

Transport Focus Board Meeting	
Date:	Wednesday 30 March 2022
Times:	10.30-12.45
Location	Video Conference (Zoom)
Classification	Not protectively marked

Attended

Board members:

Jeff Halliwell	JH	Chair
Keith Richards OBE	KR	Board member
Theo de Pencier	TdP	Board member
Arthur Leathley	AL	Board member for London
Trisha McAuley OBE	TM	Board member for Scotland

Management and other staff in attendance:

Anthony Smith	AS	Chief Executive
David Sidebottom	DS	Director
Nigel Holden	NH	Corporate Services Director
Jon Carter	JC	Head of Board and Governance
Stephanie Ahemor	SA	Board and Governance Executive
Mike Hewitson	MH	Head of Policy
Guy Dangerfield	GD	Head of Strategy
Sara Nelson	SN	Head of Communications
Louise Coward	LC	Head of Insight
Louise Collins	LCn	Senior Stakeholder Manager
Joanne Trotman	JT	Stakeholder Manager

Event production team

Oliver Banks	OB	Digital Content and Communications Officer
Sarah Bush	SB	VisAir

Members of the public: Around 100 members of the public viewed the proceedings live.

Apologies

Cllr William Powell	WP	Board member for Wales
Kate Denham	KD	Board member
Rob Wilson	RW	Board member

PART A: Public affairs

1. Chair's welcome and opening remarks; apologies and introductions; declarations of conflicts of interest.

Jeff Halliwell (JH) opened the meeting and thanked those present and viewing remotely for joining.

JH stated that the meeting was also a formal Board meeting, and as such they would have some Board business to go through. He noted that Cllr William Powell, Kate Denham and Rob Wilson had sent their apologies.

JH noted that no declarations of conflicts of interest had been made.

2. Omnibus survey – what is it telling us?

Louise Coward (LC) noted the positive progress made since the weekly rail and bus survey was established in September 2022. The Omnibus survey was a logical development to the Travel during Covid-19 survey, including insights on 18 passenger satisfaction indicators such as value for money, seat comfort and cleanliness. These weekly reports have been very well received by key stakeholders and users. She explained, for those not familiar with it, that it is a continuous survey with a 'piggyback' setup – it uses established data, collected and delivered reliably every week to make insights into bus and rail passengers' satisfaction, without having to pay extra project and setup costs.

The survey has been able to track the impact of changing restrictions due to Covid-19 on usage, such as the drop in usage due to Omicron in December 2021. Lower overall satisfaction was observed when services were reduced due to staff shortages in January 2022. Additionally, the survey monitored the impact of changes to rules regarding face coverings, tracking how passengers felt about passengers' compliance.

Over the past six weeks, the data has stabilised significantly. For example, rail journey satisfaction has remained at 88% in 4 out of 6 of the last weeks' surveys, while the figure remains around 87% for buses. To continue to provide compelling insights, reporting of the Omnibus survey's findings will be reduced to every 4 weeks.

Anthony Smith (AS) asked whether the continuation of the omnibus methodology is flexible and whether they can adapt questions or re-establish the frequency at any given moment. LC confirmed that this would be the case and that it is quick to adapt.

Theo de Pencier (TdP) questioned whether the omnibus will become a permanent offering, noting its usefulness in providing rapid insights. LC believed that in its current state, the Omnibus survey is a valuable interim project while the bus and rail replacement satisfaction surveys are in development. While the future of the Omnibus survey is unclear and dependent on external factors, it could potentially play a continued role in the future.

Keith Richards (KR) commented that it would be useful if the survey can give segmented insight on certain groups' attitudes to face coverings, returning to work and overall satisfaction. LC agreed that this is something that insight can explore in more detail by segmenting by demographics or location.

TdP enquired whether it is possible to do a similar survey with the same frequency as the Omnibus for road users, particularly those on the Strategic Road Network (SRN). LC stated that this could potentially be done through the Strategic Road User Survey (SRUS) and that there is a question in the Omnibus survey regarding car availability in participants' households.

3. Road user issues – what is SRUS telling us?

This survey is the formal measure of user satisfaction for those driving on England's motorways and major 'A' roads; the roads managed by National Highways on behalf of the Government. Guy Dangerfield (GD) highlighted that the SRUS in its current format – push to web as opposed to face-to-face interviews – has now been running for a year. Transport Focus write to selected addresses across England and invite drivers to take the survey online. Data is published monthly on the datahub, with statistical measures as well as written comments. This method generally sees lower overall satisfaction (~10%) than pre-pandemic face-to-face surveys, but this is commonly seen when moving surveys online in general.

