



House of Commons
Transport Committee

**The future of rail:
Improving the rail
passenger experience:
Government Response
to the Committee's
Sixth Report of Session
2016–17**

**Seventh Special Report of Session
2016–17**

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Transport Committee

The Transport Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Department for Transport and its associated public bodies.

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Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Gordon Clarke (Committee Clerk), Nehal Bradley-Depani (Second Clerk), James Clarke (Committee Specialist), Andrew Haylen (Committee Specialist), Daniel Moeller (Senior Committee Assistant), Michelle Owens (Committee Assistant) and Estelle Currie (Media Officer).

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Seventh Special Report

The Transport Committee published its Sixth Report of Session 2016–17, *The future of rail: Improving the rail passenger experience* (HC 64), on 14 October 2016. The Government's response was received on 16 December 2016 and is appended to this report.

In the Government response, the Committee's recommendations appear in **bold text** and the Government's responses are in plain text.

The responses from Rail Delivery Group and the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) are also appended to this report.

Appendix 1: Government Response

Introduction

My thanks to you and your Committee for the latest report from its series of inter-related rail inquiries, "The future of rail: Improving the rail passenger experience". This letter represents the Government's response to that report and its recommendations.

Before doing so, I think it's important to recognise that the UK rail industry has experienced a renaissance since privatisation. A sector which was in chronic decline under British Rail 20 years ago is now the fastest growing railway in Europe, and one of the safest. One in every five passenger journeys made in Europe takes place on a UK train. This is a terrific record which, quite rightly, is the envy of many countries around the world.

Rail franchising has been a key contributor to this success. It is a process which has constantly evolved in response to market circumstances and in particular to meet the aspirations of passengers which I am determined to bring even closer to the heart of decision making by the industry. I therefore welcome the Transport Select Committee's report which explores the extent to which franchising is achieving its policy objectives and improving the rail passenger experience. The Government's response to the Committee's recommendations is below:

1. We recommend that the Department for Transport (DfT) lead a review, in conjunction with Network Rail, the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) and an appropriate passenger group, of the lessons learned for maintaining acceptable levels of passenger service from the planning of the Thameslink Programme. The review should ascertain how the planning assumptions for the franchise were so poorly forecast. The report should set out a clear plan to better anticipate and avoid the unacceptably severe levels of disruption to passenger rail services during future major infrastructure works. We recommend that the review be undertaken as a matter of urgency and report its findings before summer 2017. (Paragraph 23)

The Government agrees with this recommendation. The Department and rail industry partners are continually learning lessons throughout the Thameslink Programme. The Department is feeding these lessons into other major programmes such as High Speed 2. Network Rail and the train operators work closely together along with other industry parties to develop the timetables for passenger rail services. Lessons learned

about planning assumptions on capacity, performance and recovery from disruption at London Bridge have been taken into account in changes made to the timetable in 2015 and subsequent timetable changes to services which operate via London Bridge. The lessons learned and the impact on passengers are being factored into further consultations about the 2018 Thameslink timetable and work to develop the timetable at Euston to facilitate HS2 construction.

The outcomes of Chris Gibb's Project Board are due to be reported to the Secretary of State by the end of 2016, following which, the Secretary of State will consider whether a further review as proposed by the Transport Select Committee, is required.

2. We welcome the Minister's intention to consider improvements to the processes for handing over rail franchises from one operator to another, ensuring that the new operator has access to the robust information it needs to run an effective service for passengers from day one of its operations. We recommend that the Government set out in its response to this Report its analysis of the problems at handover of the current TSGN franchise and the work it plans to undertake to ensure that these problems are avoided in future franchise handovers, particularly in relation to ensuring appropriate staffing levels at the commencement of operations. (Paragraph 31)

The Government partially agrees with this recommendation. The Department has let 16 new franchises in three years. Most, if not all, of these franchise handovers have happened entirely seamlessly and with minimal issues. The TSGN franchise has been an exception. TSGN and Thameslink were 15 years in the making, many of the issues this franchise had to address were pre-ordained many years ago.

There were a number of issues which immediately impacted GTR when they inherited the franchise. In respect of Thameslink services, GTR inherited a driver establishment that was lower than expected and following infrastructure works, drivers required additional training in order to learn the revised London Bridge track layout. The combination of issues led to an increased driver requirement with fewer drivers available than planned. Additionally, the operating characteristics of the network have changed since bid stage, resulting in far higher delays as a result of congestion.

In the case of GTR, the driver establishment they inherited was exacerbated by more drivers than expected retiring at the end of the previous franchise. This led to an immediate shortfall of drivers which required urgent action. GTR has undertaken a large scale recruitment and training campaign in order to bring drivers into the franchise. Although these risks remain in any situation where staff transfer under Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (TUPE) arrangements, the Department endeavours to provide as much information as possible to bidders.

The additional driver training requirement at London Bridge may have been foreseen. However there were similar issues across the network at that time, thus straining resources. There are several learning points here in respect of delivering changes that impact on staff resources as part of a programme rather than independently. The Department does ensure the most up to date information is available to bidders during competitions.

The operating characteristics of the network continue to be a major issue. Disruption due to a railway network that is increasingly very full with traffic continue to rise. All operators across London and the South East are working with Network Rail to identify root causes on their respective networks and solutions will be embedded across future franchises.

Underlying all the above, the Department has acknowledged that the size of this franchise has resulted in performance challenges. In future, such risks will be broken down as it is unlikely that a franchise of this magnitude will be let.

