

## 1. The growing importance of small stations

Small rail stations play an important role within London's transport network. Although they welcome fewer passengers than medium-size and large stations, the number of passengers using small stations collectively in and around London is significant. Small stations act as an entry and exit point to the wider network and the standard of the station environment can greatly influence a passenger's overall travel experience.

For the purpose of this report, we define a small station as one that sees less than 1 million entries and exits annually according to the Office and Rail and Road's *Estimates of station usage* statistics for 2014/2015<sup>1</sup>. Using these statistics, there are 188 small stations within the London Railways Area, which defines our remit area. This includes both Transport for London (London Underground, London Overground, TfL Rail) and National Rail stations. Examples of small stations in London range from Little Kimble, Roydon, Otford, and Chertsey outside London to Kensal Green, Dagenham Dock, Penge West, and Thames Ditton within London. See Appendix **XXX** for a complete list of small stations in and around London.

The usage statistics for all 188 small stations in and around London collectively show over 91 million entries and exits last year. In contrast, Paddington Station had over 35 million entries and exits, and London Bridge Station just under 50 million. London's population growth means that demand for rail transport is likely to grow. In fact, increasing usage means that many stations will eventually exceed the 1 million total annual entries and exits threshold we use to classify them as a small station; over the past five years, between 12 and 19 stations exceeded this threshold annually.

The table below show that the proportion of growth in station usage at small stations in and around London has been consistently higher than other stations in Great Britain over the past five years.

Station usage growth (%) / year	2010 / 2011	2011 / 2012	2012 / 2013	2013 / 2014	2014 / 2015
Great Britain	10.44	9.39	3.57	4.96	5.11
London small stations	25.57	9.75	5.87	6.48	5.29
London Railways Area	18.77	11.24	5.94	7.5	5.75

Table 1. Proportion of growth in station usage (Office of Rail and Road estimates)

An important issue for small stations in and around London is that there are differences in standards and levels of investment between them. Different operators manage different stations, have different franchise or concession arrangements with either the Department for Transport (DfT) or Transport for London (TfL) and, therefore, different incentives to invest in their smaller stations. Smaller stations are treated differently than larger stations, tend to receive less investment and are not eligible for certain funding programmes. Different standards are applied to different stations and, as a result, some small stations are being left behind.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://orr.gov.uk/statistics/published-stats/station-usage-estimates>

Passengers understand that smaller stations will have different facilities and services than larger stations, but they do expect a minimum standard at the stations they use. They pay to use their local small stations and expect good value for money.

Investing in infrastructural and service standards at small stations is important to improve the journey experience, as well as to attract more passengers. Increasing public transport usage meets the sustainability objectives of transport operators, the DfT, TfL, the Mayor of London, and local authorities alike, so all should work together to improve standards and increase usage. For example, the Mayor of London should make the link between improving standards at small stations to make them more attractive and reduce the number of drivers when setting housing and air quality goals.

Many improvements can be inexpensive, relatively simple, and quick to implement - small station operators should identify opportunities for 'quick wins'. We recognise that, for example, the cost of making the whole network accessible is prohibitive, but we support incremental progress towards a more accessible transport system, including at London's small stations.

In some cases, investing in small stations is cheaper than in larger stations and gives better value for money. Station improvements mostly need small interventions, particularly to improve access and information. Station operators could gain quick wins and raise satisfaction levels with relatively simple station improvements. For example:

- ensuring dropped kerbs or access ramps to improve accessibility for mobility impaired passengers and those travelling with luggage or children
- providing clear and consistent travel information on London's wider transport network;
- maps, signage and wayfinding to and from the station;
- ticket machines, Oyster / Contactless card validators or permit to travel machines;
- regular and frequent cleaning of the station environment for detritus, litter, and graffiti.

The rail industry should recognise the importance of small stations to the wider London network and that the standard at some of these stations needs to be raised. A joined up effort to make incremental improvements will provide better value for money for the many passengers who use small stations in and around London.

## 2. What passengers want from small stations

### Our research

London TravelWatch has researched what passengers expect from the rail stations they use. *Interchange Matters: passenger priorities for improvement* (July 2015), *Standards at London's Rail Stations* (September 2010) and *Whose station are you? – Facilities at joint Underground and National Rail stations* (August 2004) highlight what is important to passengers:

- Step-free access within and around the station to help passengers with disabilities and those travelling with children and/or luggage
- Staff presence from first to last service either at a ticket office, on the concourse or on platforms to help with tickets, travel advice and security
- Easy to use ticketing facilities (for example a ticket office, ticket vending machine or nearby outlet);
- Toilets, sheltered waiting areas, seating (both within the station concourse and on the platforms), and refreshments
- Good quality, clearly visible and real-time journey and onward travel information which is not overwhelmed by advertising
- Signage both bespoke to the station yet consistent in design to be easily recognisable and appropriately placed to not obstruct movement or views
- Easy interchanging with other services (other trains, buses, car and bicycle)
- Litter bins and a clean, safe, and well cared-for environment

Passengers recognise that facilities and services will be different between larger and smaller stations, but they do expect a minimum standard at small stations. Investment in station infrastructure and the passenger experience should not excessively benefit medium-size and large stations, but rather be allocated proportionately to the whole range of stations around the network. Passengers expect value for money for the small stations they use.

