

Swansea Bay and West Wales Metro Consultation

Transport Focus response

Introduction

Transport Focus is the independent consumer watchdog promoting the interests of rail passengers throughout Great Britain; bus, coach and tram passengers across England, outside London; and users of the Strategic Road Network in England. We have a Board Member for Wales appointed by Welsh Ministers.

Transport Focus welcomes this consultation. Our response is informed both by our extensive evidence base and insight gathered through the engagement of our work in Wales.

Consultation Questions

Questions 1-10.

We respond to this consultation in the capacity of the independent transport user watchdog as opposed to an individual transport user. We have set out our comments and observations by each option outlined in the consultation paper for consideration in any decision-making around timetable and service enhancements, which are laid out in Appendix 1.

Question 14: We would like to know your views on the effects that Swansea Bay and West Wales Metro would have on the Welsh language, specifically on opportunities for people to use Welsh and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English.

What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

Improving connectivity between Swansea and West Wales including improved journey times and increased service frequency has the potential to support the economy, particularly for the tourism industry. There are also opportunities to improve access to the employment market. There is a high demand for Welsh language speakers in south Wales cities, but according to the 2011 census¹, these areas have fewer people able to speak Welsh. To illustrate: in Carmarthen, 43.9 per cent of the population are able to speak Welsh, but notably fewer in Swansea (11.4 per cent), Cardiff (11.1 per cent) and Bridgend (9.7 per cent). More recent data from the annual population survey² suggests in terms of those aged three and over, 52 per cent are able to speak Welsh, compared with 23.5 per cent in Swansea and 17.5 per cent in Bridgend. Whilst various strategies have been deployed to stimulate the number of Welsh Language speakers in line with the Government's ambition for a million Welsh speakers by 2050, this is not going to happen overnight and requires sustained activity. Better connectivity would help those in West Wales to access the job markets in these areas, providing added support for the strategy.

¹ StatsWales: [Welsh speakers by local authority and broader age groups](#), 2001 and 2011 census

² StatsWales: [Annual Population Survey](#) - Ability to speak Welsh by local authority and year March 2021

Question 15: Please also explain how you believe the proposed Swansea Bay and West Wales Metro could be formulated or changed so as to have positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language, and no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

Clear passenger information is key, and this must be reflected across all communications taking account of the needs of Welsh language speakers. For example stakeholder newsletters, operator websites, station and on-board announcements and social media channels. We are aware that work is ongoing to have a single website to access transport information with the merging of the Transport for Wales and Transport for Wales Rail websites. There is a clear opportunity here to ensure this meets the needs of Welsh speakers, by involving them in the design process.

Question 13: Do you have any other comments you'd like to add which you believe would be useful in developing the future of the Swansea Bay and West Wales Metro?

Question 16: We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

We have taken these two questions together in our main response below.

General comments

Any move to improve services for passengers is welcomed, but developments of service provision, timetables or new stations must be sufficiently resourced including future maintenance and be able to be delivered in the agreed timeframes.

We have addressed each of the key aims the Swansea and West Wales metro seeks to achieve separately in Appendix 2.

Passenger priorities for improvement

In all transport planning processes, the voice of the passenger is vital and their priorities must be at the heart. Our recent research³ highlights the key priorities for passengers in Wales, which are shown in detail in Appendix 3 – the top five are:

1. Reliability and punctuality
2. Price of train tickets offers better value for money
3. Passengers able to get a seat on the train
4. Trains sufficiently frequent at the times I wish to travel
5. Train company keeps passengers informed about delays

Reliability and punctuality are the most important factors for passengers and this has been consistent over recent years. In the design of any new services or enhancements, reliability and punctuality must be a key consideration. Our recent National Rail Passenger Surveys (Autumn 2019 and Spring 2020) show that there is some dissatisfaction with this aspect for passengers in

³ [Rail passengers' priorities for improvement](#), Transport Focus. 2020

South and West Wales, as illustrated by feedback comments:

“The train service has gone quite bad, trains are often late or delayed never know what to expect trains need to be more frequent.” Haverfordwest (National Rail Passenger Survey, Spring 2020)

“The rail service is not always reliable with turning up on time or replacement buses.” Haverfordwest (National Rail Passenger Survey, Autumn 2019)

“...the whole journey between Swansea & Tenby of which I use often. There are always delays, the trains are noisy and old, the stations all need upgrades. Not welcoming to visitors to Wales. Whilst I had no objection to the use of bus service, it needs to be same time as trains or good information telling users alternative times”. Tenby (National Rail Passenger Survey, Spring 2020)

Ensuring that passengers have a good core service is of paramount importance. There is evidence to show that underinvestment in Wales has led to some dissatisfaction with stations, crowding and poor connectivity with other services and quality of rolling stock. Priorities in Wales for clean toilets and onboard comfort are placed higher. Younger passengers also place higher importance on better information during delays, fewer disruptions and good connections. Passengers with a disability put clean toilets, improved personal security and step-free access higher on their list. Tables of priorities for improvement are collated in Appendix 3. Whilst more frequent services and better connectivity will be welcomed, these basic passenger needs must still be met. Line capacity is also a key issue – any future increases in train services must balance the interplay between freight and passenger services so passenger journeys are not negatively impacted. Only 63 per cent of passengers are satisfied with the frequency of trains on the route in the South West Wales and Borders area.

Stations need to meet the needs of passengers and their input into any improvement or investment is vital. The National Rail Passenger Survey (Spring 2020) shows that satisfaction with the upkeep and repair of the station buildings and platforms for South Wales and Borders/West Wales was only 55 per cent (compared with 79 per cent for Mid Wales and Borders). Only 58 per cent were satisfied with connections with other forms of public transport (compared with 87 per cent for North Wales).

Connectivity with other services is important, for example the Great Western services at Swansea for journeys to London, but also to connect with other services to reach destinations elsewhere in Great Britain. Historically there have been some issues with connection timings in Swansea towards West Wales. Low frequency of services means that if there is a delay and a service is not held, passengers could be subjected to substantial delays on their journeys and there are limited waiting areas at Swansea station.

