also represented the interests of users of the strategic road network. We are an independent body funded by the Department for Transport (DfT).

Our mission for rail is to get the best deal for passengers. With a strong emphasis on evidence based campaigning and research, we ensure that we know what is happening on the ground. We use our knowledge to influence decisions on behalf of passengers and we work with the industry, passenger groups, governments and devolved transport authorities to secure journey improvements.

2. Introduction

Transport Focus welcomes the opportunity to provide a rail passenger's perspective as the future of the Great Western franchise is considered. This is an important and extensive network serving and connecting the far and central South West, Wales, West Midlands, Thames Valley, London and the South East.

We note the intention to negotiate a further direct award with the incumbent for a period of two to four years from 2019 and the focus of this consultation on the 2020s. That said, given it will then be over fifteen years since this franchise was completed, passengers will legitimately expect this interim contract to be ambitious.

We acknowledge the current challenges in delivering the extensive upgrade programme, particularly the electrification and infrastructure enhancements, along with the introduction of new rolling stock that in turn facilitate cascades across the network. This will continue to define the Great Western franchise in the third Direct Award. It is clear that there is still a great deal of work, and some further pain, to come. It is imperative that these obstacles are addressed with passenger needs at the forefront of all partners' minds and that, wherever feasible, the opportunities to build on the delivered improvements are maximised as rapidly as possible.

Whatever the stage of the franchise process it is vital that the needs of passengers using and paying for rail services are placed squarely at the heart of the contract. In this response our comments can be taken as applicable to either the next stage of a direct award or the specification and bids for the subsequent competition.

Passengers' top priorities for the franchise are:

- punctuality and reliability – at all stages of the train journey, not simply the timing of the train at its destination

- minimise and effectively manage disruptions – with planning and contingency arrangements placing passenger interests to the fore

- capacity – considering service frequencies and train layouts, optimising the availability of carriages and classification (as first or standard) appropriate to

demand, as well as how fares incentives might make a contribution to alleviating pressures

- information – for all stages of the journey but especially during delays and disruption

- value for money – encompassing the important service elements which drive this as well as the ticket price

- providing a clean and comfortable environment on the train

The Great Western operator also needs to ensure an embedded, genuinely customer-service focused culture at all levels and provide a personalised, rewarding passenger experience.

We are pleased to have engaged with the DfT from an early stage in the consideration of the future for the Great Western franchise. We have used discussions to highlight key passenger issues and the findings of our research on a range of subjects.

This formal consultation response draws on two rich seams of franchise specific data. It combines knowledge and understanding drawn from passenger reports of their current journeys on Great Western services with information on passenger priorities for improvement. Read together these two complementary studies provide a unique perspective on passenger needs from the franchise and provide hard evidence to inform the decisions to be made for the future.

In addition, we also reference findings from our wider research into a range of issues that are important to passengers. Our research, which will be detailed in further sections of this response, highlights the central importance to passengers of value for money, punctuality and capacity. These core needs must be the top requirements in the specification for the next franchise.

Our research into passenger understanding of, and desire for involvement in, the franchise process led to our emphasis on *Passenger Power!* and a call for more recognition of the passenger within the franchising system. Recent announcements of franchise policy have made welcome commitments to a greater emphasis on the quality of the passenger experience and enhanced arrangements for engagement and communication with customers. It is important these promises are brought to life in the specification for the next franchise and that passengers can see these ideals manifest in the services they receive.

It is vital that, throughout its duration, the franchise remains responsive to changing passenger needs. This means not only that there must be a clear understanding of passenger requirements at the outset but that there is an ongoing emphasis on consultation and engagement with stakeholders and a set of output measures that reflect passenger satisfaction.

There is an important role for the National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) in providing direct feedback from passengers using the services.

Transport Focus is committed to the promotion of passenger interests in the future decisions on the Great Western franchise. We will continue to work closely with DfT, the current operator and, in time, potential bidders to ensure that services address both current and evolving needs throughout the term of each and any contract.

2.1 Franchise consultation response

Our response to this consultation is based on our evidence of passenger needs and aspirations.

Transport Focus's approach to answering the consultation questions focuses largely on the higher level issues. Passengers and stakeholders across this very diverse network will all have their own experiences and specific ambitions which they will want considered in future plans.

It is important that DfT and the operator/bidders listen carefully to the views expressed by those whose lives are impacted by decisions about the future of the franchise and the day-to-day operations which result from this.

3. Great Western rail franchise – passenger research and implications for the franchise

3.1 The Transport Focus evidence base

Transport Focus is committed to underpinning our work to get the best deal for passengers with a solid evidence base: we have a considerable body of research on the issues passengers tell us matter to them. Much of this is directly relevant to the specification for the next Great Western franchise.

In this section we highlight the findings of our examination into passengers' priorities for improvement and trust in the rail industry. We also draw on NRPS data for information about the current experience on the franchise. Read together these complementary studies provide a unique perspective on passenger needs from the franchise and provide hard evidence to inform the decisions to be made for the future.

Other research is cited as applicable within following sections.

3.2 Rail passengers' priorities for improvement – Findings from 2017[1]

This 2017 study of passenger priorities allows us to compare the priorities of Great Western Railway (GWR) passengers against the national sample (Figure 1). It also allows us to examine the operator's results in more detail, such as by journey purpose (Figure 2), or route (Figure 3).

The priorities are shown as an index averaged on 100. An index of 300 is three times as important as the average and an index score of 50 is half as important as the average. This information can also be shown graphically to illustrate just how much the relative importance varies between the factors (Figure 4).

We can see that there are two stand-out factors for GWR passengers. The top priority of 'price of train tickets offers better value for money' is more than five times the average importance, and 'passengers able to get a seat on the train' is the second highest priority, at over three and a half times the average importance. Both of these are higher than their respective national averages (477 for value for money and 318 for getting a seat). Performance factors are also important to GWR passengers, they rank highly in GWR top 10, but index slightly lower than nationally.

'More trains on time than happens now' and 'less frequent major unplanned disruption, are the third and fourth-highest priorities for improvement, both over one and a half times the importance of the average factor. Sufficiently frequent trains ranks fifth with an index score of 150.

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[1] *Rail passengers' priorities for improvement*, 2017.
https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research-publications/publications/rail-passengers-priorities-for-improvement/

Following that, GWR passengers prioritise improving the on-board experience, with things like free Wi-Fi, well-maintained train interiors and clean toilets, as well as other elements of what can be regarded as 'core' elements of service in punctuality, reliability and service frequency.

'Train company keeps passengers informed about delays' ranks eighth for GWR passengers, with an index score of 108, making this a little above average importance in terms of priorities for improvement.

Comparison by journey purpose highlights the differing priorities of passengers. For example, 'Free Wi-Fi available on the train' is seventh priority for commuters and business travellers on GWR, but only tenth for leisure passengers. Whereas, clean and well maintained interiors and toilets on the train are much more important to business and leisure passengers than commuters. The standout difference amongst passengers on the three routes is the emphasis placed by long distance passengers on value for money; at 701 this is seven times more important than the average factor for this group.

Summarising the findings, it is clear that the top priorities for improvement largely focus on the basic elements of the rail service – value for money, getting a seat, punctuality, frequency, managing delays and provision of information, along with the comfort factors on the train. This is not to say the remaining priorities are not important to the passenger experience, it is just that they are not as important to improve as the top ranking.

We would like to see improvements to the delivery of these 'core' elements of the service, but also a real focus on improving the quality of experience overall, building on the extensive infrastructure and rolling stock upgrade programme and maximising the benefit to passengers. The new franchise should regard things once formerly seen as aspirations, like power sockets and free Wi-Fi, as things passengers now *expect* as standard.

The priorities research database (simulator) contains a wealth of information which can be analysed in many ways to explore how priorities vary by NRPS building block, demographic and journey purpose, amongst other things. We recommend its use to DfT, the current operator and potential future bidders to enable a detailed understanding of the aspirations of passengers to apply to the specification and plans for the Great Western rail network.

Figure 1: Passenger priorities for improvement 2017: comparison of GWR and Great Britain

	GWR		Great Britain	
Price of train tickets offers better value for money	526	1	477	1
Passengers able to get a seat on the train	369	2	318	2
More trains arrive on time than happens now	163	3	178	3
Less frequent major unplanned disruptions to your journey	152	4	166	4
Fewer trains cancelled than happens now	144	6	161	5
Trains sufficiently frequent at the times I wish to travel	150	5	156	6
Less disruption due to engineering works	104	10	116	7
Train company keeps passengers informed about delays	108	8	115	8
Free Wi-Fi available on the train	120	7	108	9
Inside of train is maintained and cleaned to a high standard	106	9	99	10
Journey time is reduced	99	11	98	11
Accurate and timely information available at stations	89	13	95	12
Well-maintained, clean toilet facilities on every train	94	12	85	13
Accurate and timely information provided on trains	77	14	83	14
Improved personal security on the train	59	19	78	15
Connections with other train services are always good	70	16	72	16
Good connections with other public transport at stations	65	18	69	17
Easier to buy the right ticket	73	15	65	18
Improved personal security at the station	49	20	64	19
Seating area on train is more comfortable	69	17	62	20
Stations maintained and cleaned to a high standard	46	22	46	21
More room to stand comfortably on busy trains	44	23	46	22
Train staff have a positive, helpful attitude	43	24	45	23
Station staff have a positive, helpful attitude	41	25	44	24
Free Wi-Fi available at the station	41	26	42	25
Sufficient space on train for passengers' luggage	48	21	42	26
More staff available at stations to help passengers	36	27	41	27
More staff available on trains to help passengers	35	28	41	28
Access from station entrance to boarding train is step-free	30	29	34	29
Easier to claim compensation when delayed	25	31	28	30
Better mobile phone signal on trains	25	30	26	31
Sample size:	1061		12803	

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Figure 2: Passenger priorities for improvement: comparison of GWR commuter, business and leisure passengers

	Commute		Business		Leisure	
Price of train tickets offers better value for money	452	1	563	1	594	1
Passengers able to get a seat on the train	307	2	396	2	430	2
More trains arrive on time than happens now	189	3	158	3	134	4
Less frequent major unplanned disruptions to your journey	173	4	157	4	124	6
Fewer trains cancelled than happens now	170	5	141	5	114	7
Trains sufficiently frequent at the times I wish to travel	168	6	137	6	135	3
Less disruption due to engineering works	121	8	104	11	85	13
Train company keeps passengers informed about delays	113	10	104	10	105	9
Free Wi-Fi available on the train	146	7	122	7	88	10
Inside of train is maintained and cleaned to a high standard	84	12	121	8	124	5
Journey time is reduced	119	9	91	12	79	14
Accurate and timely information available at stations	94	11	85	13	86	12
Well-maintained, clean toilet facilities on every train	73	14	110	9	111	8
Accurate and timely information provided on trains	83	13	73	15	72	17
Improved personal security on the train	54	20	53	19	66	19
Connections with other train services are always good	70	15	61	17	75	16
Good connections with other public transport at stations	68	16	55	18	67	18
Easier to buy the right ticket	63	17	69	16	86	11
Improved personal security at the station	49	22	44	22	52	21
Seating area on train is more comfortable	60	18	76	14	76	15
Stations maintained and cleaned to a high standard	44	23	46	21	48	22
More room to stand comfortably on busy trains	52	21	40	24	36	28
Train staff have a positive, helpful attitude	42	25	41	23	44	23
Station staff have a positive, helpful attitude	41	26	40	25	42	24
Free Wi-Fi available at the station	57	19	32	28	26	29
Sufficient space on train for passengers' luggage	43	24	50	20	54	20
More staff available at stations to help passengers	36	27	34	27	37	27
More staff available on trains to help passengers	33	30	34	26	38	25
Access from station entrance to boarding train is step-free	27	31	24	29	37	26
Easier to claim compensation when delayed	34	29	20	31	18	30
Better mobile phone signal on trains	35	28	21	30	17	31

Sample size: 158   128   774

Figure 3: Passenger priorities for improvement: comparison of GWR passengers by route

	London Thames Valley		Long distance		West	
Price of train tickets offers better value for money	465	1	701	1	459	1
Passengers able to get a seat on the train	288	2	405	2	397	2
More trains arrive on time than happens now	179	3	143	3	175	3
Less frequent major unplanned disruptions to your journey	156	7	138	5	170	4
Fewer trains cancelled than happens now	158	5	120	7	160	5
Trains sufficiently frequent at the times I wish to travel	170	4	136	6	158	6
Less disruption due to engineering works	112	9	91	12	117	7
Train company keeps passengers informed about delays	120	8	95	11	113	9
Free Wi-Fi available on the train	156	6	142	4	68	18
Inside of train is maintained and cleaned to a high standard	96	12	120	8	97	10
Journey time is reduced	101	10	100	10	115	8
Accurate and timely information available at stations	101	11	77	14	95	11
Well-maintained, clean toilet facilities on every train	83	14	108	9	88	12
Accurate and timely information provided on trains	88	13	66	16	79	15
Improved personal security on the train	64	18	41	21	52	20
Connections with other train services are always good	74	15	59	17	86	13
Good connections with other public transport at stations	71	16	51	18	82	14
Easier to buy the right ticket	67	17	77	13	75	16
Improved personal security at the station	55	21	33	24	44	22
Seating area on train is more comfortable	56	20	73	15	71	17
Stations maintained and cleaned to a high standard	46	23	41	20	43	23
More room to stand comfortably on busy trains	46	22	30	26	48	21
Train staff have a positive, helpful attitude	45	24	34	22	42	24
Station staff have a positive, helpful attitude	44	25	32	25	41	25
Free Wi-Fi available at the station	58	19	33	23	22	30
Sufficient space on train for passengers' luggage	42	26	44	19	57	19
More staff available at stations to help passengers	38	27	24	29	37	26
More staff available on trains to help passengers	37	28	24	27	36	27
Access from station entrance to boarding train is step-free	26	31	24	28	28	28
Easier to claim compensation when delayed	29	30	16	31	26	29
Better mobile phone signal on trains	31	29	21	30	19	31

Sample size –journeys starting and finishing within the route: *67*   *218*   *87*

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Figure 4: GWR passengers' priorities for improvement – relative importance

GWR passengers' priorities for improvement 2017 - relative importance. *Sample size: 1061*

Priority	Value
Price of train tickets offers better value for money	526
Passengers able to get a seat on the train	369
More trains arrive on time than happens now	163
Less frequent major unplanned disruptions to your…	152
Trains sufficiently frequent at the times I wish to travel	150
Fewer trains cancelled than happens now	144
Free Wi-Fi available on the train	120
Train company keeps passengers informed about…	108
Inside of train is maintained and cleaned to a high…	106
Less disruption due to engineering works	104
Journey time is reduced	99
Well-maintained, clean toilet facilities on every train	94
Accurate and timely information available at stations	89
Accurate and timely information provided on trains	77
Easier to buy the right ticket	73
Connections with other train services are always…	70
Seating area on train is more comfortable	69
Good connections with other public transport at…	65
Improved personal security on the train	59
Improved personal security at the station	49
Sufficient space on train for passengers' luggage	48
Stations maintained and cleaned to a high standard	46
More room to stand comfortably on busy trains	44
Train staff have a positive, helpful attitude	43
Station staff have a positive, helpful attitude	41
Free Wi-Fi available at the station	41
More staff available at stations to help passengers	36
More staff available on trains to help passengers	35
Access from station entrance to boarding train is…	30
Better mobile phone signal on trains	25
Easier to claim compensation when delayed	25

100 average importance

3.3 NRPS and drivers of satisfaction and dissatisfaction

The National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS), together with an analysis of the drivers of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, is a comprehensive source of information about passenger perceptions of the current franchise. It can also be broken down to show variations across the three 'building block' groupings of rail services on GWR[2].

Evidence from the NRPS reinforces the importance of punctuality and reliability and handling disruption, alongside capacity and value for money, as the highest priorities identified for the franchise. Tables detailing the NRPS headline factor scores for GWR and the three component building blocks are provided in Appendix 2. We have also included a comparison between the satisfaction of passengers travelling at weekdays and weekends, and for GWR overall and the London Thames Valley block also in the peak and in the off-peak.

The Autumn 2017 NRPS results show that overall satisfaction with GWR is at 79 per cent, a decline from a high of 84 for Autumn 2015 and Spring 2016. It also shows that London Thames Valley is generally the weakest performer of the three building blocks.

