

Minutes of the:
May 2025 Meeting

Date 20 May 2025

Location Canary Wharf, London (+live stream via MS Teams)

Classification Public

Attendance

Board Members (8)

Nigel Stevens (NS), Chairperson

Kate Denham (KD)

Keith Richards OBE (KR)

Rob Wilson (RW)

Sandra Witzel (SW)

Tricia Hayes CB (TH)

Trisha McAuley OBE (TM)

Cllr William Powell (WP)

Staff Members (8)

Alex Robertson, Chief Executive Officer

Alex Campbell (ACa), Director Insight & Policy

Andy Cottrell (ACo), Corporate Services Director

Jasmin Cheung, PA to Chair and CEO

Jon Carter (JC), Head of Governance and Risk

Kayla Schembri (KS), Board and Governance Executive

Louise Collins (LC), Director

Natasha Grice (NG), Director

Additional Attendees (3)

Ceri Oest (CO), Engagement Manager

Guy Dangerfield (GD), Head of Strategy and Intelligence

Rebecca Joyner (RJ), Insight and Evidence Manager

External Attendees (1)

Karen Thompson, Minute-Taker, *via video conference*

Apologies:

Callum Jolly

1. Meeting Opening

Item 1.1 – Welcome, apologies, declarations, conflicts of interest

NS welcomed everyone to the annual Transport Focus public board meeting. Apologies were received from CJ. There were no declarations of conflicts of interest.

Item 1.2 – Chairperson's report

NS briefly outlined some recent areas of focus for the board. Rail and bus reform mean that emphasis has been on future developments and how Transport Focus will represent the passenger most effectively. The board continues to review how current passenger issues are being addressed across all of the transport modes. The board had an excellent session last month with National Highways, seeing first-hand how it is delivering a new improvement scheme. Transport Focus continues to work closely with London TravelWatch, representing the specific needs of the rail user. The way the board works is continuously reviewed, and this has resulted in several significant format changes over the last year. An effectiveness review will take place over the next few months.

Item 1.3 – CEO report

AR provided an overview of key activities since the last board meeting. There has been ongoing constructive engagement with the Department for Transport (DfT) on rail and bus reform. The revenue protection work undertaken last autumn has now been followed up with a list of actions that could be implemented reasonably quickly. The government set up a review of train operator revenue practices with the Office of Rail and Road (ORR), which is nearing publication, and it is likely to reflect some of the thinking outlined in the Transport Focus revenue protection work.

Transport Focus has also been working closely with the industry. One example is rail fares and how the impact on those passengers who are digitally excluded is managed, as the industry benefits from the efficiencies of new technology. On lorry driver facilities, Transport Focus organized a round table event in March 2025, bringing together the key players to think through how challenges can be addressed. The lorry driver facilities work is a good example of how Transport Focus research is used to engage with the industry to achieve change. Several examples were given of how impact is being achieved in other work, including EV charging and rail service disruption.

Board members added that the organisation has been on a change journey, with a fundamental change in personnel and a drive to achieve impact. They noted the transformative work of the executive team in delivering results. Board members agreed that there has been a core change in how projects are delivered, with more emphasis on working with the industry to find solutions. Consideration might be given now to helping to ensure that change is firmly embedded and on measuring impact. The more structured approach to stakeholder management was also welcomed.

On the question of stakeholder discussions about the interfaces between modes, LC said that the engagement team is fully intermodal and shares best practice and approaches across different modes. The importance of an integrated transport network for economic growth was also highlighted.

2. Business Plan

Item 2.1 – Business Plan 2025-27

AR provided a summary of the 2025-27 business plan and values. The mission is to drive positive change; the mission statement brings clarity about priorities and where the team needs to focus its energy to influence change. Transport Focus, as an independent organisation, is in a unique position to do this. When developing the business plan objectives, the criteria considered by the executive team were threefold. What is most important to transport users? Is there an issue that affects particular groups of users? Where can we make a difference?

AR provided examples of various activities underway to deliver each of the business plan's four outward-facing objectives. Surveys track progress against the things that matter most to users and ensure that the transport user has a voice in rail and bus reform. Transport Focus has been out in the field with disabled users, finding out first-hand what it is like to navigate the transport system. The work highlights overlooked issues, examples of how passengers have been let down by Turn Up and Go and the issues with the interface between modes to support the objective of making transport safe and accessible for all users. By sharing best practice, Transport Focus is driving best practice to become standard practice. Under objective three, AR outlined how the organisation has identified unsatisfactory aspects of operator performance and proposed solutions to improve the way the impact of planned and unplanned disruption on transport users is minimised. The ongoing work to improve lorry driver rest stops is one example of how Transport Focus makes sure that all voices are listened to, including groups whose needs are often over-looked. Work on digital exclusion has just been completed.

