HS2 Customer Community
Dealing with Disruption – January 2019
Debrief: 15/02/19

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Panel participation

Topic	Dates	%
Dealing with disruption	4 Jan – 1 Feb	73
Personas and journeys	6 Dec – 11 Jan	73
Staff uniform	2 Nov – 9 Dec	75
Staff behaviour	5 Oct – 4 Nov	80
Autonomous vehicles in stations	7 Sep – 7 Oct	80
Announcements	3 Aug – 9 Sep	75
Stations of the future	6 Jul – 5 Aug	70
Customer experience hubs	8 Jun – 8 Jul	80
2030 customer journey	11 May – 10 Jun	80
Workshop feedback	17 Apr – 13 May	84
Connectivity	16 Mar – 15 Apr	95
Design handbook	2 Mar – 8 Apr	83
Train blueprint	2 Feb – 2 Mar	93

%

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The task

Dealing with Disruption

For this task, we would like you to think about how disruptions are dealt with by HS2. We will describe different scenarios to help set the scene for this.

In the case of an infrastructure failure on the London to Birmingham line, how should operations staff deal with delays to further services? Please tell us which scenario you think would provide a better customer experience and why:

A) Operations staff tell customers that the highspeed railway is shut for a set period of time (e.g. 1hr 30m) to manage the incident and get services restored. Customers can therefore leave the station and come back 90 minutes later in the knowledge that they will not be missing any trains in that time.

OR

B) Operations staff continuously update customers on possible next highspeed services, even if this means times are moved backwards and forwards as information comes in.

In both scenarios, assume that HS2 will give customers information about alternative routes using non-HS2 services.

For infrastructure failures, we'll have a robust idea of how long the failure will take to rectify so we can be fairly accurate in our predictions. For a fatality, things are slightly less predictable in terms of how long it takes to get trains running again. With this in mind, if it were a fatality on the line rather than infrastructure failure, would this change which scenario you would opt for?

You have 4 weeks to respond to this task.

Your response

1. In the case of an infrastructure failure, do you prefer option A or B? Why?

2. In the case of a fatality, does your decision change? Why/why not?

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Overall

When asked to consider different approaches to dealing with disruption, Community members saw value in receiving information outlining definite timescales, an option that is not available when travelling by rail today

"For me, **the biggest frustration at the moment is the lack of information currently available**, either about the cause of the delay, the likely duration of the delay or alternative routes. If this was forthcoming, I could work with either system."
Female, 61-70, Business

"I would be bored for an hour and a half to be honest... BUT **if there were services that could entertain us a bit maybe that would be better** – warmer places to go where you don't need to buy anything to sit in... a TV, free games for kids etc."
Community member with autism

"In both scenarios I think it proves **honesty is generally the best**. If you are told there has been a fatality, you're more likely to be sympathetic and not go moaning about the delays, and in an infrastructure problem I would encourage **as much information as the average layman can understand**"
Male, 51-60, Business

"I like that there is a set time which the services promise to resolve the issue, that is **more professional in my opinion**."
Female, 18-23, Commuter

"I think the understanding of possible timescales as in **is it long term or short term issue is the most important**. Even if that information is we have no idea of the cause but will provide an update in an hour."
Female, 41-50, Business

"I would rather be kept abreast of the situation and **informed in a dynamic manner**"
Male, 41-50, Commuter

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Event: Infrastructure failure

Many Community members were intrigued by the concept of being told a set time for service recovery following disruption, seeing the potential benefits of being able to make better use of waiting time than they can today

- They liked the idea of being given a definite and guaranteed waiting time, equipping them with adequate information to make informed choices around rearranging personal plans as early as possible

- They suggested that this solution had the potential to turn a typically negative situation into something that passengers could potentially enjoy

"It is better for people to be given a set period of time delay so they can decide whether to go and do a bit of window shopping or get something to eat rather than waiting on the platform for updates. It would be such a pain if a passenger had just ordered hot food then suddenly get a notification that an HS2 train is arriving in 10 minutes."
Female, 41-50, Leisure

"It would be a great help to be told I had a window of time to grab a coffee outside the station or go for a bit of window shopping etc. safe in the knowledge I wouldn't miss my delayed train... This would need to be something people feel confident with, however, as currently I wouldn't put it past some operators to not communicate when delayed train has arrived and I then miss it! Using my mobile or wearable device though would be a great aid to ping me notifications."
Male, 31-40, Business

- However, they emphasised how important delivering accurate information in a timely manner would be to the success of the concept
  - This would be essential to gain passengers' trust!