Table 1: NRPS - Overall Satisfaction and Value for Money, GWR and building blocks, Spring 2014 – Autumn 2017

Percentage satisfied	Spring 2014	Autumn 2014	Spring 2015	Autumn 2015	Spring 2016	Autumn 2016	Spring 2017	Autumn 2017
Overall satisfaction								
GWR total	80	81	81	84	84	82	81	79
West	80	81	83	83	83	81	84	82
Long Distance	82	81	83	88	86	82	84	82
London Thames Valley	80	83	77	81	82	82	78	78
Value for money								
GWR total	48	48	49	53	50	51	48	49
West	61	59	63	69	64	66	64	64
Long Distance	42	43	43	47	43	46	46	50
London Thames Valley	45	46	45	48	47	47	39	40

Drilling down into the detail in the NRPS scores throws up plenty of room for improvement across the network. The top two priorities for improvement of value for money and level of crowding are reflected in low satisfaction scores, particularly on certain parts of the network and at certain times. Satisfaction with value for money is at 49 per cent, with a previous high score of 53 in Autumn 2015. Across the three building blocks the value for money scores are 64, 50 and 40 per cent for West,

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[2] Appendix 1 provides definitions of the NRPS building blocks

Long Distance and London Thames Valley respectively. It's significantly lower among peak time travellers, of whom only 20 per cent are satisfied

Looking at passengers' experiences of crowding shows that 66 per cent of GWR passengers are satisfied, It's predictably lower for commuters (56 per cent) than business or leisure passengers (68 and 71 per cent respectively).

There are several factors for which satisfaction with London Thames Valley services falls well below both elsewhere on GWR, For example, punctuality and reliability is a key driver of satisfaction, yet only 66 per cent of London Thames Valley passengers are satisfied with this, compared to 74 and 75 per cent for passengers on West and Long Distance routes. Similarly, dealing with delays scores just 31 per cent on London Thames Valley, whilst this is 40 per cent on West and 54 per cent on Long Distance.

3.3.1 Drivers of satisfaction

Figures 5a and 5b show the importance of punctuality and reliability as a driver of satisfaction for GWR passengers overall at 47 per cent. The cleanliness of the inside of the train is the second biggest driver of satisfaction overall on GWR, at 8 per cent, closely followed by personal security whilst using the station at 7 per cent. Length of time the journey was scheduled to take, comfort of the seats and level of crowding are all at 5 per cent.

The cleanliness of the inside of the train is a particularly important driver of satisfaction with Long Distance (23 per cent) and West services (15 per cent). Other notable drivers on the various routes are level of crowding on West (15 per cent) upkeep and repair of the train on London Thames Valley (14 per cent) and the overall station environment on Long Distance (13 per cent).

3.3.2 Drivers of dissatisfaction

An analysis of the factors that drive passenger dissatisfaction also echoes the importance of getting the core product right. (Figure 6). Punctuality and reliability, and how the train company deals with disruption, are overwhelmingly the main drivers of dissatisfaction (29 per cent and 24 per cent respectively), followed by the level of crowding (9 per cent). Where delays are not dealt with well, passengers will be dissatisfied. Therefore we call on renewed emphasis on provision of comprehensive, live information at stations and on trains, with helpful staff who are informed and empowered to help passengers, especially when delays occur. Any new trains, and upgrades to existing trains, must be able to receive the live Darwin feed to supply information screens.

Figure 5a: Drivers of satisfaction, NRPS Spring 2017/Autumn 2017: Great Western Railway

Great Western Railway Drivers of Satisfaction, Spring 2017 - Autumn 2017 NRPS

- 15%
- 4%
- 4%
- 5%
- 5%
- 5%
- 7%
- 8%
- 47%

- ☐ Punctuality/reliability (i.e. the train arriving/departing on time)
- ☐ Cleanliness of the inside
- ☐ Your personal security whilst using that station
- ☐ Comfort of the seats
- ☐ Length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed)
- ☐ Level of crowding
- ☐ Frequency of the trains on that route
- ☐ Rating of how train company dealt with these delays
- ☐ Other - Individual factors under 3%

**Figure 5b: Drivers of satisfaction, NRPS Spring 2017/Autumn 2017:
Great Western Railway building blocks**

Great Western Railway Drivers of Statisfaction by
Building Block, Spring 2017 - Autumn 2017 NRPS

Long Distance	36%	23%	13%	7%	5%	16%
London Thames Valley	50%	14%	9%	9%	8%	4% 6%
West	39%	15%	15%	7%	7%	8% 5% 4%

- ☐ Punctuality/reliability (i.e. the train arriving/departing on time)
- ■ Cleanliness of the inside
- ☐ Level of crowding
- ■ Up keep and repair of the train
- ■ Overall station environment
- ■ Comfort of the seats
- ■ Length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed)
- ■ Helpfulness and attitude of staff on train
- ■ Provision of information about train times/platforms
- ■ Frequency of the trains on that route
- ■ Rating of how train company dealt with these delays
- ■ Your personal security whilst on board the train
- ■ Value for money for the price of your ticket
- ■ Other - Individual factors under 3%

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Figure 6: Drivers of dissatisfaction, NRPS Spring 2017/Autumn 2017: Great Western Railway

Great Western Railway Drivers of Dissatisfaction by Building Block, Spring 2017 - Autumn 2017 NRPS

☐ Punctuality/reliability (i.e. the train arriving/departing on time)

☐ Rating of how train company dealt with these delays

☐ Level of crowding

☐ Availability of staff on the train

☐ Frequency of the trains on that route

☐ Other - Individual factors under 3%
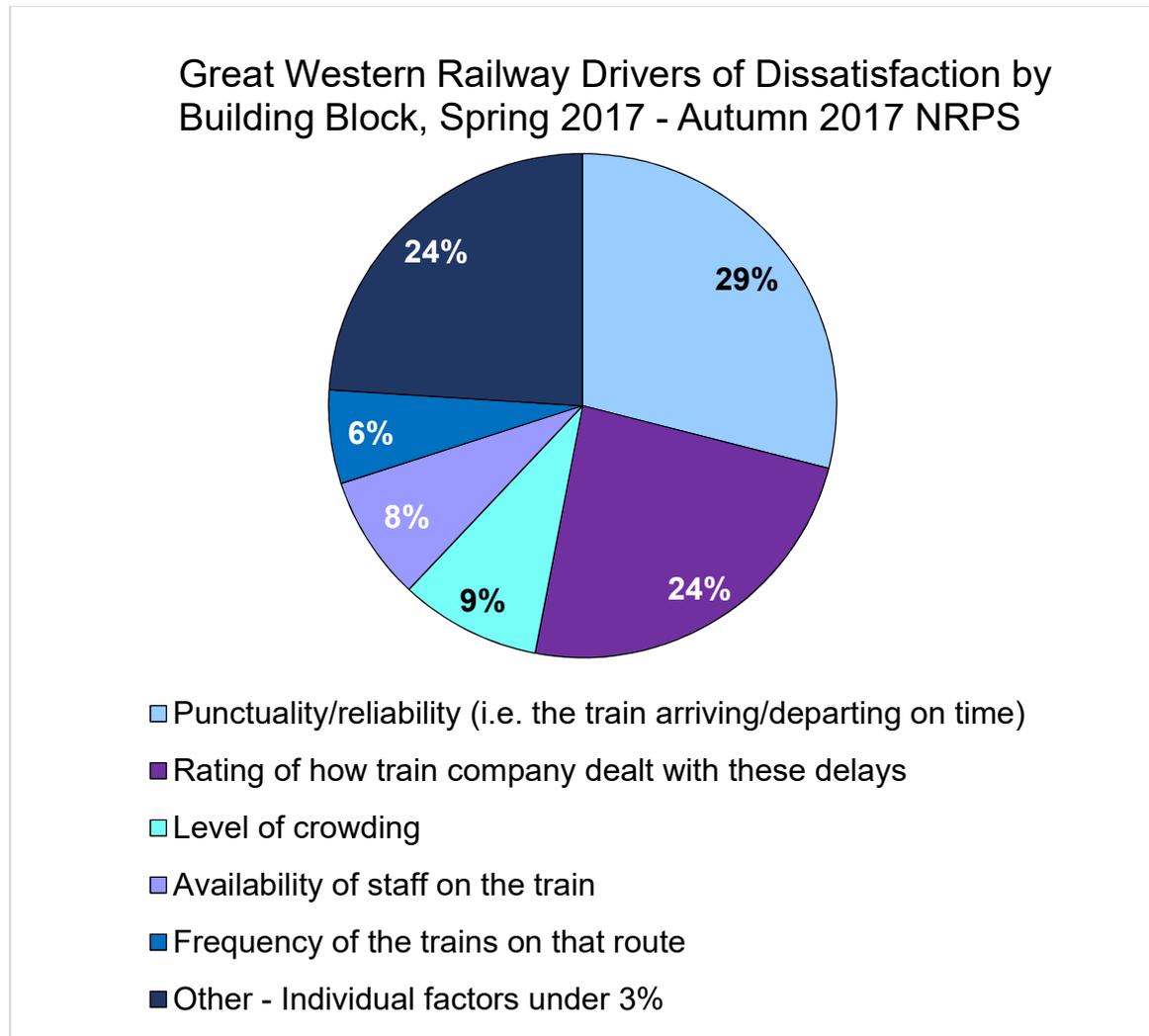
3.4 Qualitative research into passengers' experiences and aspirations for the future

As part of developing the specification for the future Great Western franchise, we encourage the Government to work with us at the appropriate time to explore and understand the experiences and aspirations of passengers in more detail. We have carried out focus group research to inform other franchise competitions, which has proved invaluable in providing understanding of the needs of passengers, and thus in shaping the narrative of the franchise specification. Once the modernisation programme currently underway has been completed, we believe such an exercise would be very worthwhile as part of the next Great Western franchise competition.

3.5 Recommendations - top level priorities for the franchise

Analysis of the passenger priorities for improvement, drivers of satisfaction/ dissatisfaction and the NRPS shows a number of factors that should be top level priorities for the next Great Western franchise.

Great Western is a diverse network, covering a large geographic area and catering for a range of different markets. We can see from our research that on parts of the network, passengers need to see improvements to the basic, core elements of the service – such as punctuality and reliability, getting a seat and value for money. These expectations are in the here and now but, particularly once the delivery of the upgrade projects is completed, passengers will want to see a step change in their experiences on this network.

Beyond the basic elements of service, passengers would like to see the operator respond to the more quality-focussed elements of the journey experience such as power sockets and free Wi-Fi, more comfortable seats and improvements to catering. Friendly, helpful, and well-informed staff are important at stations and on trains to help people make their journeys in confidence with the information they need.

This franchise must identify and improve those parts of the network where the basic elements of the service are falling behind, and then look to improve the quality and consistency of service across the board, delivering against passengers' higher expectations. We would like to see the current operator embrace this challenge in any new contract and set the direction to become a market-leader in providing an outstanding whole-journey experience. This will provide the firm foundations on which the subsequent franchise can build.

Our research clearly shows:

- Delivering a punctual, reliable service is rail passengers' fundamental requirement of the operator.

But it also identifies other key areas for improvement in the next Great Western franchise:

- Capacity, crowding and service frequency – considering service frequencies and train layouts, optimising the availability of carriages and classification (as first or standard) appropriate to demand, as well as how fares incentives might make a contribution to alleviating pressures. Services should be sufficiently frequent to allow passengers to use the train at the times they wish to travel.

- On-board experience and comfort – The IET fleet should deliver many of the modern facilities that passengers' want (e.g. fold down tables, wifi, power sockets). Any new franchise will also have to demonstrate how these will be provided across the wider fleet.

- Ticketing, retail and value for money – encompassing the important service elements which drive this as well as the ticket price. Passengers should see a step change in the usability and functionality of TVMs and the introduction and

scope of smart ticketing. They need to be able to select and easily obtain the best and most appropriate fare for their journey delivered through the medium of their choice.

The Great Western operator also needs to ensure an embedded, genuinely customer-service focused culture at all levels and provide a personalised, rewarding passenger experience. This will require a genuinely engaged and empowered workforce for effective delivery of high standards to passengers.

These points, and other elements that require consideration for the future of the Great Western franchise, are developed in the remainder of this document. Where relevant, we provide enhanced details of key topics and our policy perspective on wider issues related to rail franchising.

4. Response to consultation questions

4.1 Future Priorities
Question 1: Franchise objectives for the 2020s.
a) To what extent do you agree or disagree with these objectives, and why?
b) Are there any priorities you would change or add, and if so why?

We propose the following core objectives for the Great Western franchise in the 2020s:

- Provide safe, punctual and reliable services with enough seats and space for people who want to use them;
- Focus on the needs of the travelling public to provide an excellent and continually-improving customer experience for all passengers, whatever their particular needs and abilities;
- Maximise the benefits for passengers from the current transformational investment in the Great Western railway network;
- Maximise the contribution of the railway to driving local and regional economic growth, enabling planned growth in housing, and meeting the wider needs of citizens and society across the whole of the franchise area;
- Be a responsible employer who invests in the welfare and the development of its workforce, motivating staff and equipping them with the right skills to provide the best possible customer service;
- Strengthen the connection between the railway and the communities it serves, supported by strong relationships with all those who have an interest in the franchise and the services it provides;
- Continue to improve the environmental performance of the railway and support wider environmental objectives by providing an attractive alternative to more polluting modes, and improving measures such as energy and water consumption and recycling;
- Develop close collaborative working with Network Rail and other partners, bringing the operation of track and train closer together to deliver the best possible service for passengers and drawing in funding from the widest possible range of sources;
- Work with the Government and other agencies to support the development and delivery of other major rail investment schemes, such as the proposed western rail link to Heathrow, East-West Rail and the interface with HS2 at Old Oak Common; and
- Operate efficiently, providing best value for taxpayers' and passengers' money, thereby ensuring the maximum possible resources are available for further service improvements.

4.1.1 Priorities

In 2017 we carried out research into rail passengers' priorities for improvement[3]. The research showed that the number one priority for improvement for GWR passengers

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[3] *Rail Passengers' priorities for improvement, 2017 Rail passengers' priorities for improvement*, 2017.

was the value for money of the price of the ticket, at over five times the importance of the average factor. The most recent wave of the National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS)[4] revealed that less than half GWR passengers are satisfied with value for money whilst just under a third of passengers are dissatisfied. Ensuring that the franchise operator delivers better value for money to passengers has to be a key priority for the next franchise and we should like to see this explicitly stated as an objective.

That said, value for money is about more than just the price of the ticket. Passengers consider the whole journey experience against the money they have paid when considering whether their ticket price represents value for money. As such, the objectives set out in the consultation document largely address passengers' core needs. Key priorities for improvement centre on improving capacity, punctuality and reliability and improving information provision, especially during disruption. NRPS shows that punctuality and reliability is the number one driver of both overall satisfaction and also dissatisfaction for GWR passengers. How GWR deals with delays is the second and also substantial driver of dissatisfaction, and was in fact the most significant driver until overtaken by punctuality and reliability in the most recent wave.

We should, however, welcome an explicit reference in the objectives to delivering both frequencies and service patterns that respond to aspirations across the network for regular and timely services, including early mornings, evenings and weekends. Connectivity is also important, especially linkages with other public transport and ensuring access to the railway is convenient through a range of modes.

Transport Focus strongly supports the objective to focus on the needs of the travelling public, providing an excellent and continually-improving customer experience for all passengers, whatever their particular needs and abilities. It is important that the railway is accessible and open to all and strives to reach new heights of quality and service. The objective around investing in the welfare and development of the workforce and equipping them with skills to provide the best possible customer service will also support this.

One objective that perhaps could be more deliberately articulated is to deliver accurate and useful information for all stages of the journey through a range of channels to make access as simple as possible whatever the passenger needs. A reference to the provision of high quality station environments, with appropriate facilities and services and supportive of passengers' personal security would be helpful.

It is also vital to take every opportunity to maximise the benefits for passengers from the current transformational investment in the Great Western railway network. There

https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research-publications/publications/rail-passengers-priorities-for-improvement/
[4] https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research-publications/publications/national-rail-passenger-survey-nrps-autumn-2017-main-report/

is a major programme being delivered, which is the cause of some considerable inconvenience to passengers. The staged introduction of improvements as scope becomes available will help demonstrate the progress being made towards the ultimate goal of a modern, efficient, easy-to-use passenger-centric railway. This will be facilitated by the objectives around collaborative working with Network Rail and other partners and supporting the development and delivery of other major rail schemes on or around this network.