3. Whilst the dispute can ultimately only be resolved through negotiation between GTR and the RMT, given the Department's unusually direct involvement in the TSGN franchise it should take a greater degree of responsibility for fostering productive negotiations. We therefore urge the new Rail Minister and Secretary of State to engage more actively and substantively with the rail unions' safety and workforce-related concerns in relation to the expansion of DOO on the TSGN franchise, as a matter of urgency. Whilst the RMT rightly has an interest in ensuring the safety of its members and passengers, responsibility for monitoring the safety of the railway lies with the RSSB and the ORR—both of these organisations have broadly endorsed the safety of DOO. Prior to, and during, the RMT's industrial action on GTR services over the introduction of DOO, the RMT's members have continued to perform their functions on DOO trains across parts of the UK without industrial action. Given the official conclusions of the RSSB and the ORR it is of concern that industrial action is continuing over this issue. The failure of GTR and the RMT to agree to a set of circumstances in which a DOO train can be operational is deeply regrettable. (Paragraph 52)

The Government partially agrees with this recommendation. The Department does consult widely when letting franchises. This includes with unions. The Minister and Secretary of State are happy to meet with Unions to discuss railway operations, but not during times of Industrial Action. In relation to the disputes on Southern, the Secretary of State has offered to meet both unions if they call off their industrial action.

It should also be noted that both ORR and RSSB have stated publicly that DOO is a safe method of operation. It is regrettable that RMT are not willing to engage with GTR in order to determine when a train can run without the second member of staff on board, particularly when the ORR and RSSB are content for trains to operate in this manner. This is unhelpful for passengers and brings about unnecessary delay to journeys.

4. GTR, the RMT and the Government are each to some extent culpable in the current damaging industrial dispute that, in the main, adversely affects passengers. The impact has been catastrophic for passengers and local communities covered by GTR services. We urge GTR, the RMT and the Government to take on board the criticisms and recommendations made in this Report, and each party to consider further compromises to bring this matter to a rapid resolution. It would be unacceptable for any party to instead use sections of this Report to emphasise the shortcomings of another. (Paragraph 53)

The Government agrees with this recommendation. The Department does consult widely when letting franchises. This includes with unions. The Minister and Secretary of State are happy to meet with Unions, but not during times of Industrial Action, or to get directly involved in disputes which are properly between them and specific employers.

5. We are concerned that no official impact assessment has been made of the potential effects of DOO on disabled people's access to the railway. We recommend the DfT and the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) jointly commission research into the potential effects of DOO on the "turn up and go" accessibility of the railway to disabled people who require assistance getting on and off trains. The Department should draw on this research to issue guidance to train operating companies on the measures that should be taken to mitigate potential detrimental effects on disabled people's access. It should ensure that actions are taken to guarantee that disabled rail passengers receive the support to which they are entitled. The research should be conducted, and guidance published, before summer 2017. (Paragraph 56)

The Government partially agrees with this recommendation. The Government is determined for everyone to have the same access to public transport and all train companies must comply with their legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and their Disabled People's Protection Policy (DPPP) (which is a Passenger Operator Licence Condition and must be approved by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR)) in respect of all aspects of their operation, including where Driver Only Operation is in effect.

Impact assessments are carried out when DfT implements a policy or regulatory change and we need to quantify how that change will impact on different users or groups. The Department does not have a policy, implemented through franchise agreements, to require train crew staffing levels to be reduced to one person. While some recent franchises have included requirements about driver-only operation, such that full operational responsibility for the operation of the train rests with the driver, the Department has never required a reduction in the level of on-train staffing. On the contrary, franchise specifications have emphasised the importance of ensuring that on-train and/or platform staff are visible to passengers and available to meet their needs. We expect a franchisee to manage its operations safely and legally – and this includes making provision under the Equality Act 2010 and under its passenger operator's licence for the carriage of disabled passengers, if considering making changes to staffing arrangements.

ORR has responsibility for approving and monitoring compliance with operators' DPPPs. These set out the help and assistance that an operator will provide. ORR has developed a package of research in this area, taking place from September 2016 to the second quarter of 2017. One piece of planned research is a mystery shop to check compliance with the obligation to assist passengers who turn up without booking. The details of the research have yet to be defined but it is likely this will provide a snapshot of industry performance and is likely to include some routes with unstaffed stations and/or driver only operated trains. In addition, ORR is currently investigating the robustness of some of the processes operators rely on in this context, including help points

Alongside the work which ORR is planning, RDG are making improvements to the Passenger Assist system, which will deliver a new Availability & Reservation Service, effectively 'a one stop shop' solution for TOCs and passengers, by 2018.

Furthermore, DfT is currently working with Transport Focus to establish a research project to identify the challenges that disabled passengers face in making rail journeys. This will seek to identify the barriers that may inhibit someone from making as many

journeys as they would like or prevent them from making rail journeys at all. This work will provide us with a clearer picture of the experience of disabled travellers when making both pre-booked and spontaneous rail journeys.

We will report on the progress of these projects in mid-2017.

6. The DfT must take urgent action to increase the transparency of GTR's performance against its contractual obligations. In the interests of open and transparent scrutiny, we recommend that the Department immediately require GTR to publicly report its performance against each of its contractual performance measures in each Reporting Period since the commencement of the current franchise and on an ongoing basis. (Paragraph 74)

The Government agrees with this recommendation. The Rail Minister has written to the Chair of the Committee, outlining his plans for publishing performance against contractual targets for all franchised train operators. This will need to be agreed with operators and the data will be published as soon as possible.