“It is extremely frustrating that this train seems timed specifically to miss a connection with the fast train from Swansea. It arrives at Swansea just as the GWR service to London is departing.” Llanelli (National Rail Passenger Survey, Autumn 2019)

Carriages need to be sufficiently comfortable for passengers. The National Rail Passenger Survey (Spring 2020) shows satisfaction with seat comfort at only 62 per cent, reliability of the internet

connection at 42 per cent and availability of power sockets at 46 per cent – making it clear that more needs to be done to provide passengers with attractive and comfortable surroundings. In tandem with this, any increased frequency of trains will require more drivers and staff. We know that covid 19 has placed a strain on driver and staff training so it is vital that there is a sufficient pipeline of suitably trained staff to deliver proposed enhancements to service levels, which should include providing access to facilities at stations, as one passenger illustrates:

“I was travelling in the middle of the afternoon and was very surprised that the station was closed, as were the lavatories, with access to the platforms via a side gate. I can understand the station not being “manned” outside of normal travelling times, but I would have expected some facilities to be available all day long, such as the lavatories. However, based on the behaviour of the youths smoking pot (I could smell it) on the steps leading to the other platform I can see why you can’t allow passengers access to the facilities as they would probably get trashed. Very sad, but true.” Llanelli (National Rail Passenger Survey, Autumn 2019)

Value for money ranks as the second most important priority for passengers. However our latest National Rail Passenger Survey highlights that only 56 per cent of Transport for Wales passengers are satisfied with the value for money of their ticket, despite the move to reduce some fares in January 2020. The pandemic has created some real challenges for operators in terms of revenue generation with very few people travelling on public transport, but the move to increase fares further in Wales by 2.6% in March 2021 creates further pressures on passengers. Fares need to be attractive to suit the future needs of passengers. The TfW carnet-style multiflex ticket offers good value for those who may no longer need to travel every day to commute, but this is not available on all routes. Anomalies in the fares system such as the need for split ticketing in order to get best value continue to frustrate passengers, so work to iron these out is welcomed along with proposals to integrate Traws Cymru into the retailing system. But a more in-depth review of fares is needed, crucially to bring forward plans for an integrated ticketing system across the network sooner than the proposed date of 2040, to support joining up journeys in a simpler, more cost-effective way.

“I was not able to warn my partner in time to buy tickets for split journey which meant I wasted £10 or so which was frustrating to waste the money” Swansea. (National Rail Passenger Survey, Spring 2020)

Fares between South Wales and London are notably high particularly at peak times, such as comparing longer journeys between South Wales and Manchester. Travel at peak time towards the capital is cost prohibitive for many and does not encourage people to travel in a more sustainable way. Wider availability of cheaper and off-peak fares is needed to attract people back onto the railway.

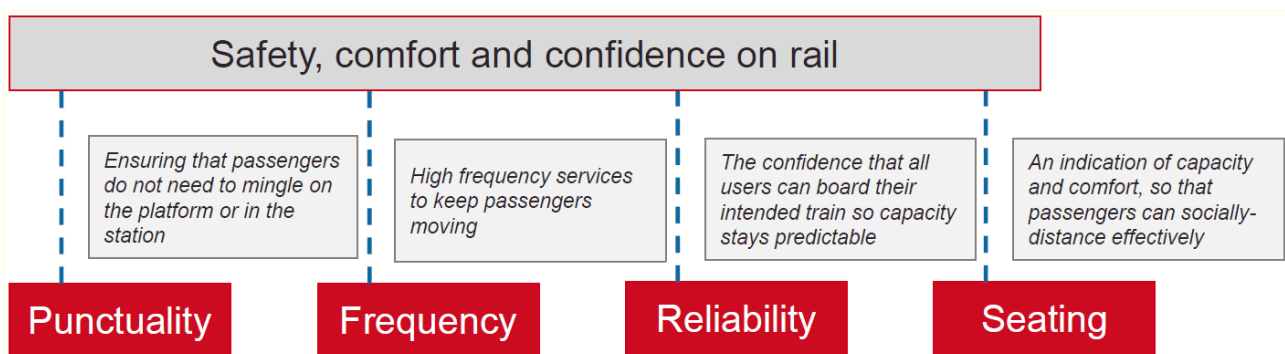
Furthermore, research with our transport user community⁴ illustrates that there is a widespread assumption that rail will have to operate a diminished or reduced level of service to adjust for lower passenger numbers. Passengers fear that they will, in effect, be paying more for less, although they can struggle to articulate what that reduced service might look like in practice.

⁴ [Transport User Community Travel and Ticketing Post-Covid](#), Transport Focus. 2020

"I think that even with home working continuing, the loss of revenue will be reflected in a poorer service. I will only use public transport when I need to." **Female, 61, Wales**

As part of our travel during Covid-19 research, we asked our Transport User Community what impact this has had on their priorities. Our report⁵ shows that safety has emerged as a central priority for rail passengers. While punctuality, reliability, seating and frequency remain the 'core' of what rail users want, the community has realised that these metrics now serve a different purpose. In addition to a smooth journey, these priorities are now understood as helping to deliver a safe and COVID-secure one.

Post-pandemic, most argue that the overall sense of safety will continue to be important. It may change slightly to encompass feelings like 'comfort' or 'confidence' in public transport, but few are willing to concede that the need to feel safe will decline, even if the pandemic does. The old priorities have to some extent been re-framed to feed into safety, serving a dual purpose:



With the aspirations of the new transport strategy 'Llwybr Newydd' and the focus on shifting to more sustainable transport modes, it is vital that cost and affordability are built into the system to ensure that public transport becomes an attractive proposition and can compete effectively with the cost and convenience of car use.

'Environmentally I want to use trains even though much more expensive but poor service continue to be a problem'. (National Rail Passenger Survey, Spring 2020).

Decarbonisation agenda

Public transport will play a vital role in the drive to tackle climate change. Our work on priorities for improvement shows passengers in Wales place more environmentally friendly journeys in a higher position. Younger passengers also place higher importance on more environmentally friendly journeys, as can be seen in the tables in Appendix 3. Our recent research⁶ with our transport user community shows that there is an appetite for more sustainable modes of transport, but that there are some barriers to overcome. The proposals put forward in the consultation suggest further electrification options which would be a greener option. The programme of electrification through to Swansea was suspended and implemented only as far as Cardiff, however electrification could be an important element in achieving ambitious carbon emissions reductions.

