
Secretariat Memorandum

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First class travel research members briefing

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To consider and receive the research report prepared by Ipsos–MORI for London TravelWatch on First class travel.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are recommended to :
 - 2.1.1 Note the research findings, and agree that these should be used to inform future London TravelWatch submissions to railway industry consultations such as franchise replacements and Route Utilisation Strategies (RUS).
- 2.2 It is also recommended that London TravelWatch invite train operators to a meeting at which the findings of this study may be shared.

3 Background

- 3.1 London TravelWatch has had a long term aspiration to look at and understand what passengers think about first class travel and what role it might play in managing capacity on the rail network.
- 3.2 In 2009 following a competitive bidding process Ipsos–MORI were contracted to conduct an on-line survey of 600 rail users in London and the South East government region.
- 3.3 The results and report from Ipsos–MORI is attached in the Appendix.

4 Commentary

- 4.1 The research shows that the level of passenger expectation of service for first class travel varies according to the length of journey time.

- 4.1.1 In the case of journeys of less than hours' duration, the majority of users (including those who use first class), believe that the provision of first class is not necessary. This would mean that for local services within the London Travelcard/Pay As You Go (PAYG) area, first class accommodation should be reclassified as standard class. Where new or refurbishment of older trains for this type of work is envisaged then the presumption should be that only standard class accommodation should be provided. This would give the ability to maximise the layout of vehicles and thereby give a small increase in overall capacity.
- 4.1.2 For journeys of between one and two hour's duration, the majority of users, (including those who use first class) believe that some sort of 'core' facilities which would currently be associated with first class should be provided. These include a guaranteed seat, a more comfortable seat than standard and additional space and leg room in the first class area. This does not necessarily need to be branded as first class but could be called something else, such as business or comfort class. This length of journey covers the majority of commuter journeys between London and the Home counties.
- 4.1.3 For journeys over two hours duration, the majority of users (including those who use first class), believe that a far wider range of facilities should be provided in first class above and beyond a guaranteed seat, a more comfortable seat than standard and additional space and leg room. These include full restaurant services, complimentary soft and hot drinks as a minimum, followed by a member of staff present at all times, a guaranteed table, complimentary alcoholic drinks, sandwiches, snacks and newspapers, free internet access and a place to plug in a laptop. This reflects the nature of the journeys being made either as a one-off leisure activity or for business where effectively the train becomes an extension of the work/office environment. This length of journey covers international journeys and long distance ones within the UK.
- 4.2 It should be noted that users of airport related services were not surveyed as part of this research.

5 Equalities and inclusion implications

- 5.1 First class by its very nature means that those on low incomes are unlikely to be able to afford to use it. However, the removal of first class on services of less than one hour duration would enable a marginal reduction in overcrowding for standard class passengers which would give a benefit to low income travellers. Similarly if some passengers could be encouraged to upgrade from standard to first class on longer distance journeys this would also give a marginal benefit in overcrowding reduction. It should be noted however that the use of demand management tools on advance purchase tickets will in some cases mean that first class tickets are cheaper than standard class ones.

6 Financial implications

- 6.1 The contents of this report have no specific financial implications for London TravelWatch.

7 Legal powers

- 7.1 Section 252A of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 places a duty upon London TravelWatch (as the London Transport Users Committee) to keep under review matters affecting the interests of the public in relation to railway passenger and station services provided wholly or partly within the London railway area, and to make representations about them to such persons as it thinks appropriate.