7. Industrial action by the RMT since April 2016 has had a substantial exacerbating effect on GTR's poor performance. GTR claims that unofficial industrial action necessitated the implementation of a revised timetable, which appears to have contributed to GTR exceeding the contractual default level for cancellations. The Department must carefully and thoroughly assess GTR's claims for force majeure. We accept that assessment of these claims, particularly where they relate to alleged unofficial industrial action, will be complex and painstaking, involving verification of train crew absences and the actions taken by GTR to mitigate the effects on services. It is unacceptable, however, that the process is being delayed by GTR's tardiness in supplying the information required to support its force majeure claims. It is also unacceptable that the Department does not intend to conclude its assessment of GTR's force majeure claims until the current industrial dispute is resolved. There seems little prospect of resolution in the short term; the union has recently announced further strike dates up to and including 8 December 2016. It is essential that the Department provide clarity about whether GTR is in default, as a matter of urgency. We therefore recommend the Department expedite its assessments of GTR's force majeure claims in the three Reporting Periods to 20 August 2016. GTR should be given a deadline by which to supply the necessary information. Given that the Department requires six to eight weeks to process each claim, we recommend it come to a decision on whether GTR is in default by early November 2016. (Paragraph 75)

The Government agrees with this recommendation. The Rail Minister has written to the Chair of the Committee outlining the approach we are taking with GTR.

GTR's force majeure claim represents over 10,000 train cancellations and associated disruption between the end of April and late July 2016. The Department needs to be certain that GTR is not claiming for more disruption than can be accounted for by the unofficial and official industrial action. Acceptance or rejection often comes down to judgement of complex data provided at an individual train level. This is a considerable task for the Department to undertake for which there has been no precedent set, and we need to ensure the outcome is consistent with our commitment to passengers and taxpayers.

We are in the process of concluding our assessment of the first three railway periods of the claim, since the action began in late April and this will show whether GTR are in breach of their performance benchmarks. The Department is expediting this work as quickly as possible, but it must be noted that the claim is large and complicated. It will be possible however, for GTR to challenge our assessment, which will mean that further work will be required. I have subsequently written to the committee on this point.

8. We ask that the Department, in response to this Report, set out in detail: how the recently announced £20 million will be allocated to address the problems on Southern Railway; whether the £20 million is new, additional funding, or from what part of the Department's budget it has been reallocated; the precise outputs it expects the £20 million to achieve; and a more precise timetable for the publication of the project board's plan and the implementation of its actions. This money should ultimately be recovered from the operator. (Paragraph 81)

The Government partially agrees with this recommendation. Chris Gibb is heading up a new project board, working with the train operator, the Department for Transport and Network Rail, to explore how to achieve a rapid improvement to services for the public. The board will oversee the £20m fund and closer working between GTR and Network Rail to improve performance for Southern customers. Two passenger representatives have been appointed to this review board to ensure commuters' views are heard and improvements properly reflect passenger demands.

This project is prioritising immediate works, such as vegetation clearance, infrastructure improvements, staffing and improving control mechanisms. Some things have been completed quickly, such as ensuring joined up control teams at the Three Bridges Control Centre. Immediate infrastructure works, such as the works required at Balcombe, are being undertaken now.

Mr Gibb will be preparing a report which will be delivered to the Secretary of State at the end of the year. This report will detail where the operator and Network Rail can make immediate changes in order to improve services. The report will also look at longer term improvements which the board can take forward.

9. The DfT must have a workable enforcement policy for all rail franchises. There must be a clear and credible threat to restructure or terminate GTR's franchise agreement should it default on its contractual obligations. We recommend that the DfT respond to this report with a clear statement of its capability to step in as operator of last resort, as it is legally obliged to do in the event of default. We recommend the Department work up plans for this contingency, which would enable it to break up the franchise and transfer some or all operations to one or more other operators. The Department should, for example, be working with Transport for London (TfL) to develop plans, in the event of default, for the transfer of Southern's suburban rail services to TfL before the scheduled end of GTR's agreement in 2021. (Paragraph 82)

The Government agrees with this recommendation. The Secretary of State has a duty under Section 30 of the Railways Act 1993, to maintain the continuity of passenger rail services in the event that a passenger rail franchise terminates and is not immediately replaced. In order to ensure the effective discharge of this duty the Department maintains a standby capability which would enable it to step into a rail franchise and operate it in the

public sector should the need arise. This capability includes a team of advisers from the rail industry on standby who are capable and ready to assist the Department in delivering its obligations.

Where an operator is in default of its obligations under a Franchise Agreement the Department has a number of options and choices open to it, including taking the TOC in question into public ownership. Where such a choice exists, the Secretary of State will consider it alongside other remedial options with a view to implementing best available solution for the taxpayer and the passengers.

10. We recommend that the Government immediately put in place an automatic compensation scheme, in which TSGN's passengers are refunded directly, without the necessity to make a claim. (Paragraph 88)

The Government has recently announced that Delay Repay 15 will be going live on the GTR franchise. This was commenced on the 11th December. Additionally, the Government has also announced a compensation package for customers that have endured disruption during 2016. Season ticket holders will be able to claim a refund equivalent to a month's travel. GTR will be contacting passengers in the new year and arranging refunds for affected passengers.

11. We recommend that the GB-wide NRPS be carried out at least quarterly, and that the DfT fund Transport Focus to do this. We further recommend that Transport Focus take careful steps to broaden the NRPS's sample, including by piloting the use of online surveys and surveying the views of non-users of rail travel, including those who were unable to board a train due to overcrowding. (Paragraph 103)

The Government agrees with the recommendation insofar that it shares the Committee's determination to improve the collection of that passenger satisfaction data so that it reflects the true experience of rail travel. This is fundamental to putting the passenger at the heart of decision making in the industry.