Board members reflected that the focus on solutions described by AR represents a change of organisational approach. Examples of accessibility failures were discussed, particularly the lack of step-free boarding and issues with the Turn Up and Go service in rail. Operator staff need to be equipped with the right training and tools to support improvement in service delivery. The challenges of integration within and across modes were discussed, including the disproportionate impact on disabled users. On the question of business plan deliverability risks post the Spending Review 2025, AR replied that Transport Focus is reasonably well-positioned to continue to deliver on the business plan, but the organisation must remain aware of any potential impact on investment in, for example, lorry driver rest facilities or bus reform. It was noted that creative solutions are not always reliant on additional funding. On lorry driver facilities investment, the counter point was made that difficulty in recruiting skilled haulage drivers has a significant negative economic impact. The discussion concluded by noting that in improving service delivery for those who are most disadvantaged, all transport users benefit and that is good for business. Consumer studies demonstrate that service improvements also lead to better staff engagement and retention.

3. Presentations and initiative updates

Item 3.1 – Tracker surveys overview and Your Bus Journey 2024 results

LC opened with an introduction to the survey work of the insight team across three modes of transport. Each of the three key surveys uses a consistent methodology to track transport user experience over a period of time. This work relates to objective 1 of the business plan. Transport Focus evidence shows that tracker surveys drive positive change. In the road sector, the Strategic Road User Survey is a key performance

indicator survey. A new rail customer experience survey will start in July 2025. It will be an “always on” survey, providing real time data about 10,000 individual customer journeys in each four-week cycle and will feed into the rail operator scorecard.

RJ then provided an overview of Your Bus Journey, the Transport Focus bus sector tracker survey. It is an independent survey, with wide coverage across all three nations of Great Britain, incorporating 43 different local authority areas. Work is ongoing to expand the survey into more local authorities. All research findings are published. The survey measures actual passenger experience of an individual journey, with field workers surveying passengers at bus stops and on board. The survey can provide granular level detail, sometimes down to a specific route or time of the day. The survey methodology is consistent and tracks performance changes and improvements.

RJ presented a high-level summary of overall journey satisfaction levels. The national trend shows an improving picture, with a steady increase in scores since the survey began in 2023. Punctuality scores in England, for example, rose from 70% satisfaction in 2023 to 75% in the most recent survey. Punctuality is what passengers really care about.

Board members commented that the survey does not capture the reasons why people do not use buses, although there is an aspiration to carry out research into non-user decision-making in the future. The high satisfaction scores for bus drivers were recognised, with members acknowledging the challenges that bus drivers face and the importance of this role to the overall user experience. The question of mapping bus punctuality improvements against data from the operators themselves led to a discussion about passenger perceptions and improvements in bus patronage. The lowest satisfaction score category was value for money, although it also saw the largest increase, from 67% satisfaction to 73% between 2023 and 2025. The recently introduced £3 price cap may well have an impact on future value for money scores.

RJ reported that satisfaction levels vary significantly across the country. The highest scoring area in the 2024 survey was East Riding of Yorkshire, largely a rural bus network. Warrington and East Sussex were highlighted as examples of areas seeing the largest increases in satisfaction levels. In 2023 Warrington had a particular issue with anti-social behaviour. A number of security related changes were implemented, and the area has since seen one of the biggest drops in reports of anti-social behaviour. All six large metropolitan areas are improving at a slower pace; commuting for work or education makes up a significant proportion of the customer base, where congestion is often a challenge.

Board members noted that there may be potential for further work to investigate the connectivity of services, particularly in rural areas which tend to be under-served. The discussion then moved on to highlight some cost-effective changes that bus operators can implement, including timely communication, to improve passenger perceptions of their service. RJ confirmed that results can be disaggregated to show levels of satisfaction amongst different transport user groups, highlighting for example, lower satisfaction amongst people with a mobility impairment. On the question of whether there have been any useful findings that could feed into Transport Focus work on bus stop design, RJ confirmed that the survey captures satisfaction with bus shelter seating, cleanliness, lighting etc. LC added that the impact of changes made by an individual local authority, for example, on bus shelter improvement, could be tracked and measured.

The engagement teams are following up in each region to motivate operators to act on the survey findings, using case studies to highlight best practice or to outline improvement plans for areas that have not

performed as well. The stakeholder teams also engage with operator associations and industry events, workshops and webinars. Discussions have taken place with DfT, pulling out specific findings from areas that have received funding. A House of Commons event is planned, with the intention of trying to get MPs to interest local authorities in their areas in participating in future surveys. The 2025 survey is now underway, with participation from 50 local authority areas.