⁵ [Transport User Community – rail and bus priorities](#), Transport Focus. 2020

⁶ [The environment and travel](#). Transport Focus. 2021

"I think that far too many people are using cars for journeys which could easily be done by public transport. Of course, during COVID, it's understandable, but hopefully this will be short term and I would very much like car ownership to be not such a necessary thing in people's eyes in rural areas." **Male, 60, Wales, rail passenger**

"I do consider environmental issues to be important, but I'm not the best at reducing my carbon footprint, I wouldn't say I am using my vehicle more or less than before as I hardly used it for work. The government's decisions to stop the sale of diesel cars won't affect me too much as by the time it comes in my cars probably won't be worth a lot." **Male, 32, Wales, rail passenger**

Investment decisions need take into account a multimodal approach, so that the network provision is considered holistically including buses, park and ride, active travel, electric vehicles and micro mobility. This will support attractive, joined-up and door-to-door journeys that people want to make – with a single, simple to use, value for money ticketing system across the network. Rurality is a major challenge in Wales in terms of supporting end to end journeys, but the introduction and subsequent expansion of the demand responsive 'Fflesci' service is helping to fill these gaps. Transport Focus has been commissioned to undertake some qualitative research into the Fflesci service, which seeks to understand passengers' experience of Fflesci, potential improvements to the service, and ways of attracting new users. Transport Focus is also conducting some Wales-specific research on bus travel to gain a deeper understanding of current and lapsed passengers' experiences, perceptions, and expectations of travelling during and after the Covid pandemic. Initial findings suggest that buses continue to represent a good option despite some concerns remaining around cleanliness and covid safety, with people generally wanting things to 'get back to normal'. Those in more rural areas were more likely to mention a specific additional benefit to using the bus social aspects involving passengers and driver which they do not want to lose. This illustrates that the role of bus goes beyond conveying passengers to where they want to go, it also has a role in community cohesion and tackling loneliness. We are about to publish this work and will be happy to discuss in more detail.

Resilience is another essential consideration relating to climate change. Extreme weather conditions are becoming much more commonplace – barely a year goes by without new records being set. The tragic accident at Stonehaven and derailment at Llangennech have given this a fresh and urgent emphasis. The inquiry into Stonehaven and the reviews being undertaken by Network Rail into weather related resilience will invariably have an impact on future rail operations – both in terms of infrastructure management and in operational decisions. Effective systems to manage disruption will be pivotal in managing the passenger experience.

We know that being informed of delays is priority number five for people in Wales. Our Spring 2020 National Rail Passenger Survey shows that satisfaction with how the train company dealt with delays was only 34 per cent. Satisfaction with the usefulness of information about delays is only 31 per cent – this shows a marked need for improvement and a need for this to be sufficiently resourced.

Services in the West Wales area have been impacted heavily over recent years by disruption caused by inclement weather, and it is important that these issues are factored into the strategic planning process to identify how disruption can be minimised, and how it can be managed better when it does occur, such as keeping passengers on trains – illustrated by this comment:

“Train left on time but was re-routed through Barry because of flooding. This was acceptable to me and far better than using substitute buses.” Swansea (National Rail Passenger Survey, Spring 2020)

Passenger journeys in West Wales have also been impacted by prolonged vegetation works along the line over recent years. Ensuring vegetation management works are handled on an ongoing basis is a vital part of minimising future disruption.

Transport Focus has been conducting research into sustainability and this includes a specific element of sustainable travel behaviours and associated barriers. We would be happy to discuss our research further and share our reports once this has been published.

Passenger communications

The metro transformation represents a significant project and as such it is important that good, clear passenger communications are built in to planning processes. With such a large amount of work planned for West Wales and elsewhere across the network, it is absolutely critical that sufficient resource is put in to managing passenger communications whether that be relating to engineering works or amended timetables. Social media, stakeholder newsletters, station and on-board posters, press releases, journey planning tools, station and on-board announcements and website content etc. need to be regularly updated and reviewed to ensure passenger confidence and this represents a significant resource implication particularly during recent times when there is important information to convey around covid safety in addition to significant improvement projects, and unplanned engineering works. The activity needs to be coordinated to mitigate against silo working – all elements of passenger communications need to work together to create synergy.

Transport Focus has conducted extensive research into passenger impacts of significant planned improvement works such as Kings Cross⁷, Reading and Bath Spa⁸ with some key recommendations on how to manage this effectively to support passengers.

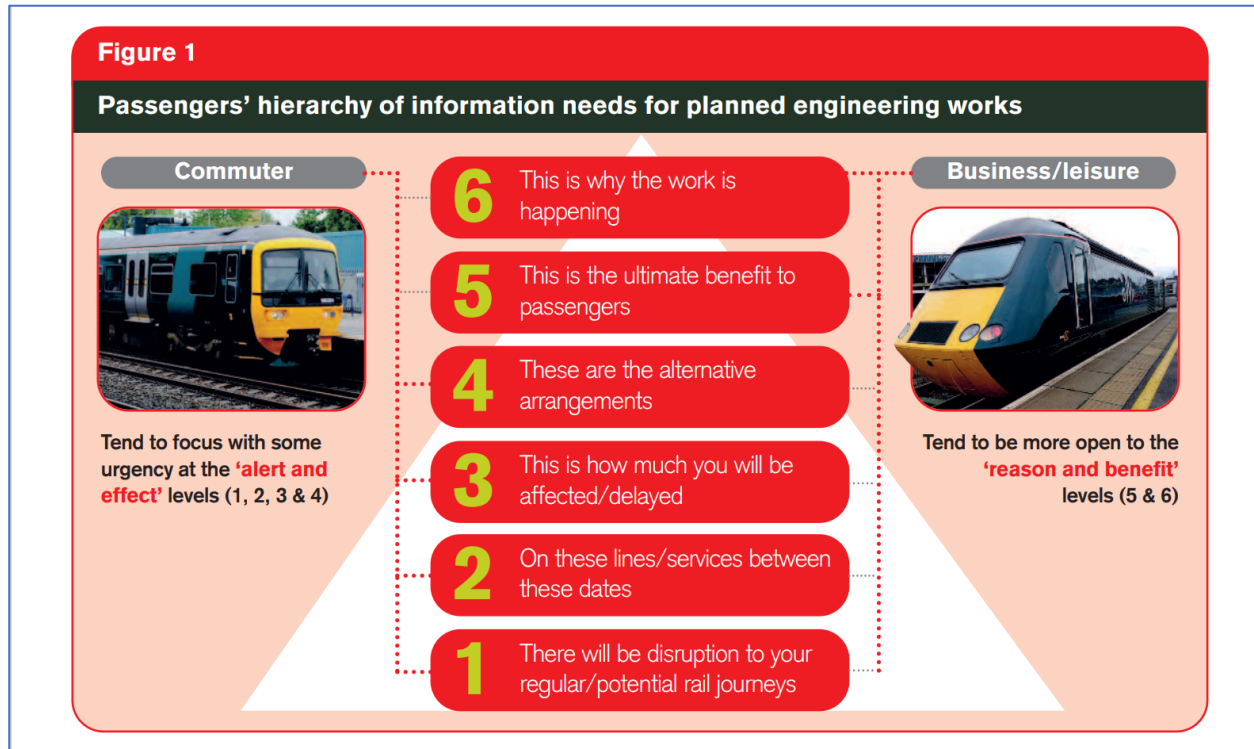
1. Consider how the various elements of the engineering work are likely to affect individual passengers' journeys: who does it affect and how?
2. Build this insight into your planning approach so that you are able to deliver a tailored information campaign: tell passengers what they want to know about their journey, when they need to know it
3. Tailor your message.

