

Passenger Voice London

Independent national rail passenger watchdog



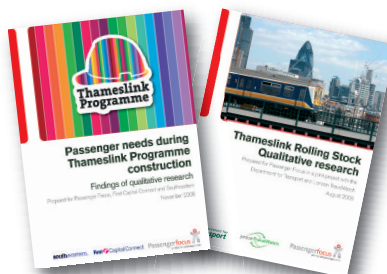
Thameslink

Passengers' views at the heart of decision making

Passenger Focus has worked with the Department for Transport (DfT) and London TravelWatch to ensure that passengers' views are at the heart of the decisions made about new trains to run on Thameslink routes. Passenger Focus manager Guy Dangerfield said: "In the research, passengers told us they want a spacious train that they can get in and out of easily, unlike the existing

Thameslink rolling stock. They also want a step change in passenger information, going well beyond the destination and calling pattern now standard on new trains." Passenger Focus is pleased that these, and a number of other points we made to the DfT following the research, have been reflected in the specification.

Passenger Focus has also published another major report, 'Passenger needs



during Thameslink Programme construction: findings of qualitative research', which looks at what passengers are concerned about and how the rail industry can minimise disruption to best maintain passenger satisfaction while works are

going on. Mr Dangerfield said: "Shining through was the message that passenger communication has a vital role to play in delivery of the Thameslink Programme. Getting the communications right, so that passengers do not feel that they are being kept in the dark, will be key to the rail industry meeting passengers' expectations during Thameslink construction." The research was carried out jointly with First Capital Connect and Southeastern, and is available at www.passengerfocus.org.uk.



Passengers report train journey improving

London and south east passengers have said train services are getting better with a greater percentage of people reporting they are satisfied with their overall journey.

Passenger Focus has launched the results of its Autumn 2008 National Passenger Survey (NPS) in the Winter 2009 Passenger Voice bulletin.

In London and the south east, 82% of passengers said they were satisfied with their overall journey and reported significant improvements with several aspects of train facilities including the upkeep of the train, the provision of information during their journey and the cleanliness of the train.

Passenger Focus warned there was still room for improvement with low percentages of passengers satisfied with value for money (41%), train toilet facilities (34%), availability of staff on the train (31%), and how train companies deal with delays (35%).

Full results can be found at www.passengerfocus.org.uk

London

Train Operating Company (TOC)	Overall % satisfied	Passengers' satisfaction up	Passengers' satisfaction down
c2c	90	Helpfulness & attitude of staff on the train	Ticket-buying facilities
Chiltern	90	No significant improvements in satisfaction scores	Space for luggage on the train
First Capital Connect	77	How a request to station staff was handled	Connections with other forms of public transport
First Great Western	80	How well the company dealt with delays	No decline in satisfaction scores
Heathrow Express	93	Personal security at the station	No decline in satisfaction scores
London Midland	80	Cleanliness of the inside of the train	Car-parking facilities
London Overground	77	How a request to station staff was handled	No decline in satisfaction scores
National Express East Anglia	77	Provision of information during the train journey	Train frequency
Southeastern	80	Helpfulness & attitude of staff on the train	Car-parking facilities
Southern	83	No significant improvements in satisfaction scores	Car-parking facilities
South West Trains	87	Punctuality/reliability	Overall station environment

c2c's quiet revolution

Passenger Focus supports c2c's decision to introduce the use of quiet carriages dedicated to passengers who would simply like to unwind during their journey to or from work.

c2c's initial approach was for the carriages to be self policing but this has not worked as too many passengers simply carry on with their mobile conversations regardless.

Passenger Focus is therefore pleased that c2c has listened to further passenger representations and responded by coming up with an innovative solution – blocking mobile phone signals in the quiet carriage! The trials will soon be introduced and if it is successful, we hope that other train operators will follow suit.

Ticket office cuts

First Capital Connect wants to reduce the opening hours of ticket offices at 28 stations. Passenger Focus will work with London TravelWatch to understand passengers' views about the proposals, which are subject to public consultation during January and February.

Southeastern wins National Rail Award

The Passenger Focus-supported 'Putting passengers first' award for 2008 was won by Southeastern for the overhaul of its customer complaints service. It took a remarkably honest look at its procedures, and resolved to respond to passengers in plain English, devise better standard wording of complaints policy in consultation with Passenger Focus and London TravelWatch, treat compensation claims sympathetically, and ensure that 'comebacks' are

reviewed by a head of department. A senior managers' committee was also established.

Southeastern has also ensured that its monthly 'Meet the Managers' sessions are well supported, kept passengers informed about work in progress especially during planned disruption, improved staff motivation by passing on passenger praise internally and set up a steering group to focus on improving customer satisfaction.

Rebuilding King's Cross station

Passenger Focus is carrying out research to understand passengers' needs and concerns about the redevelopment of King's Cross station, now underway. In a joint project with Network Rail, First Capital Connect, Grand Central, Hull Trains and National Express East Coast, we are probing views about aspects of the project, including arrangements on the small number of occasions when timetables will have to be amended, and how the rail industry should communicate with passengers during the project.

Eurostar managing disruption

When fire broke out on a lorry in the Channel Tunnel last year, passenger safety and the level of customer service provided by Eurostar were key Passenger Focus priorities.

Five trains full of passengers were stuck in the tunnel, and a further

100,000 passengers were booked to travel over the next four days. Passenger Focus, London TravelWatch and the European Passengers Federation met with Eurostar to discuss the complaints received and the overall handling of the disruption.

Premium fares for Javelins

It is less than a year now until the introduction of a high-speed service from Kent to St Pancras. The new service is welcomed as a first step in improving some of the notoriously slow journey-times in Kent – for instance in the case of Ashford to London, a distance of only 56 miles, can take anything up to 90 minutes. However, Passenger Focus fears that premium fares will be too high. Passenger Focus

manager, Tunde Olatunji, said: "Unless introductory fares on Javelin services are attractive and are at a level which recognises current economic difficulties, passengers will be reluctant to burden themselves with the extra cost of premium fares despite the journey-time savings on offer.

Evidence suggests that people are cutting costs wherever they can and are seeking better value. We



would therefore expect introductory premium fares to be affordable, discounted and offer flexibility for the occasional user. The new service will succeed only if passengers who use the service think it offers value for money."

Impact on South Central franchise

Passenger Focus has had considerable success in influencing the new South Central franchise. Following extensive research to evidence passenger priorities for the new franchise, we were pleased to see requirements for more trains at weekends and in the late evening and improved information provision included in the specification. The level by which regulated fares can be increased will also be limited in direct response to our suggestions. The inclusion of targets for National Passenger Survey satisfaction measures will mean that passengers' views will directly influence the franchise. The operator will be assessed on satisfaction with trains, stations and customer services/information, with financial penalties for failure to deliver.

The input from Passenger Focus has been judged useful by the Department for Transport and we expect to have the opportunity to influence other franchises as and when they are due for renewal.