

Dear Member



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Early days – thoughts on train service updates...

It is still very early days for the Franchise, and as yet I do not believe Govia and the new management team will have been able to influence day to day train performance. Whilst performance over the first 10 days has not been good, this has often been down to problems with the infrastructure, including, unfortunately a number of fatalities.

As regards informing us about problems with the train service, it seems to me that there has been a noticeable step backwards since the switch from First to Govia, with there being less information on the main website and Journey Check now only operating for email alerting without a web option.

I would be interested in any observations you may have in this area so I have a consolidated view to take up with Thameslink. **Please let me have any thoughts by Sunday morning (28th).** (see also the item below on Passenger Focus’s publication on Poor Information).

Problems with the Thameslink App

The Thameslink App (for Android and Apple) has an issue with late running trains disappearing from listings at their scheduled departure time.

I understand this is a national issue, not just for Thameslink. Thameslink have provided us with this work-round:

There is an error with 'Common Journeys' which is being addressed. However if you go to 'Saved Stations', select the station and then go to Departures and Arrivals, trains will continue to show until they have actually left the station rather than disappearing at the scheduled departure time.

Note: you need to look at each journey

Personally, I use Real Time trains as this makes it easy to see how the trains I might catch are running earlier in their journey. The website design means it generates pages addresses that can be bookmarked and reused - eg

realtimetrains.co.uk/search/advanced/HPD/to/BFR?stp=WVS&show=all&order=actual

(note that I have specified both a destination and the choice to list in actual departure order [rather than planned]).

Passenger Focus “Poor information makes passenger experience worse when trains are delayed”

Passenger Focus published research in this area yesterday. Their comments included:

Passengers need speedy, accurate, and consistent information to help them feel in control of their travel plans. Only 34 per cent of passengers were satisfied with the way their train company had dealt with delays or cancellations, according to research published by Passenger Focus today.

The research considers the quality of information provided to passengers when they experience delays and

“Passengers need information as quickly as possible – ideally before leaving home. Only 17 per cent knew about the disruption before arriving at the station. Passengers now receive information from a range of sources, so train companies must ensure that staff at stations and on trains are ahead of the information game.

“Passengers need frank and honest messages that paint a realistic picture of the problems as they unfold. For instance, a fallen tree across a railway is just that, not an ‘obstruction’. Passengers told the full reasons for the delay are likely to be less frustrated than those who are not.

The tone of announcements needs to signal that the train company is ‘on the passengers’ side’ and can be as important as the content of the messages. Other recent Passenger Focus research has shown that this can enhance passengers’ trust in train companies.

More at the Passenger Focus website - bit.ly/1B8qrTN.

We’ll be using this report in conjunction with your comments to lobby Thameslink.

London TravelWatch requesting comments on Tube ticket closures (by the 28th)

London TravelWatch have asked us:

As you may know, Transport for London (TfL) will be making major changes to the way in which tickets are sold at London Underground stations as part of their vision for the future of the tube. This is described at the following link: tfl.gov.uk/campaign/the-future-of-the-tube?cid=fs054.

As the independent body representing passengers, London TravelWatch wants to understand how people buy their tickets at the moment. This will help inform our response to London Underground about their proposals. We would therefore like to encourage your members to take a few minutes to complete our survey about how they buy their tickets through the following link: surveymonkey.com/s/tubesurvey.

Details for individual stations are still being finalised but London Underground have produced a lot of detailed information ordered on a line by line basis and anyone who is interested can view further information on the following webpage: fitforthefuture.tfl.gov.uk/taking-it-station-by-station/

I have done so, will you do likewise?

Railfuture campaign: “Rail disruption happens - how can we reduce the impact?”

From Railfuture:

The pressure group Railfuture is launching a campaign to reduce the impact on passengers when rail services are disrupted. “We all know rail disruption happens, but how it is handled remains the number one concern of rail passengers” said Chris Fribbins, Head of Railfuture’s Passenger Group. “Most passengers will have their horror stories about journeys that went wrong, but they will also have examples of where it went well and the rail industry must learn from that experience. We want to spread the message of good practice on the railways and demand improvements for our passengers. We have examples of the rail industry getting it right with major projects both past and current, for example Thameslink, and major events such as the 2012 Olympics. However there are also examples of information breakdown and passengers, and often front line railway staff, not knowing what is going on or what to do. Although there has been a rapid growth in use of technology (web, Twitter, Facebook, smartphone applications and customer information screens), passengers may not know about them. This information can be incomplete and contradictory, although it is often ahead of what the front line staff know but there are still a significant number of passengers that rely on face to face contact with staff and

use public, rather than personal, sources of information. We also know that passengers hate bus replacement services, so we want to ensure that these are kept to an absolute minimum. Our challenge to the rail industry is to tell us what you are doing about the problems and involve passengers in the solutions.”

Railfuture is seeking input from across the rail industry **and from rail passengers**. Both are invited to log their experiences on www.railfuture.org.uk/disruption or contact the project by emailing disruption@railfuture.org.uk. A draft report will be produced in February 2015 and a final report in July 2015.

Siemens City Desiros / Class 700s

We recently received the September edition of “raileast”, the Railfuture East Anglia branch newsletter. It had this to say on Class 700s:

The absence of Wi-Fi is largely down to lack of lineside transponders¹. But even with such things, Govia said retro-equipping Cl.700s will not be cheap. 4G phones have far less of a problem except through certain tunnels. The Govia team hinted “just maybe” movement regarding the lack of seat back “tables” on these new trains. Both these issues were at the forefront of Railfuture and other organisations’ critique of the new trains last year.

1 (NM note): I believe they are referring to mobile phone masts.

On the above, my observation is that I met Steve Scrimshaw, the Managing Director, Rail Systems at Siemens UK at the FCC farewell reception, who was telling me that every change to the design of the class 700s has to be agreed by all 18 members of the banking consortium that funded the trains - and that he doesn’t expect this to be simple... - I think from our point of view when the time comes, we should be looking for a bundle of changes all at once - eg seat back tables and wifi together.

FCC’s ‘End of Term’ report

We received a final stakeholder news from FCC setting out their achievements during the Franchise. As the equivalent material published on their website is no longer available, we have uploaded it to our website: aptu.org.uk/pdfs/fcc_finalstakeholdernews.pdf.

Other

- Thameslink Programme imagery:
 - There is a time lapse video on the Network Rail site of works completed at the end of August: bit.ly/1qjI9gJ.
 - The Daily Mail has published a set of Thameslink Programme related aerial photos that may be of interest: dailym.ai/1u8PDei.

Regards

Neil

Neil Middleton

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