In addition to the broader points above, we provide more specific opportunities to improve small stations below. (See Appendix **XXX** for a list of London TravelWatch reports on passenger priorities for improvement at stations.)

### **Tickets and smart cards**

Passengers want to be sure that they are purchasing the right ticket at the best price. Where a ticket office and / or staff members are not available for assistance, retail outlets within or close to the station should be able to sell tickets. Otherwise, ticket vending machines (TVMs) at stations should be easy to use, sheltered from the elements, and provide the full range of National Rail and London Underground services at the best price. 'Virtual' TVMs, like the ones recently introduced at some South West Trains stations, are a new way to help passengers buy tickets at unstaffed or partly-staffed small stations, especially since TVMs can be complicated and small stations are not likely to have an alternative ticket retailer nearby. Where TVMs are unavailable, Permit to Travel machines should allow passengers to pay for their ticket at another station along their journey. However, when there is a programme to renew TVMs, operators should take the opportunity to also provide them at stations that do not have them.

An increasing number of passengers in London use smart cards such as Oyster and Contactless that calculate the best fare for journeys within London's Travelcard zones. We recommend that all stations within the zones should have smart card readers and, where possible, Oyster card products available for purchase through TVMs. The transition between Oyster- and Contactless-enabled travel and National Rail tickets should be as simple as possible.

### **Travel information**

Passengers do not want to feel isolated or forgotten waiting for trains at small stations, especially where there is a less frequent service. In addition to good quality travel information, signage, wayfinding, and Customer Information Screens providing real-time service information should be extended to all small stations. Likewise, public address systems need to be clear, concise, and audible enough for passengers across all parts of the station to hear.

### **Interchange**

Station Travel Plans can improve how passengers get to and from stations, such as providing car and cycle parking, and improved links to buses. A plan assesses the unique characteristics, constraints, and opportunities for the station. It can also bring station operators and local authorities to work together to increase use of small stations and deliver on their transport and sustainability objectives

Car parks should be well lit and monitored by CCTV to make sure passengers feel safe. Bicycles are a valuable possession and passengers appreciate the opportunity to place them in secure cycle storage.

Rail replacement buses should have a dedicated, well-signed stop providing easy access to buses to simplify the journey for passengers during planned and unplanned disruptions.

### **Assistance, security and staff**

Assistance for passengers with mobility issues should be easy to book – currently through the Assisted Passenger Reservation System – when it is not available as a 'turn up and go' service. National Rail operators should have a Disabled Peoples Protection Policy setting out procedures for assisting disabled and elderly passengers who wish to use their services.

Assistance varies from providing a special telephone service, assisting passengers into stations and onto trains, or providing alternatives where a station is physically inaccessible to them. Operators generally offer good service to disabled and elderly passengers. In fact, the industry's efforts to improve accessibility across the network have increased the amount of passengers with disabilities who use it; more passengers are purchasing the disabled person's railcards and more rail passengers are requesting assistance<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/browse/reports/18>

Yet there is inconsistency between different operators and / or members of staff. Disabled passengers want good quality assistance throughout their journey, especially when they use the services of multiple operators to complete their journey. A negative experience can profoundly affect a disabled person's confidence and sense of independence using public transport, so improvements to assistance at small stations should be made where needed.

Where stations are unstaffed for part or all of the hours of service, CCTV should be monitored and Help Points available for passengers needing assistance. However, as mentioned above, staff presence is a priority for passengers. In order to ensure appropriate staff levels at small stations, a mechanism is needed to see not only whether staffing should be decreased from a station, but also whether it needs to be increased for parts or all of the operating day.

### Other research

Transport Focus and Transport for London conduct passenger satisfaction surveys, including questions about stations, but results for small stations specifically are less reliable.

### Transport Focus research

#### The National Rail Passenger Survey

Transport Focus is the official watchdog for passengers and road users across England outside London. They produce the National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) twice a year to gauge the satisfaction of rail passengers with their experience at stations and on trains. The NRPS is well respected by the rail industry as a measure of operator performance in providing a good service and shows what is important to passengers. Questions specifically about stations involve:

- overall satisfaction with the station;
- ticket buying facilities;
- information about train times and platforms;
- the upkeep and repair of station buildings and platforms;
- cleanliness;
- facilities and services (for example, toilets, shops, cafes);
- attitudes and helpfulness of staff;
- connections with other forms of public transport;
- facilities for car parking;
- overall environment;
- personal security;
- availability of staff;
- provision of shelter;
- availability of seating;
- how request to station staff was handled;
- the choice of shops/eating/drinking facilities.

The NRPS is a great resource to see how operators are doing in terms of passenger satisfaction with stations. We advocate that passenger satisfaction measures be combined with a more objective measure of station performance (for example, whether the TVMs or the toilets are in working order) through, for example, the

Quality Experience on Stations and Trains (QUEST) audits. However, there are some limitations for measuring standards at small stations. Firstly, not all small stations in and around London have received responses or been surveyed at all throughout the last five years (2011-2015). Around 25% of all London stations, mainly small- and medium-size ones, have never been surveyed in the history of the NRPS. This then leads to the possibility of 'gaming' by operators who know that certain stations are less likely to be surveyed and, thus, have less incentive to carry out station improvements. To reduce the possibility of this, London TravelWatch has previously advocated that the NRPS should aim to cover all stations in and around London, and increase the frequency of surveys.

