



Transport user information during coronavirus good practice guide

September 2020

“I don’t totally understand the rules and as my daughter has asthma, both she and I have found that the information is patchy about if she should or should not be allowed on the bus if she is unable to wear a face covering.”

This quote, from a member of our Transport User Panel, perhaps sums up the user need for clear information in light of the coronavirus pandemic. Transport Focus has been campaigning for improvements through its recent assessments of the clarity of information provided by train companies, bus companies, transport authorities and motorway services operators’ websites. This is all about the reassurance needed to give people the confidence to travel again after lockdown.

In this short report we:

- draw together our key messages in light of this work. Some are specific to a scenario in which transport users have not travelled for months, but others have general applicability
- provide examples of good practice for transport operators to emulate.

The world is going to continue to change, both in terms of the products transport users are offered and their needs for information and reassurance. We encourage all transport organisations to continually consider how good their website is in the context of our key messages and examples of good practice and make improvements where needed. New needs may emerge, but the need to always think ‘what will people want to know?’ will remain.

Transport Focus is pleased to have been asked by the Department for Transport to carry out further work in this area on behalf of rail passengers. We are exploring with stakeholders in the bus, motorway services and tram sectors how in future we can best help them provide excellent information for their customers.

Guy Dangerfield
Head of Strategy
Transport Focus

Key messages from Transport Focus

1. The problem that 'the author knew what they meant' is real. We challenged a number of instances where text didn't quite say what we (could only assume) it meant. The reaction when we raised issues was usually 'ah, good point, I hadn't read it that way' and changes were quickly made.

Transport Focus's message: that transport operators need more effective ways to sense check that websites say what they think they say, and that text is accurate and unambiguous.

2. Transport operators didn't seem to put themselves in the shoes of somebody who hadn't travelled for three months, and so hadn't thought about the extra information those people might need. An example is reservations. When there was lots in the media about needing to book in advance (for all sorts of things that had previously been 'turn up'), we had to work hard to help some organisations see the merit of confirming that they were still providing a 'turn up' service. And even small changes, like entering through one door and leaving through another, are useful things for people to know before they arrive.

Transport Focus's message: that transport operators will, for some time, need to think what those who haven't travelled far since mid-March, or in some cases at all, will want to know. Even if services are being provided in exactly the same way as before Covid-19, why would transport users necessarily know that?

3. In striving for clear messages it's easy to overlook caveats. We had to challenge the use of 'must', unqualified, in a number of instances – particularly to do with face coverings. For example, the law sets out when somebody is allowed not to cover their face and that shouldn't be glossed over. It's important to those concerned, some of whom are disabled. First, so those who are exempt know they are and, second, to a signal to the majority that some people are legitimately entitled not to cover their face.

Transport Focus's message: be careful when using words like must, mandatory and compulsory. Is it technically correct? Who is disadvantaged if you don't mention a caveat?

4. Organisations sometimes use terminology that transport users may have understood before Covid-19, but the meaning has changed. Take descriptions like peak and off-peak times: the peaks are now different and may well keep changing.

Transport Focus's message: in the transition to 'new normal' it is vital that organisations check that phrases used before Covid-19 are still accurate and useful in the current context.

5. Some organisations tended to think that just because something had been tweeted, it didn't matter if their website wasn't clear. A proportion of transport users will come to a website as the official source of the truth and may not be following that organisation on social media.

Transport Focus's message: full marks to those who are using social media to communicate, but it can't be instead of keeping the website up to date.

Examples of good practice

For the purposes of this document we have selected a handful of examples of best practice; we couldn't include them all. Some of those selected are a result of organisations embracing our feedback; others were good in the first place. We've included examples from train company, bus company, transport authority and motorway services operator websites. We hope this will encourage cross-sector learning: the contexts may differ a bit, but the principles are often common.

Train companies

Communicating when it is best to travel

On its website South Western Railway sets out, in the context of social distancing, when it will be very busy, busy and not busy.

