



**Transport Select Committee Inquiry – Improving the rail passenger experience – May 2016**

1. The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) is the UK's largest train driver's union representing approximately 20,000 members in train operating companies and freight companies as well as London Underground and light rail systems.
2. ASLEF is welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the committee's inquiry on the subject of rail passenger experience. We would contend that the principle means of improving the rail passenger experience is to alleviate overcrowding by increasing capacity. Passenger journeys have dramatically increased over the last two decades with the number of rail journeys taken in Britain rising from 735 million in 1994-95 to 1.7 billion in 2014-15. ASLEF welcomes these additional journeys. Rail is a greener, faster and more efficient mode of transport compared to road. While the growth in passenger numbers has been near exponential in 20 years there has been very little done to increase capacity over the same period of time. This is the primary reason why HS2, IEP and the various electrification projects are so desperately need. However the passenger growth is so substantial that more must be done to ensure that passengers, who are already paying the highest fares in Europe, do not have to travel on ever more uncomfortable and overcrowded services.
3. We recognise that access to plugs for chargers and Wi-Fi are important improvements for passengers but we believe that these should be of secondary importance to safety, reliability and frequency of services. There

is little point having Wi-Fi if its main function is to allow passengers on delayed services to complain to operators online. For this reason ASLEF found it absurd that Network Rail's £53.1m fine for missing punctuality targets in the summer of 2014 was used to part fund Wi-Fi on trains. This money should have been used to improve the punctuality that the infrastructure operator was being fined for failing on in the first place.

4. ASLEF accepts that this investigation is not looking into such operational matters, however it must always be remembered that these issues are inseparable from the overall passenger experience.
5. The union fully supports the introduction of smart ticketing and associated benefits a clear example of which is the Oyster Card out in London. Smart tickets would enable more flexibility for passengers in terms of ticket types and can mean a simplification in getting the right fare. For example the cap on fares that ensures TfL passengers do not pay more than the cost of a Travelcard.
6. However, when considering these matters its essential to remember that the rail network is a national network. People therefore want single tickets to work on several services from the starting point to the destination of a journey. It is important that any smart ticketing system is facilitated within a national unified system. To run many parallel systems would only add to the confusion and would in fact take away from many of the benefits of smart ticketing.
7. ASLEF believes that there must be changes to allow flexibility for season ticket holders. The current system for season tickets is highly beneficial and creates savings for those who work full time and traditional working hours. The current season ticket structure does little to support part time workers and those who work in different ways.

8. In addition, some workers do not need to use peak services. Often any savings that are to be gained from buying a season ticket are lost by the fact that passengers may only require cheaper off-peak services on a daily basis.
9. The problems created by the one size fits all, all-encompassing season ticket presently used has a negative impact on women who are more likely to be part time workers or have caring responsibilities.
10. ASLEF therefore supports the introduction a larger variety of season tickets with the options of peak and off peak and also for use for those who travel less than 5 days a week. This may well help maximise the use of capacity throughout the day and also create savings for part time works and help promote flexible working.
11. ASLEF believes that one of the main issues of concern for passengers is having a second member of staff on trains. This is demonstrated by Transport Focus' report "Passenger attitudes towards rail staff" published earlier this year. When asked whether they had cause to worry about their personal security during a rail journey in the previous six months, one in ten passengers said that they had. This is clearly too many. The report notes, "When asked what could allay some of those concerns, passengers consistently identified staff presence as the key.'
12. The report also states that "the industry needs to consider how it can best deploy staff across the rail network to meet this need. Cutting the number of staff, either at stations or on the train, runs counter to what passengers actually want and could jeopardise their confidence in their ability to get to their destination safely."
13. A recent poll commissioned by our sister union the RMT of passengers on Southern found that three quarters (73%) are concerned about the safety

of travelling on trains that no longer had an on-board train guard and a similar percentage believe Southern Rail should not allow trains to operate without at least one member of staff assisting passengers and protecting their safety (70%).

14. ASLEF therefore believes that a second member of staff must be present on services and rejects any extension of driver only operation. The union believes this additional member of staff must be a guard. If there is at any point an emergency, having a fully practised and qualified guard can be essential for safety. Passengers expect a visible member of staff on trains. Taking staff away from services will have safety implications and could well put passengers, especially those who are more vulnerable, off of using services.

15. ASLEF welcomes any inquiry into improving the experience of the traveling public by improving ticketing, apps, and on-board facilities. However our experience, as well as the many reports into these matters show, that passengers' biggest priorities are that their services are safe, comfortable, frequent and reliable. These must therefore always be priorities for the industry.

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