From April 2021 to January 2022, 69% of drivers were satisfied overall with their journey, with slight variations across different regions. Journey time is an important factor, with 1/5 of respondents finding that their journeys took longer than expected. 1/4 of respondents passed through roadworks, with just under 1/2 of those passing through satisfied by their experience with them. Many stated that poor signage and confusing layout made for a poorer roadwork experience. Other important factors highlighted in the include surface quality, safety and information from permanent and electronic signs.

The Logistics and Coach Survey continues to drive change, with National Highways beginning to action recommendations from the survey. Cyclist, Pedestrians and Equestrians qualitative research continues across Kent and Sussex with National Highways, DfT and the Office of Rail and Road.

Two new surveys on EV charging and lorry driver satisfaction regarding roadside facilities will focus on end-user experience and aim to create incentives for operators to enact positive change. Finally, the Motorway Service Users Survey will be conducted in late Spring 2022.

JH asked where National Highways stand in adopting SRUS as KPIs. GD noted that the aim is to formally reinstate SRUS as KPIs in April 2023 to account for the short amount of time that the new methodology (push to web) has been in place. He noted that while around 4500 drivers are surveyed annually at present, development work aims to bring this up to 7000 drivers in the 2022/23 financial year.

It was noted that many people have little idea about whether they are driving on 'strategic' 'A' road or not. Could work be done to get the DfT to better understand the consumer view, and to also extend our remit to cover all major roads? He also asked whether any progress has been made on widening remit to Wales and Scotland. GD noted that neither of these issues were active areas of discussion at present but could be in future.

The question of generating a similar survey for rail freight users arose, which could assist in making it a more appealing option for moving goods. GD agreed this might be the case but there was currently no remit for work of this kind.

4. Bus Service Improvement Plans: our work

David Sidebottom (DS) introduced Transport Focus's work alongside local bus service operators on Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs), announced by the UK government a year ago. £3bn has been pledged to support enhanced improvements to bus services outside London in England.

Transport Focus has provided guidance, documents and advice to over 70 local transport authorities and operators to support them in creating BSIPs to bid for funding. £1.2bn will be made available to local transport authorities, and the DfT will shortlist authorities to develop BSIPs with over the next few months. During consultation, Transport Focus tested authorities' BSIPs against several consumer principles drawn from previous bus surveys to ensure that passengers' priorities will be met.

This consultation role, alongside Transport Focus's role in Enhanced Partnership Plans, has generated a significant number of references for online material and feedback has been positive. Each partnership is obliged to set out a passenger charter, with two authorities (Cornwall and Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority) particularly finding input beneficial.

Transport Focus will give evidence on the progress made on BSIPs to the Transport Select Committee, with a draft response to be completed this week.

Regarding the new bus passenger satisfaction measure, pilot work is being carried out in three areas of the country to test the methodology and will be completed this week.

A survey with the in-house transport user panel is currently underway to investigate the attitudes and views of concessionary passengers, who have generally not returned to buses to the degree that fee-paying passengers have. 4000 responses are expected, with reporting due in early May.

The Government has announced a £150m bus recovery fund for local buses and light rail, and another £200m to fund 1000 zero emission buses. Transport Focus are also monitoring the latest West Midlands Metro service suspension, including information provision and alternative bus routes.

The Board questioned what the general financial position of the bus industry is at present. DS noted that while the industry is recovering, there are several funding challenges. In comparison to rail, less work-related journeys are made on buses, with more reliance on leisure which has also had a difficult recovery. DS stated that the next six months will give more of an indication about how service providers can adapt long term; early results from surveys are showing significant continuity. The major difference between the old and new survey is the method of data collection: intercepting at busy bus stops and stations, in addition to those embarking/disembarking on buses.

AS suggested that TfL's Bus Plan gives a clue to what the National Bus Survey may include. DS added that continued discussion with London TravelWatch alongside observation of bus franchising plans across the country (e.g. in Greater Manchester) is needed to learn how to enhance work.

DS concluded by saying that, broadly speaking, enhanced cleaning has been maintained and remains one of the top eight priorities for consumers.