The screenshot shows the South Western Railway website. The header includes the logo and navigation links: Buy tickets, Train tickets, Plan my journey, Travelling with us, Destinations and offers, and Help and support. A yellow banner below the header contains a warning icon and text: 'Revised timetable // Hot weather forecast // Disruption between Petersfield and Liss // Disruption through Longcross - Click for more information - Last updated: 4:41 PM'. The main content area has a breadcrumb trail: Home / Plan my journey / How busy will my train be?. The title 'Train and station crowding information' is prominently displayed. Below the title, there is a section 'Check before you travel' with text explaining the importance of planning during the coronavirus pandemic. It mentions that the guide is based on the most recent data and will be updated regularly. A link to 'nationalrail.co.uk' is provided for live updates. To the right, there are two blue boxes: 'Coronavirus Travel Information' with a 'Find out more' link and 'Season tickets' with a 'Learn more' link. The 'Find out about:' section lists several bullet points: 'Busiest trains (morning peak arrivals at London Waterloo)', 'Busiest trains (evening peak departures from London Waterloo)', 'The busiest times at London Waterloo, Vauxhall and Clapham Junction', 'The busiest times at Wimbledon, Surbiton and Woking', and 'Travelling to Bournemouth this weekend'. A 'Key:' section follows, explaining the color coding: red for 'Busiest time' (one-metre gap difficult), amber for 'Busy' (one-metre plus social distancing possible), and green for 'Not busy' (two-metre gap possible).

South Western Railway

Buy tickets Train tickets Plan my journey Travelling with us Destinations and offers Help and support

Revised timetable // Hot weather forecast // Disruption between Petersfield and Liss // Disruption through Longcross - Click for more information - Last updated: 4:41 PM

Home / Plan my journey / How busy will my train be?

Train and station crowding information

Check before you travel

Planning your journey is especially important during the coronavirus pandemic. In order to maintain social distancing on our trains and at stations, we are asking our customers to travel at quieter times where possible.

Use our new guide below to find out when our major stations tend get busy on weekdays, and the crowding levels on our peak time services.

We've based our guide on the most recent data, and we will continue to update it regularly. Being based on recent data, this guide doesn't take account of events like hot weather which may mean that more people travel than usual.

For live updates for your journey please visit nationalrail.co.uk

Find out about:

- Busiest trains (morning peak arrivals at London Waterloo)
- Busiest trains (evening peak departures from London Waterloo)
- The busiest times at London Waterloo, Vauxhall and Clapham Junction
- The busiest times at Wimbledon, Surbiton and Woking
- Travelling to Bournemouth this weekend

Key:

- Busiest time (red): **Maintaining a one-metre gap between travellers will be difficult at these times.** Trains will have very little available space left - consider travelling earlier or later if you can.
- Busy (amber): **"One-metre plus" social distancing will be possible.** Trains will have limited space available - consider travelling on trains or at times marked in green if you can.
- Not busy (green): **A two-metre gap between travellers will be possible.** There will be plenty of room on these

Coronavirus Travel Information

Find out more about what we're doing to help combat Coronavirus on our network

[Find out more](#)