4.1.2 Getting the basics right: punctuality and reliability

The 2017 research, *Rail passengers' priorities for improvements*, found that 'more trains arrive on time than happens now' and 'less frequent major unplanned disruption, are the third and fourth-highest priorities for improvement for GWR passengers, whilst 'fewer trains cancelled than happens now' is sixth. These factors are all around one and a half times the importance of the average factor.

Punctuality and reliability is of critical importance to passengers, and particularly to commuters. Our research, *Train punctuality: the passenger perspective*[5], demonstrates a clear link between punctuality and overall satisfaction, which declines one and a half percentage points for every minute of lateness for all passengers and three percentage points for commuters.

Concerns with performance can be felt more acutely by commuters than by leisure or business travellers. Many leisure and business users find delays less frequent in off-peak hours and these also tend not to cause such significant overcrowding when they happen. In addition, leisure passengers often feel less time sensitive so are not as frustrated by minor delays. The NRPS shows that 73 per cent of GWR passengers travelling off-peak are satisfied with punctuality and reliability, eleven points higher than passengers travelling in the peak.

Table 2: Autumn 2017 NRPS satisfaction with punctuality and reliability

Percentage satisfied	Great Western Railway	Long distance	London Thames Valley	West	Peak	Off-peak
Punctuality/reliability	71	75	66	74	62	73

Around three in four passengers on West and Long Distance journeys are satisfied with punctuality and reliability but this drops to 66 per cent on London Thames Valley and to 62 per cent amongst GWR peak passengers overall. For GWR overall, punctuality and reliability has been on a declining trend since Autumn 2015.

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[5] *Train punctuality: the passenger perspective*, November 2015

The Great Western operator must be seen to take action to eliminate causes of delays within its control, such as staff shortages. Running trains with the maximum number of carriages during periods of disruption would also help alleviate overcrowding issues arising as a knock on effect of delays and cancellations.

4.1.3 Providing sufficient capacity

There is an important capacity challenge to be addressed on GW. 'Passengers able to get a seat on the train' is the second highest priority for improvement across all journey purposes, with index scores of 307, 396 and 430 for commuters, business and leisure passengers respectively, making this between three and four and a half times more important than an 'average' factor.

Table 3: Autumn 2017 NRPS satisfaction with capacity

Level of crowding	Great Western Railway	Long distance	London Thames Valley	West	Peak	Off-peak
Satisfied	66	72	65	58	64	66
Dissatisfied	20	16	20	29	n/a	n/a

NRPS shows that there is some variation in the levels of satisfaction across each of the building blocks, with the West scoring lowest at just 58 per cent. However, it is the levels of dissatisfaction that are most striking, with nearly a third of West passengers dissatisfied, a fifth of London Thames Valley and one in six Long Distance passengers.

We have recently seen an increase in complaints about overcrowding on the Cardiff to Bristol route

With numbers of people using the network expected to grow, addressing passengers' concerns about capacity is important. This means not only allowing passengers making shorter journeys to use the train easily and stand safely in a degree of comfort, but also providing sufficient capacity for passengers making longer journeys to sit in comfort.

Whilst we recognise that the plans for the network over the next few years will increase capacity we suggest that this important issue remains closely monitored and expectations of future growth are reviewed and planned for.

4.2 The structure of the franchise

Our research with passengers has demonstrated that their requirements focus more

on the delivery of an effective service rather than who runs the rail operation[6]. Thus, the significant issue to be assessed in any consideration of remapping must be the outcomes this would deliver for passengers.

A critical factor that must be assessed is what structure or operator will be best placed to deliver and manage services, maintain the trains, and provide the best response to passenger needs. The balance between co-ordination and competition, as well as the impact of introducing additional operators at key stations must all be considered, especially where this may add complexity to journeys or operations. Detailed proposals should be developed and subject to full consultation.

There will be benefits and drawbacks associated with splitting the franchise, or transfers, and the overall balance of these for the majority of passengers must be the key to any decision. The objectives for any change should be clear, there should be a transparent evaluation of the costs of any re-organisation and clarity about how they will be met. Passengers should not have to bear the price of changes initiated principally for organisational reasons.

Should any services transfer to or from Great Western then existing arrangements for passenger access to discounted tickets for certain journeys (e.g. Groupsave and Weekend First) should be maintained or comparable products provided. Passengers should not suffer as a result of reorganisation.

Should services to any destinations transfer, in whole or in part, there must be a requirement for effective liaison between operators, particularly in relation to information, service disruption, connections and the management of station facilities. There must also be a clear agreement over responsibilities for complaints handling and compensation claims during any transition periods.

4.2.1 Question 2: Do you agree or disagree with the proposals for splitting the Great Western franchise into smaller franchises? Why?

Transport Focus has not carried out any specific research looking at passenger views regarding any potential split of the current Great Western franchise nor what forms it could take if it was to be progressed. However, in considering the appropriate structure for the future, the key issue to address has to be what will enable the best way of delivering high quality, reliable services for passengers.

The GW franchise is undoubtedly large, diverse and complex, and until 2006 was three separate operations. The benefits of the current amalgamation are recognised in the consultation document, which also sets out the apparently finely balanced pros and cons for retaining it as a whole or splitting into smaller franchises. The significant amount of work and major organisational change that any split would entail is also recognised.

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[6] Giving passengers a voice in rail services, 2013

This factor, in itself, suggests to us that now is not the time to undertake this restructuring. The expectation of a third direct award to Great Western Railway is driven by the ongoing upheavals on the network and the continued process of change. The organisation, along with Network Rail, is struggling to deliver reliable performance against a backdrop of significant engineering work and fleet transformation that is set to continue until a sufficiently steady state to enable a competition is achieved. Resources and attention in this franchise should remain resolutely focused on these vital tasks to ensure the best possible service provision to passengers is delivered.

An assessment of future options and any case that justifies the upheaval that a restructure will entail, as well as the implications of change, may best be done once the franchise is in a more stable period of operation. Feedback from the current consultation and potential alternative approaches should also be considered, from the perspective of what will deliver the best outcomes for passengers.

4.2.2 Question 3a: Giving reasons, do you agree or disagree with the options for:
- Transferring Greenford branch services to the Chiltern franchise
- Transferring the existing Brighton – Southampton portion of the Bristol-Salisbury-Southampton-Brighton service to the Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern franchise
Again, Transport Focus has not explored passenger views regarding any transfer of Greenford branch services. We did, though, assess views on a previous proposal for splitting services East of Portsmouth and found substantially negative views about this[7].

On Greenford, there is minimal articulation about the drivers for any change or about the benefits or dis-benefits this may generate for passengers. However, in our 2014 consultation response we observed that once Crossrail is fully open to Reading and Heathrow, the West Ealing to Greenford shuttle will be notable as a DfT-specified service wholly within the TfL area. It will also be a diesel outpost on what will be a largely electric railway.

Thus, as a discrete element of the network, there could be some merit in moving it from GW. This would make a small reduction to the overall size and financial scale of the franchise which might support other objectives around a future competition. However we wonder, despite the fact that the current operator delivers good levels of passenger satisfaction, whether Chiltern is the most obvious alternative and suggest a more detailed rationale for this proposal, or other alternatives, is required for informed consideration.

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[7] Great Western passenger research conducted in 2011, available on request

For passengers travelling beyond just the Brighton – Southampton stretch of the longer service, the transfer of this portion would have negative implications. There are also advantages to providing a non-London route from the South West to significant destinations in the South East and operational efficiencies alone are not a sufficient reason for curtailing a valued service. However, releasing diesel trains to provide much needed capacity elsewhere on the network supports this case, as does the benefits that would derive from a more consistent and regular service pattern on the East Coastway and the prospect of more seats afforded by using electric trains here instead.

If this proposal is to proceed then there would need to be a range of mitigations for passengers that would be compelled to change during their longer journey and a requirement to maintain not just sufficient capacity but also journey frequencies between Brighton, Portsmouth and Southampton.

4.2.3 Question 3b – what other locations or routes do you think should be considered for adding to the franchise or transferring to another franchise, and why?

Notwithstanding the caveats in 4.2 above, we note that Great Western is a large, complex and highly differentiated franchise and a product of combining three previously separate franchises. We agree that there may be merit in exploring the synergies between various franchise areas and the potential benefits to be gained by reviewing which services should sit in which operation.

A number of possibilities that might be explored come to mind:

- Given the Cross Country competition is imminent we wonder whether this might provide opportunities to explore the interplay between these franchises.

- Outliers at the further extent of the GW network, such as Reading to Gatwick may also warrant some thought.

- The opportunities to develop Okehampton as a Dawlish relief within the network might also be usefully explored.

4.3 Working with Network Rail

The operator and Network Rail share responsibility for delivering day-to-day services that meet the needs of passengers, especially in relation to punctuality and reliability. Delivering the infrastructure upgrades and maintaining the railway also requires close working and co-operation, particularly around the scheduling of engineering works, planning possessions and ensuring all necessary information is available in a timely fashion to passengers. There is also a need for liaison on the development of future timetables to optimise travel opportunities across the network. Network Rail's perspective on proposals arising from any future competition must also be considered to ensure realistic expectations about their deliverability.

4.3.1 Joint working and priorities

Question 4a: What do you think are the main challenges that might be addressed through greater co-ordination and integration between the train operator and Network Rail?

Question 4b: What do you think should be the future priorities for strengthened partnership working between the franchise operator and Network Rail?

Undoubtedly, the key challenges relate to managing the upgrade upheavals, reducing disruption and driving performance improvements, then working to realise the benefits. Greater co-ordination and integration is likely to assist with this.

One particular issue that needs to be addressed is improving planning and enabling the operator to deliver the T-12 information in the public domain. The whole industry has a role to play in this process, relating to all engineering work, large and small:

- engineering plans must be locked down in sufficient time for Train Operating Companies (TOCs) to bid timetable changes at T-18
- there should be adequate staffing resources in NR and TOC to meet T-18/T-12 deadlines and 'fire-fight' when legitimate short notice changes are needed
- if journey planners are incorrect there needs to be effective communication to passengers.

Closer working may provide the opportunity to revisit previously successful practice and have the operator's staff, especially those on stations, trained as first responders to minor local operational incidents, for example signal and point failures or road vehicles hitting bridges. This could help to get trains moving without having to wait for the arrival of a Network Rail staff member who may be some distance away.

Operational efficiencies and driving down costs are clearly important but the needs of passengers must be central to the overall approach. Aligning incentives and working more closely together can certainly help improve efficiency. We know from our research that passengers want a sense of someone being in charge when it comes to the delivery of services, especially during times of disruption. But it cannot just be a case of aligning Network Rail and train company processes to achieve cost savings; such processes must also be aligned with passengers' priorities. Any approach must be mindful of the consequences for passengers when considering how to manage restoration of services following disruption.

Of course, the route involves other operators as well as GW and the recently established Supervisory Board provides a useful context for strategic planning. It is important that this continues to include the passenger perspective in discussions and decision making.

The opportunity to present a unified voice of the railway, simplify procedures and provide mechanisms for other parties to engage may also bring benefits, including the potential to attract third party investment. An openness to examining other ways of delivering schemes, especially where this can reduce costs and/or improve outcomes, should also be fostered in future working relationships.

Application of whole-life costing would significantly improve the chances that resilience projects secure a positive business case. Proposers should set out details

of how they will start planning with all the relevant partners, firstly deciding where and what needs doing, then ranking in order of costs and time to implement, quickest benefits and greatest benefits.

Network Rail's performance clearly has a huge bearing on an operator's punctuality and yet a franchise agreement typically creates an obligation only in relation to factors within the train company's direct control. Clearly there are limits to how far one organisation is willing to be held accountable for another's performance but, from a passenger's perspective, it is overall punctuality that matters - not just how well the train company did.

We would like to see the franchise structure encourage and cement appropriate joint working mechanisms. To this end we would ask DfT to consider the scope for introducing joint targets, an approach publically endorsed by the Chief Executive of Network Rail.

A further opportunity presented by closer partnership is the achievement of a step-change in transparency. The open data agenda is driving the industry towards higher levels of information being in the public domain. A new, more responsive, alliance could make a very public commitment towards accountability by promising greater transparency from the outset.

The objectives of partnership must be to improve the overall experience for passengers, and we know from our research that this starts with getting the basic service right before then looking at improving the overall quality. That means improving punctuality and capacity first and foremost.

4.4 Future train service and timetable development

Train service decisions can highlight the different interests of varying groups and locations and timetabling can mean some tough choices. We therefore believe that some fundamental principles should be established to inform the approach to train service development.

The specification for the next Direct Award and any competitive franchise beyond that should ensure that train service provision is based on passenger needs and priorities and is linked to measures of passenger satisfaction. Engagement with passengers and local communities should be regarded as a starting point for service developments.

The key issues are whether passengers at each station, and people who might use the train if there was a service to suit their needs, have the required level of service to and from the places they want or need to travel, at the times they wish to do so. The starting point should be to optimise rail services based on passenger demand and any new opportunities that become available.

First and foremost, the provision of sufficient capacity must be addressed, both in terms of seats and appropriate frequencies, particularly for times of peak demand.

More generally, our view is that origin and destination data should be used as the basis for understanding existing travel requirements. This data is available to the industry, but not generally to stakeholders. Without access to this key data and other relevant information, particularly about network capacity, timetabling options and comprehensive assessments of stakeholder views, it is not possible for others to derive a properly balanced judgement about service options.

It is therefore important that, when considering choices and bringing forward proposals, the decision makers, whether Government, Network Rail or the operator, should ensure that the rationale that underpins them is properly set out to all who have an interest.

Transport Focus supports a specification which is flexible enough to allow the operator to review usage and how station calls are allocated to train paths in order to improve overall capacity and efficient use of resources.

However, while acknowledging the need for some flexibility to adapt the train service to respond to current and changing demands, Transport Focus is clear that there must be sufficient detail in the specification to protect key journey opportunities. These must include journeys to/from school and work and, at key locations, to retain or improve connection opportunities.

Whatever the plans for the train service it is essential that the timetable proposals are subject to proper consultation, including the initial proposals for the competition specification. There must be a requirement for timely, transparent and meaningful consultation that allows all stakeholder views to be listened to prior to changes being finalised. Feedback, irrespective of whether it has been possible to accommodate the recommendation or request, must be provided.

From the outset, and throughout the life of the franchise, there are some principles that should be embedded, to be followed whenever timetables are revised:

- early consultation with passengers, followed by honest feedback about why the ultimate decisions were made
- existing basic features such as first and last trains, if satisfactory, should remain
- aspirations for improvements should be met if possible
- capacity and resources should be matched as closely as possible.

The service specification should take a holistic view of the needs of all passengers; commuter, business and leisure, from all parts of the network. Timetable opportunities must be optimised with passenger interests placed at the heart of planning and ahead of operational convenience.

Within the acknowledged constraints of the network, the distribution of train services should be appropriate to passenger demand. Where possible there should be clearly differentiated services for different markets.

4.4.1 Frequency improvements

Question 5a: Which routes do you believe could benefit from improvements to train frequencies?

Question 5b: What times of the day or week are these improvements needed?

Question 5c. Why?

Frequency is clearly an important factor for GWR passengers. It is a driver of both satisfaction and dissatisfaction for the network overall and is a driver of satisfaction for both Long Distance and West passengers. 'Trains sufficiently frequent at the times I wish to travel' is also a high priority for improvement for GWR passengers, ranking fifth, with an index score of 150, it is one-and-a-half times as important as an 'average' factor.

Table 4: Autumn 2017 NRPS satisfaction with service frequency

Percentage satisfied	GWR	Long Distance	London Thames Valley	West	Peak	Off-peak
The frequency of trains on that route	75	85	70	69	83	74

NRPS satisfaction scores in Table 4 show levels of satisfaction with service frequency vary between the different building blocks and different times of the day. While long distance passengers seem broadly satisfied with the level of frequency, passengers in the London Thames Valley and West building blocks register much lower levels of satisfaction. There is also a considerable gap in satisfaction between peak and off peak services, with off peak satisfaction levels lower than peak.

It is therefore important that the future specification identifies and addresses the issues driving these variations. Passengers and user groups on the ground will have specific insight that should inform the process required to understand where frequencies are not meeting current need or may be indeed be suppressing demand. The DfT will be aware that there are many frequency enhancement aspirations that require assessment.