There is a clear need to gather more granular passenger feedback on a more frequent basis, and we are collaborating with a range of organisations, including Transport Focus, with whom we are exploring what level of frequency would improve data collection via the NRPS. We can give no undertakings on funding until we understand the full cost implications of any change.

On the NRPS, Transport Focus have recently concluded a public consultation with the aim of improving and updating the survey methodology. The consultation explored a range of suggested improvements; a large-scale national pilot was conducted using the improved methodology, which included a shortened and more focused questionnaire and a refresh of the existing online survey. The new paper questionnaire and refreshed online questionnaire will be taken forward as part of the main NRPS from the Spring 2017 wave. The results of the pilot and consultation exercise, including the new questionnaire, are available on Transport Focus' website. This can be found here <http://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research-publications/research/national-rail-passenger-survey-consultation/>.

Transport Focus are also currently undertaking a tendering exercise for the supply of the NRPS from the Spring 2017 wave and are exploring the potential for changes to the

fieldwork frequency, subject to timings and funding availability. The Invitation to Tender asked respondents to provide details on how they would undertake four fieldwork waves a year and continuous fieldwork.

The NRPS is a measure of rail passenger satisfaction, and the questionnaire and sampling method have been designed specifically for this purpose; as such it would not be an appropriate vehicle for the collection of evidence from rail non-users. The Department has regularly sponsored modules on the Office for National Statistics Opinions and Lifestyle Survey looking at the experiences and views on rail of both rail users and non-users. The last module was in 2015, the results of which are available on the Department's website <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/public-attitudes-towards-train-services-2015>.

The NRPS currently includes a range of questions on crowding, including the availability of seats and standing space on trains and if passengers experienced a delay due to station crowding, or were unable to board a train due to overcrowding. The new questionnaire piloted in Spring 2016 includes questions on passenger ratings of the level of crowding and seat availability on their journey.

12. We recommend PPM be abandoned as the headline measure of TOC performance, and the DfT work with Network Rail and Transport Focus to establish updated “right-time” measures, which take account of punctuality at all stops on a train’s journey. We recommend that a replacement for PPM be implemented by summer 2017. (Paragraph 108)

The Government agrees with this recommendation and has been working for 2 years with the wider rail industry and with Transport Focus, under the auspices of the industry's National Task Force, to establish a suitable suite of performance measures that can replace the existing Public Performance Measure (PPM) and allow for a better reflection of the real passenger experience. The new measures include an on-time (“right time”) metric measured at all stations to measure train performance, and a measure of the total delay to passengers. These will provide a better indication of customers' journey experience throughout their journeys, will be a more accurate reflection of how individual trains perform when compared to their advertised departure and arrival times, and should encourage a stronger operational focus on keeping trains to schedule.

The initial timescales are expected to see the industry progressively migrating from the existing PPM measures to the on-time metric from around the beginning of the next control period, CP6 in April 2019. However, in advance of this, Network Rail and train operators are now collating the data and shadow reporting the revised metrics with a view to publishing these statistics before the end of the current control period.

In the meantime it should be noted that under the PPM regime, if a train misses any of its scheduled station stops, it is classed as a PPM failure. So the Department does not believe that the current regime provides a perverse incentive on operators to omit stops.

13. We recommend the DfT review and redesign its PiXC statistics, with a view to more clearly identifying particular train services operating at substantially over capacity. The Department should draw on these statistics to develop a more coherent strategy for tackling overcrowding, including by incentivising TOCs, through franchise agreements, to alleviate the worst examples of persistent overcrowding on particular services across the rail network. (Paragraph 112)

The Government agrees, although the focus of our attention now is on using the data to tackle the problem of crowding, rather than taking further steps to identify it. Passenger loading data is already used by the Department to assess services that are substantially over capacity and to inform franchise specification, day-to-day franchise management and policy decisions such as appraisals for train capacity improvement schemes. Franchise agreements include obligations on operators to minimise overcrowding and, so far as possible, to avoid it being unduly concentrated on particular routes or services. They also include levers to require TOCs to develop proposals to address overcrowding, and the Department has worked with incumbent TOCs during the terms of their franchises to secure the implementation of investments to reduce crowding and improve the passenger experience. Significant in-franchise changes in the last few years have between them added hundreds of carriages to those in service at the time in the franchises – including East Anglia, Northern, TPE, London Midland, East Midlands, West Coast and Great Western. Over 500 brand-new carriages have entered into service since 2010, and a further 5,000 are due to be in place by the end of 2020.

We also actively encourage train operators to publish information about their services in a format that will allow passengers to make informed decisions about their journeys and to avoid crowded services where possible. There are several very good examples of TOCs such as London Midland¹ and Greater Anglia² that are making service-level information available on websites and at stations about how busy services are likely to be. Some TOCs such as c2c are exploring opportunities to use apps that will tell customers, in real time, how crowded trains are, and where to move to in the train to get a seat.