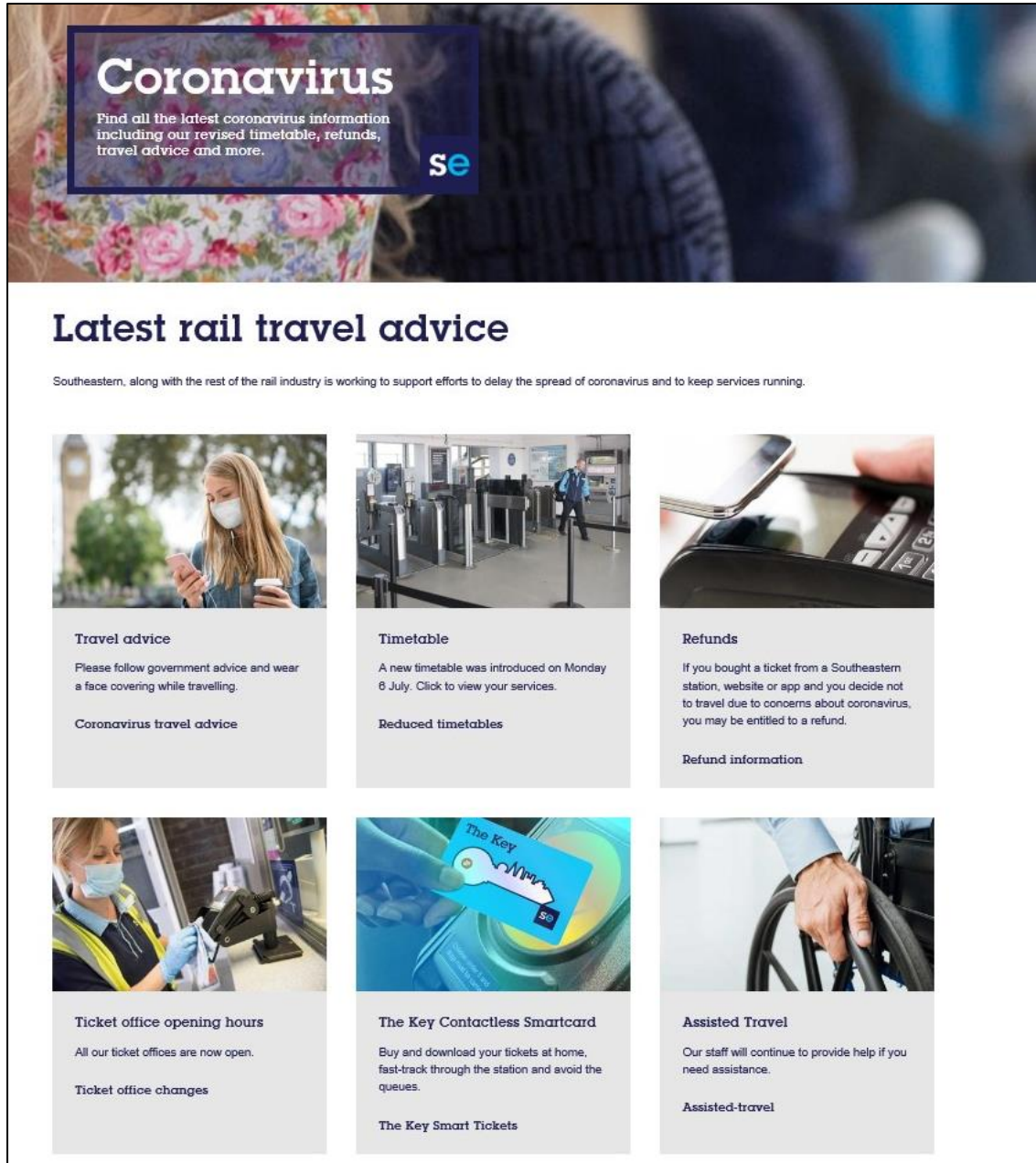
Season tickets

If you travel on the same route regularly, you could save money and time with a season ticket

[Learn more](#)

Organising information so passengers can find what they want

On its website Southeastern has a coronavirus 'landing page', allowing passengers to navigate to the subject they want. We feel this is preferable to a long, unwieldy list which some organisations display.



The screenshot shows the Southeastern website's coronavirus landing page. At the top, there's a banner with the word "Coronavirus" in large white text on a dark blue background. Below it, smaller white text says "Find all the latest coronavirus information including our revised timetable, refunds, travel advice and more." and the "se" logo is on the right. The main heading is "Latest rail travel advice" in a large, bold, dark blue font. Below this, a small line of text states: "Southeastern, along with the rest of the rail industry is working to support efforts to delay the spread of coronavirus and to keep services running." The page features a grid of nine information cards, each with a relevant image at the top and text below. The cards are: 1. Travel advice (woman with mask), 2. Timetable (train platform), 3. Refunds (hand holding phone), 4. Ticket office opening hours (staff member), 5. The Key Contactless Smartcard (blue card), 6. Assisted Travel (hand on wheelchair), 7. Coronavirus travel advice (text only), 8. Reduced timetables (text only), and 9. Refund information (text only).