Frequency is critical to the attractiveness of the railway to passengers and ultimately its success. Through its ability to connect employees to workplace, and business to other businesses and customers, leisure passengers to tourist destinations, the railway is increasingly recognised as a key factor in the generation of national, regional and local economic growth. This can only happen effectively with a service specification that fits passenger requirements.

The West of England Joint Spatial Plan[8] alone suggests that 100,000 new homes are required in the region in the coming year. It also suggests that car travel still

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[8] West of England Joint Spatial Plan: Publication - November 2017
https://www.jointplanningwofe.org.uk/consult.ti/JSPPublication/viewCompoundDoc?docid=9163508&partId=9415412&sessionid=&voteid=

accounts for around two-thirds of commuting journeys in the region with train and bus journeys only 14% and 2 % respectively. Modal shift to public transport, so important to many of the towns and cities in the region who are grappling with heavy congestion, will not be achievable if passengers and potential passengers cannot rely on the railway due to inconsistent or inconvenient service patterns.

A key part of ensuring that the railway provides a service that passengers want to use is the expectation that the railway reflect the seven day a week requirements that passengers have. People travel for a range of purposes at weekends and on Bank Holidays, indeed, for many Sunday is now a working day, whilst for others it presents an opportunity to shop, sightsee or participate in leisure, sporting or cultural activities.

Passengers also wish to take advantage of earlier and later trains, for some this will be about accessing employment that, for many, extends far beyond a 9-5 framework[9]. Others, for example, will, wish to enjoy a full day out or be able to appreciate an evening out and still get home by train.

One such example of a route that experiences low and erratic service frequency, particularly at the weekend, is the Heart of Wessex line. Only five services run on a Sunday, and the earliest service somewhere such as Bruton has towards Bath and Bristol is 12:14. The potential for rail travel on a Saturday evening is also limited, with the last service available from Bath at 21:07. As such we welcome the DfT's statement that it will review early, late and weekend service levels across the franchise.

It is not just local and regional lines where there are issues. While the level of satisfaction in frequency for Long Distance passengers appears to be relatively stable we are aware that there are gaps in long distance services that stakeholders wish to see addressed. For example services from intermediate stations on the Berks & Hants and West of England line. The January 2019 timetable change will see the introduction of a two hourly service frequency, however for some of these stations an hourly service might well be more appropriate. This example along with the many other aspirations across the network should be explored, as part of the franchise specification.

While we acknowledge that decisions on service options will be driven by business case it is also important to recognise that for those outside of the industry access to key data is limited. Without relevant information, particularly about demand, network capacity, timetabling options and comprehensive assessments of stakeholder views, it is difficult to construct arguments that can influence service changes. In some cases there is also no way of reliably predicting what demand there might be for additional services. We would point to the successful growth of the TransWilts line

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[9] https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research-publications/publications/understanding-rail-passengers-the-average-commuter/

which far out stripped its initial predicted growth rate of 218,000 passengers in five years, reaching 235,000 in only two years.

We would urge that ways are found to overcome these barriers so that service enhancements that would bring passenger benefit and drive modal shift, can be considered.

4.4.2 Engineering access
Question 5d: If the only way of achieving earlier first trains or later last trains was to curtail services at other times of the week or year so Network Rail can carry out essential maintenance, what times would you suggest?
Maintaining rail infrastructure is critical however these works can cause disruption to passengers whose services are affected by the work.

Transport Focus has carried out extensive research into passengers' views about engineering work, most recently 'Routine railway maintenance: passenger perspectives and priorities'[10] and 'Rail Passengers' experiences and priorities during engineering works'[11], to help the rail industry understand more about passenger perceptions of planned disruption, including when they think it should be undertaken, and their actual experiences.

Passengers consistently tell us that there is never a good time to conduct planned engineering work and that if disruptive, work should be scheduled so that it inconveniences the least number of people. In our research into routine maintenance passengers generally favoured work taking place at night (usually referring to a period after midnight and before early morning journeys). Where this wasn't practical and more disruptive access was required it was difficult to reach consensus. Suspending later evening services appeared to be a reasonable compromise for many, however some objected on the basis it may affect commuters working late or people on a night out.

The desire to minimise disruptive impact was mirrored in the research we undertook with GWR and Northern to understand more about passenger experiences and expectations from planned engineering work[12]. Given a choice of options for carrying out engineering - from overnight for several months, to closing the railway early for a slightly shorter period, working at weekends, or a concentrated block over several weeks - passengers opted for the least disruptive option, overnight work only (trains run normally 05:30 to midnight). Even with that option there was a concern amongst some that overnight work would overrun, affecting commuter services the following morning.

It is worth noting the context within which any disruptive engineering work will be undertaken over the course of the proposed new direct award. Both recent research

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[10] Routine railway maintenance: passenger perspectives and priorities. Dec 2017
[11] Rail passengers experiences and priorities during engineering works. Oct 2017
[12] Rail passengers experiences and priorities during engineering works. Oct 2017

reports highlight the fact that many passengers struggle to differentiate between the different types of disruption be it due to major improvement work, bad weather, infrastructure failure or a broken down train.

On the Great Western network this sense is further compounded by the multi-billion pound route upgrade investment and the associated disruption. The scale of these works, combined with the inevitable impact on performance means that many passengers are facing raised levels of disruption to their journey. This needs to be borne in mind when engineering work is planned and delivered. We regard it as good practice to explore passenger views on timing and mitigations whenever extensive possessions are required. Wherever realistic diversionary routes should be used, rather than bus or coach substitution, and the needs of all passengers who wish to travel accommodated.

While it is inevitable that maintenance work will at times require disruptive access our findings serve to reinforce the fact that, while passengers may accept the need for the railway to be maintained and indeed support investment in the railway, they do not like the disruption it causes and expect it to be planned to have minimal impact. It also reinforces the need for the rail industry to work together to ensure passengers are given plenty of warning, accurate and useful information to help them plan, as well as support on the ground when they make their journey.

4.4.2 Question 6: Transport Focus has no remit to promote new schemes.

4.4.3 Reducing journey times
Question 7a: Do you agree or disagree with reducing journey times to destinations in the South West by reducing stops at intermediate stations?
Question 7b: Which services or stations would benefit or be disadvantaged by this approach? Why?
Question 7c: Are there any locations or routes on the elsewhere where it could be appropriate to reduce station stops in order to speed up longer-distance journeys? Why?

NRPS results for journey time suggest that satisfaction levels amongst existing GWR passengers are broadly consistent and relatively high, particularly in comparison to frequency.

Table 5: Autumn 2017 NRPS satisfaction with journey times and service frequency

Percentage satisfied	GWR	Long Distance	London Thames Valley	West	Peak	Off-peak
The frequency of trains on that route	75	85	70	69	83	74

The length of time the journey was scheduled to take	81	82	80	79	80	81

While satisfaction with frequency is slightly higher than that with journey length in the Long Distance building block, levels of satisfaction with frequency are lower, some 10% lower, in the West and Thames Valley and 6% lower overall.

Journey time and frequency are both drivers of satisfaction for GWR overall, however they are relatively lower level drivers at 5% and 4% respectively, with the major driver being punctuality and reliability at 47%. They are also lower level drivers of dissatisfaction 2% and 6% respectively, behind punctuality and reliability at 29%, delay handling at 24%, crowding at 9% and train staff availability at 8%.

Priorities for improvement also show that frequency ranks 5th overall amongst GWR passengers' priorities for improvement whilst journey time ranks 11th. An index score of 99 for journey time improvements suggests this is no more important than an 'average' factor. Similarly improving frequency is ranked more highly than journey time in the London Thames Valley (4th vs 10th), Long distance (6th vs 10th) and West (6th vs 8th). As such there does not seem to be a high level of demand amongst existing passengers for improved journey times.

Clearly this may assume higher importance among non-users and those with specific route aspirations, for example the Peninsular Rail Taskforce's desire for faster journey times between London and the South West peninsular is well known.

In the first instance, there should be a detailed examination of the way in which the infrastructure can be adapted/enhanced to deliver improvements in journey time or facilitate additional trains. It would be preferable, if possible, to provide additional services, nominated as fast from the outset, rather than reducing stops in the existing timetable.

Any proposal to reduce stops at intermediate stations will have a substantially negative effect on those passengers whose stations receive a reduced service. There may be considerable difficulties for those who have to balance work, life and travel needs and who have based such decisions on the expectation of service levels. It may also reduce the attractiveness of rail in those areas.

With these points in mind we would argue that, while understandable, aspirations to speed up journeys for some must be balanced against the needs of passengers on other parts of the network. The importance of intermediate stations to network wide connectivity and as rail access hubs must be considered in any assessment of service structures. We would urge that any such assessment is undertaken wherever there is a proposal to reduce station stops and that done in a transparent way, with full consultation with those likely to be affected.

4.4.4 Direct links and connections

Question 8a: Which direct services such as those described above should be preserved in the next franchise? Why?

Question 8b: Are there any other stations between which you feel direct services should be provided? Why?

Question 8c: At which locations should connections between different services be improved? Why?

Passengers generally favour direct services and tell us that connecting onto other trains can be a stress-point in their journey. Direct trains avoid the scenario of having to know which platform you need, manoeuvring heavy suitcases or young children up and down staircases, only to discover that the train is late or that you have missed it altogether.

On busy services, making a change may also mean less chance of finding a seat, or for groups to able to sit together. Indeed, research we undertook in 2011 during the last franchise consultation suggested that 40% of the passengers we asked said they would be unlikely to travel if there were no direct trains on their route. That figure was as high as 45% for regional commuters. While this research is somewhat dated and service patterns will have changed since it was undertaken it nevertheless provides an indication of passenger preferences.

We are surprised by the suggestion in the consultation document that services that cross Bristol may only exist as a result of operational requirements, rather than actual passenger demand. Without the relevant data on passenger flows we are not in the position to make an informed comment about whether passenger numbers justify through services. Nevertheless, given that local centres of employment, including Filton Abbey Wood and Bath, draw in passengers from Wales and the wider western region, as well as local and inter-regional leisure travel, one might expect there to be a reasonable flow of passengers.

We would urge that the specification not only focuses on improvements to direct services to London but also looks to fully serve the inter-regional and local flows across the network.

Connectivity across the franchise, and indeed beyond, is critically important to a successful service specification, opening up opportunities for people to access and reliably use the different parts of the rail network for work and leisure. Where passenger journeys are reliant on connections the operator must provide good-quality information for all circumstances relating to the journey. Well-timed connections with sufficient, but not excessive, time between arriving and departing trains and ease of transfer between the platforms are also important. Where possible this should be a level transfer, with minimal distance between arrival and departure points.

If there are delays to trains approaching common interchange stations then consideration should be given to the practicalities of holding connecting services and

passengers should be informed about this in advance of arrival. Co-operation between TOCs is also fundamental to maintain and improve the cohesiveness and usability of the network and should be a requirement for the future.

4.4.5 Demand for seasonal services

Question 9: What additional seasonal train services do you consider to be particularly important to retain or improve in the next franchise? Why?

Given the importance of tourism to the economy of the South West it is important that accommodating seasonal capacity demand created on the railway continues to be specified as part of the Great Western franchise.

Allocated rolling stock should, where possible, meet the needs of the market it serves, for example ample luggage space for holiday makers travelling to Devon and Cornwall, and for passengers travelling to and from busy Christmas markets capacity is a key consideration. We would also suggest that some flexibility is built into any specification to take into account any changes in demand and any possible new requirements.

The South West is host to a diverse and growing number of major events. From festivals such as Glastonbury, Reading, as well as plethora of other cultural, food and music festivals across the network to major rugby and football games many thousands of people rely on the railway to get them to and from their event safely and on time. These acute spikes in demand require close co-operation between the franchisee, event organisers as well as other transport providers and authorities. As such we would support the strengthening of the requirement for the franchisee to have appropriate plans in place. However it is also important that the franchisee is cognisant of, and manages the impact on, non-event going passengers through capacity management and good communications.

4.4.6 Question 10: What other train service enhancements do you believe should be considered for inclusion in the next franchise? Why?

Local stakeholders and communities are best placed to identify further service improvements that they would wish to see implemented.

4.4.7 Question 11 on freight is outside the remit of Transport Focus.

4.5 Rolling stock

The quality of rolling stock and the on-train environment are important to passengers. The priorities for improvement shown in Figures 1, 2 and 3 demonstrate that a number of train factors are of above average importance to passengers and some of these are particularly important to certain travellers. These factors are free Wi-Fi available on the train and high standards of maintenance and cleanliness of the inside of the train and the toilet facilities.

The cleanliness of the inside of the train is the second highest driver of passenger satisfaction at 8 per cent (and this is a decline on greater influence in previous

waves), whilst the comfort of the seats and the level of crowding are both at 5 per cent. However, these figures for the GWR network as a whole mask some significant differences across the building blocks.

For long distance journeys the cleanliness of the inside of the train is a 23 per cent driver, whilst on the West it is 15 per cent, along with the level of crowding which is also at 15 per cent. On London Thames Valley upkeep and repair of the train accounts for 14 per cent of the drivers of satisfaction, followed by the comfort of the seats at 9 per cent, whilst on the West this is 7 per cent.

NRPS scores show that Long Distance services are delivering better satisfaction with some elements of the train than either West or London Thames Valley. However scores are comparable for comfort of the seats and there are generally lower levels of satisfaction with both toilet facilities and space for luggage. Satisfaction with the level of crowding is lower on West and London Thames Valley journeys.

Table 6: Autumn 2017 NRPS satisfaction with the train

Per centage satisfied	GWR	Long Distance	London Thames Valley	West	Peak	Off-peak
Overall satisfaction with the train	76	81	72	73	73	76
The cleanliness of the inside of the train	78	83	75	76	77	78
Upkeep and repair of the train	76	81	73	75	77	76
Level of crowding	66	72	65	58	64	66
Comfort of the seats	70	72	70	69	73	70
Toilet facilities	45	52	36	49	43	46
Space for luggage	57	60	58	52	61	56

4.5.1 Question 12 a) What do you think are the main priorities that we should seek to address in relation to rolling stock?
Provision of sufficient capacity, with comfortable seats, clean interiors and reasonable toilets are central to meeting needs. Passengers will expect rolling stock to be fit for purpose and meet twenty-first century expectations. This includes provision of free and reliable Wi-Fi on the train. Many people expect at least drop-down tables, whilst others, for various reasons, appreciate larger tables in bays.

Storage for luggage, cycles and other bulky items should also be considered alongside the balance of seating provision and, for busy services, the ability to stand safely and in a degree of comfort.

The ability to deliver real-time information to passengers on the train is becoming increasingly important and equipping trains with the technology for GPS tracking, Darwin feeds and direct communication from control will support efforts to improve the handling of delays. Similarly the ability to inform passengers about loading in various sections of the train and the status of connections or other potential onward journey opportunities will also provide value. Enhanced entertainment services and wider travel information may also be of interest.

The impact of the fleet transformation and cascade has yet to be fully understood but there may be some issues with the older fleet remaining on the network which bidders in a franchise competition should seek to address.

4.5.2 Train design

Ultimately, passenger views on the suitability of particular 'rolling stock' set-ups are likely to be driven by personal circumstances related to the type of journey being made and the likelihood of a seat, or even standing room, being available when they get on.

Transport Focus has conducted several research projects on rolling stock design and, where capacity has proved to be a driving force for change, there are two areas that passengers consistently point to in terms of need for improvement:

- the design of the aisle and gangway running the length of the carriage

- the vestibule area and entrance to the carriage.

Research among Thameslink passengers indicated that on busy peak trains the design should allow passengers who have to stand to do so in complete safety and as comfortably as possible[13]. This could include improved provision of grab handles and rails. Passengers welcomed designs that showed wider gangways and aisles between each coach, as they were felt to greatly enhance freedom of movement along the train, and provided more standing space; but only if coupled with something to hold on to when doing so.

These findings were echoed in Merseyrail rolling stock research[14]. Congestion in the vestibule area was identified as an issue. Passengers are reluctant to stand in the aisles, primarily due to a lack of usable grab poles in this part of the carriage. The narrowness of the space also creates the perception that there is a risk of those who move down the aisle becoming trapped there. This creates concerns about being able to get off quickly enough and perhaps missing the intended stop, especially for those making relatively short journeys.

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[13] *Thameslink rolling stock qualitative research*, September 2008
[14] *Future Merseyrail rolling stock – what passengers want*, April 2014

Aspirations for the type and layout of trains will differ according to passenger characteristics across various routes. The best way of capturing these is with bespoke research.