Our research also identified a hierarchy of needs, with specific considerations for tailoring the communications approach between the commuter market and leisure travellers. This is useful in developing a communication strategy. Passengers and stakeholders should be regularly informed of progress of improvement works, particularly where there are delays. Key lessons should be learned from the promises made to passengers to withdraw pacers by December 2019, and delays to introduction of refurbished fleet. Transparency is key to building passenger trust. The introduction of a the TfW regional stakeholder forums and advisory panel are providing a useful

⁷ [Passenger needs during King's Cross redevelopment](#), Transport Focus 2009

⁸ [Planned Rail Engineering Work, the passenger perspective](#): Transport Focus 2015

outlet for key stakeholders to input directly to improvement works and ask questions, but there needs to be a continued focus on looking at innovative ways to involve passengers more generally, particularly those who may be digitally excluded or those harder to reach groups to ensure diversity.



The pandemic has shifted travel behaviours and any improvement works need to consider that timings that used to be less disruptive to passengers in the past such as evenings and weekends, may not be the same based on new travel patterns, so consulting with passengers and stakeholders is vital. Throughout the pandemic, we have been working to ensure clarity of information for passengers and produced a good practice guide⁹, which highlighted the need for authors to 'sense check' the information they were producing to ensure clarity and understanding, taking care to avoid ambiguities. Also taking into consideration changes that Covid 19 has presented such as changes in peak times and ensuring that messages are consistent across channels – particularly between social media and operator websites.

Post-covid recovery

Throughout the pandemic Transport Focus has been conducting research via our regular omnibus tracker survey, via our transport user communities and our well-established transport user panel. We have spoken to thousands of people to gain some very valuable insight into passenger wants and needs during this challenging time.

A key consideration going forward is the changing dynamic between commuter and leisure travel. In line with government mandate for people to work from home if they can, many people have heeded this and our research shows that this is likely to continue at least to some extent post

⁹ [Transport user information during coronavirus good practice guide](#). Transport Focus. September 2021

pandemic. It appears anomalous, therefore that in terms of the consultation, one of the aims (8) is cited as 'Increase the number of trips made by public transport, focusing on commuter trips'. Whilst we know that increasing use of public transport aligns with the new transport strategy aims, it seems at odds to focus specifically on a diminishing commuter market. We know that people's working patterns were already beginning to change before the start of the pandemic with increased homeworking starting to become more commonplace and the pandemic has catalysed the process. Evidence from our recent survey highlights:

- Almost nine in 10 (86 per cent) of those who used to be rail commuters before Covid said that they do not physically need to attend their workplace all the time in order to do their job
- The vast majority (88 per cent) of these (i.e. those who aren't tied to the office) expect to work from home more in future. This compares with 44 per cent who worked from home some or all of the time prior to March 2020
- There is a significant drop in those who say they will commute five days a week in future – from 43 per cent pre-Covid to 12 per cent post-Covid
- Those saying they will commute four days a week has also dropped, from 24 per cent to 9 per cent
- There is an increase in those saying they will commute from one to three days a week. Those saying they will commute one day a week has increased from 9 per cent pre-Covid to 24 per cent in future; those commuting two days has increased from 10 per cent to 31 per cent, and for three days from 14 per cent to 19 per cent.

We have been using our research to look at how different segments might approach a return to travel and have identified five types through our segmentation analysis¹⁰: 'Cautious car choosers', 'anxious and affected', 'rethinking reducers', 'spring back socialisers', and 'carefree and carrying on' – and some discernible patterns are evident. Only 14 per cent of people in the 'anxious and affected' segment agree that enough is being done to ensure coronavirus safety on public transport, compared with 71 per cent in the 'spring back socialiser' group.

Our recent omnibus survey¹¹ shows that there are some important factors to consider in planning future services in a post pandemic world:

- More than nine in ten people who had used a train in the previous seven days said they felt comfortable doing so (slightly lower for bus).
- There is still a perception gap about how safe trains feel amongst those who have not travelled recently – only three in five said they would feel safe using a train
- More than half say they will not use public transport unless social distancing is in place
- Three in ten say they will never again feel completely comfortable on public transport

This illustrates that whilst working towards improved journey times and better connectivity to and from Swansea and West Wales and routes to London, there remain significant challenges if people are to be encouraged to use public transport and to substitute or replace car journeys. Social distancing measures and enhanced cleaning regimes are very important to passengers now and our research suggests that it will continue to be important going forward. According to our new

¹⁰ [Covid 19 Travel segmentation analysis 7 – 23 May 2021](#). Transport Focus 2021

¹¹ [Travel during covid 19 travel survey](#), Wave 47, Transport Focus 28 May 2021

report¹², a total of 77 per cent of people say cleanliness on public transport is more important to them than before the pandemic, and 75 per cent agree that cleanliness of public transport will continue to be important even when covid 19 no longer poses a significant risk.

It will be important to understand how people will want to travel in the future. It is not clear if the pandemic will stimulate a demand for more leisure journeys as opposed to the regular commuter journeys of the past. Keeping abreast of passenger wants and needs will be key. There are opportunities to stimulate growth in domestic tourism by opening up travel opportunities and streamlining services particularly to/from West Wales but planning these needs sufficient consultation with stakeholders including passengers, not just for timetable improvements, but also for proposed new rolling stock design. We are heartened to see that a diverse range of passengers and key stakeholders are being actively involved in the design of the refurbished Mark IV fleet serving the Cardiff to Holyhead route and would encourage this level of participation with the introduction of new fleet in the future as standard practice.

Meeting the needs of the increased leisure market must be considered. The National Rail Passenger Survey Spring 2020 shows that room for luggage is an issue for some with only 62 per cent saying they are satisfied with the provision on board. There is scope for improvement in terms of connectivity with other services with 71 per cent showing they are satisfied. If the domestic staycation market is to be actively promoted, it is important that resource meets demand. Transport Focus has extensive experience of surveying passengers to understand their travel habits and is well-placed to assist with similar work with the West Wales Metro programme.