Secondly, analysing survey results for individual stations is difficult. For those small stations in and around London that have been surveyed for all or some of the bi-annual (Spring and Autumn) surveys over the past five years, most have generated less than 25 responses and many less than 5 or 10 responses. Also, there is often a significant variation in the number of responses received between each survey. For example, there may be 10 responses received in a Spring survey, 3 received in the Autumn survey and 14 received in the following Spring survey for a particular station.

Transport Focus seeks a minimum of 50 respondents for the findings to be robust, with a minimum of 100 respondents being ideal. Because individual small stations tend to generate fewer responses, Transport Focus will combine results to provide a more robust assessment of small stations as a category, rather than at the individual station level.

Charting NRPS passenger satisfaction scores by station category (for all of Great Britain) reveals the fluctuation between Spring and Autumn surveys and few strong trends. Despite this, Category A (largest) stations have seen an increase in satisfaction since Spring 2013 while Category B stations have seen a gradual decline in satisfaction since Spring 2011.

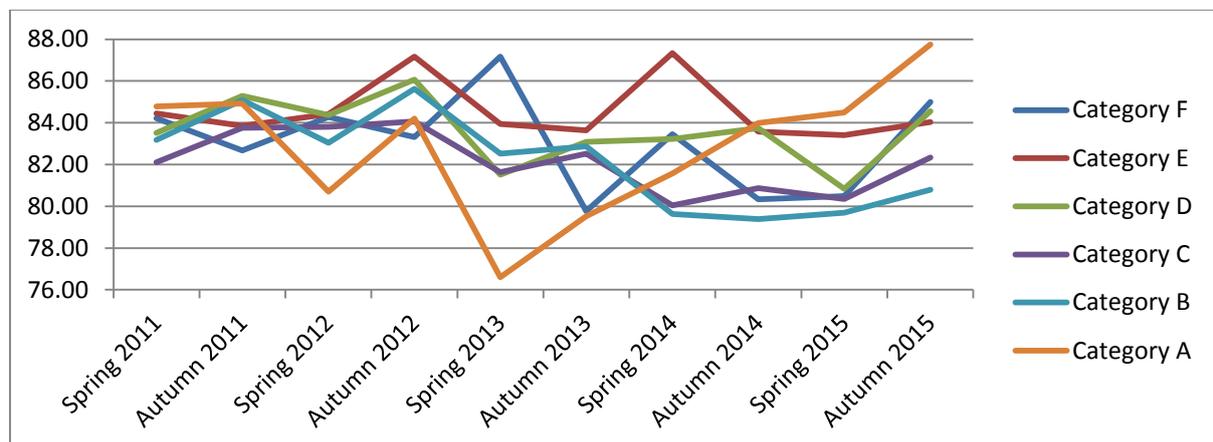


Figure 1. Passenger satisfaction scores by station category for all of Great Britain (NRPS data)

Despite the patchy NRPS data, if we group together available passenger satisfaction scores at small stations in and around London by operator from Spring 2011 to August 2015:

- c2c, London Underground, and London Overground perform the best with 97.64, 93.06, and 89.21 respectively, and
- Southeastern, Abellio Greater Anglia, and Great Northern are at the bottom of the list with 74.68, 73.64, and 73.59 respectively.

Operator	Score
c2c	97.64
London Underground	93.06
London Overground	89.21
First Great Western	88.69
Chiltern Railway	88.23
London Midland	85.81
Thameslink	84.93
Southern	82.31
South West Trains	78.69
Southeastern	74.68
Abellio Greater Anglia	73.64
Great Northern	73.59
TfL Rail	No data

Table 2. Passenger satisfaction scores at small stations in and around London by operator

This ranking does offer a generalised picture of how the different operators are performing at small stations in and around London, but a more consistent set of passenger responses would provide a clearer picture for comparison.

### Assessing the National Stations Improvement Program

Transport Focus produced research in 2012<sup>3</sup> on the impact of the National Station Improvement Programme on passenger satisfaction. Using 'before and after' (Phases One and Two) surveys, they found that the improvements made at various stations drove up overall satisfaction and that these successes indicated the potential for further improvement.

In Phase One of the research, passengers placed the greatest importance on shelters and waiting rooms while, in Phase Two, they 'gave much higher satisfaction scores for facilities such as the ticket office/sales points, platform shelters, waiting rooms and the station entrances/exits.' [p.1] Many also appreciated improvements in visual information on train arrivals, platform shelters, seating, and lighting.

The most effective improvements in raising satisfaction were in the 'appearance of the booking office, the condition of platform shelters, the footbridges, ticket sales points, the main entrances/exits, and the waiting rooms.' [p.1]

Overall, the research showed the high value passengers place on the basics such as comfort, security, and real-time information and that investing in stations leads to higher passenger satisfaction.