4.5.2 Question 12

b) Are there any routes which do not currently have First Class accommodation where you think it should be provided?

c) Should the franchisee provide specific services and facilities for

a) business travellers or b) families travelling with children or c) other passengers?

d) If yes, please provide more information on what you think should be provided

Transport Focus has not conducted any specific research into aspirations for, or attitudes to, the extension of First Class accommodation, nor the provision of specific services and facilities for particular groups.

It is notable that on other parts of the GB rail network, and as implemented on a predecessor franchise, there is a move to remove or reduce First Class provision in order increase available capacity. We should be concerned if increasing First Class accommodation on Great Western led to more over-crowding in other parts of trains. That said, where there is identified opportunity to offer this without impacting on other passengers, there may well be people who would appreciate the chance to upgrade and travel in greater comfort and with an enhanced level of service.

Whilst we believe that wherever possible trains should be appropriate for the needs of the markets they serve, the practicality of offering specific services for particular passengers seems potentially limited; although there is no doubt that people travelling for various journey purposes can frequently have different and sometimes conflicting needs, as evidenced by views on quiet carriages which remain valued by many but opposed by others. In a similar vein, even allocating particular carriages for specific purposes is likely to be a challenge, especially at busy times when every passenger wants to embark as swiftly as possible.

However, where there are opportunities to differentiate the travel offering and provide tailored journey options then this could promote a more comfortable and enjoyable experience for passengers. Technological advancements may make this easier in the future. The passenger priorities for improvement simulator allows analysis by multiple criteria and might assist in identifying the requirements of different groups that could form the basis for new approaches. More detailed research with a cross-section of passengers would provide the opportunity to gather ideas and receive feedback on potential offerings.

4.5.3 Question 12

e) What benefits or disadvantages do you think innovative technologies for rolling stock, e.g. hydrogen or battery power, could bring?

f) Are there any routes which would be particularly suitable for these types of innovative technology?

This is not a particular area of expertise but we note there could be potential to utilise new technologies in parts of the network which remain un-electrified and/or where routes are lightly used. This may provide the opportunity to update fleets that may otherwise not see modern trains, reduce wear on the track and cut the costs of running services. It would be important to ensure that any options intended to be introduced would find acceptance with passengers.

4.6 Improving accessibility

4.6.1 Question 13a): Which stations do you think should be a priority for improving accessibility?

b) Why?

Improving the accessibility of stations helps increase the journey opportunities for passengers with disabilities as well as other passengers who may be travelling encumbered.

Many of the bigger stations have been dealt with as far as step-free access is concerned and we are pleased that Cheltenham is finally being looked at again. Others are being dealt with as part of the Crossrail improvement. The Bristol area is problematic, although we understand there is a move to look at lifts where ramps may be challenging and we hope this delivers improved outcomes.

In addition, there are a number of places that we suggest should also be considered as there are still quite long gaps between accessible stations. We note that there are likely to be passengers who can also identify specific local circumstances where improvements are needed.

Potential priorities include (with 2016/17 ORR footfall figures):
* Nailsea & Backwell (504,000): one platform has no step-free access. The other platform has access via a slope which is steeper than modern standards permit, but still no wheelchair access from that platform to the train. Heavily used station.
* Bradford on Avon (543,000): the station had a barrow crossing which was removed so that one platform has no step-free access. This is a retrograde step.
* St Erth (252,000): the station had a barrow crossing which was removed so that the Penzance-bound platform has no step-free access. This is a retrograde step.
    * Dawlish, Castle Cary, Hayle, Bodmin Parkway (amongst others) still retain their barrow crossings. The logic of this is unclear.
* Step-free access at one of the stations between Reading and Didcot Parkway would be welcome – Tilehurst (552,000); Pangbourne (456,000); Goring & Streatley (422,000); Cholsey & Moulsford (281,000). As Tilehurst is quite close to Reading perhaps Pangbourne should be considered a candidate.

- Dorking Deepdene (399,000). Potentially useful interchange with Dorking (Main) but currently a very lack-lustre station for all users, and each platform reached only by open-air stairs with non-compliant handrails. Each platform has only one basic shelter, and very dated help-points on the platform. All right-time info is provided on the platform only, so everyone has to scale the stairs to find out if the train is running from industry systems. Not everyone has suitable apps.
- Theale (494,000): step-free access for a well-used station.

In addition, the following issues should be considered and addressed across the network where necessary:
- Ensure that at accessible stations all shelters are wheelchair accessible.
- Ensure that all stations have modern information facilities: CIS, PA, help points.
- A mixture of compliant seating, some marked 'priority' where necessary.
- Compliant handrails to all stairs/slopes
- Adapt platforms/ramps to enable wheelchairs to board/alight at all technically-accessible stations.

4.6.2 Question 13c): What other improvements could help to make rail services easier to access and use for all passengers?

We expect franchise specifications to include requirements to comply with equalities and discrimination legislation and to produce a Disabled People's Protection Policy (DPPP). Transport Focus also recommends a minor works fund and advocates that consultation with relevant groups should include inviting suggestions about how this money might best be spent to meet identified needs.

In addition to the provisions set out in DPPP guidance, Transport Focus believes that the franchise specification should also require the following provisions:

- **Scooter policy**
  Ensure that a suitable scooter acceptance scheme is in place for smaller, lighter and more manoeuvrable machines such as Scootercards. Blanket bans are no longer acceptable – always understanding that some models will be too wide/heavy ever to be accepted on to trains.

- **Priority seat cards**
  Provide a priority seat card scheme (as initiated by Southern and now adopted as good practice by a number of operators) to help passengers demonstrate a specific need for a seat, backed up by publicity on stations and greater prominence made of which seats are priority seats so that they are easily located and recognised. This is especially important in the case of trains where no reservation facility is available.

- **Clarify priorities**
  Clarify the priority of use of priority seating and the groups considered eligible for it.

  Clearly clarify priority of usage in 'shared' spaces, in other words wheelchairs have absolute priority over prams.

- **Assistance cards**
  Provide assistance cards which disabled passengers can show to staff to explain their disability – for example hearing-impaired, speech-impaired, learning difficulties, so that staff can react and provide the necessary additional assistance.

- **Promote Passenger Assist more widely and monitor service provided**
  Promote Passenger Assist across a range of channels and through outreach. Carry out comprehensive Passenger Assist monitoring – proper management, for example, perhaps the number of assistance requests delivered, rather than satisfaction, which can be deceptive. This could be included in the Passenger's Charter and the DPPP.

  Make best use of the management information gained from Passenger Assist – for example enabling TOCs to plan assistance provision better.

- **Training**
  Carry out training with staff – especially front-line staff in immediate customer contact, whether face-to face or by telephone. Constantly review/update disability training especially for 'hidden' disabilities and if using agency staff ensure that they are trained.

- **Physical changes**
  Examine all possibilities to improve station accessibility: for example induction loops, help points, adjustable-height counters, automatic doors.

- **For longer journeys**
  Ensure that on-train staff have booking details of passengers using Passenger Assist on that service and that staff make themselves known to such passengers during the journey.

Other areas that will also improve the accessibility of rail services include:

- Ensuring clarity in documents and on the website
- Wider use of social media to advise disabled passengers and to receive feedback/approaches from them
- Develop easy-access and easy-to-use website, especially for Visually-impaired users
- Offer full refund on disabled passengers' tickets (and all passengers travelling together) if booked assistance fails significantly
- Abolish the up-to-five-minute wait at terminating stations for assistance to arrive (and seek improvements at the larger stations operated by NR: Bristol Temple Meads, Reading, Paddington)
- Improve instant-contact-in-emergency arrangements, e.g. for stranded passengers on trains or stations
- Ensure that on-train staff circulate through all parts of the train, making themselves known to booked passengers and ensuring their well-being and fetching refreshments from static buffets where the passenger cannot manage to do so
- Ensure that no text descriptions of station accessibility (website, DPPP, NRE website) etc contradict each other and that all are, in fact, correct. Too many

still contradict one another. This is a failing which we have repeatedly reported to the operator and DfT/ORR. Access bookings rely on correct information.

We believe that despite infrastructure and on-train facility improvements across the rail network over the last two decades, the level of the assistance-provision service has failed to register such a significant improvement over the same period. Transport Focus's predecessor bodies undertook a series of mystery-shop surveys over a number of years to assess the efficiency of passenger assistance[15]. We have noted some improvements during the course of these, but it seems from ORR research that several aspects of assistance still stubbornly refuse to improve significantly. We detailed a number of key elements in their recent consultation that we suggest will contribute to resolving such issues[16].

4.7 Stations and Interchange - Question 14

a) Do you think these are the right priorities for stations in the new franchise?
b) Which priorities would you change or add, and why?
Passengers will generally visit at least two stations as part of a rail journey and the quality of the experience there can influence views about the journey overall. Whilst station improvements are not such a high priority as the core service and on-train factors, they are nevertheless an important element of overall experience.

Appendix 3 shows the priorities for improvement at stations and highlights the key priorities of toilets, seating and shelter on platforms, free Wi-Fi and cash points. The significance of cash points at a time when the ATM estate appears to be under threat is notable, and responding to this may also encourage community use of stations, making them better used and more vibrant locations.

NRPS data for waves 34/45 shows the factors that have the greatest influence over GWR passengers' overall satisfaction with the station. These are: 'the facilities and services at the station' (21%), 'provision of information about train times/platforms' (20%), 'the upkeep/repair of the station buildings/platforms (17%) and 'cleanliness of the station' (14%), followed by personal security at the station (9%).

The overall station environment is also a driver of overall passenger satisfaction for Long Distance and West journeys in Autumn 2017.

Table 7 below shows differing satisfaction levels for station attributes and how these vary across the network. These indicate that London Thames Valley passengers are generally less satisfied whilst Long Distance passengers are more satisfied with a number of factors. However, across the network lower scores for toilet facilities and choice of shops/eating and drinking facilities reinforce the need for improvement.

We would therefore agree that the priorities for stations identified in the consultation largely address passengers' key concerns, although we note that there is no mention

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[15] https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research-publications/publications/passenger-assist-summary-report/
[16] Awaiting publication, available on request

of toilet facilities which should be included as an area for attention and improvement. The increasing expectations around the provision of free Wi-Fi should also be noted.

It is not only important to provide high quality station environments with the required facilities, it is also important to ensure these are available whilst services are running and passengers are using the station. We discuss the importance of staffing in our response to Question 17 but there are too often situations where facilities are locked out of use when the station is unstaffed, rendering them useless.

We agree that allocated funds for station improvements would be helpful and also support the case for dedicating some of this resource to improvements at smaller stations. We also note that, given the new franchise is not expected to commence for another four to six years, there will need to be the flexibility to respond to further technological change and evolving passenger requirements across the station estate.

Table 7: Autumn 2017 NRPS satisfaction – Station factors

Percentage satisfied	GWR	Long Distance	London Thames Valley	West	Peak	Off-peak
Overall satisfaction with the station	79	85	73	81	78	79
Upkeep and repair of the station buildings/ platforms	71	80	65	67	74	70
Overall environment	74	79	70	73	75	74
Cleanliness	77	81	74	76	78	77
Shelter facilities	72	77	64	77	70	72
Toilet facilities	50	58	39	57	48	51
Choice of shops/eating/drinking facilities	51	54	51	44	52	50
Provision of information about train times and platforms	84	86	80	89	82	84
Personal security whilst using the station	74	78	69	78	79	73

4.7.1 Transport Interchange - Question 14

c) At which stations do you think co-ordination between transport modes could be improved?

d) How do you believe these areas could be improved, e.g. through timetabling connections or through physical works at the location?

e) What do you believe are examples of best practice elsewhere which could be relevant for stations on the Great Western franchise network?

Transport interchange needs to be considered at all stations and the approach needs to encompass all potential means of access, including how passengers access the station in the first instance.

In general, when passengers decide what mode of transport to take they are swayed by three overwhelming factors: how convenient will the journey be, how much will it cost and how long will it take[17]. This applies to the whole door-to-door journey. Improving access to stations should therefore drive rail usage and provide some additional revenue.

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[17] *Integrated transport – perception and reality*, January 2010

Table 8: Autumn 2017 NRPS Satisfaction with getting to the station

Percentage satisfied	GWR	Long Distance	London Thames Valley	West	Peak	Off-peak
Connections with other forms of public transport	72	75	71	69	77	71
Connections with other train services	75	80	74	71	75	75
Facilities for car parking	53	56	44	63	52	54
Facilities for bicycle parking Spring 2017	*68*	*69*	*69*	*65*	*-*	*-*

The way passengers access the station can affect both overall journey cost and time. If getting to the rail station becomes too inconvenient passengers will often choose to make their whole journey by car, adding congestion to the roads and to transport's carbon footprint. Similarly, car parking charges can add sometimes substantial sums to the price of a journey and can create disincentives to choosing rail. There should be restrictions within each franchise that limit the level of increase in those costs that fall within the operator's own control. There should also be an independent appeal mechanism that allows passengers to contest car parking enforcement tickets issued by the train company or their agents.

On parts of the Great Western network, many passengers use the train to commute into and out of busy urban centres – journeys for which using the car can be unattractive and seem a less viable option. But the franchise operator shouldn't simply take for granted that these core customers will use the train. A commuter during the week may be a potential leisure or business user at other times when there may be more options available: making using the train as convenient and attractive as possible will help to make it the mode of choice.

At some locations the solution to station access needs will be to improve public transport links and parking provision; but at others the solution will be more complex and could be more creative.

With limited space for car parking at some stations, and the industry's desire to look at more sustainable options, Transport Focus supports the use of Station Travel Plans. Local groups and Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) should be involved in developing proposals to improve station access.

The franchise specification should encourage commitment to station travel plan schemes, with rollout dispersed across the network and throughout the life of the franchise. The stations selected should not just be those with the highest footfall; we know that congestion does not just occur at those stations with the highest number of passengers starting or ending their journeys.

Franchise bidders might also be asked to explore the potential to develop 'virtual branch lines' using existing scheduled bus services, with bus times and through

fares available through railway journey planning and retail systems to and from towns with no railway station or limitations in service provision.

Bidders may also need to address the absence, or potential loss, of access via public transport in places, particularly rural areas, where there is little or no funding for bus services. Bidders should be encouraged to explore how they can contribute to potential initiatives for demand-led schemes.

The bidders should be able to demonstrate how they will work in partnership with local authorities and other agencies to improve accessibility to stations by all modes, including cycling and walking. Where identifiably beneficial schemes for passengers can be delivered by other partners, they should be encouraged and their future assured. The new franchise should accommodate commitments to the future operation of any facilities provided.

4.8 Fares and Ticketing - Question 15
a) Do you agree or disagree with these priorities for i) fares and ii) ticketing? Which priorities would you change or add, and why?
b) What changes to the fares structure could be of benefit to you?

The identified priorities for smart and multi-modal tickets, improved tvms, reduction of anomalies and joint marketing/ticketing with tourist attractions are all relevant. There are live opportunities to improve all of these today. However, it will be important to ensure that the next franchise is properly placed to embrace and respond to any further developments that may take place over the next four to six years and beyond.

Whatever the circumstances then, the next franchise operator must make ticket purchase easier for passengers, who can be confused by the complexity of the fares system.

Clear information about the validity of tickets and any applicable restrictions must be readily available. Passengers should be offered the most appropriate ticket for their intended journey, regardless of whether this is at a ticket office, online, at a ticket machine or through any other method.

Bidders should also look at how they would simplify the fare structure. We believe a single-leg fare structure is easy to understand, removes the confusion of a return being only 10p or £1 more than a single and allows passengers to mix and match different tickets (for example an Advance ticket for the outward leg and a semi-flexible ticket for the return).

We also advocate bringing in systems that allow for sales of Advance tickets closer to the time of travel, as has been successfully introduced on the Cross Country franchise (subject to adequate protections for people occupying 'empty' seats that can be booked). Information about the availability of Advance tickets and the number

remaining for specific journeys should also be readily available. This helps give passengers confidence that such tickets exist.

Table 9: Autumn 2017 NRPS satisfaction with ticketing

Percentage satisfied	GWR	Long Distance	London Thames Valley	West	Peak	Off-peak
The value for money for the price of your ticket	49	50	40	64	20	54
Ticket buying facilities	76	87	69	77	78	76

The cost of rail travel is a concern for many Great Western passengers with 31 per cent of passengers dissatisfied with value for money. Satisfaction is particularly low for London Thames Valley and Peak travellers. While they may be resigned to believing that prices won't come down, they want to see the amount of money they pay reflected in the quality of service they get. Value for money is the stand-out, number one priority for improvement.