Board members thanked RJ for an excellent demonstration of the power of Your Bus Journey. The importance of working with a broad range of stakeholders was reiterated as the best way of influencing positive change. Discussions are happening to try to make Your Bus Journey a national survey.

Item 3.2 – Electric vehicle charging and accessibility

CO opened her presentation by stating that disabled EV users report that they particularly struggle with EV charging. All users struggle with reliability of the EV charging network, but for disabled users with mobility issues, it presents significant challenges. Disabled users are often less likely to be able to charge their vehicles at home, and this obviously has value for money implications. LC added that as part of recent Transport Focus accessibility training, members of the team went to the EV charging point of a motorway service station with a wheelchair user to understand the challenges. The accessibility barriers to charging effectively excluded this person from being an EV driver. Cables are extremely heavy, bay surface is uneven, lack of space makes manoeuvrability difficult, and the help points to connect to staff were not useful.

The EV charging network rollout has not met the needs of disabled drivers, as recognised by the National Audit Office. A British Standards Institute (BSI) standard has been developed, PAS 1899:2022 (PAS 18/99). It was co-sponsored by Motability and the government. The standard specifies, amongst other things, the charging bay area, height of the device, weight, spacing of bollards. Adoption of the standard has been very low; Transport Focus understanding is that none of the motorway charging points have adopted it. There are several different types of charging models within the network; this may have affected take-up, along with the low level of awareness about the standard.

Transport Focus now intends to engage with stakeholders and use its influence to bring a sense of urgency about the issue, ensuring that future infrastructure is designed with the needs of disabled users in mind. Transport Focus will publish a report highlighting the issues and outlining the potential ways forward. Transport Focus continues to work with disabled users and will partner with other interested voices.

Board members asked about industry interest in the standard. CO said that PAS 18/99 is under review. Operators have expressed willingness to work with Transport Focus, but the issues are not straightforward. Some operators believe that their charging points are fully accessible, although they have not been certified as PAS 18/99 compliant, but there is no consistency. Potential recommendations could include a database for users to give them confidence about where accessible charge points are located. There has been some interest in making standards mandatory, which would then support a business case.

Board members reflected that the standard has now been around for some time. Rather than presenting it as a standard for people with disabilities, the business case for the standard should be that there is a universal benefit for all users. The standard covers specifications that all users would welcome, including on signage, user assistance, connector types, maintenance requirements etc. The board will consider writing to the Transport Secretary to raise awareness of the issues. It was noted that regulatory standards

are already in place around EV charging, so the next logical step should be to bring in standards around customer facing issues. There was a discussion of potential engagement partners who are also prepared to make the case for change. The point was made that standards need to include provisions for all disabled users, not just wheelchair users. The fragmented nature of charging network information available to all EV users was highlighted.

Item 3.3 – GWR disruption

NG said that the next presentations reflect work undertaken on business plan objective 3: Improving the way service providers minimise the impact of disruption on users. Both pieces of work relate to unplanned disruption. NG highlighted the work with Great Western Railway (GWR) as a great example of collaboration with the industry and within the Transport Focus internal team. The work on stranded trains is another great example of cross industry working to develop recommendations and solutions.

GD explained that Transport Focus has carried out several pieces of work in recent years on minimising the impact of planned disruption. This piece of work relates to how things are handled during unexpected disruption. He noted that there had been a very quick sign-up to the idea from senior management at GWR and Network Rail. Transport Focus staff were based at different locations throughout the observation period. Some were at train stations (London Paddington, Bristol Temple Meads), observing the passenger experience during disruption, particularly what worked well and what could have been better. Staff monitored online and social media interactions. GWR agreed to allow staff to observe decision-making in the control room over a period of one week.

GD said that the overall conclusion was that a plan was needed to substantially improve the quality of online information for passengers during disruption, with a focus on accuracy, timeliness and consistency. The team found that the use of “Please Wait” notices on departure screens at Paddington station provided no useful information for passengers. The time between departure information being displayed at Paddington and the train leaving was also insufficient. Passengers in Bristol would have benefitted from having the confidence of knowing where to wait, so that they didn’t have to race for their train.

Follow-up to the work with GWR includes the establishment of a steering group, chaired by Nina Howe of Transport Focus. Transport Focus is also a member of “Team Pad”, a Paddington station working group, including the train operator and Network Rail representatives. Engagement is also ongoing with relevant managers from within GWR. Transport Focus will help to deliver some control staff workshops in Swindon in June 2025, looking specifically at good messaging.

