



# Transport User Community

'Covid-safe' accreditation

March 2021

# What did we ask our community?

## **Covid safe standards**

This week, we showed the bus and rail communities two examples of external certifications that transport organisations can obtain to demonstrate their safety standards to the public.

Visit Britain 'We're good to go' Standard

Skytrax Covid-19 Airline Safety Ratings

Are these accreditations valued, reassuring, and believable? What impact are they likely to have in the future?

# Executive summary

**The idea of a safety accreditation is reassuring in principle across rail and bus communities, however they are divided on the impact it would have in practice.**

- While some respondents felt that an accreditation would make them feel more confident about travelling, others were more sceptical that it could become a box-ticking exercise, and would want reassurance around how long the standard has to be maintained for, and how frequently checks are done
- Elements of the Visit Britain 'We're good to go' accreditation were well-liked, particularly that it demonstrates that transport operators are taking the pandemic seriously
- However, many had concerns as to how thorough and reliable the accreditation is
- The Skytrax example was seen to be more robust as it requires in-person testing, but the star rating system raised some confusion

# Who is in our rail and bus communities?

## 60|60

60 people using rail to commute and 60 using bus prior to Covid-19



Across England, Scotland and Wales



Mix of payment methods



Mix of those currently using public transport and those not



A spread of age, gender and ethnicity



Some have disabilities

# While safety accreditations are well-liked in principle, many ask 'How long will it last?'

- The bus and rail communities alike are somewhat sceptical about transport companies continuing to adhere to these externally accredited standards on an ongoing basis.
- **Previous lapses** (prior to Covid-19) such as litter on board have damaged confidence in transport providers' ability to maintain standards for some respondents.
- As a result, significant **contextual information** is needed when transport companies talk about their accreditations:
  - ✓ **For what length of time do companies need to adhere to the standard to be awarded the accreditation?**
  - ✓ **Is the accreditation still relevant if awarded in the past?**
  - ✓ **What was the process by which the accreditation was awarded?**
  - ✓ **What is being done to maintain the standard into the next year?**

*I like the idea of accreditation for businesses and organisations who meet the Covid safety guidelines. It could become a bit like the "Kite mark" or "Cask Marque" accreditations which are now widely used and do give us confidence in what's on offer by a business. I suppose the only concern I have is **how this new accreditation will be monitored and enforced** going forward.*

**Male, 64, Scotland, rail**

*All companies should be striving for the best health standards they can possibly achieve. It's important that any level of cleaning should be suitably scrutinised by quality checks... **It's just that prior to the pandemic hygiene and cleanliness standards and stringent safety checks were already in place, and yet we saw dirty trains, and incredibly unhygienic toilets both in stations and on trains!***

**Male, 65, North West, rail**

*I think this is great for businesses to have. It is stuff that should be common practice anyway of course - but people are reassured by things like this and it would work on me, because it feels like **they've seen where things were lacking, made the changes necessary and now can guarantee that they're doing everything they can.***

**Female, 29, North West, bus**

## The strongest impact of the Visit Britain ‘We’re good to go’ certification on trains was demonstrating that they are taking Covid-19 seriously

We showed the community examples of operators using the ‘We’re good to go’ standard to demonstrate that they adhere to Government and public health guidance:

<https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/were-good-go-industry-standard>

The rail community specifically looked at an example of the standard being used by TransPennine Express (TPE):

<https://www.tpexpress.co.uk/media-centre/news/2020/august/tpe-receive-were-good-to-go-accreditation-from-visit-britain>

- The response to this example was divided – for some the sense that an external body has validated TPE’s sanitation and safety processes was genuinely reassuring, but others were more sceptical
  - Several passengers argued that they would be more likely to travel using TransPennine Express once restrictions permit.
  - Knowing that additional cleaning efforts were underway in parts of the train that are most often frequented by passengers was helpful.
  - Some respondents took issue with the concept of a “checklist” that companies have to adhere to – with some respondents showing concern that it would become a box-ticking exercise.