The increasing drive toward digitisation of products and services has of course enabled passengers to access safer (in terms of covid) contactless ticketing options and this can also help with efficiency savings, however it is important to consider those who may be digitally excluded. In addition, our National Rail Passenger Survey also shows some dissatisfaction with the internet connection reliability – only 42 per cent are satisfied. Equally, there is some dissatisfaction with the availability of power sockets on board TfW services with only 46 per cent satisfied (although it is recognised that this represents a significant improvement on Spring 2019 when satisfaction levels were at 31 per cent).

“No power sockets for a 2:30 hour trip + only 20 mb of internet... Really? G.W.R offer more + Why can't you match them?” Haverfordwest (National Rail Passenger Survey, Autumn 2019)

“Staff are good. The train stock is old tired noisy, needs replacing. WIFI POOR”. Tenby (National Rail Passenger Survey, Spring 2020)

As passenger numbers grow again and demand for leisure travel increases, these elements are likely to grow in importance as passengers want to use the internet to check train times, connections, or access media content to pass their time, particularly on longer journeys. Availability of power sockets is important to ensure passengers can charge their devices and this becomes even more important during times of disruption.

¹² [Public transport: A cleaner future?](#) Transport Focus. May 2021

Whilst there will be a need to regain the confidence of lapsed rail passengers, there is also an opportunity with increased service provision to attract new customers to rail. Our research shows that there are some perceived barriers to using rail, most recently in submissions to the Williams Rail Review¹³. Points can be brought together under three main headings:

- **Cost:** value for money in return for the price of the ticket, availability of discounts and flexible tickets, comparison of the expense when considering an alternative, especially when a group is travelling together
- **Convenience:** including availability of the network, ability to make door-to-door journeys, time taken, potential to work or relax and familiarity of always travelling a particular way or not knowing how to do it another way. Smart ticketing needs to be a convenient option that is easy to use and makes passengers' lives easier
- **Complexity:** lack of familiarity with journey planning, especially factoring in connections, difficulties with timetables, interchange or access, availability of facilities and uncertainties undermining confidence to travel.

Accessibility

Meeting the needs of passengers with disabilities is paramount and there is the potential to make rail transport more accessible and inclusive by increasing services and extending existing routes. This could reduce the need to change services and potentially open up better access to the employment market and increased opportunities for leisure travel. Research with our transport user panel¹⁴ shows that 70 per cent of disabled passengers would like to use public transport more than they do. This compares with 54 per cent of non-disabled people. 45 per cent of disabled passengers think that public transport availability in their area limits their ability to go to places they would like to go to, compared with 31 per cent of non-disabled people. 27 per cent of disabled people feel that public transport availability limits their access to employment opportunities compared with just 18 per cent of non-disabled people.

It is important that the needs of disabled passengers are considered as early as possible in planning processes by involving them and relevant advocacy groups. Planning needs to consider the long term to future proof provision and not just to adhere to current required minimum standards. New provision also needs to consider the ageing population.

Promoting the interests of transport users in Wales

Improving representation and accountability are vital in building trust with users. However transport users in Wales do not have the same standard of advocacy as their counterparts across the border and there is a gap for independent representation across modes of travel. Having a transport user consumer organisation in Wales, which bases its work on evidence and aims to be both useful to those making major decisions about transport and makes a difference on the ground for all users, will strengthen the consumer voice in Wales. Transport Focus Wales is uniquely positioned to give focus and energy to promoting the interests of transport users in Wales.

¹³ [Williams Rail Review – Barriers to travel: How to make rail more attractive to infrequent and non-users.](#) Transport Focus. April 2019

¹⁴ [Accessible transport: Unlocking a better normal.](#) Transport Focus April 2021

Conclusion

It is still unclear what ramifications there will be for rail in Wales with respect to the Williams - Shapps review. However, in summary, passengers want a good, reliable service that represents value for money. Our research suggests there is room for improvement with some of the basic needs of passengers and this should be considered when planning any enhancements to service levels. There will be some challenges in a post-pandemic world in terms of attracting people back to public transport and going forward, operator efforts to maintain high levels of cleanliness will continue to be important to passengers in making them feel safe. However current requirements around social distancing and face coverings need to be viewed against a background of UK and Welsh Governments holding the cards on the overall rules and top level messaging, but how that pans out for passengers is the unknown factor. Sustained and meaningful dialogue with passengers and key stakeholders throughout the process is paramount, particularly around timetable alterations and new stations, as well as for improvements to existing facilities. It is important that station improvement work factors in the needs of passengers with specific needs such as disabled passengers, those less mobile, or older passengers so that they not only meet current requirements, but can be future-proofed as far as possible.

The options to improve frequency of services towards west Wales can only be good for the economic prosperity of Wales, giving better access to jobs and leisure activities, and potentially boosting domestic tourism which is likely to be key over the next few years as recovery from the pandemic continues. This is an opportunity to promote Wales as an attractive staycation destination in the first instance, but longer term to attract overseas visitors. Any drive to improve services must be supported by sufficient financial and physical resources.

June 2021

Appendix 1: Consultation Questions 1-10

A: Long distance services

Option	Details	Comments
1	2 per hour SWA to PAD	This would be best if one of the two were to run fast between BPW and PAD – faster journey time to main destination. However, paths on the GWML are unlikely to cope. Potential for running them as portions of one of the “fast” BRI to PAD via BPW trains would be a solution. However, is this aspirational given that GW no longer has some of its portioned workings?
2	“W. Wales Express” – CDF – TAU service to start back at CMN/MFH; possible station at Felindre “W. Wales Parkway” on Swansea District Line (SDL)	This makes sense as a way of doing two things: 1. through services for stations SWA to BRI and west; 2. increasing the frequency for stations west of CMN. Using the SDL doesn’t make sense – SWA is a major market. As would be 1 per hour, alternate trains would terminate at CMN. The paper states MFH would be 2 trains every 3 hours, which is unexplained if the MFH – MAN service were to continue to run every two hours. Fig. 4 shows the TAU – W. Wales as hourly to MFH, which doesn’t agree with the frequency in the text. See below.
3	Start CMN to PAD train at HVF/MFH; down train same	Extra costs versus revenue; would the early start/late arrival attract many new passengers? Costs: the CMN to PAD train is 5.45 off the depot in Swansea, 100 minutes before it leaves – so there is already a lot of “unproductive” time at each end of the day.
4	MFH to BPW or BRI every two hours	Additional to existing, so would provide 1 per hour to MFH. Why suggest BPW?
5	Grand Union Trains	No comment
6	Review line speeds CDF and west	Essential for journey time aspirations, but could be very costly – track might need upgrading, signals re-sited, etc.
26	Electrification – reduce journey times and carbon outputs	A definite must is to have a full-worked through programme, especially if it is proposed to take on responsibility for rail infrastructure.
Fig. 4	Diagram of services over the “SWML”	Confusion with Fig. 5 “W. Wales” – the two diagrams separate services which operate over the same routes, making frequencies and service patterns hard to understand

B: Frequency and connectivity: West Wales

Because there are two diagrams (figs. 4 and 5) to show the services west of Swansea, these have been combined.