There is opportunity to provide tickets more tailored to individual needs. Part-time commuters feel they should get some benefit as regular passengers, albeit not at the same level of discount as a full season ticket. We advocate the introduction of innovative new products such as carnet-style tickets that will enable passengers who cannot benefit from season ticket discounts (for example part-time workers) to achieve some economies from repeat travel. Schemes to spread the cost of annual season tickets should also be available.

Young people aged 16 and over, but still in education, feel penalised by having to pay adult fares. With education now being compulsory until 18, it is important to find ways of making 'school' travel affordable. Some passengers would like to see an incentive for travelling on early morning trains, to reduce the strain on the busiest periods.

There is growing interest amongst passengers in 'smarter' alternatives to current paper ticketing. Many passengers are aware of the Transport for London Oyster zone and would like to see a similar mechanism for paying available to them. This chimes with other research we have carried out which indicates that passengers find the ticket purchasing experience complex and uncertain[18]. Across all groups of passengers there is a desire to make the ticketing process smoother, easier and more convenient. People want to see innovation that will deliver improvements to each stage: purchasing a ticket, ticket types (such as smart and e-tickets) and in providing relevant journey updates after the purchase has been made.

The new operator should provide a wider range of tickets for passengers so they can choose the method which is simplest and most convenient for them. This includes

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[18] http://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research/smarter-travel

using the ticket office, ticket vending machines (TVMs), website and taking advantage of developments in ticketing such as smartcards or contactless bank cards and mobile phone products.

Many passengers prefer to buy from a ticket office because it offers the full range of tickets and staff can provide advice and reassurance on the best ticket to buy. Any proposals by bidders to significantly change ticket office opening hours must involve proper consultation and demonstrate that passengers will not suffer (for example no reduction in the range of tickets sold or the time it takes to buy them).

The value of Permit to Travel (PERTIS) machines, which we acknowledge are increasingly a thing of the past, lies in providing passengers with evidence of an attempt to pay and reassurance against allegations of ticketless travel. If there is to be greater reliance on TVMs, or other methods, then some fundamental safeguards must be put in place. These include:

- ease of use and clear details of about the validity of, and any restrictions applicable to, tickets offered
- offer of a comprehensive range of tickets and/or ability to tell passengers what to do should the ticket they want not be available
- capability of remote monitoring so that any faults are identified and can be rectified.

In addition revenue protection strategies must set out:

- procedures for alerting revenue protection staff if there is a fault with the machine
- systems for monitoring queue length – passengers should not be penalised for queue lengths in excess of the three/five minutes targets set out in the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement (TSA).

Transport Focus's research has identified a number of issues with both TVMs and websites – much of which was reflected in Government's own Fares and Ticketing Review consultation in 2012, and subsequently in the industry's own retail information code of practice[19]. We have taken an active role in a task force, set up by the Government, to tackle these issues. The task force published its *Action plan for information on rail fares and ticketing*[20] in December 2016, and is reviewing progress on a monthly basis. A progress report was published in December 2017[21] and we continue to press for improvements.

Key issues to focus on include:

- printing any restrictions on passengers' tickets to remove confusion over validity
- displaying outward and return ticket restrictions on TVMs prior to a passenger committing to purchase

[19] *A Code of Practice on retail information for rail tickets and services,* March 2015
[20] *Action plan for information on rail fares and ticketing*, December 2016
[21] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-the-action-plan-for-information-on-rail-fares-and-ticketing

- making it impossible to buy an Advance ticket on the internet at a higher price than the 'walk-up' fare available on the same train
- making TVMs capable of accepting cash as well as card payments.

More details of the problems that passengers experience, and recommendations about how to improve retailing through these channels, can be found in our research into ticket vending machine usability and ticket retailing website usability[22].

The key is to ensure that passengers have all the necessary information on which to make an 'informed purchase'.

4.8.1 Smart ticketing

We know, from our research programme on smarter travel[23], that passengers across modes and throughout the country do see real benefits in smart ticketing.

When thinking about the development of smart ticketing, and preferences for how this will work, there are seven key attributes that drive attitudes and views.

- **Value for money**

Value for money is a key driver for ticket choice at the moment, and remains an important factor when considering smart ticketing. Passengers expect that smart ticketing will involve some kind of cost saving either via cheaper fares or new cost-effective tickets and products.

- **Convenient**

Smart ticketing needs to be a convenient option that is easy to use. The research participants told us they look for a ticketing system that makes life easier, rather than complicating their commute. When thinking about convenience, they want a system where it is easy to buy tickets, to manage their smart ticket account and use their ticket.

- **Simple**

Simplicity is important, especially for those unfamiliar with smart technology or smart ticketing. These people are most likely to need education regarding how smart ticketing will work, and a simple system is likely to support them in moving to smart ticketing.

- **Secure**

Our research participants had some concerns about the security of smart ticketing. When thinking about smart cards, people expect that their personal data will be kept safe – especially any details that will be printed and visible on the card.

When thinking about mobile ticketing and contactless, many were concerned about the safety and security of their mobile phone or credit card, and the potential for theft when using these. However, a benefit of smart ticketing is that the ticket details are

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[22] *Ticket vending machine usability*, July 2010 and *Ticket retailing website usability*, July 2011
[23] http://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research-publications/research/smarter-travel/

thought to be safer – for instance if a card is lost or stolen then it will be easier to get the product cancelled and reissued.

- **Flexible**

Alongside a convenient and easy-to-use system, people want smart ticketing to be flexible. They want the ability to choose and purchase new products and tickets that offer flexible travel options. They also want flexibility with regards to managing their smart ticketing account, including being able to make ticket purchases at the last minute and being able to upload tickets at a range of stations.

- **Tailored management**

In addition to new products that would enable people to tailor their smart ticket products to their needs, people also want tailored smart ticketing accounts. Many want to manage them online and via an app. They want the ability to choose how they prefer to manage their account (online, app, text message), and reassurances that this will be tailored to be compatible with the technology they own (for example, Apple or Android-compliant).

- **Leading edge**

People feel that the introduction of smart ticketing is a shift into a more technology-focused way of ticketing. With this in mind they are keen that the technology used is forward-thinking. This is particularly noted by those who are familiar with smart technology and smart ticketing, and who see this as an opportunity for train operating companies to lead the way in ticketing technology rather than replicate existing systems.

Some key principles have emerged from our smart ticketing work:

- designing good systems, where passengers are consulted from the outset and their views are fully incorporated
- making sure that communications to both customers and staff are clear, easily-accessible, consistent and comprehensive
- ensuring that staff are fully trained when systems are introduced, so that they can sympathetically deal with any issues, problems or queries that their passengers may have.

4.8.2 Ticketless travel

Research has shown that passengers find the issue of fare evasion very frustrating[24]. There is a strong sense of injustice amongst those who have paid for a ticket when some passengers are known to be travelling without a ticket. They also felt that this reduced the amount of money available for investment.

Passengers believe that the main solution to fare evasion would be to make better provision for the purchase of tickets at stations and on board, and to implement better checking procedures and enforcement. This must include:

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[24]*Passenger views on Northern and TransPennine rail franchises,* December 2012

- clarity and consistency over when it is permissible to buy a ticket on board a train – the current system is felt to be too arbitrary
- managing ticket queues effectively (at TVMs and offices)
- providing ticket restrictions in an easy-to-access form and in plain English
- providing the passenger with verification of permission to travel without a ticket
- providing the passenger with verification of attempt to purchase a ticket if a card is declined due to bank security measures or signal issues.

Further roll-out of ticket barriers and ensuring that ticket barriers, where provided, are in use consistently can be helpful in ensuring that all travellers pay for the journey they are making. It is important that there are sufficient numbers of staff available to ensure that barriers in place are used effectively and not left open. Gate-line staff also provide the visible staff presence that passengers value.

There need to be sufficient barriers to cope with the number of passengers passing through them, particularly at peak times. Where problems arise staff should be empowered to take appropriate action to ease congestion at the gates.

Where remote staffing for barriers is a consideration, there will need to be proper consultation to look at demand, the suitability of this approach for each location and any implications for disabled passengers.

Transport Focus believes ticketless travel is an important issue and one that needs to be addressed. Passengers who avoid paying for their ticket are in effect being subsidised by the vast majority of fare-paying passengers.

However, the revenue protection strategy must provide safeguards for those who make an innocent mistake and whose intention was never to defraud the system. We believe this requires:

- clear consistent guidelines explaining when staff should show discretion in the enforcement of penalties
- commitment not to go straight to any form of criminal prosecution unless operators suspect (or have proof) that there was intent to defraud
- penalties that are proportionate to the actual loss suffered by the operator
- operators to work with others in the industry to create a national system that is transparent and supports the honest passenger who makes a mistake
- giving passengers charged a penalty or a fine a genuine opportunity to appeal against that decision, via an independent, binding appeals mechanism, before any action is taken (including the addition of administration fees).

We recommend that bidders develop and publicly consult on a revenue protection strategy. In doing so they should be mindful of the recommendations within our *Ticket to Ride* publications[25].

The Government has announced plans to ensure that passengers who have received a penalty fare are treated fairly, with an independent appeals process in place. The plans include:

- simpler rules on deadlines for payments and appeals
- creation of a third-stage independent appeals panel
- existing appeals bodies must be independent of train operators
- better government oversight of appeals process through an annual audit of penalty fares data.

4.9 Community Rail Partnerships

Question 16: What more do you feel that the franchisee could be doing to help the Community Rail sector increase its contribution to society and the railway, for example in harnessing local community relations and outreach into the community?

Community Rail has been vibrant on GWR and there is multi-way benefit from the successes delivered through various schemes. It provides a firm basis on which to build and we are supportive of the intention to grow the scale of activity.

Resourcing for staffing and marketing, practical encouragement to steering groups and 'supporters of', linking objectives to the wider activities of the franchise (e.g. utilising redundant buildings at stations) and facilitating streamlined access to funding and wider partnerships are all ways in which the CRP sector can be assisted to engage and deliver more within local communities. Providing regular opportunities for interaction and sharing of good practice amongst CRP groups also fosters further enthusiasm and encouragement, as do local, regional and national awards schemes.

The franchise must continue with a genuine commitment to partnership working. This needs to recognise the challenges of promoting rail and the fundamental needs for appropriate frequency and timing of services and reliable performance. The phasing of CRP activities, particularly schemes to promote increased ridership, need to reflect the potential to deliver dependable services and provide an attractive option to new as well as existing passengers. CRPs could be helped to provide 'taster tickets' or other incentives to trial/return to rail services where there have been periods of disruption or upheaval, especially when this has been widely and negatively covered.

Where there is scope CRPs might be assisted to explore more ambitious business models to create commercial conditions in a way that enables them to prosper and to deliver benefits to the regional economy.

The 2015 report on the Value of Community Rail Partnerships shows that they can be extremely successful[26]. Focusing on the regional and local level, results can be seen in increased footfall at stations along CRP lines. The report goes on to show

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[25] *Ticket to ride?*, May 2012 and *Ticket to ride – an update*, February 2015

[26] *Value of Community Rail Partnerships*, Association of Community Rail Partnerships, January 2015

that the costs of running CRPs are less than the value of additional revenues earned by their lines and they therefore present a commercial case.

We welcome the emphasis in franchising on supporting and working with CRPs. Not only is it important that funding and dedicated staff are written into franchise bids, but also, perhaps just as important is building working with CRPs into rail industry managerial structures. Proper local engagement requires not only finance, but also senior management buy-in and a culture in favour of working with local groups.

4.10 Workforce and skills

Question 17: What more should the franchise do to invest in the workforce and wider industry skills?

Staff play a key role in delivering customer service at all stages of the journey and we know that passengers welcome face-to-face contact with members of staff. Passengers rely on staff for information and advice, assistance using stations and trains and for help when things go wrong. They make passengers feel safe and secure at stations and on trains, and for some passengers that can make the difference between whether or not they choose to travel by train.

Table 10 shows that the satisfaction with the availability of staff at stations is 67 per cent, with scores for Long Distance and West of 73 and 71 per cent respectively but a much lower 59 per cent in the London Thames Valley. Passengers notice an increased station staff presence at peak times, where satisfaction increases to 79 per cent.

Table 10 also shows that passengers are fairly satisfied with the helpfulness and attitudes of staff at the station, but that there is some room for improvement. The difference between satisfaction with the attitudes/helpfulness and with how requests to station staff were handled suggest that, once staff are approached, passengers find them to be generally very helpful, but that overall they could be more proactive in identifying people who might need assistance.

Satisfaction with the availability of staff on trains is low, at 49 per cent, with notably low satisfaction of 33 per cent on the London Thames Valley, which also scores lowest of the three building blocks for helpfulness and attitude of staff on the train at 51 per cent. The lower scores for helpfulness and attitude of staff on the train suggests there needs to be more of a focus on customer service as opposed to just revenue protection and operational duties.

Table 10: Autumn 2017 NRPS satisfaction – staff factors

	GWR	Long Distance	London Thames Valley	West	Peak	Off-peak
Availability of staff at the station	67	73	59	71	79	73

Attitudes and helpfulness of the staff (at station)	80	83	77	82	76	81
How request to station staff was handled	88	91	86	86	82	89
Availability of staff on the train	49	55	33	59	40	50
Helpfulness and attitude of staff on the train	69	77	51	77	67	69

Changes to retailing practices have seen a trend towards moving staff out from behind the glass of the ticket office and into sometimes multi-functional roles on the station concourse. Transport Focus has no intrinsic objection to this evolving role, provided that passengers still have access to the full range of tickets, it does not take any longer to buy a ticket and that the current regulatory safeguards (in other words assuring the hours that staff are present) are retained. It must not become a back-door means to cutting staff. In addition, many station facilities and services are available only while staff are present, which is a challenge which also needs to be addressed as passenger needs do not occur simply in line with staff shift patterns.

Passengers with assistance needs are particularly dependent on staff to deliver the help they require and to fulfil requests made through Passenger Assist. Disability awareness training should be considered for all staff and regarded as essential for anyone in a passenger-facing role.

Passengers also cite the lack of staff as a major reason for their feelings of concern over personal security and consistently identify a visible staff presence as being important to providing reassurance to those travelling on the railway. It is vital that those staff receive the appropriate training both in terms of managing the station environment and personal security within it, and customer service.

The new operator needs to give serious consideration to how it can best use staff and make best use of the different types of complementary policing available to it. Our research sets out passengers' concerns in more detail[27]. The specification should include a requirement to set out how these issues will be addressed across the franchise.

It is important that staff are trained, managed and supported to deliver the highest possible levels of customer service. Workforce development needs to be an ongoing process as expectations of customer service continue to rise, as standards do across the range of passenger experience, both within and beyond the rail industry. A proactive and empowered staff are best placed to respond effectively to meet passenger needs.

The pressure on the industry to reduce costs inevitably places a focus on the overheads associated with staff. However, Transport Focus is concerned that the

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[27]*Passenger perceptions of personal security on the railways*, May 2016

very significant roles staff play and the value passengers attach to a visible staff presence, especially at stations, is not overlooked. We urge that the franchise specification is mindful of the many benefits derived from staffing and that bid evaluation ensures sufficient credit for initiatives to make proposals viable.

More widely, in a competitive marketplace for staff and skills the operator needs do everything possible to ensure a work environment that is attractive in order to retain existing personnel and attract new entrants. There need to be positive plans for training, support and career development, and a careful review of the need for succession planning to ensure key functions continue to be resourced for safe and effective operations.

4.10.1 Staffing on board trains

The impact on passengers of recent high-profile disputes about the role and responsibilities of a second staff member of staff on the train cannot be overlooked. Safety is of paramount importance. The safety regulator ORR has said that, as long as suitable equipment, proper procedures and competent staff are in place then Driver Only Operation is safe; rail unions disagree.

The precise duties of staff on board will clearly require negotiation and agreement on a franchise by franchise basis; but what should not be at stake is the presence of that member of staff. Passengers value the information and assistance they provide, especially in times of disruption, and their presence also enhances feelings of personal security.