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<sup>3</sup> Passenger Focus (2012). *National Station Improvement Programme - Phase Two: Report on a research study conducted for Passenger Focus, May 2012.*

## Network Rail research

Network Rail research also showed the importance of providing 'the basics'. The Action Stations initiative<sup>4</sup> found that seated waiting areas, toilets, ticket sales facilities, cash points and reliable information are valued highly by passengers. Not just focusing on the large stations it manages, Network Rail aims for all stations to:

- 'Be safe, secure and easy to use
- Provide the information needed for passengers to plan their journeys
- Allow quick and easy transfer to other forms of transport
- Attract people to use the rail network
- Have a positive impact on the environment.' [p.2]

## Transport for London research

Transport for London has its own measure of passenger satisfaction called the Customer Satisfaction Survey (CSS). The survey measures satisfaction with information, safety and security, staff helpfulness and availability, cleanliness, and service on vehicles and at stations. CSS data, measured quarterly, is not published on its website, but the results are included within the publicly available performance reports for the various transport modes operated by TfL, including London Underground, London Overground and TfL Rail.

Like the NRPS, there are also limitations to CSS data relating to stations. Survey responses are not considered sufficiently robust at the individual station level, so results are grouped at the route level. For this reason, CSS data is not useful to assess passenger satisfaction with specific stations. TfL should aim to increase robustness for CSS data at the station level, especially since stations along the same route differ greatly and so might passenger satisfaction levels accordingly.

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<sup>4</sup> Network Rail (no date). Action Stations (booklet). <http://www.networkrail.co.uk/asp/6368.aspx>

## Recommendations

- Ensure that investment in infrastructure and service improvements is proportionately distributed to the full range of stations in and around London, including for small stations, including improvements in:
  - the availability of ticketing and smart card facilities;
  - passenger and onward travel information;
  - interchange with other services and modes;
  - assistance and security.

Action: DfT, Network Rail, TOCs, TfL

- Combine subjective passenger satisfaction measures (NRPS) with a more objective measure of station performance audits such as QUEST.

Action: DfT, Network Rail, TOCs, TfL

- Provide passengers with 'the basics' at stations to increase satisfaction

- Action: DfT, Network Rail, TOCs, TfL

- Increase the robustness of the Customer Satisfaction Survey data for analysis at the station level.

Action: TfL

### 3. Improving small stations

Stations have recently begun to benefit from greater investment and the Government has pledged the 'largest investment in the railways since Victorian times'. The relatively higher growth in passengers at small stations in and around London compared to the rest of Great Britain makes the case for investment in these smaller stations even stronger.

The following section provides a summary of industry guidance on standards at rail stations, including minimum standards, investment, Station Travel Plans, and safety at stations. The second section in this chapter presents the funding programmes currently available to operators for station upgrades. The last section looks at how the local community can be involved to help improve their small station.

#### Industry guidance

Industry guidance for rail stations tends to focus on planning, design, and accessibility guidelines. Some guidance is available to help operators raise overall standards at their stations, though much of the guidance addresses the broad range of stations with little guidance specific to small stations.

Until 2009, attempts to introduce station standards across the rail industry were not very effective. Minimum standards set by the Office of Rail Franchising from 1996 were ineffective since they were mainly self-enforced by the Train Operating Companies (TOCs). The *Modern Facilities at Stations* fund developed by the Strategic Rail Authority in 2003 ran out of funding. Department for Transport (DfT) franchise agreements from 2004 strengthened requirements for station standards, but not in a comprehensive way. In 2009, the Southern franchise was the first to place greater emphasis on station standards. This coincided with the release of a DfT review of stations, *Better Rail Stations*, in the same year.

#### Minimum standards for stations

The DfT set minimum standards for stations in England and Wales through its 2009 *Better Rail Stations* report<sup>5</sup>. This independent review considered and recommended minimum levels of service, delivering better stations and enhancing stations as transport interchanges and community institutions.

The report proposed detailed Minimum Station Standards for each of the six station categories to be progressively applied as rail franchises are renewed. The categories, devised by the DfT in 1996, are as follows:

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<http://collections.europarchive.org/tna/20100409091328/http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/rail/passenger/stations/beterrailstations/pdf/report.pdf>

Category A: National hub stations  
Category B: Regional Hub stations  
Category C: Large feeder stations

Category D: Medium staffed stations  
Category E: Small staffed stations  
Category F: Unstaffed stations

For the purposes of this report, our definition of a small station matches categories D, E and F in the DfT's categorisation scheme.

Broadly, the report called for greater investment in stations to bring their access, information, facilities, and environment up to a consistent modern standard in order to raise passenger satisfaction scores. It is useful because it addresses standards at smaller stations specifically. Smaller stations 'should be progressively brought up to minimum standards through franchise tenders' [p.7], including the removal of redundant buildings and upgrading remaining facilities. Station standards should be treated as Key Performance Indicators within franchise agreements and TOCs should seek accreditation such as Park Mark (for car park security) and the Secure Stations scheme.

The report also recommends 'Adopt a Station' and Community Rail Partnership initiatives to involve community members in the upkeep and improvement of stations. Attracting retailers and local organisations to operate at small, particularly unstaffed stations would not only help integrate the station within the local community, but would also provide more station presence to make passengers feel safer.

Smaller stations "should be capable of quick and proportionate improvements. Unstaffed stations can win high approval levels if kept smart and secure" they "just need a different funding strategy compared to the larger staffed stations." [p.13]

To achieve improvements, the report promotes joint working between the rail industry, local authorities, and the local community since "a dilapidated station is bad business for both town and railway." [p.3]

See Appendix **XXX** for a list of specific recommended standards for stations in categories F, E, and D.

