

Louise Ellman MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

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 smartcard 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.

# Rail Delivery Group



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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jacqueline Starr".

Jacqueline Starr  
Managing Director of Customer Experience