4.11 Further issues

4.11.1 Question 18a: Are there any other priorities you would wish to see addressed?

b) Which of the priorities identified in Chapter 4 do you think should be pursued most urgently in the period between 2020 and 2022?
In section 4.1 we reviewed the proposed franchise objectives against our evidence of passenger priorities for improvement and their satisfaction with current journeys. We identify the top and most urgent priorities as:
- ensuring punctual and reliable services, minimising disruption and providing high quality information when it does occur
- improving capacity and frequency, with service patterns that meet passenger demands and accurate information for all stages of the journey.
- delivering value for money.

In addition to these issues, there are a number of other important areas that must be addressed to provide high quality passenger experience and in the sections below we provide information about those we have not yet covered.

4.11.2 Question 18c) What initiatives not currently offered can, in your opinion, be provided through improved technology to meet the changing requirements of passengers?

Rapidly evolving technology can both enhance many existing elements of rail provision and provide the basis for a step-change in the future. See particularly the sections on information, dealing with disruption and fares and ticketing. The opportunities to deliver creative responses to the first and last mile and enhance the full door-to-door experience should also be considered.

Given the ongoing advance of technology and expectations, bidders should be asked to produce flexible plans to provide future connectivity and improve information through the most appropriate channels available.

4.11.3 Question 18d) In what ways do you think that the franchise could promote equality of opportunity for people with: – disabilities? – other protected characteristics within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010?

See our response to Questions 13c.

4.11.4 Question 18e) Do you have any other comments?

Other important elements of passenger experience that the franchise should address are set out below.

4.11.4.1 Journey planning

There are two key aspects to journey planning: building an original journey, checking routes, fares, options and so on, and checking to see if a planned or regular journey is running as it should.

Passengers planning their journey will have different requirements depending on their individual situation and preferences. Pre-journey information should therefore be available through a variety of channels.

We know that websites are the first place many passengers go when planning a journey.

Websites need to be easy to navigate and kept up to date. Passengers want a site that gives them clear information on which they can make an informed decision, uses language that they understand and instils confidence (primarily that they have bought the right ticket)[28]. As passengers use a range of different websites when planning their journeys, for example National Rail and The Trainline, as well as Great Western's own website, it is important that information is consistent across different sites.

Information on planned disruption is a key requirement during the journey planning stage. Passengers need to know if there is engineering work causing extended journey times, additional changes or bus replacements. Ensuring that passengers

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[28]*Ticket retailing website usability*, July 2011

know in advance of buying a ticket, or are informed far enough out that they can plan around the disruption, is key to managing expectations on the day. It is also an important component of trust and building a relationship with passengers.

Information is also essential during unplanned disruption. Accurate, timely information can help to empower passengers during such times[29]. Passengers want this information to be personalised (in other words 'what does the delay mean to me') so that they can rearrange meetings, alert family members and so on. Some passengers will welcome the option to sign up for journey alerts.

Our research looking at how train companies use social media found that Twitter was seen as a useful channel for pushing information out to people[30]. However, it was essential that this information could be filtered to suit individual requirements; passengers want a tailored solution rather than an overwhelming amount of detail that is not directly relevant to their journey.

Some passengers may prefer to speak to a member of staff at their local station for information. This option offers reassurance, about both journey details and fares, especially to a passenger who is not a regular rail user or who is making an unfamiliar journey. Contact centre service staff should have good local area and network knowledge to deal constructively with enquiries made by phone and email.

There are also specific journey planning implications for passengers with disabilities, not only in terms of accessing the information above but also in arranging assistance on the day of travel. The latter requires up-to-date, trusted details about facilities at stations and en-route. This will become even more relevant with an increasingly ageing population.

Journeys rarely begin and end at rail stations. Passengers will welcome a joined-up approach to offering information about other train operators, other public transport services, cycling or walking options, taxis and parking and drop-off facilities.

4.11.4.2 Unplanned service disruption

In 2017 Transport Focus updated research looking at passengers' needs and experiences during disruption, including around the provision of information[31].

We made a number of recommendations we would encourage bidders to make credible plans to address. However, there are two key points that must be tackled from day one of the new franchise:

- the cultural issue, across the industry, that deficiencies in passenger information at times of disruption persist in a way that would not be tolerated if they were operational or safety failures
- operators must measure the quality of information provided during disruption on a robust and ongoing basis.

[29]*Passenger information when trains are disrupted*, September 2014
[30]*Short and Tweet. How passengers want social media during disruption*, June 2012
[31] Rail passengers experiences and priorities during engineering works. Oct 2017

In addition to the recommendations within that research, we encourage Government to secure, as part of the new franchise, two important factors in providing effective passenger information during disruption:

- reliable, accurate and consistent visual and audible information at all stations
- train movement data sufficiently detailed to deliver accurate live departure predictions for all stations – this could mean fitting GPS devices to all trains. Allowing positional data to be fed to Darwin via the 'GPS gateway' currently under development would seem likely to be the best solution.

4.11.4.3 Resilience

Transport Focus recommends that new franchises have a strong emphasis on service resilience, including in the face of severe weather.

Specifically, we feel bidders should be required to:

- set out the extent to which they will rely on overtime and rest-day working to deliver the service, including on Sundays and at Christmas
- show they have effective maintenance and repair facilities balanced with reasonable rolling stock availability assumptions that are not so optimistic that passengers are at continual risk of experiencing short-formed and cancelled trains.

Research into passengers' views and expectations of rail services during extreme weather found three core principles that the rail industry must embrace[32]:

- provide timely, accurate information so passengers can make informed decisions about their journeys
- be transparent – help passengers understand why timetable changes and service suspensions have been made
- demonstrate that train companies and Network Rail are doing their best on behalf of passengers, despite the weather.

4.11.4.4 Engineering works

Engineering works are inevitable in maintaining the infrastructure that supports rail operations and allowing future improvements. As such, the planning, scheduling and management of this disruption is part and parcel of regular business. There should be structured procedures for managing this activity that are regularly reviewed, then adapted and refined in the light of experience.

Regardless of scale, and as a core principle, it is vital that passengers receive appropriate and timely information about the effect that engineering works will have on their particular journey and are given appropriate advice about alternatives. It is important that revised timetables are robust and achievable.

More generally, bidders should be required to set out how they will work with Network Rail to minimise the use of 'all line' engineering blocks. Culturally, the

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[32]*Reacting to extreme weather on the railways*, July 2015

default assumption must be that routes remain open while maintenance, renewal and enhancement takes place, with exceptions made where there is compelling need.

Bidders should recognise that 55 per cent of passengers say they would not travel at all if a replacement bus is involved[33]. We encourage a joint, public commitment from future operators and Network Rail that, wherever practically possible, they will keep passengers on trains and transfer them to buses only as a last resort. Decisions should not be based solely on operational convenience and plans must also consider the needs of disabled passengers, as well as those with larger items of luggage/equipment.

Use of diversionary routes and/or using shuttles to move passengers as far along the route as possible is an important way to minimise the number of passengers needing to use replacement buses or the length of this element of the journey. Where this is unavoidable there should be consideration of where, for some passengers, coaches may provide a more palatable alternative and how a good and consistent service can be provided where passengers transfer between rail and replacement vehicles.

Transport Focus encourages bidders to have credible proposals for regularly submitting a high-quality bid to Network Rail 18 weeks out from work starting, so accurate amended timetables are in the public domain and reservations open 12 weeks before. We recommend that operators should be required to report, period by period, on the level of changes to the train plan after this 12-week point.

Recent Transport Focus research looks at passengers' experiences from two sets of planned works, at Reading and Bath Spa, in 2015[34]. While the nature and impact of the two engineering projects were very different, the research findings provide useful insight into passengers' core information needs and offer valuable lessons for the rail industry as a whole.

The research indicates the need for a flexible approach to communications planning in the build up to scheduled disruption. The fact that every project and the associated disruption is different means that the onus is on train companies and Network Rail planners to know what their passengers want and understand how a specific project will affect different passenger types.

The results of that assessment should then allow them to tailor communications to give the right level of detailed information when passengers want it, using the most effective communications channel.

The research makes five key recommendations for planning and delivering engineering schemes:

- consider how the various elements of the engineering work are likely to affect individual passengers' journeys: who does it affect and how?

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[33] *Rail passengers' experiences and priorities during engineering works*, September 2012
[34] *Planned rail engineering work – the passenger perspective*, December 2015

- build this insight into your planning approach so that you are able to deliver a tailored information campaign: tell passengers what they want to know about their journey, when they need to know it
- tailor your message
- timing of information: every project is different so be prepared to be flexible
- use full range of information channels to reach different types of passengers.

4.11.4.5 Information, communication and dealing with disruption

Our work on passenger priorities shows that keeping passengers informed when there is disruption is the eighth highest priority for improvement for Great Western Railway passengers.

Table 11: Autumn 2017 NRPS satisfaction with information and dealing with disruption.

Percentage satisfied	GWR	Long Distance	London Thames Valley	West	Peak	Off-peak
Provision of information about train times/platforms	84	86	80	89	82	84
Provision of information during the journey	71	77	68	68	68	72
How well train company deals with delays	41	40	54	31	36	42

The provision of high-quality and effective passenger information during disruption is vitally important. However, it is intrinsically linked to the broader topic of managing or, better still, minimising the disruption that blights far too many passenger experiences. It is important that staff have access to the most up-to-the-minute information, especially during times of disruption, and that they are suitably empowered to be able to make decisions in the interests of passengers.

NRPS shows that there is considerable improvement to be delivered to increase levels of passenger satisfaction with this factor.

Passengers are frustrated with a lack of quality, accurate information during disruption. They want to know how long the delay will last, when the next trains will run and details about alternative routes with the likely impact on travel connections. They want to see accurate, real-time, GPS-based trackers presented on apps and screens to show the progress of trains. They want regular announcements, and they would like to see staff taking ownership of disruption situations, apologising for the inconvenience and being honest about how they are able to help.

4.11.4.6 Passenger compensation

Transport Focus believes that, if not already in place beforehand, the next direct award and subsequent franchises should have Delay Repay style compensation but with the following additional safeguards:

- Not more than 464 journeys are used to calculate annual season ticket holders' fare per journey for Delay Repay purposes – that is, two trips per day, five days a week for 52 weeks, less 5.6 weeks (leave and bank holidays – see https://www.gov.uk/holiday-entitlement-rights). To be fair to passengers, calculations must reflect that people do not work and travel every day of the year.

- The implementation of a 15 minute threshold/trigger for compensation (DR15)

- Transitional arrangements to ensure that passengers who would otherwise have received a discount off the cost of their next season ticket do not lose out. Arrangements with the South Western franchise provide an example as to what can be done.

These safeguards should be established and available at the outset, ready to address any persistent shortcomings in performance that may arise from planned or unplanned disruption on the franchise. It is important that mechanisms to respond to potential problems are available to provide equitable recompense and demonstrate that the industry will put its money where its mouth is in the event of persistent failure.

Our 2016 report into passengers' experience of delays and compensation found that two thirds of those eligible for compensation for their delay did not make a claim[35]. While this shows a welcome improvement since earlier research in 2013 there remains a great deal to be done to increase passengers' awareness of their rights to claim compensation.

Train operators should take further steps to raise general awareness that compensation schemes exist and to familiarise passengers with the eligibility requirements. Posters on trains and at stations are a key part of achieving this, supported by information on the train company's website.

It is also vital to inform passengers each time they experience a qualifying delay. Announcements should be made on trains and at stations, claim forms handed out and electronic notifications issued to let passengers know about their individual eligibility and provide the information they need to make a claim.

Some passengers are put off claiming because they think the process will be complicated or take too long. Where a delay has already inconvenienced passengers the process of claiming compensation should not create additional frustration. Franchise bidders should offer solutions that will make the process swift and simple.

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[35] *Rail delays and compensation - what passengers want*, November 2016

There should be a range of options both for making the claim and receiving the payment. Many passengers say they would value a refund to their card or bank account. There is also a clear desire for compensation to be paid automatically, using technology to make the compensation process easier for passengers.

The research found that passengers are increasingly unsatisfied with the length of time it takes to process compensation claims. Bidders should look to speed up this process to meet passengers' expectations.

Transport Focus recommends that the franchise specification should contain an explicit requirement for the introduction of an automatic compensation scheme.

4.11.4.7 Complaints handling

In our role as the statutory appeals body (outside London) Transport Focus has extensive experience of working with passengers and rail operators to seek resolution of unresolved complaints[36].

We have found a number of recurring issues with either the operators' complaints processes or response quality. We work with the industry in an effort to improve customer service, reduce complaint handling times and focus on operators providing quality complaints handling. This should, in turn, decrease the number of passenger appeals to train companies.

It is important that the franchise specification asks for detailed information about policies and procedures for dealing with complaints. These should demonstrate a clear commitment to best practice and should encompass the points set out in the two sections below.

Any potential change of contact centre and complaints handling supplier should be well managed, with clear plans in place to ensure a smooth transition. Consideration should be given to the possibility that a new team, unfamiliar with the network and nature of cases they will be handling, might be initially slower at resolving complaints. Contingency plans should be in place to mitigate this and avoid any build-up or back-log of cases as a result of the transition.

Transport Focus has previously conducted audits of train operators' complaints-handling functions. These have enabled us to provide feedback on specific issues identified and recommendations for improvements to be adopted more generally. It may be appropriate to require future operators to commit to commissioning similar reviews at appropriate stages within the life of the franchise.

4.11.4.7.1 Complaints handling process issues

We recommend that the operator should:

- empower front-line staff to deal with complaints on the spot, with processes in place to obtain approval for goodwill there and then

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[36]For rail passengers in Britain outside of London.

- ensure any complaints that can't be resolved by front-line staff can be fed into customer relations on the passenger's behalf
- make it easy for passengers to get in contact by providing a variety of contact methods and by being pro-active when things go wrong
- empower customer service advisors to apply 'natural justice' when dealing with poor passenger experiences and allow redress to go beyond the minimum levels of the Passenger Charter or National Rail Conditions of Travel
- monitor and manage response times, and acknowledge complaints if they cannot be resolved within the target time; this information should be published
- have a process for customer service advisors, and other relevant staff members, to proactively investigate issues and share findings with passengers
- establish mechanisms to feed complaints into service improvements, where possible, and feed information about this back to the passenger
- ensure a clear and well-communicated escalation process is in place for complaints handling, including referral to, and cooperation with, Transport Focus or London TravelWatch. This should comply with ORR guidance on Complaints Handling Procedures that sets out requirements for reference to the passenger body and establishment of a protocol with these organisations for the entire appeal handling process[37].

4.11.4.7.2 Complaints handling response quality

We recommend that the operator should:

- train and empower customer service advisors to identify and address all the points in the complaint and give heavy weighting to 'addressing all issues raised by the passenger' in internal quality monitoring processes – this focus on first time resolution reduces 'comebacks' and the need for a subsequent response by the operator
- provide clear explanations about why the passenger is is not receiving compensation and/or gesture of goodwill
- make careful use of appropriately worded standard paragraphs, supplemented as necessary by bespoke responses
- ensure customer service advisors use clear, jargon-free English with correct spelling, grammar and punctuation when writing responses
- use complaints handling as an opportunity to restore a customer's faith in the train operator
- seek feedback from passengers on the quality of responses and use this to contribute to ongoing quality monitoring and implementing a culture of continuous improvement.

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[37] *Guidance on complaints handling procedures for licence holders*, Office of Rail and Road, 2015

4.11.4.7.3 Dealing with legacy complaints

In advance of the new franchise, a clear process for handling legacy complaints should be established. Transport Focus recommends that all complaints should be dealt with by the new operator from the first day onwards, with appropriate recompense mechanisms from the outgoing operator established to enable this. This should extend to honouring any complimentary journeys or vouchers which remain within their expiry date after the new franchise operation starts.

Making the new operator responsible for handling complaints reduces confusion and complexity for the passenger. It also ensures that complaints are handled by the operator with an ongoing interest in retaining the passenger, and who is best placed to resolve any issues and implement any changes as a result of the complaint.

4.11.5 Lost property

Every year passengers lose a huge number of items on the rail network. Many of those passengers never manage to locate the items, even if they have been handed in.

From our preliminary investigation into this subject we have concluded that some operators' systems are not efficient or consistently effective in managing lost property. It is important that bidders develop systems that will:

- register and track an item of lost property from the point it comes into their possession and allow it to be open to enquiry within 24 hours
- provide secure storage from the point an item is handed in at the station until its arrival at the location where it will be held
- register the item with an accurate description including any distinguishing marks, brands or serial numbers
- make it simple for the passenger to try and locate items – at minimum, operators should provide a phone number and an online service with a reasonable response time advertised and stuck to
- re-check the register on a regular basis and inform the passenger promptly by their preferred method of contact if their item is located.