## **Investment in stations**

*The Value of Station Investment: Research on Regenerative Impacts<sup>6</sup>*, produced by Steer Davies Gleave for Network Rail in 2011, argues that investment in stations contributes to the wider economic development of the local area by not only raising land values, but by encouraging economic activity as well. On the contrary, stations in poor condition can act as a barrier to local economic development and lead to a negative perception of the area. The report focuses on improvements to station facilities, the station environment, and accessibility to both local / onward destinations and to passengers with restricted mobility.

Although investment in smaller stations may have less of an impact on the local economy in absolute terms, it can still play a significant role in supporting regeneration. Coordination between station operators and local stakeholders is

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[http://www.steerdaviesgleave.com/sites/default/files/newsandinsights/Station\\_Investment\\_Report.pdf](http://www.steerdaviesgleave.com/sites/default/files/newsandinsights/Station_Investment_Report.pdf)

important to help develop the area around stations. Station operators should explore a wider range of funding sources to avoid depending on limited public sector funding.

The Rail Delivery Group (RDG) produced its *Vision for Stations* in October 2015 to help decision makers, passengers, and local communities work together to meet changing passenger needs and expectations at stations in Britain, as well as to promote the important role stations can play in the local community. The vision sets out nine guiding principles for stations to:

- be customer focussed
- use technology intelligently
- offer a seamless journey experience
- reflect local needs and opportunities
- provide a safe and secure environment
- promote entrepreneurial spirit
- have flexible and long-term stewardship
- share industry know-how
- be part of an optimised network.

The Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) is also currently working with the DfT on the *Sustainable Stations Framework*, a tool for the rail industry to help inform investment decisions and realise the RDG's *Vision for Stations*. The framework aims to create a new classification system for stations to replace the current A to F categories, as well as a dashboard to help improve benchmarking, provide a common set of performance indicators, and use the existing and potential characteristics of the station and its surrounding community to better measure and improve performance. The RSSB hopes the framework will inform the franchising process to improve stations standards and simplify information on what passengers can expect from stations.

The *Vision for Stations* and *Sustainable Stations Framework* provide a step in the right direction to placing more focus on the quality of and potential for stations after decades of industry neglect.

## Station Travel Plans

A Station Travel Plan (STP) is a management tool that brings stakeholders together to improve multi-modal access to and from stations with a focus on sustainable transport objectives and easing door-to-door journeys for passengers. *Guidance on the implementation of Station Travel Plans*<sup>7</sup>, produced by the RSSB in 2013, used lessons learned to describe the benefits of STPs and provide advice to station operators wishing to develop their own. STPs can help to improve customer satisfaction levels, communication and coordination between stakeholders, generate savings for existing initiatives and strategic objectives, and deliver wider economic benefits by improving access to jobs, education and tourism.

*Guidelines for Development Management for Stations*<sup>8</sup>, guidance published by the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) in 2014, also promotes the use of

<sup>7</sup> <http://live-cycle-rail.pantheonsite.io/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/STP-Toolkit-low-res-web.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.atoc.org/latest-publications/>

STPs. It provides a breakdown of requirements and considerations to produce STPs for all station categories, including for smaller stations. Category D stations should have a summary STP and action plan, but with less strict criteria than for larger (A to C) stations. Since smaller (E and F) stations are not formally required to produce an STP, this guidance suggests that smaller stations could instead use a simpler 'plan on a page' evaluation of access arrangements. Local Community Rail Partnerships or user groups could carry out this type of assessment.

## **Safety at stations**

The *Secure Stations Scheme* sets design and management safety standards to reduce crime at rail stations. Established in 1998 and managed by the DfT and the British Transport Police (BTP), the scheme provides accreditation to station operators that provide a safe station environment for passengers and staff. The certificate is valid for 2 years, but a station can lose its accreditation if it fails to comply with standards.

Meeting these standards can help station operators manage the risk of crime and reduce the cost of vandalism, while providing a safer environment for staff and passengers, and potentially increasing passenger numbers.

The BTP operate the similar but separate *Railway Safety Accreditation Scheme*, which sets standards for organisations and their employees, including station staff, to control anti-social behaviour.

The *Safer Parking Scheme* sets a national standard for car parks and awards the 'Park Mark' certificate, valid for one year, to car parks with 10 spaces or more that have measures in place to reduce crime.

## **TfL asset management**

TfL does not have any guidance for stations (?TBC?), though it does have an asset management policy and strategy setting out its long-term objectives. For example, its strategy for the London Underground<sup>9</sup> sets goals for future delivery plans, including for stations, lifts and escalators, and communication systems.

Like the DfT, TfL has created station categories for the 272 in the London Underground (LU) network:

- 'Gateway stations – main visitor entry points to London, with a high proportion of people unfamiliar with the Tube network, such as Kings Cross/St. Pancras, and Heathrow 123 stations.
- Destination stations – busy stations in central London, which have high volumes of customers, and include commuter rail termini and tourist destinations, such as Embankment station.
- Metro stations – that serve predominantly inner London communities, with many regular users, such as Clapham South station.