PART B: Updates

1. Rail reform update

Mike Hewitson (MH) outlined the continued work on Great British Railways (GBR), alongside their transition team (GBR TT) which is now up and running. The design of GBR proper and pre-legislative work is currently being carried out, with the call for evidence for their 30-year strategic plan (Whole Industry Strategic Plan, or WISP) completed for drafting. A national competition for towns and cities to be the location of GBR's new HQ has been launched. GBR TT are working closely alongside DfT on fares, ticketing, retail reform and passenger revenue. For example, £360m has been set out for contactless payments in 700 stations, particularly in the North. GBR is planned to be ready by early 2024, but legislation needs passed by Parliament prior to this.

DfT is moving away from emergency contracts to National Rail contracts, which are more flexible and can better cope with fluctuations.. A new, consolidated online retail solution is to be established, offering ticket sales from a single entity rather than from each individual rail company.

Transport Focus's role in providing the passenger voice, as set out in the White paper, is under discussion with DfT. Conversations on the remit and resources to fulfil this role are in their early stages.

Arthur Leathley (AL) asked for clarity on how passenger satisfaction will be included in legislation. MH explained that while passenger satisfaction will not be in the legislation itself, it will form a key part in rail contracts and KPIs as GBR cannot solely rely on hard metrics such as punctuality.

2. Sort My Sign update

Joanne Trotman (JT) summarised the 'Sort My Sign' (SMS) campaign, which launched in February 2020 to increase the usefulness and effectiveness of information on roads, including messages on electronic signs. Since its launch, 296 reports on broken signs in the National Highways network have been made. National Highways have fixed 75% of these signs, with 75% of those remaining scheduled to be fixed. From February 2022, road users have been redirected to National Highway's own reporting tool.

Transport Focus is continuing work to deliver improvements to information on roads, with future plans for public-facing reporting to summarise the campaign. A press event with an invited minister to unveil a newly fixed road sign is being planned alongside National Highways. Policy changes include National Highways committing to enact several recommendations, set out by Transport Focus. Four 'challenge areas', highlighted for improvement are: ensuring drivers can see properly; increasing speed that signs are repaired or replaced; improving the approach to worn-out signs; and continuous improvement to existing provisions.

Oliver Banks (OB) highlighted the success of the SMS campaign, with 2% of driving age adults coming into contact with the campaign online across Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. 900 expressions of interest led directly to the webpage, leading to organic growth. With additional features via the AA, Think!, the RAC, National Highways, Fifth Gear and Drive Tribe, around 750,000 users have seen and interacted with the video advert. Around 37% of those who interacted with the advert went on to share it, which is well above the industry standard. These outcomes have led to SMS becoming one of Transport Focus's most successful campaigns in terms of engagement.

JH looked forward to the writing up of the campaign's findings in some way, as a record of achievement. He also asked whether there is any evidence around the usefulness of signs in roadworks? JT noted that while this work was outside of the remit of this campaign, additional research on clustering of signage and the wording of yellow and black signs is ongoing in collaboration with National Highways. GD added that when approached for review on the consumer view for an internal document on roadworks, he found that guidance for project managers is constrained by rules and formal regulations around road signage. Transport Focus could provide insight on the user perspective, as users' perceptions of safety should form a key part of regulations.

3. Project Future update

Louise Collins (LCn) introduced Project Future as the name of all work which has taken place since the start of the pandemic two years ago in March 2020.

Reflecting on Transport Focus's achievements over the past 2 years as we head towards the 'new' business as usual, several learnings should be taken from pandemic work. For example, deep understanding was gained from the reactive Travel During Covid-19 Survey, with great feedback from stakeholders on reliable regular data. 160,000 interviews were conducted, with 81 data publications, which has formed the basis of several pieces of work over the past few years.

Other highlights include the development of a segmentation tool to break populations down into different behavioural groups, which helped operators such as GWR to understand customer data and tailor messaging and mailing. Online events included the transport user Covid panel event, with industry speakers and a keynote delivered by Baroness Vere, and an event on accessibility. Around 300 viewers watched online for each event, showing the potential success of online webinars in reaching new audiences.

Transport Focus adapted to new, agile ways of working. By being forced to work in alternative ways, teams across the organisation have had to meet little and often for quick turnarounds. Reflections from these techniques are crucial to build learnings into present and future work.

JH suggested that someone external could be commissioned to produce a technical report on 'lessons learned' from Project Future.

4. Insight Update

Louise Coward (LC) outlined Insight's focus around year end on finishing projects on time. Development work on historical measurements and how to improve them also continues. Challenges include how to make new measures, such as how to accurately measure EV users' charging experiences and lorry drivers' satisfaction with roadside facilities.