14. The Department and the Office of Rail and Road must more rigorously use their respective franchising and regulatory powers, and work together to address:

- **use of incomprehensible jargon in relation to rail tickets, including implementation of clear and consistent terminology in relation to ticketing across the rail network;**
- **the availability of cheaper “split-ticketing” options only to those passengers who are “in the know” or prepared to undertake onerous research; and**
- **ticket vending machines that are confusing and do not always offer the best value fares.**

We recommend that the Department and the ORR publish a joint strategy to address each of these problems, or take enforcement action against TOCs who fail to comply with relevant codes of practice, rail licence conditions, franchise agreements or consumer law. We recommend that the joint strategy be published by April 2017, and that it include a clear timetable for full implementation across the rail network. (Paragraph 125)

The Government agrees with the recommendation. The Department has a clear mission to put the travelling public first and to improve the passenger experience. The fares system is complex and this impacts on people's trust in the railway. As a first step, the Department is

1 <https://www.londonmidland.com/travel-information/on-board/finding-a-seat>

2 <https://www.greateranglia.co.uk/travel-information/less-busy-trains>

working with the Office of Rail and Road, the Rail Delivery Group, Which? and Transport Focus to develop an action plan to drive improvements over the next 12 months. As a result, a set of clearly defined steps will be carried out over the next year including:

- how you choose your ticket – we will take steps to improve the information passengers are offered so they can make an informed choice of ticket
- what you buy – we will enable innovative new ticket products to emerge in the retail market and ensure customers always get a simple explanation of their chosen ticket
- where you buy your ticket – we will increase and improve the scope of where and the ways passengers can buy tickets
- how you buy your ticket – we will improve the process of buying a ticket to make it as simple as possible
- Some of the improvements include:
 - an end to jargon like ‘any permitted route’ on tickets and a new online look-up tool explaining the restrictions
 - a heads-up when stocks of the best value advance tickets are running low
 - alerts at the time of purchase if changing travel times would be cheaper
 - ticket machines to give customers clear choices including cheaper options where available by changing time or service
 - advance tickets where available may be purchased on the day of travel from longer distance operators
 - the first time a customer holding a valid railcard forgets it at the time of travel they will be able to claim back any additional expense

This action plan³ was published on 13 December. The Department as part of a working group will review progress against these actions regularly and publish an interim report on delivery against this plan in the ORR’s Annual Consumer Report in July 2017, and a final report in December 2017.

The Department also plans to work with the industry to develop longer term options for reform and simplification of the fares system, which could address issues such as split ticketing building upon the evaluation of and lessons learned from the industry pilots agreed in the action plan.

15. We recommend the RDG immediately publish details of its smart-ticketing plan, including a clear timetable for delivery. This must not be further postponed; we expect to see an implementation timetable for which TOCs can be held publicly to account. (Paragraph 129)

3 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/action-plan-for-information-on-rail-fares-and-ticketing>

The Department agrees with the recommendation and will oversee the delivery of smart ticketing on rail, with the first DfT and industry Smart Ticketing Delivery Board meeting planned for January 2017.

The Secretary of State made a recent speech at the National Transport Awards⁴ setting out his priorities for rail and set the challenge to industry and Government to accelerate the rollout of smart ticketing. The Chancellor has made £80m available to accelerate the roll out of smart ticketing. Our intention is for all commuters, in our major towns and cities to have access to smart season tickets.

The Government wants every passenger to have the choice of travelling with a smart ticket by the end of 2018, providing them with more convenience and choice. The Secretary of State has established a special project team in the Department, under senior leadership, to work with the industry and accelerate progress towards smart ticketing for both commuters and for less frequent passengers. This is with the goal of achieving real results for passengers in the next two years.

The Department's intention is for all commuters to have access to smart season tickets, and for these to open up better and targeted information to regular travellers – such as if their preferred train is running late.

The Rail Delivery Group (RDG) have brought the rail industry together to agree a long-term vision. In September the RDG published their retail strategy – How we are making it easier to buy a train ticket – which sets out their plan for modernising and improving how tickets are sold and making payments to travel by train quick and easy in future.

16. We recommend that the DfT produce an analysis of the likely revenue effects of the introduction of part-time season tickets across the English the rail network, broken down by each franchise area. It should do this before spring 2017. Drawing on this work, it should proceed to focus available funding on franchises where the effects will be greatest and expediting progress in this important area. (Paragraph 135)

The Government agrees that there should be good value products available for passengers who work or commute less than 5 days per week. We are requiring bidders for future franchise competitions to introduce new, more flexible products that provide these passengers with a better deal than they get now. This does not necessarily have to take the form of 'part time season tickets' but could also include the use of multi-buy discounts such as carnet style tickets or a 'Pay as you go' system such as that introduced in and around London.

We will work with the rail industry to consider how passengers might benefit from greater fairness, transparency and consistency as a result of earlier introduction of more flexible products for part-time workers. We will also consider the feasibility of expediting implementation of a wider range of products across the rail network in England.

We will use industry data on existing season ticket sales and revenue to estimate the possible revenue effects. While it may be possible to break these estimates down to franchise areas, the resultant figures are likely to be highly commercially sensitive and subject to variation given uncertain assumptions.

4 <https://www.greateranglia.co.uk/travel-information/less-busy-trains>

17. We welcome ATOC/RDG's commitment, as part of its ongoing work to improve the passenger experience, to promote a level of consistency and minimum set of standards across all TOCs' websites and apps. We recommend that ATOC/RDG publish a detailed plan for how it intends to take this work forward, including clear timescales for action, to facilitate our continued scrutiny of this area. (Paragraph 142)

The Government agrees with the recommendation. In its letter to the Committee of 15th November the RDG outlined that its intention was for the new National Rail Enquiries (NRE) website, which is currently being reviewed, to act as a template for TOC websites. This remains the case. In response to the Committee's recommendation the RDG confirmed that it intends to provide further clarity on the plans for a minimum set of standards across all TOC websites and apps following the publication of its NRE strategy in early 2017.