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<sup>9</sup> Transport for London (2013). *LU Asset Management Strategy Summary*. <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/lu-asset-management-strategy.pdf>

- Local Stations – smaller stations, in Outer London or beyond, with lower customer numbers that serve mainly regular customers, such as Rickmansworth station.’ [p.24]

The overall goal for stations is to:

“Provide our customers with a functional, bright, clean and welcoming environment that is safe, accessible to all, whilst keeping in line with growth demands delivered through our line upgrades. Good station design will be applied that will be attractive, spacious, reflect our heritage, have a local identity whilst reinforcing the world famous LU brand.” [p.25]

The strategy also aims to

- improve interchange between modes through changes to layout, signage and customer information.
- maintain and improve lifts and escalators, which are crucial for managing congestion, reducing journey time, and increasing accessibility at stations.
- improve communication systems such as Help Points, public address systems, service update boards and new technologies (Apps, etc.) to improve the passenger experience.

LU bases the schedule for delivering station improvements on the overall condition, risk, and fault levels, as well as customer usage. Therefore, smaller stations are likely to be further down on the list of priorities. Yet TfL’s higher standards for stations (London Underground and others) do result in better station environments for passengers when compared to the other station operators in and around London.

## Funding programmes

### The National Station Improvement Programme

The National Station Improvement Programme (NSIP) is a partnership between Network Rail and the TOCs to deliver £150 million provided by the Government to upgrade over 150 medium-size stations across England and Wales. The main aim of the programme is to improve the station environment and raise passenger satisfaction. The NSIP was initially scheduled to run between 2009 and 2014, though it has been extended beyond this and the fund has increased to £220 million from additional industry investment. The Government will also invest an additional £100 million to the programme (?TBC?). Although mostly aimed at medium-size (A to D) stations, some small (E and F) stations in and around London have benefitted from the fund, which we will discuss in the next section.

### Access for All

In 2006, the DfT launched the Access for All (AfA) programme as part of the Railways for All strategy to improve step-free access at stations. The fund distributed £35 million annually to 2015 to improve access to and between platforms for passengers with disabilities, elderly passengers and those travelling with children and/or luggage. The DfT chose to fund a range of stations, including some small

stations in and around London. From 2011, a 'mid-tier' programme began accepting bids for smaller access projects costing between £250,000 and £1,000,000.

Announced in 2014, a further £135 million extended the AfA fund to 2019. However the Hendy Review (November 2015) recommended revising this funding allocation to £87.1m up to 2019, and the remaining £47.9m for the 2019-2024 period. The results of a consultation on this recommendation, which ended in March 2016, and the final decision taken by the Minister for Transport should be known soon.

### **TfL's accessibility programme**

TfL has its own rolling programme of accessibility improvements for the Tube, rail and tram stations (as well as for the bus stops) it operates. London Underground, London Overground and TfL Rail stations benefit from year-on-year investment to make them fully or partially step-free. TfL's 2016/2017 Budget and Business Plan has doubled the station accessibility fund from £75 million to £150 million, with a target of making 50 per cent of rail and Tube stations step-free by 2018. (Note: London Overground and TfL Rail also seek AfA funding from the DfT for its stations).

### **Station Commercial Project Facility**

The Station Commercial Project Facility funds projects that will increase income for the DfT while improving station environments, such as new and extended car parks, ticket gatelines to increase fare income, and approaches to reduce operating costs. £100 million was made available between 2011 and 2014, and a further £60 million available between 2014 and 2019.

### **Cycle Rail fund**

The Cycle Rail fund supports train companies to improve the integrations between cycling and rail at stations, primarily by providing cycle parking and storage spaces. The DfT made £14.5 million available from 2012 to 2014 and a further £15 million for 2015-2016.

### **Involving local community members and businesses**

Over the past decade, the DfT has promoted Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) as a way to involve local people and organisations in supporting and maintaining small stations. A CRP is an arrangement between the station operator, local council, and community organisation (rail user groups, friends groups, etc.) to improve local railways.

An assessment by the Association for Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP)<sup>10</sup> found that CRPs can generate station enhancements at good value for money, increase ridership and fares revenue, encourage a modal shift from car to rail for part or whole journeys, reduce anti-social behaviour and increase security at stations, and stimulate economic development in the local area. CRPs may also be effective in pushing for more investment to improve the travelling environment of small stations.

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<sup>10</sup> Association for Community Rail Partnerships (2015). *The Value of Community Rail Partnerships and The Value of Community Rail Volunteering*.

According to the DfT:

“Although station developments can often be major projects involving substantial sums of money and the use of professional architects and contractors, community engagement can deliver more modest but still worthwhile station improvements. Many stations are now adopted by individuals or organisations and this type of community engagement can help to enhance the appearance and feel of station facilities.”<sup>11</sup>

CRPs are most often designated for rail lines and stations in rural areas, however there are some in the greater London area, such as the award-winning CRP between London Midland and the Abbey Line Abbey Flyer Users’ Group. Community members and organisations may help with station maintenance and redecoration (artwork, planting gardens, etc.). Through some CRPs, under-used station buildings are transformed into commercial, office or training spaces for local businesses and initiatives, or transformed into waiting rooms for passengers.