Coronavirus

Find all the latest coronavirus information including our revised timetable, refunds, travel advice and more.

se

Latest rail travel advice


Southeastern, along with the rest of the rail industry is working to support efforts to delay the spread of coronavirus and to keep services running.



Travel advice

Please follow government advice and wear a face covering while travelling.


[Coronavirus travel advice](#)



Timetable

A new timetable was introduced on Monday 6 July. [Click to view your services.](#)


[Reduced timetables](#)



Refunds

If you bought a ticket from a Southeastern station, website or app and you decide not to travel due to concerns about coronavirus, you may be entitled to a refund.


[Refund information](#)



Ticket office opening hours

All our ticket offices are now open.


[Ticket office changes](#)



The Key Contactless Smartcard

Buy and download your tickets at home, fast-track through the station and avoid the queues.

[The Key Smart Tickets](#)



Assisted Travel

Our staff will continue to provide help if you need assistance.

[Assisted-travel](#)

Setting information out clearly for those needing assistance

Not only does Southeastern set the information out well, prompted by Transport Focus's questions the operator thoroughly reviewed the service it was provided to disabled passengers during the Covid-19 crisis.

Accessible travel
We're committed to accessible travel for all our passengers. **se**

Accessible Travel

Are you disabled or an older person who needs help using our services?
Information on the accessibility of our trains and stations is available below, as well as guidance on how to book our Passenger Assist service.

Coronavirus FAQs

If you need assistance to travel by train, our staff will continue to provide help so that you can get to your destination safely. We will do everything we can to help you complete your journey, and while it is not a requirement to book ahead, we strongly recommend that you contact us to discuss your journey as soon as possible.

- Will assistance still be available at the station to help me travel?
- How will you make sure it's safe?
- What if I need help with my luggage?
- I have a visual impairment
- I am a wheelchair user
- I have a hearing impairment
- I have a neuro-diverse condition, such as Autism or Dementia

Accessible travel

- Disabled persons protection policy
- Book passenger assistance
- Support while travelling
- Station information
- Accessibility on board our trains
- Tickets and discounts


Explore Assisted-travel

- Assisted-travel
- Buy before you board
- Car parking
- Delays explained
- Explore our network
- Safety
- Secure stations
- Station Information
- Travel Support Card

Bus companies

Information about how to travel safely

The Stagecoach website 'travelling safely' page sets out what to expect in a logical progression, for example planning, at the bus stop and on the bus.



No location set

Sign up / Login

Basket (0 ticket)

[Plan a journey](#)[Maps](#)[Tickets](#)[Timetables](#)[Service updates](#)[Help & Contact](#)[Stagecoach Group](#)

[Home](#) > [Promos and offers](#) > [National](#) > Covid 19 Travelling Safely on our Services

Share

Travelling safely in England

Over the past few months our absolute priority has been to keep our customers and employees safe. Now that steps are being taken to ease lockdown and more people are travelling, our priorities remain the same.


If you can, walking and cycling are encouraged but if you travel by bus, please follow the guidance set out below to make sure you travel safely on our services. You can travel on our services with confidence. We pay special attention to the items you come into contact with - handrails, bells, seats, poles - to make sure they're regularly and thoroughly cleaned. [Find out more in our video.](#)

We fully support the Government's advice about social distancing, including the compulsory wearing of face coverings on public transport and when using indoor public transport hubs in England.

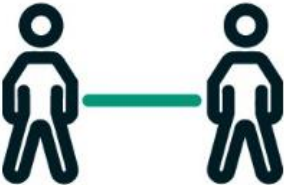
You can find full details below of how you can travel safely on our services.

Make a plan:

- Allow extra time for your journey and try to travel at quiet times. We've introduced a new how busy is my bus indicator in our live map view, on the [Stagecoach Bus App](#), to show the busiest and quietest times to travel, based on how many people normally use the service.
- Check our latest timetables before you travel.
- We do not provide hand sanitiser on our buses or trams so it is important that you thoroughly wash or sanitise your hands before and after you travel.
- Remember your face covering. See our [Face Covering FAQs](#) page for more information.