Outcomes to date include the replacement of the “Please Wait” instruction on departure screens at stations. The message will now read “train on time”, or if delayed, then the updated time will be shown. “Delayed” will be displayed if there is no updated on the train time. The system has now been trialled by GWR, and the IT supplier has now updated all platforms. Transport Focus participation in Team Pad meetings provides an opportunity to challenge current practice and influence implementation of change. NG noted that a LinkedIn post about the trial was Transport Focus’ most engaged post in four years, demonstrating that people like to see on-the-ground activity that shows where Transport Focus is making a difference. Transport Focus is in discussions with ScotRail and Network Rail Scotland, who are keen to participate in a similar exercise.

Board members congratulated the team on a great piece of work and the hands-on approach to achieving change. GD explained the content of the forthcoming GWR staff workshop and its emphasis on improving messaging during times of disruption. He confirmed that the good practice lessons will be shared. Board members highlighted the need for customer insight to drive IT systems, rather than the other way round. They also pointed out that other industries are ahead of rail in identifying and implementing customer centric improvement. Board members noted that there may be an opportunity for collaboration with London TravelWatch on similar initiatives that they are working on at Euston station, to create a model for Great British Railway (GBR) for all major stations across the country.

GD and NG said that issues often arise because the right process is not in place to deliver information to the passenger. They were concerned that if barriers are not tackled, then the problems will be absorbed into GBR. The significant public investment into the Great Western line was noted, along with some disappointment about the subsequent modest level of customer service improvement. The board will re-visit discussions about the next stage of rail reform and the need to create systemic change.

Item 3.4 – Stranded trains

GD said that the passenger experience can be very poor when trains become stranded. There are circa 1.8 incidences of stranded trains per *day*, so the experience is not uncommon. The stranded trains work was a joint initiative with ORR to investigate the issue and make recommendations. The starting point was to consider the industry guidance from a passenger perspective, asking whether the guidance was being followed and whether it was good enough. The approach involved examining four stranded train incidents that occurred in December 2023. Introductions were made by operators to a sample of passengers on those journeys to whom they had sold tickets, and they were invited to complete a questionnaire. Of these, a further sample of passengers were invited to a more in-depth interview.

GD presented some verbatim comments from passengers describing their experience, beginning with the discomfort of being in a warm, airless carriage due to the power being off. Some people commented on the difference that staff can make when communication is good. Others had felt quite abandoned, particularly when operators did not take responsibility for onward travel obligations. By and large passengers had been quite stoical about their experience.

Findings highlighted areas where the guidance had not been well executed, or where it needed to be strengthened. For example, the guidance recommended that a plan should be created within 60 minutes, but passenger feedback suggested that was not good enough. Too little priority was given to ensuring that passengers had a smooth onward journey, once off the train. In January 2024, in conjunction with ORR, Transport Focus brought senior industry leaders together to present the findings and get their buy-in to implement solutions.

The findings had a significant influence on revising industry guidance, which was issued in 2024 and came into effect at the end of March 2025. The guidance highlights the need for faster timelines for evacuation and improvements to support for passengers with additional needs. The guidance is explicit that it applies up until the point where the passenger arrives at the intended destination. It also includes an expanded section on training and competency. The Rail Delivery Group's remit on revising the guidance was expanded to include documenting good practice around supporting passengers on stranded trains. The task and finish group will also work on ensuring that robust data is available on the number of incidents. GD noted that

much of the impact from this work had been in collaboration with partners and through participation in the working group.

Board members thanked GD for a very informative presentation, noting that this piece of work is a great model for how the passenger champion and regulator can work together to drive improvement and change. Board members asked GD to pass on thanks to the wider team.

Item 3.5 – Overview – nations and regions

TM said that it is very important that the needs and priorities of the devolved nations are embedded within the overall organisation strategy. The Nations and Regions Group is also very aware of the significant change happening in the English regions. A strong strategy is emerging. The group will continue to focus on current and future issues in the nations and regions, working collaboratively with London TravelWatch and reporting to the board. The group meets quarterly and will convene again in June 2025.

4. 4.Updates – Minutes and Operational

Item 4.1 – Minutes – public board (May 2024)

The minutes of the 22 May 2024 public meeting of the board were **agreed** as a true and accurate record.

Item 4.2 – Record of approvals

JC had no further observations on the record of approvals, which were **noted**.

5. Meeting Close

Item 5.1 Any other business

There was no other business.

Item 5.2 – Meeting close

The meeting closed at 13.01 hrs.

Next meeting: Tuesday, 24 June 2025, Canary Wharf, London

Signed as an accurate record of the meeting.



Nigel Stevens, Chair

19 May 2026

Board – Matters Arising			
Item	Originating Item and Action	Owner (SLT); Responsible	Due
	There were no matters arising		