A successful CRP is:

‘about going well beyond the essential ‘basics’ of accessibility, safety, lighting and information. It requires flexibility, creativity and imagination. And it involves partners. What works in one location might not work somewhere else. One local authority or community group might be keen, others won’t be. There is no simple ‘rule book’ on how to make it work, but lessons from around the UK are worth studying.’<sup>12</sup>

CRPs may be an effective way of improving a greater number of small stations in and around London. More station operators should consider whether investing in a CRP might benefit their stations and the surrounding community. We will look at some case studies of CRPs and other local initiatives at stations in and around London in Chapter **XXX**.

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<sup>11</sup> Department for Transport (2007). *Review of Community Rail Development Strategy*, p.12.

<sup>12</sup> Paul Salveson (2015). The stations we deserve? *Transport Xtra* – Issue 666, 20 Feb 2015.

## Recommendations

- Produce more specific guidance on standards at small stations.

Action: DfT, Network Rail, ATOC, TfL

- Ensure that standards at small stations are progressively raised through renewed franchise or concession agreements

Action: DfT, TfL

- Consider the added value investing in stations has on the local economy

Action: TOCs, TfL

- Develop simplified Station Travel Plans in partnership with local authorities, stakeholders, and community members

Action: TOCs, TfL

- Seek accreditation for the Secure Stations Scheme, Railway Safety Accreditation Scheme, and Safer Parking Scheme (where applicable)

Action: TOCs, TfL

- Bid for funding to improve the infrastructure and amenities at small stations

Action: TOCs, TfL

- Develop partnerships with local residents and organisations to help improve small stations through, for example, CRPs and Adopt-a-Station initiatives

Action: TOCs, TfL

## 4. Different standards and levels of investment for small stations

Rail stations in and around London not only have different design and service characteristics, they are managed by different operators. In London, these different operators have contractual agreements with either the Department for Transport (DfT) or Transport for London (TfL), who set different standards for stations. There are also different levels of funding available to the range of station categories, and not all Train Operating Companies (TOC) bid for the funding with the same endeavour. In terms of passenger satisfaction surveys, some stations are surveyed regularly while some have never been surveyed, or the varying number of responses makes it difficult to gauge passenger satisfaction with specific stations.

As a result of these differences, some small stations in and around London are better off than others. The passenger experience at small stations depends on which one they use; passengers using 'neglected' stations can experience a sub-standard station environment and relatively limited facilities such as ticket offices, waiting rooms, toilets, step-free access, and passenger information. Besides structural and facility differences between stations, some stations are simply cleaner than others and there is no guidance specifically for station cleanliness. It is understandable that different size stations are treated differently, but there should not be such a difference in standards for stations in the same category – and all stations should be properly cleaned at the very least.

### Different station operators

Network Rail is the property owner for most stations of the National Rail network in Great Britain and the majority of these are generally leased to the TOC that runs the most services out of the station. TfL directly controls London Underground services and stations, while it leases operations of the London Overground, Docklands Light Railway (DLR), Tramlink, and TfL Rail to different companies.

The different operators face different challenges when they start their franchise or concession, depending on the state of the rail, train and station infrastructure they inherit from the previous operator. Levels of investment from the operator can also change during the course of the franchise or concession. Finally, some operators simply perform better than others in improving the railways they inherit.

Different operators will have different approaches to improving stations and the industry seeks innovation from operators so that others can copy and improve upon them. But the problem is when some operators offer sub-standard station environments and facilities to their passengers and are not appearing to do anything about it. In this case, it should be the role of franchise and concession agreements to incrementally bring neglected stations up to standard.

TfL not only has a longer-term strategy for London Underground stations directly under its control, but also for stations operated under London Overground, DLR, Tramlink, and TfL Rail concessions. This longer-term strategy is a stronger model since it does not change much when concessions are renewed. The DfT should adopt a similar long-term vision for its stations regardless of the franchisees temporarily operating them.

## Different contractual agreements

The industry guidance summarised in the last chapter acknowledges that there has only recently been a concerted effort to invest in stations and modernise the aging railways infrastructure. Under the present rail industry structure, contractual agreements, either franchises or concessions, form the most effective tool to bring about incremental improvements.

TfL and the DfT have different standards for investing in small stations through its contractual agreements with operators. When compared to the DfT, TfL sets higher standards for its stations, including for cleanliness (graffiti, litter, etc.). Alongside keeping cleanliness and station environment standards, staff presence from first to last service also helps to reduce anti-social behaviour and increase the passengers' sense of safety.

Passengers will recognise that TfL is in charge of station standards, even with its concession arrangements for London Overground, DLR, Tramlink, and TfL Rail. Yet, passengers will tend to think the TOCs (Southeastern, c2c, London Midland, etc.) are in charge of improving station standards, which undermines the important role the DfT plays in setting standards for stations within its franchise agreements.. This means that TfL will often be blamed if standards slip at, for example, London Underground stations, but the DfT may not for the stations it controls through Network Rail. All this has an effect on the sense of accountability and level of standards set by TfL and the DfT for station operators.

One way stations in and around London receive investment is through contractual agreements. Investments to improve stations, including safety and accessibility, are set within individual franchise or concession agreements between the DfT or TfL and the TOCs. This includes more specific agreements to invest in certain stations at the outset of the franchise and a more general promise on behalf of the TOC to invest in stations throughout the duration of its franchise. Investment funds may either come from the DfT, TfL or the TOC.