Social distancing at the bus stop:



- It is now compulsory to wear face coverings when using indoor public transport hubs in England, so please remember your face covering.
- To allow for social distancing buses will have limited capacity. If your bus has a BUS FULL sign please be prepared to wait for the next bus.
- Please be kind and look out for other passengers who might need to travel more urgently than you.
- Take note and follow any [posters at your bus stop](#) which offer guidance about how to travel safely. Please see here for an [example poster](#) that can be found at the bus stop.
- At bus stops, try to keep at least one metre away from anyone else in the queue.
- There may be additional signage to guide you at bus stations on how to queue.
- Let people off the bus before you get on and try to keep a safe distance between you, the driver and other customers.

- Pay by contactless card, travelcard or mobile ticket where possible.

Oxford Bus Company

The Oxford bus company website lists the things passengers may wish to know before travelling. It also gives a link to their When2Travel journey planning tool, which uses past (recent past) demand data to predict how busy each journey will be (even which *part* of a journey).

The screenshot shows the Oxford Bus Company website with a red header. The main navigation bar includes links for Home, COVID-19, Bus Kids, Times&Tolls, Tours, Maps, About Us, App, the key, News, Updates, Things to do, and Contact us. A search bar is located on the right. The main content area features a large yellow banner with the text "BUS TRAVEL GUIDANCE" and icons for social distancing (1m+), hand hygiene, and face covering. Below this is a section titled "Bus travel guidance" with the text: "When you travel, please follow our COVID-19 bus travel guidance to help keep you and our colleagues safe." To the right, a sidebar titled "COVID-19" contains the text: "We're safe and ready when you are!" and "We're ready when you are!" followed by a link to "COVID-19 service changes". Below the main banner, a section titled "Please help us to help you by..." lists several guidelines with icons and links for more details:

- Don't travel unwell**: If you feel unwell, please don't travel. If you have coronavirus-like symptoms, stay at home and call 111 if you need help.
- Plan ahead**: Plan ahead and try to travel at off-peak times where possible using our prediction tool When2Travel. [→ When2Travel](#)
- Face covering**: You must now wear a face covering (e.g. mask, scarf or bandana) when travelling on public transport. [→ Click here for more details](#)
- Avoid cash payment**: Pay by contactless, Freeflow, the key or the app if you can. If you need to use cash, try to have the right change.
- Social distancing**: Keep a safe social distance from others and make sure you stay at least one metre apart wherever possible.
- Help the ventilation**: Please keep the windows opened if it's possible to help ventilation on-board the bus.
- Sit safely**: Avoid sitting side-by-side or face-to-face with people from outside your household. Try to sit by the window if you can.
- Cough or sneeze hygienically**: If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into the inside of your arm.

Transdev

The Transdev website sets out what it is doing to keep buses clean, with text and a video. Good practice from an accessibility perspective: text that can be read out by software for the visually impaired, alongside a video.

We're Clean, Safe and Ready to Go

What we are doing to keep our buses clean

- Our buses are deep cleaned every night by our expert team of cleaners ready for you each morning
- Cleaners at our bus stations are there to hop on board to disinfect buses and clean touchpoints throughout the day.
- Cleaning kits are carried by drivers to ensure they're equipped during the journey
- Virucidal fog is used every night as part of a new regime and is proven to be highly effective



Keeping you safe, including distancing on board and at stops

- We have added more buses to our timetables so you have a greater choice of journeys.
- At the bus stop, allow anyone leaving the bus to get off before you try to board. Get on one at a time and keep apart from other customers.
- We're looking forward to seeing more of you on board as capacity restrictions are being lifted.
- We are keeping our buses well ventilated by leaving the windows open to ensure the air is as fresh as possible.
- Please try to only sit in the window seats, unless you're a family who can sit together
- We've added hand sanitiser dispensers to every bus, so please help yourself as you board and leave the bus.