The preferred supplier list was refreshed in September 2021, with some agencies remaining as well as additional new ones. A video of Transport Focus's expectations for working with the Insight team and on regulations was sent to all agencies. A workshop on Diversity and Inclusion is to be held soon to learn how to better incorporate recommendations into future projects.

Insight team members have been invited to speak at industry events, including the Transport Ticketing Global Conference in June. These will be excellent opportunities for networking and engaging with communities of interest.

PART C: Corporate Affairs

1. Transport Focus workplan 2022-23

The Board formally **approved** the workplan.

2. Transport Focus budget 2022-23

The Board formally **approved** the budget for 2022-23.

3. Board meeting minutes: November 2021

The minutes were **approved**.

4. Committee meeting minutes

4.1. Statistics Governance Group (December 2021) (March 2022 verbal update)

To be noted at the next meeting.

4.2. Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (January 2022)

Committee members highlighted the marked increase (27%, £6,500) in audit fees, which the National Audit Office (NAO) needs for full cost recovery. Benchmarking with other public sector bodies and discussing with the sponsorship team at DfT were mentioned as possible responses to this.

TM requested succession plan visibility in a future meeting. This was noted and will be included in next year's internal audit plan.

The minutes were **noted**.

5. Reports from subsidiaries

5.1. Transport Focus Wales Limited (January 2022)

Welsh Deputy Minister for Climate Change Lee Waters MS has formed a performance board, of which Transport Focus has a seat (occupied by David Beer). This board is to provide scrutiny on Wales's transport strategy.

Transport for Wales has conducted several pilot schemes on demand-responsive transport under 'fleccsi' branding. Transport Focus Wales has been running research on users and non-users for local authorities to understand their experience. A report is to be published by Transport Focus Wales Ltd, which will give insight on how demand-responsive transport can fit in the overall transport mix, particularly in rural settings.

Transport Focus Wales has supported the Senedd Climate Change committee enquiry into public transport, sending invitations to stakeholders, creating discussion guides and will be called to give formal evidence in future.

5.2. Transport Focus Scotland (December 2021)

Alongside Robert Samson, TM and Transport Focus Scotland are working with the rail taskforce on Covid recovery and ongoing insight. The team have been monitoring the transfer of ScotRail to Scottish ownership (as ScotRail Trains Ltd) to ensure that the transition is seamless for rail users. Plans are being made to meet the Chair and CEO as soon as possible.

A meeting with Jenny Gilruth MSP, who announced a #nationalconversation on the future of public rail services, will take place in May. This is timely considering that the next board meeting is to be held in Scotland in May. A 'meet the passenger' event is to be held at Edinburgh Waverley station to coincide with this meeting.

TM chaired the face-to-face 'Rail North of the Border' (Rail Scotland conference) in March which has 400 people in attendance. This was a great opportunity to share Transport Focus's work, raise our profile and share the passenger voice to key stakeholders. TM will also chair a panel discussion held during an event in Autumn, in conjunction with Rail Scotland.

Further discussions with the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland on inclusive infrastructure investment and other transport issues highlight the value that Transport Focus's insights on Covid recovery and sustainability can add to stakeholders' priorities.

6. For noting by the Board

Items previously discussed and/or approved out of meeting

The Board formally ratified the following projects / proposals originally approved out of meeting:

- BRD2122-009 #171 DfT TOC Mystery Shopping
- BRD2122-010 #170 MSUS 2022
- BRD2122-011 Updated Transport Focus / London TravelWatch Collaboration Agreement
- BRD2122-012 #168 Tyne Tunnel Critical Friend
- BRD2122-013 #175 Lorry Drivers Facilities Survey Pilot
- BRD2122-014 #162 Bus and Rail Passenger Satisfaction Measurement using Omnibus (RfC)
- BRD2122-015 #180 Your rail journey
- BRD2122-016 #181 Your bus journey
- BRD2122-017 #153 Measuring the on the day passenger experience of using public transport (RfC)
- BRD2122-018 171 171 DfT TOC Mystery Shopping (RfC)
- BRD2122-019 #170 MSUS 2022 (RfC)

7. Governance arrangements 2022-23

Jon Carter (JC) presented Part 1 of the Governance Pack setting out robust, simple, and clear governance arrangements for 2022-23, which the Board **approved**.

Any other business and closing remarks

JH noted that his term of office has been extended for further three months, while recruitment of a replacement Chair continues.

JH thanked all attendees, board members and staff for their time and closed the meeting.