Transport Focus also recommends that bidders:

- cap any charges to reunite the passenger with their item at a reasonable level
- actively seek to increase the number of items repatriated to their owner
- define a process for dealing with 'live incidents' in which a passenger reports that they have left an item on a train that is about to depart
- ensure the system can work with British Transport Police to identify any items held by the operator that have been reported as stolen
- monitor and measure the system to ensure it is effective in meeting the above objectives
- actively work towards the establishment of a national lost property system and, if established, participate in the scheme. This could be either a

national system or the ability to ensure that local schemes can 'talk' to other lost property systems.

4.11.6 Engagement and communication

Effective passenger and stakeholder engagement is central to improving the passenger experience - particularly for gathering intelligence on local aspirations and developments, and for consulting on future proposals.

We carried out research on passenger understanding of the franchise process and their appetite for engagement with it[38]. It is clear from this work that passengers have unanswered desires to contribute their thoughts, both about priorities for franchise specifications and the performance of the train operator. There is also a desire for greater two-way communication about what each franchise promises – and what is actually achieved.

Our research exploring reactions to the Customer Reports required as part of new franchises found that passengers welcomed this additional channel of engagement[39]. The Customer Report provides a clear statement of promises and addresses passengers' desire to understand what a new franchise will deliver and what they can expect over the months and years to come. This is a positive step towards a train operator building a relationship with passengers and generating trust.

When negotiations with a successful bidder are concluded we recommend that there is a clear public statement about key elements of the franchise, particularly how they address passenger requirements. It is important that the contract announcement does not simply cover the 'good news' and high-profile initiatives but also covers any aspects of the new franchise which may have the potential to be detrimental. This would demonstrate an appropriate level of transparency and avoid the negative impact and distrust that can follow when less-good news emerges further down the line.

We also recommend the DfT should publish a redacted version of the franchise agreement and associated documents as soon as possible after the winning bidder is announced, and certainly by the time the new franchise begins.

The new franchisee should demonstrate a clear engagement strategy that accommodates the needs of different passengers. Transport Focus advocates that a wide range of means should be employed to communicate with passengers and wider communities to allow people to access information and provide input in the ways that are most suited to each individual or group. This should not overlook the various needs of passengers with disabilities.

Transport Focus recommends that the franchise specification includes provision for Customer and Communities Investment Schemes, the production of an initial customer report and a commitment to regular updates, or revisions, at key stages of the franchise. These reports should include information about performance on the

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[38]*Giving passengers a voice in rail services*, June 2013
[39]*What passengers want from Customer Reports*, March 2015

factors important to passengers and, particularly where targets are missed or results fall, plans for improvement.

The contract should also require the operator to establish mechanisms that, at the appropriate time, will be used to alert passengers to the prospect of changes as a result of the forthcoming competition when the franchise approaches its end.

As the independent passenger watchdog, Transport Focus will naturally expect a constructive and meaningful relationship with the next operator, from mobilisation and throughout the term of the contract. We will structure engagement to be as effective as possible within the resources we have available.

We require a co-operative, responsive and collaborative approach to working with us in our role as the statutory appeals body.

We also expect a commitment to engage with us around NRPS performance, service delivery and any major disruption events, whether planned or unplanned, as well as responding swiftly to feedback on issues arising across the network. Opportunities to collaborate on research projects would also be welcomed, as would sharing of relevant data.

4.11.6.1 Passenger trust in the rail industry

In 2014 Transport Focus carried out a study exploring passengers' relationship with the rail industry[40]. The main finding is that to improve passengers' trust in the rail industry, train companies not only need to get the basic service right day-to-day, they need to put effort into building long-term relationships with their passengers.

Trust consists of three elements: service, relationship and judgement. Service elements include day-to-day issues such as punctuality, reliability, helpfulness of staff and value for money. They are the foundations for building passengers' trust.

It is important to focus on relationship factors to build passenger trust once the service elements are in place. Communicating directly and proactively with passengers goes down well with them. The research identified particular problem areas for communication, including confusion over ticketing options and when there are delays or cancellations. Communicating and acting honestly, with integrity and transparency, and seeking to build long-term relationships with passengers can inspire trust.

Many train companies score well on the third trust element – judgement. They are seen to have high principles, a good reputation and show leadership. However, judgement does not contribute as much to trust as service and relationship.

One way is through high quality communication. Passengers should feel that train companies are 'on their side'.

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[40]*Passengers' relationship with the rail industry*, August 2014

4.11.6.2 Culture, customer service, reward and recognition

The organisational culture must recognise that passengers are the very reason the organisation exists, ensuring that passengers are valued and appreciated at every level of the operation. This is especially true with a franchise like Great Western, where a high proportion of customers are leisure passengers who may have discretion over the frequency of travel and the means to make journeys. These passengers are important to the business, and should be valued as such.

This approach needs to be driven from the top to achieve exemplary staff behaviour among a workforce that is genuinely engaged and empowered. The ethos must be that passenger interests are central to the decisions and actions of the business. There should be a genuine and consistent demonstration of care for whether a passenger returns to travel again.

We believe that empowering frontline staff to proactively address passenger needs, and giving them the authority and tools to respond to issues where and when they arise, will do much to improve perceptions of customer service.

The focus for good customer service should not solely be on staff at stations and on trains. Customer service is about every aspect of interaction the passenger has with the operator. Provision of adequate journey-planning tools, a useful, easy-to-use website and a helpful, knowledgeable contact centre are all vital to the overall experience. If a customer has cause to make a complaint then how it is handled can have a substantial impact on overall impressions of customer service.

Passengers' experiences on rail are clearly also influenced by the services they experience in the wider aspects of their lives. Our work on trust identified a hierarchy of need. The base level relates to delivery of the core service and is fundamental for building any degree of trust. Beyond this, the middle tier emphasises communication and customer service, while the higher levels rely on a more individualised experience and a sense of being valued.

The theme of recognition and reward has become increasingly evident in our work with passengers. There is a real sense that they wish to be known as individuals, with information and contact personalised to their own requirements and relevant to the interactions they have with the operator. In a world where loyalty schemes and benefits linked to base purchases are common currency, passengers expect similar from their experience on rail.

The franchise specification should encourage the next operator to demonstrate how they will rise to the challenge of delivering improved customer service and build strong, positive and trusting relationships with passengers.

4.11.7 Performance targets

It is important that there are a range of measures in place to assess the perofmance of the franchise. Given the very high significance of these factors to Great Western passengers, the specification must prioritise traditional, 'hard' performance targets covering punctuality, reliability and crowding.

4.11.7.1 Punctuality

Punctuality data provided only at the overall operator level can easily mask significant differences between routes and times of day. Transport Focus supports the provision of performance data (PPM, 'on time'/'right time', and cancellations) in a fully granular way, allowing data to be aggregated as required. This would allow those who use, for example, only the 07:19 and 17:20 service to see the performance of those trains – because that is all that matters to them.

The existing measure (PPM) for Great Western allows a five/ten-minute leeway on late arrival and is only measured at the train's destination station; a train is not late until it exceeds this allowance. However, we know from our research exploring passenger perspectives on train punctuality that a delay can have an effect on passengers before that. We advocate introducing new measure based on right-time arrival, measured ideally at every station along the route, but at least at key points. Recent steps by the industry towards publication of right-time data on particular trains make this increasingly feasible and more likely to be the measure on which performance is publicly judged.

Within the new franchise contract we think there should be:

• Targets to improve PPM, 'on time'/'right time' and cancellations across all routes and to report these at a disaggregated level. Reliance on service group averages, let alone a whole TOC average, risks exposing passengers on individual routes to poor performance.

• Targets for PPM and 'on time'/'right time' at key intermediate stations in addition to at the train destinations and a commitment to report these regularly.

• A requirement to make historic train performance information easy to obtain and understand. Passengers should be able to view the performance of individual trains they catch (or a group of trains) between the stations they use. When journey planning, the performance record of individual trains should be one of the elements presented to assist passenger decision-making.

• A requirement to report publicly the number of trains each period that appear in the public timetable, but are excluded from the 'plan of the day' and therefore do not count officially as cancellations. The fact that any cancellation – if declared by 10pm the day before – does not appear in performance statistics fuels many passengers' underlying suspicion and mistrust of the industry. Being open about what is going on would help.

4.11.7.2 Crowding

There is generally very little data in the public domain about crowding. This is another fundamental aspect of a passenger's journey and an area where greater transparency can generate improvements for passengers. It is a key priority for improvement for Great Western passengers.

The future operator must be required to adopt and publish appropriate crowding measures that are more representative of individual passenger's experiences across

the range of routes and services. Published data should make the crowding levels on different services easily comparable so that decisions about allocation of resources can be scrutinised. NRPS satisfaction measures for relevant factors, including overall satisfaction and room to sit and stand, should be published alongside capacity data to demonstrate the impact this has on passengers.

Technological solutions should also be adopted. Crowding can now be monitored in real time and information systems and apps are becoming available to indicate where available seats on trains are located.

A traffic-light system of information should be made available to passengers to help them understand the likelihood of getting a seat, or even getting onto, a particular train. This allows passengers who have more flexibility to make an informed choice about their travel options. Even where there are more defined patterns of travel, some passengers may appreciate the option of being able to make small adjustments or trade-offs to have a more comfortable journey.

Monitoring and publishing the extent and frequency of short-formations and cancellations should also be a requirement.

4.11.7.3 National Rail Passenger Survey

We have long advocated more use of quality-focused targets within the franchise. Our strong preference is for targets based on what passengers think, the best judge of quality being those who have used the services in question.

The NRPS is ideally suited to capture information that directly reflects the customer perspective. NRPS has a large sample size, currently covering over 60,000 rail passengers nationally in two waves each year, providing for a fair assessment of measures across identified franchise building blocks. The sampling plan ensures that it is representative of day of travel, journey purpose (commuter, business and leisure), and, of course, by a range of demographic attributes (age, sex, ethnicity and so on).

We may also explore the scope for boosting sample sizes in particular areas, in line with practice in some other PTE areas. In some circumstances it may be appropriate to consider increasing the frequency of surveys.

We recommend bespoke NRPS targets should be established on each of the franchise building blocks to measure passenger satisfaction with station, train and customer service attributes. Doing so simply at a global level risks masking the poorer performing areas.

Existing levels of satisfaction should be the starting point for establishing NRPS targets which should generally become more stretching as the franchise progresses and also increase to reflect the outcomes delivered by investment (for example in capacity improvements). An annual assessment of the combined spring and autumn results would provide a fair measure of the overall passenger satisfaction within each given year. We would encourage DfT to consider targeting improvements to

satisfaction over the life of the franchise, rather than allowing bidders to focus solely on the early years.

In line with existing DfT policy, bidders for new franchises should be asked to submit bids that include plans on how they will improve NRPS scores.

4.11.7.4 Key Performance Indicators

The franchise specification should require operators to conduct KPI assessments across the entire franchise and include all stations and representative samples of the major train service groups.

Standards of satisfaction with the customer services function, Passenger Assist, complaints handling, and the level of appeals to Transport Focus should also be measured and reported, as should the level of adherence to Schedule 17 ticket office opening times and T-12. All assessments should be conducted regularly to provide ongoing management information as well as a basis for regular reviews based on collated information.

4.11.7.5 Transparency and monitoring service quality

We recommend a transparent approach to making information about all aspects of the franchise available in the public domain.

Specifications should set out clear expectations for publication of franchise performance in all areas of interest to passengers, particularly those relating to service quality. This should include commitments to disaggregation of data which will also make it easier for passengers to find information that is more relevant to the journeys they make and meaningful to them. Bidders should be encouraged to demonstrate how they will take steps to personalise information to make it most relevant to passengers

Transparency will promote greater accountability by making clear to rail passengers, staff, management and other parties how key aspects of the rail service are performing at different places and at different times. The provision of detailed information will enable rail passengers and others to hold the train company to account and to ask what is being done to improve services in return for the fares paid.

Good management should not feel threatened by this. Indeed the availability of accurate data may actually help them as a particularly bad journey can linger in the memory and distort passengers' perceptions. Accurate, relevant data can help challenge these negative perceptions and is also a vital management tool.

The ultimate measure of whether a train company is performing well is whether passengers are happy with the quality of service provided. This is good from a commercial perspective as well as a customer service one, as evidenced by the conclusions on passenger demand forecasting which suggest that service quality does have an impact on levels of demand.

Specifications for new franchises must stretch the successful bidder to take passenger satisfaction to higher levels. This should apply both for the franchise as a whole and at a building-block level. The goal should be to achieve greater consistency of performance across the component parts of each franchise and to drive satisfaction on all aspects of service delivery upwards, to bring the whole operation up to the achievements of the best comparators and to meet the reasonable expectations of passengers.

Targets, measurements, monitoring and transparent reporting are fundamental to delivering improvements to service quality. The balance between input and output measures is a fine one and Transport Focus recognises the value of both provided that they are based on passengers' priorities and needs. We strongly support the principle of monitoring and improving service quality through a combination of NRPS results and periodic reviews of train operating company Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

Passenger responses to the consultation should be used to further inform the targets and measures that go into the franchise specification. Financial penalty regimes should apply, with resources ring-fenced for additional investment into service quality measures that are most likely to improve passenger satisfaction.

5. Further information

For further information about this response to the Great Western franchise consultation please contact:

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Further details of all our publications exploring passenger perspectives on a range of issues can be found on the Transport Focus website (www.transportfocus.org.uk).

For specific information about franchising please see:
https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/key-issues/franchising/

6. Appendices

Appendix 1 NRPS building block definitions

A1.1 Great Western Railway NRPS building blocks

Great Western Railway – Long Distance: Journeys on long - distance services

Great Western Railway – London Thames Valley: Journeys on relatively short-distance services in and around the Thames Valley

Great Western Railway – West: Journeys on (generally) short - distance rural routes in the West of England

A1.2 NRPS typology groups and comparator services

Highspeed typology:
Great Western Railway - Long Distance
Southeastern - High Speed
Virgin Trains - London - Liverpool
Virgin Trains - London - Manchester
Virgin Trains - London - North Wales
Virgin Trains - London - Scotland
Virgin Trains - London - Wolverhampton/Shrewsbury
Virgin Trains East Coast - London - Leeds and West Yorkshire
Virgin Trains East Coast - London - Newcastle/Sunderland and East Yorkshire

Long Commute typology:
Great Western Railway - London Thames Valley
Chiltern Railways - Commuter
Chiltern Railways - Oxford
Chiltern Railways - West Midlands
East Midlands Trains - London
Greater Anglia - Mainline
Greater Anglia - West Anglia
Great Northern
London Midland - London Commuter
ScotRail - Urban
South West Trains - Outer Suburban & Local
Southeastern - Mainline
Southern - Sussex Coast
Thameslink - North/South

Rural typology
Great Western Railway – West

South Western Railway - Island Line
Greater Anglia - Rural
ScotRail - Rural
Arriva Trains Wales - Mid Wales and Borders
Arriva Trains Wales - North Wales and Borders

Appendix 2 NRPS satisfaction scores
See accompanying document

Appendix 3 Passenger priorities for station improvements
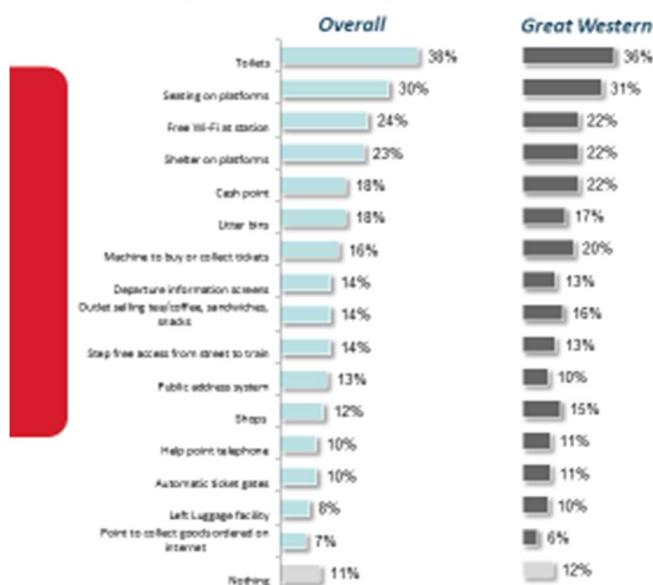
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