We're Clean, Safe and Ready to Go! If you need us, we're here...

In the context of social distancing, Travel South Yorkshire's website sets out clearly what the transport authority is doing and what the bus companies are doing.

West of England Combined authority uses 'frequently asked questions' to provide information about paying with cash and what happens if the last service is full (as a result of buses reaching their social distancing safe capacity).



Frequently asked questions

How are you keeping passengers safe at bus stops and buses?

Bus services are operated by commercial operators, all of them are carrying out extra cleaning of their buses. Some bus operators may be providing hand sanitiser on board. If you'd like more information, find out who runs your bus service and their contact/website details **by using the table on this page.**

Bus stops are managed by Local Authorities, however, we have been working closely with them to install posters at bus stops with safe travel guidance such as wearing face coverings and social distancing.

What happens if the last service of the day is full?

We advise you to travel before the last service of the day, if you can.

If you must travel on the last service, please contact the bus operator in advance to find out if they have any processes in place. To find out who runs your bus service and their contact/website details **please use the table on this page.**

Can I pay with cash on the bus?

We are encouraging everyone to pay by contactless if they can. Most services will be accepting cash on board, but to minimise risk of transmission please use the correct change. Contact the bus operator in advance to check if they're accepting cash on their service. To find out who runs your bus service and their contact/website details **please use the table on this page.**

I have more questions about bus services, how can I contact you? What are your opening times?

For any bus service queries, please contact the bus operator or visit their website. To find out who runs your bus service and their contact/website details **please use the table on this page.**

Motorway services operators

How busy is it?

A key priority given the need to social distance is how busy a particular motorway services is. The Roadchef website shows this well, site by site, although it could shout a bit louder about the fact it's there!

The screenshot displays the Roadchef website interface. On the left, a vertical menu lists 'Facilities', 'Brands', 'Deals', and 'Parking'. Below this, the 'Current status' section shows a green signal icon and the text 'We're fairly quiet right now'. A button labeled 'Order ahead →' is positioned below the status. The main content area features the heading 'We're open 24 hours' above four icons: 'Open 24 hours' (a clock with '24'), 'EV charging' (a car with a plug), 'Free Wi-Fi' (a Wi-Fi symbol), and '2 hours free parking' (a car with a 'P' and '2h'). To the right, a list titled 'All our facilities' includes: 'Open 24 hours', 'EV charging', 'Free Wi-Fi', '2 hours free parking', 'Baby changing', 'Caravan parking', 'Cash machines', 'Free water', 'HGV parking', 'Meeting rooms', 'Order ahead', 'Pet friendly', and 'Showers'.

Giving you more

→ **Facilities**

Brands

Deals

Parking

Current status

🟢 We're fairly quiet right now

Get more information on our **order ahead** and **drive-thru** services

Order ahead →

We're open 24 hours

🕒 Open 24 hours

🚗 EV charging

📶 Free Wi-Fi

🅑🅓 2 hours free parking

All our facilities

- 🕒 Open 24 hours
- 🚗 EV charging
- 📶 Free Wi-Fi
- 🅑🅓 2 hours free parking
- 👶 Baby changing
- 🚐 Caravan parking
- 💰 Cash machines
- 🚰 Free water
- 🚚 HGV parking
- 📅 Meeting rooms
- 📄 Order ahead
- 🐾 Pet friendly
- 🚿 Showers

What's open where?

Tackling head on the reality that transport users will wonder if everything is open, Extra provide details of what is open where alongside preparing people for the experience before they arrive.

EXTRA Facilities Locations Coaches Truckers News Contact Us

Beaconsfield - M40 J2

We are Open 24-7 Update 7th August 2020.

[What to expect when you visit →](#) [Brands open at each location →](#)

- Toilets & Washrooms open 24-7
- Indoor seating is available for dining in
- All parking facilities are open 24-7
- picnic & play areas are open
- ATM's available at each location
- All fuel filling stations open 24-7
- EV charging available 24-7 all locations
- A safe place to eat, rest and refuel



Transport Focus is the operating name of
the Passengers' Council

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