Option	Details	Comments
7	New service SWA/CMN to MFH	This and 8 are alternative options; plus one train every two hours: provides an hourly SWA – MFH service. The AA Route Planner gives MFH to SWA as 1 hour 27 mins. for 65.8 miles, av. 45 mph, so a two-hourly service really does not help rail's competitiveness. Rail c. 1 hour 47 mins.
8	Extend MAN – CMN service to MFH	This and 7 are alternative options; plus one train every two hours: provides an hourly SWA – MFH service. As the MAN service already operates to/from MFH every two hours, this option presumably means extend MAN – CMN services .
9	New service SWA/CMN to PMD	Additional trains to provide 1 per hour. Again, the current two-hourly frequency does not help rail's generalised journey times. The AA Route planner gives 1 hour 11 mins. for 53.4 miles, again 45 mph average. Rail c. 1 hour 39 mins.
11	Add 2 per day to SWA - FGH	Service would be two-hourly: possibly a problem with a rigid pattern – specific peaks might be “missed” – e.g., when a boat is scheduled
27	Add 1 train every 2 hours to CDF - BGN	This should be CDF – SWA see fig. 5, below.
28	Add 1 per day to Central Wales line	Page 2 of the paper mentions, in the “Information to think about...” section, an additional Central Wales train, and implies that this option is a further addition. The timetable must be revised to create a much more useful one for the line's different catchments and markets. Simply adding extra end-to-end services isn't enough. It is c. 4 hours SWA to SHR, which means that an additional though trip is likely to be a lot less effective than, say, creating a much more frequent service SWA to Llandovery.
Fig. 5	Diagram of services W. Wales	This shows CDF to SWA locals (27) as hourly

C: Swansea Bay

Option	Details	Comments
12, 22, 23, 24A-D	SWA to Pontarddulais via Neath and Swansea District Line (SDL). 2 an hour. Six new stations: options 22, 23, 24A-D are the new stations.	New stations Llandarcy, Morriston, Felindre, Penllergaer or Pontlliw on the SDL, also Landore and Winch Wen between SWA and NTH.
13, 24E	SWA to Pembrey. New station at Cockett. 2 an hour.	No comments
14	New east to north curve at Llandeilo Junction.	SWA to Central Wales line without reversing at Llanelli.
15	Ammanford to Gwaun-Cae-Gurwen. 2/hour all stations.	No mention of how many stations, or if services would originate from somewhere else. The junction for GCG is in fact south of Pantyffynnon, so it would require a reversal at a “non-passenger” location. It could be an extension of option 12.
16	Neath to Onllwyn. 2 an hour.	Onllwyn is the site of the test facility. Currently no link to Neath station; fig. 6 shows no direct link would be re-created, with options 16 and 17 using a rebuilt Neath Riverside station. The one-time direct link from Neath to Cwmgwrach is now completely obliterated by redevelopment in Neath.
17	Neath to Cwmgwrach. 2 an hour.	Part of the line that connected Swansea, Neath and Aberdare (and on to Pontypool Road). See also 18, 19 and 20.
18	Neath/Llandarcy to Swansea City Centre tram-train. 2/hour all stations.	No stations listed. Fig. 6 shows this as covering both connections from Jersey Marine S. Junction (where the line from Swansea Docks splits) to the SDL, plus the line that continues to Onllwyn and Cwmgwrach. Are through services proposed, with option 18 being only 2 per hour?
19	Swansea District Line to Clydach. 2 an hour.	Described as from Neath in the key to fig. 6.
20	Cwmgwrach to Hirwaun	See option 17. Aberdare to Hirwaun is already proposed; would provide a link to Neath for that area, plus Pontypridd.
Fig. 6	Diagram of services Swansea Bay	Shows a direct link from Neath to the SDL, which does not exist. The junction for the SDL is south of Neath, and faces Briton Ferry.

Appendix 2: Key Aims

South Wales Main Line

Aim 1. Reduce rail journey times between West Wales and London towards targets of:

a. 90 minutes between Cardiff and London Paddington

b. 30 minutes between Cardiff and Bristol Temple Meads

c. 30 minutes between Swansea and Cardiff

The aspiration to achieve reduced journey times between CDF – PAD of 90 minutes raises some concerns as this would mean an average speed of 96.76 mph. Current timings are 112 minutes with four stops totalling eight minutes. Even given the plans to raise line speeds, 96.76 mph will be a challenge. Similarly reducing the journey time between SWA – CDF to 30 minutes would mean a speed of 91.4 mph. Currently the journey is typically 52 minutes, with three stops totalling three minutes. Much of the route has line limits well under 90mph.

CDF – BRI in 30 minutes is 76.2 mph. The CDF to PMH trains takes 45 minutes, with two stops taking three minutes. Using EMUs and the higher line speeds, 30 minutes is achievable.

Aim 2: Increase service frequencies between south west Wales and London, Cardiff and Bristol Temple Meads, and Swansea and Cardiff

More services along the South Wales Main Line with the average speeds aspired to, this will invariably necessitate lots of new infrastructure and thus financial resource. It is already difficult to slot all the competing paths into the plan, therefore whilst the increased frequency for services to and from west Wales would be welcomed by passengers, it is important to consider how this might work effectively in practice and be sufficiently resourced.

Aim 3: Provide sufficient capacity and improve rail network resilience between Cardiff and Bristol to accommodate future passenger and freight demand

Agreed, with a balanced approach, so increases in freight do not impact negatively on passenger services.

Aim 4: Enhance rail connectivity to international gateways/airports and enterprise zones

Presumably Fishguard and Rhosneigr. As ever additional stations must be realistically analysed vis a vis impact on journey times/capacity.

Aim 5: Improve Park and Ride provision for accessing the South Wales Main Line and reduce reliance on the M4 corridor

Park and ride access to the SWML – as 4.