18. We recommend ATOC/RDG publish, before the end of 2016, a clear plan, with specific timescales for action, for improvements to NRE including: more reliable and informative information about delays and disruption; more consistent provision of platform numbers from which trains are due to depart; and information about onward travel on other modes, drawing on and replicating the functionality of externally produced, multi-modal transport apps. (Paragraph 146)

The Government agrees with the recommendation, although the RDG will not be in a position to publish a plan until March 2017. As explained by the RDG in its written evidence to the Committee and its letter of 15th November, steps have been taken recently to improve the consistency and reliability of information provision to passengers by synchronising all information to one central database – Darwin (the current real time information source for NRE). The RDG is currently reviewing NRE and the channels through which it provides information, and an agreed strategy with a timeframe for action will be published before the end of March 2017.

19. We recommend that the DfT, Network Rail and ATOC/RDG work collaboratively to produce a strategic plan for the implementation of extensive and reliable Wi-Fi across the rail network. We recommend that the Department publish such a plan by summer 2017. (Paragraph 153)

The Government agrees with this recommendation. The Department, Network Rail and ATOC/RDG are already working collaboratively, and a plan already exists for the implementation of extensive and reliable Wi-Fi across the rail network.

In 2015 the Government committed to rollout free Wi-Fi on trains across the rail network in all new franchises. As part of this commitment, £50 million was made available to be invested in four franchises not due to be re-let before the end of 2016.

Previously Wi-Fi on trains had relied on patchy mobile coverage on the rail network. Our investment has driven innovation. For instance, as a result of our investment, Chiltern, TSGN and SouthEastern were able to secure coverage commitments from EE.

As the Committee notes, significant investment is required in telecoms infrastructure to provide fast, reliable and extensive free Wi-Fi. Whilst not making it a formal requirement

in recent franchise competitions we have committed to score bids more highly if they include good solutions to improve connectivity for passengers. We anticipate good proposals in the South Western and West Midlands franchise competitions.

In all future invitations to tender for rail franchises, we are requiring fast, reliable and extensive free Wi-Fi on trains. The first franchises to benefit will be East Midlands, South Eastern and West Coast.

Whilst improvements can be made to connectivity using infrastructure not located on Network Rail land, we expect the train operators and their telecoms suppliers will need to work with Network Rail in some locations to make use of existing infrastructure and build new. Network Rail is working closely with train operators to understand their needs and to develop a commercial offering.

Appendix 2: Response from Rail Delivery Group

Letter from Jacqueline Starr to Louise Ellman, 15 November 2016

Dear Mrs Ellman

We are grateful for having the opportunity to give evidence to the Transport Select Committee's recent inquiry into *Improving Rail Passenger Experience* and we note the recommendations set out in the Committee's report. We agree that in too many places customers are not getting the service they deserve and we are working relentlessly to improve the service we provide. We would like to take this opportunity to outline our response to the Committee's recommendations.

On 1 November we published our [retail ticketing strategy](#), which sets out how the rail industry will be moving towards a universal barcode technology system, in conjunction with interoperable smart card and contactless payment schemes. Our intention is for customers, on every part of the network, to have the option of using barcode ticketing by the end of 2018. This will allow all of our customers to benefit from improved convenience when buying and using a ticket and additional benefits, such as personalised travel alerts and automatic compensation payments. We acknowledge the pressing need to accelerate delivery of the benefits set out in this strategy and we will be working hard to ensure that all customers have access to smart ticketing as soon as possible. I have enclosed a hard copy of the strategy with this letter and digital copies are available on the publications section of our website.

Ticketing is fundamental to customer experience on the railway and we acknowledge that more needs to be done to make buying and using tickets simpler. We accept the Committee's recommendations on addressing the complexity and transparency of ticketing. The RDG is currently working with the DfT, ORR, Which?, and Transport Focus to produce a plan that will address a range of key customer issues, including the use of jargon and plain language on tickets, and confusion related to ticket vending machines (TVM). Working collectively, we hope to publish this plan within the timescales the Committee has suggested. In addition to this, the industry is unanimous in its desire to work with Government to simplify the structure of rail fares, which requires the reform of fares regulation under the remit of the DfT.

National Rail Enquiries (NRE) is one of the industry's most important tools for providing passenger information. As mentioned in our written evidence, we have recently taken a crucial step in ensuring consistency and reliability of information to our passengers by synchronising all information to one central database – Darwin. The industry is currently in the process of reviewing NRE and the channels through which it provides information. An agreed strategy with a timeframe for action will be published by the RDG before the end of March 2017.

In our written evidence, we outlined that it was our intention for the new NRE website to act as a template for operators' websites and this remains the case. We acknowledge

the Committee's recommendation that the RDG should provide a detailed plan on a minimum set of standards across all TOC websites and apps and we hope to provide further clarity on our plans following the publication of our NRE strategy early next year.

Internet access is increasingly a necessity for our customers, rather than merely a convenience, which is why significant work is already underway to install Wi-Fi technology on more trains and stations across the network. As the Committee highlighted, the RDG believes the best way to fund the installation of on-board Wi-Fi is either through franchise agreements or bilateral agreements with the DfT and we are committed to working with the Government to deliver this. We hope to maintain the current momentum on Wi-Fi installation, to ensure the vast majority of passenger journeys take place on Wi-Fi enabled trains by the end of the decade. We agree with the Committee that the sector needs a clear plan on investment in this area and we would be happy to work with the Department, in conjunction with Network Rail, to produce a strategic plan for the implementation of Wi-Fi on the rail network.

We recognise there is concern around the introduction of driver only operation (DOO) for people with accessibility requirements. The industry is committed to ensuring that the service for people with accessibility requirements, including passenger assistance, is improved as TOCs introduce new rolling stock. Under our plans, should a service operate that is normally staffed by an on-board supervisor, platform and station staff will provide assistance as they currently do on DOO services, to ensure passengers are able to complete their journey. We are open to discussions with the Department over conducting research into this issue, and we acknowledge that more needs to be done to help people with accessibility requirements on our network more generally.