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Event: Infrastructure failure

Some Community members highlighted how stressful experiencing disruption whilst travelling can be and thought that the concept could offer a better customer experience to passengers

- They stated that waiting around on a concourse or platform was often an unpleasant experience, adding to the general anxieties felt whilst travelling
  - They suggested that this concept could help to alleviate stress by allowing passengers to feel more in control of the situation

"It gives a definite time allowing me to plan what I'm going to do with my time rather than sitting around hoping for the best"

Female, 31-40, Commuter

"I would prefer a realistic time for when you can return. The worst case scenario is the "*it will be 20 mins*", then in 20 mins' time it is a further 20 mins and so on. Would it be possible to give the following to us as passengers:
Min time of disruption: 55 mins
Expected time of disruption: 90 mins
Max time of disruption: 115 mins
Then the passenger can make an informed decision and times can be rebooked depending on your urgency and needs. Perhaps encourage customers to stay within the local eateries by offering a discount on the ticket to wait the max time with a percentage off a meal/coffee cost as a thank you. Or offer discount off a future ticket if the passenger is prepared to wait the full 115 mins?"

Male, 51-60, Business

"I would expect that I would be much happier. I can then reschedule any appointments and find a more productive or enjoyable way to use my time rather than keep watching the screen for an announcement. Waiting for unknown periods of time tends to stress me much more than having some extra time unexpectedly."

Male, 41-50, Business

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Event: Infrastructure failure

However, a proportion of the Community wanted to receive continuous updates during disruption, stating that they would prefer to be able to make progress with their journey as soon as possible

"Continual updates would be helpful even if they did fluctuate a bit. It is nice to feel updated and to be kept in the loop."

Female, 24-30, Business

- Some felt that closing the railway for a set period of time would prevent the possibility of services being resumed earlier than expected, delaying passenger for longer than necessary

- Equally, there was concern that disruption could take longer to resolve than anticipated; telling passengers a defined time and subsequently not being able to stick to it could cause further frustration.

"I personally prefer option B, as I prefer to be able to get to my destination as quickly as possible, and I think option A, while convenient for timing, does not allow for the possibility of the problem being sorted quicker than planned."

Male, 18-23, Leisure

"I would prefer option B as that's what I typically do when there are issues with rail lines anyway, look for other options even if complicated as I prefer to feel like I am moving! I always want to be kept up to date."

Community member with autism

"What seems like a minor problem that will be fixed in 90 minutes can often lead to bigger unforeseen problems. I do understand this so I would probably put it down to a rare hiccup and get to my destination by other means."

Female, 51-60, Commuter

"Generally travellers like to the get to their destination as quickly as possible"

Male, 18-23, Commuter

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Event: Infrastructure failure

There was agreement amongst the Community that an individual passenger's preferences relating to these options could vary depending on the specific journey purpose i.e. leisure vs business

- They stated that, when embarking on leisure journeys, there was more likely to be flexibility in their plans. Therefore they might be less negatively impacted by a longer delay, allowing them to make use of the station facilities on offer or surrounding area

- Conversely, they thought that those with a strict timetable or schedule to keep to (e.g. business meeting, medical appointment) might prefer to receive continuous updates.

"It would very much depend on the purpose of the journey. Anyone with a schedule to keep to, i.e. for a business meeting or when catching a connecting train, might prefer real-time updates (presumably via SMS or an app) to ensure minimal disruption of their plans."

Female, 51-60, Leisure

"It's of course highly dependent on what plans I had for later e.g. if I was catching a flight or I had a meeting"

Male, 41-50, Business

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The best of both?

Having considered both options, Community members saw value in both approaches and wondered whether a hybrid solution could be offered, which relied on supplying passengers with accurate information

- They stated that a fusion of both options could provide an elevated customer experience for all.

"I would like a combination of both. I find it difficult to believe that the train company could accurately predict the delay time given my own experience of rail infrastructure failures. If you operated under option A, you would still need to continuously update customers once the set delay period had elapsed in order to advise passengers on the revised schedule. The ultimate aim should be to limit a station full of disgruntled passengers (18 services an hour would be a lot of passengers). That could be through a combination of the following:
- Giving passengers enough warning not to leave their starting point i.e. home or diverting them
- Providing alternative routes on the main network and with an incentive to use them e.g. a voucher towards future journeys
- Vouchers for passengers at the station to use at venues outside the station e.g. cafes, museums, cinemas
- Arrangements with local hotels (ones with conference facilities) to allow passengers to wait there so they are not sat on a station floor"

Male, 41-50, Commuter

"I suppose I am really suggesting a hybrid approach, where you can estimate (as accurately as possible) the time of the wait but opt for ongoing updates if you wish. I don't think it's necessarily an either/or as long as you are kept informed about the likely length of the delay. For me, the biggest frustration at the moment is the lack of information currently available, either about the cause of the delay, the likely duration of the delay or alternative routes. If this was forthcoming, I could work with either system."