Aim 6: Improve integration between main line rail and the wider transport network, especially the developing south Wales and Bristol Metro systems

Agreed. This is clearly an important consideration, however, only certain rail services can share existing railways. Where demand is great enough, new rail routes must be built which again has a significant resource implication.

Aim 7: Maximise the potential for stations to accelerate urban regeneration and major development site delivery

Agreed.

Aim 8: Increase the number of trips made by public transport, focusing on commuter trips

This appears anomalous given that our research is showing a potential change in demand for commuter trips in a post pandemic world.

Aim 9: Reduce the environmental impact of transport, especially carbon emissions & air quality

A key consideration for addressing the carbon emissions issue would be the complete electrification of the CVL

Aim 10: Improve rail network efficiency to allow a lower future subsidy requirement per passenger

Agreed.

Swansea Bay Metro Region

Aim 1: Reduce journey times between key population centres including Swansea, Neath, Port Talbot, Llanelli, Carmarthen, Haverfordwest and Milford Haven.

Whilst reducing journey times between these key areas would be of benefit to passengers, the consultation document does not set out by how much these journey times will be reduced. It would need to be significant to compete with car usage. It is unclear if there are specific timeframes by when this is hoped to be achieved. Timeframes need to be realistic and transparent.

Aim 2: Increase service frequencies

- a. For local stations on the main line between Carmarthen and Port Talbot, especially during peak periods**
- b. On the Heart of Wales line to serve commuters into Swansea and beyond**
- c. Across South West Wales to improve suitably for daily commuting**

b The timetable on the Central Wales Line should be planned as discrete parts, driven by “local travel catchments”, linked as needed by through services

c. across SW Wales to improve “commutability” – same as a. A given that services reflect demand.

Aim 3: Improve regional transport accessibility through widening the spatial reach of the rail network and services

No comment

Aim 4: Improve Park and Ride provision for access to the Swansea Bay region.

This would need to consider the impact of more stops on journey times and capacity. We would advocate that this would be best achieved as enhancements to existing, not as additional stations.

Aim 5: Provide a viable public transport alternative to the congested M4/A48 corridor

Build on proposals emerging from the Burns report in SE Wales, with a network policies package.

Aim 6: Contribute to developing a Swansea Bay Urban Area Metro including improvements to multi-modal interchange

NC

Aim 7: Maximise the potential for stations to accelerate urban regeneration and major development site delivery

Aim 8: Increase the number of trips made by public transport, focusing particularly on commuter trips

Aim 9: Reduce the environmental impact of transport, especially carbon emission and air quality

Aim 10: Improve rail network efficient to allow a lower future subsidy requirement per passenger