The National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) provides invaluable insight for the industry on the levels of customer satisfaction on the railway, which the industry uses in conjunction with its own research. We support the Committee's recommendation that the NRPS should be carried out quarterly, but we recognise that there may be challenges to increasing the frequency. Quarterly reporting will effectively make the NRPS a continuous rolling survey and we believe this could have significant cost and logistical implications. One option to address this challenge could be to digitize the NRPS and this is a decision to be made by Transport Focus in discussion with the DfT. We agree that, despite the challenges, increasing frequency of the survey would be significantly beneficial to both customers and the industry.

We also acknowledge that there is value in including those who are unable to board trains for various circumstances in the NRPS, however we are mindful that there may be hurdles for Transport Focus in defining and identifying this very specific group of people. We would also recommend against surveying non-users who have no intention of using train services, as this would be counter-productive to the purpose of the research.

The RDG supports the Committee's recommendation to move away from PPM towards 'right time' measures. The National Taskforce, which includes representatives from the industry, regulator, and DfT, is responsible for making decisions on performance metrics and has recently agreed proposals for a new suite of measure, including 'right time' at all stations. Under these proposals, Britain will have the toughest measure of train punctuality

anywhere in Europe. In addition to this, the National Taskforce has commissioned an online tool – MyTrainJourney – which was launched in July this year and allows our customers to check train punctuality, including ‘right time’ data.

The RDG acknowledges the range of issues the Committee raised over the TSGN franchise. We would be willing to participate in a DfT-led review on the lessons learned for maintaining acceptable levels of passenger service from the planning of the Thameslink programme. We accept that both the industry and Government need to do more to anticipate and avoid severe levels of disruption from major infrastructure works in the future.

Yours Sincerely

Jacqueline Starr, Managing Director of Customer Experience

Appendix 3: Supplementary response from Rail Delivery Group

Letter from Jacqueline Starr to Louise Ellman, 8 January 2017

Dear Mrs Ellman

Following my letter to you in November, with the RDG's response to the Transport Select Committee's report on Improving Rail Passenger Experience, I thought it may be useful to provide an update on the initial progress we have made in addressing the issues highlighted in the report's recommendations.

As I outlined in November, the RDG acknowledges the importance of delivering access to smart card ticketing technology for all customers across the rail network. Currently, over half of train operators in Great Britain offer the ability for customers to use Advance tickets as mobile barcodes, on their phone. By the end of 2017, eleven train operators will offer Advance, Off-Peak, and Anytime tickets as mobile barcodes. Initial feedback from customers on the roll out of smart ticketing has been overwhelmingly positive and the RDG's objective remains for all customers to have access to mobile barcodes and/or smart card technology within the next two years.

In my first letter, I outlined that the RDG was working collectively with the DfT, ORR, Transport Focus and Which? to publish a plan to address key customer issues around ticketing, including jargon on tickets and confusion relating to the use of ticket vending machines (TVMs). This plan – [*Action Plan for Information on Rail Fares & Ticketing*](#) – was published on the 13 December. It includes a commitment from the rail industry to a number of actions that will make a real improvement to the information customers receive when choosing and purchasing their ticket. We already have a project team in place to oversee the delivery of these actions and the vast majority will be delivered before the end of the year.

In addition to this, I also highlighted to you that the industry was unanimous in its desire to work with the Government to simplify the structure of rail fares. The joint Action Plan commits the industry and Government to the implementation of pilot schemes for fares reform in May 2017. These pilots will seek to address unnecessary complexity in the structure of fares pricing and eliminate anomalies which lead to the use of split-ticketing – an issue highlighted in the Committee's report. I am pleased to inform you that we are holding our first implementation meeting for the pilots this month, with the Department for Transport.

Our review of National Rail Enquiries is currently ongoing. We agree that the website is outdated and the improvement we want to deliver is a whole new technical platform, rather than superficial change that won't provide the appropriate functionality or performance enhancements. The RDG is currently in the process of developing a prototype website, which will be used by developers as a template. Once our new platform is developed and assessed, we will share details on the timeframe for implementation with the Committee and our customers.

The ORR has recently audited all train operator websites to ensure that the industry is adhering to standards under the Consumer Rights Act regarding the provision of information about delays and claiming compensation. The results of the audit showed that all TOC websites are in adherence to the guidelines laid down by the Government, with many going beyond the minimum standards. We are not complacent and will continue to drive improvement to industry websites, to ensure customers can get the information they need. Our intention remains that the new NRE website will act as a template for further improvement.

In the last few weeks we have been reassured of the progress on the installation of Wi-Fi technology on rolling stock across the network. Since my letter in November, Virgin Trains have finally reached their target of providing free Wi-Fi and entertainment on 90% of their trains, while Scotrail have increased their Wi-Fi equipped fleet from 55 trains to 184, meaning that more than 60% of Scotrail trains are now Wi-Fi enabled. We expect current momentum to be maintained, so that by the end of the decade the vast majority of customer journeys will take place on Wi-Fi enabled trains.

The RDG is always open to working with the DfT and ORR to address accessibility issues, including potential research on accessibility and DOO. We have recently set out a number of milestones to the Rail Minister over how we intend to improve accessibility more generally across the network in the coming years. One of the first milestones is this year's pilot of Google Street View in the major rail stations, allowing customers with accessibility requirements to research their route in advance. In addition to this, later this year we will be introducing a single number to book assisted travel, making it quicker and easier for customers to book assistance at their local station.