Female, 61-70, Business

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Event: Fatality

When asked whether their preferences change in the event of a fatality, where service recovery times are more difficult to accurately predict, the overwhelming consensus was that preferences remained the same

- Interestingly, even when informed that the cause of disruption had an impact on being able to predict recovery time, most Community members still preferred their original choice

> "My decision does not change but people should be more understanding in that scenario"
> Community member with autism

- Whilst some felt that knowing the reason for the disruption was useful and would encourage passengers to be more patient, others indicated that they would prefer not to know the cause
  - They thought that this information could be made available to those who wished to access it.

> "In the case of a fatality my decision would only change in so far as I would have more understanding of the problems that HS2 would have in resuming normal service. I believe that the bare bones that a fatality had occurred would be enough information. I hope that whatever the problem causing any delay, that I would have a certain level of empathy and that I would realise that any transport provider would be doing their best to provide the service that they had been paid for."
> Female, 70+, Leisure

> "I don't think my answer changes for a fatality other than that I would think a description of the delay of "*at least X hours*" might be more relevant, with updates as things develop. In both scenarios I think it proves honesty is generally the best. If you are told there's has been a fatality, you're more likely to be sympathetic and not go moaning about the delays, and in an infrastructure problem I would encourage as much information as the average layman can understand."
> Male, 51-60, Business

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Event: Fatality

When asked whether their preferences change in the event of a fatality, where service recovery times are more difficult to accurately predict, the overwhelming consensus was that preferences remained the same

"I think in the case of a fatality understandably it would take longer to get the service up and running again, but as the timeframe could still be fluid I would say this wouldn't affect my decision"

Male, 18-23, Leisure

"At the end of the day I don't think it's what has caused the delay, but what matters to customers is when they can use the service against when service is expected to be resumed"

Female, 41-50, Commuter

"My answer is the same as I believe the ability of the train company to predict the delay would be equally variable"

Male, 41-50, Commuter

"My decision does not change in any way. A delay is a delay, regardless of the cause. There may be alternative options for travel that could be offered if there is a fatality, owing to the length of time an investigation may need to take place, so I would expect that to be offered. I would hope that we were kept updated and as soon as a realistic timescale is given to us that we are given choices of whether we wish to wait or to continue on an alternative mode or method of transport."

Male, 31-40, Commuter

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Accurate, real-time information

The Community emphasised that, to provide the best experience to passengers even when faced with disruption, delivering accurate and reliable information was essential to build and maintain trust in the operator

"Of course, both scenarios would also depend on the **alternative route information** as well, and whether there would be a suitable alternative available, so accuracy of information would be essential."

Female, 51-60, Leisure

"Overall, don't treat us like idiots, treat us like adults and **tell us what information you have**. We will then start to believe you. Several times on the tube in London, I have been told that the tube will not be moving and it is best to disembark. Within seconds the tube is moving again. This now means most travellers ignore this when told by the train driver."

Male, 51-60, Business

"A key element should be the **personalisation of information**. A common complaint when there are major airport delays is the lack of information. However passengers are given information but because it is generic e.g. there are no flights for 3 hours, people still don't feel informed (and rightly so). There should be text updates stating for example "Name of passenger, Booking number, currently booked train, revised train booking. "

Male, 41-50, Commuter

"Continual updates would be helpful even if they did fluctuate a bit. It is **nice to feel updated and to be kept in the loop**."

Female, 24-30, Business

"Being up front from the start would **show that HS2 can be trusted and relied upon**."

Female, 31-40, Commuter

"If **communication with passengers is a priority**, then perhaps a ten-minute warning can be given once everything is up and running again so passengers who have left the station can return."

Male, 18-23, Leisure

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Summary

When asked to consider different approaches to dealing with disruption, Community members saw value in receiving information outlining definite timescales, an option that is not available when travelling by rail today

- A majority of Community members saw value in the concept of providing passengers with definite timescales when stopping services due to disruption. They saw various benefits, including:
  - Giving passengers more control over the situation, equipping them with information to make decisions about their personal plans
  - Alleviating stress experienced when waiting an unknown length of time for services to resume
  - Delivering a better customer experience by enabling passengers to make use of the station facilities, perhaps supplemented with discount vouchers for vendors

- However, many still wanted the option of receiving real-time updates, suggesting that this was a feature that could be turned on or off dependant on individual preferences, creating a hybrid of the two approaches

- Regardless of the cause of disruption, they highlighted the importance of delivering accurate information that would enable them to rearrange their plans or re-route their journey if possible.

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