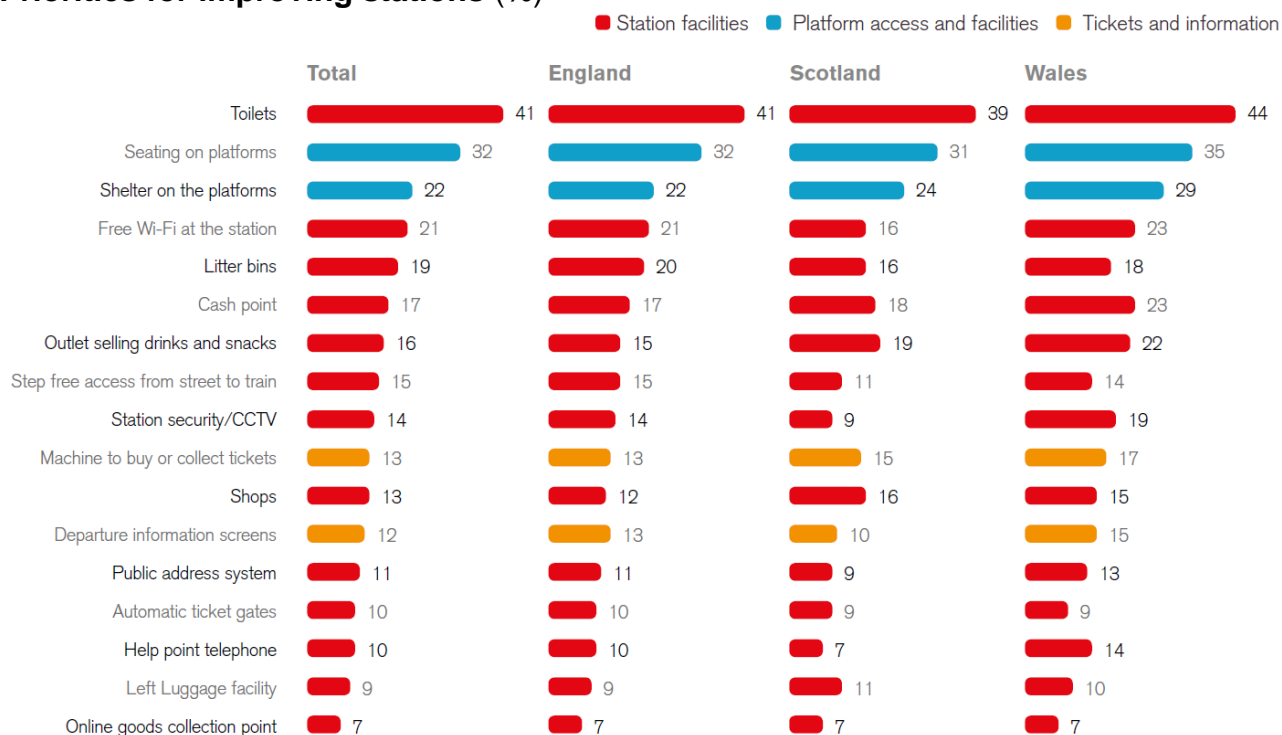
As per South Wales Main Line

Appendix 3: Rail Passengers' Priorities for Improvement

Rail passengers' priorities – by nation

	Great Britain		England		Scotland		Wales	
	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index
Reliability and punctuality	1	245	1	245	1	245	1	246
Price of train tickets offers better value for money	2	237	2	237	2	240	2	245
Passengers able to get a seat on the train	3	201	3	199	3	212	3	216
Trains sufficiently frequent at the times I wish to travel	4	164	4	165	4	162	4	164
Train company keeps passengers informed about delays	5	150	5	150	7	143	5	149
Inside of train is maintained and cleaned to a high standard	6	139	7	137	5	154	6	145
Accurate and timely information available at stations	7	138	6	139	8	133	7	139
Accurate and timely information provided on trains	8	130	8	131	9	124	9	131
Well-maintained, clean toilet facilities on every train	9	129	10	126	6	148	8	138
Less disruption due to engineering works	10	125	9	128	10	106	10	109
Connections with other train services are always good	11	103	12	103	11	103	11	104
Journey time is reduced	12	102	11	104	12	95	14	90
Good connections with other public transport at stations	13	91	13	91	14	92	13	90
Seating area on train is more comfortable	14	86	15	85	13	94	12	94
Easier to buy the right ticket	15	86	14	86	15	92	15	85
Improved personal security on the train	16	82	16	83	16	77	16	80
More room to stand comfortably on busy trains	17	75	17	76	19	64	17	76
Improved personal security at the station	18	70	18	71	20	64	20	66
Stations maintained and cleaned to a high standard	19	68	19	68	17	75	19	69
More environmentally friendly journeys	20	66	20	66	18	68	18	74
Easier to claim compensation when delayed	21	59	21	61	26	51	27	49
Free Wi-Fi available on the train	22	58	22	58	23	58	23	57
Sufficient space on train for passengers' luggage	23	57	23	57	22	60	21	62
Train staff have a positive, helpful attitude	24	56	24	55	21	63	22	59
Access from station entrance to boarding train is step-free	25	54	25	54	25	51	26	49
Station staff have a positive, helpful attitude	26	52	26	51	24	57	24	54
More staff available at stations to help passengers	27	48	27	48	28	47	28	47
More staff available on trains to help passengers	28	47	28	47	27	47	25	49
Better mobile phone signal on trains	29	42	29	43	29	39	29	34
Free Wi-Fi available at the station	30	36	30	37	30	33	30	31

Priorities for improving stations (%)





Rail passengers' priorities – by age

	All passengers		16-25		26-44		45-64		65+	
	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index
Reliability and punctuality	1	245	2	229	2	238	1	258	1	257
Price of train tickets offers better value for money	2	237	1	235	1	238	2	247	3	221
Passengers able to get a seat on the train	3	201	3	162	3	188	3	225	2	233
Trains sufficiently frequent at the times I wish to travel	4	164	5	150	4	168	4	175	7	154
Train company keeps passengers informed about delays	5	150	4	152	5	143	5	152	4	161
Inside of train is maintained and cleaned to a high standard	6	139	8	126	6	133	6	143	5	158
Accurate and timely information available at stations	7	138	6	139	7	132	7	140	8	150
Accurate and timely information provided on trains	8	130	7	135	9	127	9	130	9	134
Well-maintained, clean toilet facilities on every train	9	129	11	114	10	122	8	134	6	154
Less disruption due to engineering works	10	125	9	125	8	130	10	126	10	113
Connections with other train services are always good	11	103	12	102	12	102	11	104	11	103
Journey time is reduced	12	102	10	116	11	120	13	91	21	64
Good connections with other public transport at stations	13	91	14	93	13	93	15	90	14	88
Seating area on train is more comfortable	14	86	19	73	14	85	14	91	12	97
Easier to buy the right ticket	15	86	20	73	16	82	12	95	13	96
Improved personal security on the train	16	82	18	76	17	81	16	87	15	86
More room to stand comfortably on busy trains	17	75	15	90	15	83	18	67	25	52
Improved personal security at the station	18	70	22	67	19	70	17	72	18	70
Stations maintained and cleaned to a high standard	19	68	21	69	20	69	19	65	16	73
More environmentally friendly journeys	20	66	13	100	18	71	23	50	26	47
Easier to claim compensation when delayed	21	59	16	84	21	67	26	48	28	33
Free Wi-Fi available on the train	22	58	17	78	22	67	27	46	27	37
Sufficient space on train for passengers' luggage	23	57	23	64	24	53	22	53	19	68
Train staff have a positive, helpful attitude	24	56	27	49	26	51	20	59	17	71
Access from station entrance to boarding train is step-free	25	54	25	59	23	54	28	45	22	61
Station staff have a positive, helpful attitude	26	52	28	46	27	48	21	54	20	64
More staff available at stations to help passengers	27	48	29	41	28	46	25	49	23	57
More staff available on trains to help passengers	28	47	30	40	29	45	24	50	24	57
Better mobile phone signal on trains	29	42	24	60	25	51	29	31	29	22
Free Wi-Fi available at the station	30	36	26	53	30	44	30	25	30	19

Rail passengers' priorities – passengers with a disability

	Any disability		Mobility or wheelchair		Hearing		Eyesight	
	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index
Reliability and punctuality	1	235	1	230	1	238	1	227
Price of train tickets offers better value for money	2	224	3	216	2	219	2	217
Passengers able to get a seat on the train	3	212	2	218	3	216	3	197
Trains sufficiently frequent at the times I wish to travel	5	145	5	142	7	139	4	145
Train company keeps passengers informed about delays	4	146	6	142	6	147	5	143
Inside of train is maintained and cleaned to a high standard	7	143	7	141	4	153	6	134
Accurate and timely information available at stations	8	132	8	129	8	134	8	131
Accurate and timely information provided on trains	9	121	9	116	9	122	9	119
Well-maintained, clean toilet facilities on every train	6	144	4	145	5	148	7	132
Less disruption due to engineering works	10	108	11	105	10	110	10	107
Connections with other train services are always good	11	100	12	100	14	96	11	97
Journey time is reduced	18	77	22	70	17	77	18	78
Good connections with other public transport at stations	14	90	15	91	15	85	14	87
Seating area on train is more comfortable	13	92	13	99	12	97	13	92
Easier to buy the right ticket	15	87	16	86	13	96	15	84
Improved personal security on the train	12	93	14	95	11	97	12	93
More room to stand comfortably on busy trains	25	64	26	57	25	58	25	69
Improved personal security at the station	17	79	17	81	16	82	17	80
Stations maintained and cleaned to a high standard	19	71	21	70	18	76	23	69
More environmentally friendly journeys	23	64	25	57	26	55	26	66
Easier to claim compensation when delayed	27	49	27	42	28	43	28	56
Free Wi-Fi available on the train	28	48	28	42	27	52	27	58
Sufficient space on train for passengers' luggage	26	63	24	60	20	69	19	77
Train staff have a positive, helpful attitude	20	69	20	75	19	71	20	74
Access from station entrance to boarding train is step-free	16	84	10	112	21	68	16	81
Station staff have a positive, helpful attitude	24	64	23	69	22	64	24	69
More staff available at stations to help passengers	22	67	18	78	24	61	21	70
More staff available on trains to help passengers	21	67	19	78	23	64	22	70
Better mobile phone signal on trains	29	35	29	29	29	36	29	42
Free Wi-Fi available at the station	30	29	30	26	30	29	30	36