In our letter to you in November, we highlighted that the RDG has commissioned and launched an online tool – [MyTrainJourney](#) – which allows customers to check train punctuality and includes 'right time' data. Since we launched this tool in July 2016, more than 10,000 customers have used this information, with the overall feedback being very positive. Additionally, we are also aware of more than 80 third-party developers using the data from this tool for their software, which enhances the information provided to customers through these channels.

I hope you find this update useful and I will be more than happy to provide a further update later in the year, as more progress is made on improving the experience of rail customers on the network.

Yours Sincerely

Jacqueline Starr, Managing Director of Customer Experience

Appendix 4: Response from the Office of Rail and Road (ORR)

Letter from Joanna Whittington to Louise Ellman, 19 December 2016

Dear Mrs Ellman

I am responding to the Transport Select Committee's recommendations in your report, 'Improving the Rail Passenger Experience', published in October 2016.

Recommendation 8

"We are concerned that no official impact assessment has been made of the potential effects of **DOO on disabled people's access** to the railway. We recommend the DfT and the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) jointly commission research into the potential effects of DOO on the "turn up and go" accessibility of the railway to disabled people who require assistance getting on and off trains. The Department should draw on this research to issue guidance to train operating companies on the measures that should be taken to mitigate potential detrimental effects on disabled people's access. It should ensure that actions are taken to guarantee that disabled rail passengers receive the support to which they are entitled. The research should be conducted, and guidance published, before summer 2017."

ORR Response

ORR has responsibility for approving and monitoring train operators' compliance with the Disabled People's Protection Policies (DPPPs)¹. These set out the help and assistance that an operator will provide to those passengers that require additional assistance to access the railway. To support and inform our work in this area we have developed a package of research, taking place from September 2016 to the second quarter of 2017. This research will include looking at the level of awareness of the current Passenger Assist and 'turn-up-and-go' services and the experiences of passengers who use them.

Driver Only Operations (DOO) has been an established form of train operation for over 30 years. While we have not designed our research to specifically test the effects of DOO on the 'turn up and go' accessibility of the railway to disabled passengers, we will nonetheless adapt this research to understand better the way it affects disabled passengers.

We are separately reviewing how all operators are adapting their policies and procedures to consider the support that they can provide at unstaffed stations, particularly through the use of passenger 'Help Points'. Given this, our key role in the approval and monitoring of DPPPs and our broader package of research described above we are happy to have an active role in the development of industry guidance in this area.

¹ Copies of ORR decision letters to operators and full update on monitoring can be found here: <http://orr.gov.uk/what-and-how-we-regulate/consumers/consumer-policy/disabled-peoples-protection-policy>

Recommendation 21

“We recommend **PPM be abandoned as the headline measure** of TOC performance, and the DfT work with Network Rail and Transport Focus to establish updated “right time” measures, which take account of punctuality at all stops on a train’s journey. We recommend that a replacement for PPM be implemented by summer 2017.”

ORR Response

The industry has concluded that the current performance measures, while having some positive attributes, do have many limitations and that new measures need to be identified for the next Control Period (CP6) that will better reflect passenger experience of the railway in 2019.

The current measures – Public Performance Measure (PPM) and Cancellation and Significant Lateness (CaSL) provide simple ‘pass/fail’ assessments, measuring punctuality at the final destination. They take no account of the numbers of passengers on the train. The industry has therefore identified a series of new measures, including:

- “On time” at all stations;
- Total and average passenger lateness; and
- Cancellations.

There is a formal process, incorporating stakeholder consultation, governing the introduction of new measures. However, we expect to report on the emerging measures in our twice yearly publication of Network Rail’s performance ahead of their formal adoption so that we can develop a timely understanding of how these measures are working in practice and what messages they are providing.

Recommendation 23

“The Department and the Office of Rail and Road must more rigorously use their respective franchising and regulatory powers, and work together to address:

- use of incomprehensible jargon in relation to rail tickets, including implementation of clear and consistent terminology in relation to ticketing across the rail network;
- the availability of cheaper “split-ticketing” options only to those passengers who are “in the know” or prepared to undertake onerous research; and
- ticket vending machines that are confusing and do not always offer the best value fares.

“We recommend that the **Department and the ORR publish a joint strategy** to address each of these problems, or take enforcement action against TOCs who fail to comply with relevant codes of practice, rail licence conditions, franchise agreements or consumer law. We recommend that the joint strategy be published by April 2017, and that it include a clear timetable for full implementation across the rail network.”

ORR Response

ORR has been working closely with the Department for Transport (DfT), Rail Delivery Group (ROG), Transport Focus and also with Which? to identify actions that will improve the passenger experience of fares and ticketing. A forum working group has recently published an Action Plan that will drive overall improvements in this area, including improvements to jargon and the use of Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs). The group will be reporting during the summer 2017, alongside our report on how the rail industry is delivering its obligations for passengers. It is also important that passengers are able to have access to a clear and understandable choice when buying tickets including from vending machines.

The issue of split ticketing is likely only to be resolved by a fundamental review of the fares structure which has longer timescales. We are happy to work with the department as it develops its thoughts in this area.

Separately we have recently undertaken research to investigate the extent to which TVMs are meeting the needs and expectations of passengers, and to examine whether TVM-based transactions lead to the purchase of a more expensive ticket than is required for their journey needs. This exercise will form a key element of our work to understand whether, and to what extent, operators have made progress to improve TVMs so that they meet the needs of rail passengers. We will be publishing the results of this research and our next steps in this area in early 2017.

We will continue to keep the committee updated on our progress in implementing these recommendations. Please get in touch if you or any of your committee colleagues require further briefing on this or any other rail or road related matter.

Yours sincerely,

Joanna Whittington, Chief Executive