*I don't like the idea as companies should be cleaning to the highest standard regardless of Covid. The "Good to Go" seems to be a **checklist**. I wouldn't feel confident because a company had a good to go sticker. A system should be in place similar to restaurants*

**Male, 36, South East, rail**

*Its great that standards are been met and the safety of passengers are considered, would like measures to be in place to ensure that cleansing standards do not slip. I like the Good to Go message, reminds me safety measures are in place, not sure if it would make me travel at this time, **but possibly in the future.***

**Female, 64, South East, rail**

*But what concerns me is the long term as applying for this 'Good to Go' would only be for a point in time and applicable to a **specific period**. Standards may drop and external factors may affect how providers are rated in the future (if it is going to be an ongoing thing).*

**Male, 33, South East, rail**



# The 'We're good to go' accreditation is reassuring in principle for the bus community, but similar to rail, concerns were raised over the robustness of the standard

The bus community looked at an example of the standard being used by MoreBus:

<https://www.morebus.co.uk/were-good-go>

- Accreditations take on a slightly different meaning among the bus community. Those who are currently travelling are making non-discretionary journeys and have adapted to this through personal safety measures like hand sanitiser and face coverings.
  - As a result, some did not know what they would 'do' with an accreditation on their local service. They already have to take the bus, and after nine months of doing so, have adapted to the risk.
- Positive factors included the specific cleaning of touch points, although some wanted to see more in the standard around ventilation, having learned about its importance in a previous task. People would also like to see mention of mandatory face coverings in the accreditation.
- Overall, for leisure journeys such as those MoreBus undertake, the majority in the bus community argued that the accreditation could increase their level of confidence in travelling, but they would first need more reassurance around the reliability and robustness of the standard.



*I like that they are implementing regular cleaning and that they have rearranged the seating to allow for more social distancing. It's hard to follow on buses, especially at busy times. Like others I feel that they should have mentioned **face coverings and how they are mandatory**.*

**Female, 24, Yorks and Humber, bus**

*I think this is a great and informative piece that really answered all the questions I imagine I would have. **I liked that they included info about touch points** and how the bus station itself will be Covid compliant. The only change I would make would be to attach a video to the piece so that people could physically see the changes.*

**Male, 29, South East, bus**

*This sounds like a big step in the right direction. I was particularly impressed with them focusing on the touch points which were going to be regularly treated with anti-viral wipes as well as the seating being arranged to allow customers to practice social distancing. However there was no mention of them **enforcing face masks** which I believe is the most important thing and until they do I would not feel confident travelling on buses.*

**Male, 39, South East, bus**

## The fact that in-person testing is used for the SkyTrax accreditation raised confidence

We then asked the community to look at the SkyTrax accreditation which is an example of a standard being used in the airline industry, and asked them whether something similar would be useful on public transport:

<https://skytraxratings.com/covid-19-airline-safety-ratings>

<https://skytraxratings.com/covid-19-airline-safety-accreditation>

- The fact that in-person testing is undertaken as part of this accreditation is well-liked and something respondents would like to see as part of rail or bus certifications going forward.
- The different star-ratings can be seen as giving transport providers something of a “free pass” – passengers expect their service to achieve a five-star rating and anything less than this raises questions about what is missing, and more importantly what this means for them.
  - Having different “degrees” of passing the standard is confusing. One respondent compared it to Food Standards Agency ratings: while five-stars is best, one might reluctantly eat at a three or four-star rated restaurant.
  - Establishing *why* a three-star rating is “good enough” to provide reassurance may have been valuable here.
  - Again, there is scepticism that airlines would work hard to achieve the standard, but that measures may not be maintained after it is awarded.



*Great that the Skytrax certified rating is actual physical tests done and not just expect the company to compete a tick box which I don't think would be answered truthfully.*

**Female, 57, Scotland, rail**

*I think the rating system would be great for bus and rail. It implies there are very stringent and specific measures being taken. The cynic in me worries that might be a short lived stringency and as soon as a bus company achieves a rating that they might not maintain the standard. there'd need to be a way to enforce the measures all the time.*

**Female, 32, North East, bus**

*This seems to be a step in the right direction and would make me feel more confident about using an airline that had a good rating. However, I would expect that most airlines would work to achieve as high a rating as possible and I'm not sure that this would be maintained at all times. I would probably stick to using the airlines that I had most confidence in before the pandemic*

**Male, 53, South East, rail**

*I think the safety rating is good and would make me feel reassured about measures companies are taking to keep customers safe. In some ways though, I would be concerned about airlines not achieving 4 or 5 stars so it might make me avoid travelling with airlines on a lower safety rating. It could be a good idea for buses or trains but I don't have a choice of bus/train company so I'm not sure what I would do if my local company didn't achieve a high rating.*

**Female, 37, Scotland, bus**