We understand from the DfT that, for all new franchises, a portion of franchise funding for station improvements is reserved for the last year of the franchise, to avoid under-investment by outgoing franchisees. This 'last year' funding is generally put towards smaller station improvements and ongoing maintenance. As this is a new approach, there is currently limited evidence on its effectiveness; the franchises to which this system currently applies will only be in their last year in the early 2020s. However, it may provide an avenue for future success.

Also, TOCs under newly-tendered franchises will be subject to fines if they do not meet customer service targets such as staff politeness and toilet cleanliness.<sup>13</sup>

Even though it cannot all be done at once, incremental improvements are needed for accessibility, travel and onward journey information, facilities, the travel environment, safety and security, and staffing (where possible) at small stations in and around London. For example, new 'virtual' ticket vending machines (TVMs), like the ones

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<sup>13</sup> Graeme Paton (2015). Rail firms to be fined over dirty toilets. *The Times*, September 18 2015.

recently introduced at some South West Trains stations, can help passengers buy tickets at unstaffed or partly-staffed small stations, especially since TVMs can be complicated and small stations are not likely to have an alternative ticket retailer nearby.

There is limited evidence showing the amount and type of investment being accorded to London's small stations. There is no publicly available assessment of small stations to understand where improvements are needed to reduce the gap in standards between stations in the capital. We would like operators to provide better information about the present state of the small stations they manage and a schedule of future improvements.

Franchise and concession agreements do contain some information on station improvements, though it is sometimes not easy to find out whether and when small stations in and around London are scheduled to receive investment. The contract may reveal intentions to invest in certain stations as well as a more general commitment to invest in stations throughout the franchise or concession, yet this information should be more readily available to passengers. Operators should promote the improvements they make and a well-publicised schedule of works would let passengers know whether they can look forward to improvements at their small station, rather than being left in the dark.

TfL tend to be better at promoting the investment they make in stations and other station operators should follow their example. However, promoting improvements should also be sure to include information about any resulting disruptions to passenger journeys, if needed.

### Different levels of funding

Another way stations in and around London receive investment is through funding programmes. Operators can bid for funding to improve station infrastructure and amenities, including accessibility improvements and cycling facilities at stations. Stations can also benefit from Section 106 agreements from the development of adjacent land and the Community Infrastructure Levy from development in the wider area.

However, much of the investment in stations in and around London targets large and medium-size stations. Understandably, franchise agreements and other funding programmes tend to favour stations with a higher footfall to maximise the impact for passengers. Category A to D stations will receive the bulk of the investment, while the smallest (E and F) stations are least likely to receive investments. Although it makes sense to distribute funding to benefit the highest number of passengers, the industry needs to ensure that small stations do not remain in the Victorian era and that their passengers are not forgotten.

Although it may be argued that stations with higher entry and exit numbers should receive a proportionally greater amount of funding for accessibility improvements, it would not be unreasonable for small stations to also be eligible for Access for All funding. As the transport network become ever more accessible, particularly from upgrades to large and medium-size stations, it becomes desirable to invest in smaller stations so that even more passenger journeys can become fully step-free.

### **Inconsistent surveying of passenger satisfaction**

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the National Rail Passenger Satisfaction survey does not cover stations in a consistent way and some stations in and around London have never been surveyed. Also, survey results are difficult to analyse at the individual station level due to the low number of responses received, as well as the inconsistent number of responses received between twice-yearly surveys. Equally, TfL's Customer Satisfaction Survey does not gather enough responses at the station level to allow for comparison between stations. Instead, they look at passenger satisfaction at the route level.

We understand that not all stations can be surveyed all of the time, but the voice of passengers at small stations is not being heard. Transport Focus and TfL should ensure that satisfaction levels are more consistently collected to get a better idea of how well or poorly small stations are performing.

## 5. Examples of improvements for small stations

### The Abbey Line Community Rail Partnership

The Abbey Line Community Rail Partnership (ALCRP) was established in 2005 to promote and improve services on the Abbey Line from Watford to St. Albans Abbey. The ALCRP has brought together community members and stakeholders to deliver award winning station improvements, including:

- a new waiting shelter with stainless steel artwork panels at Garston Station in order to combat vandalism. The project was delivered by Groundwork Hertfordshire and the designs were inspired by posters made by pupils at a local school.
- mosaics displayed at St. Albans Abbey Station designed by local school children
- a community art project in conjunction with the Watford YMCA and artist Eleanor Shipman displaying posters at the Watford Junction Abbey Line platform approach

The ALCRP successfully encourages community members to take pride in their local stations and to get involved in smaller scale improvement project. They provide a good example to station operators of how developing and nurturing a Community Rail Partnership with local community members can help generate positive changes at small stations.

### London Overground takeover of Abellio Greater Anglia routes

In May 2015, London Overground took control of the Liverpool Street to Enfield Town, Cheshunt and Chingford lines from Abellio Greater Anglia. The change in operator brought about service and station improvements along the lines, including the deep cleaning and repainting of stations, as well as improved travel and onward journey information.

Cambridge Heath Station, in Zone 2, was previously a dark, dirty, and dangerous station. It has benefitted from London Overground 'rebranding' and investment, and will also be getting improved CCTV and links with the British Transport Police, a station repaint and deep clean, help points, and improved Customer Information Screens. Future station usage statistics will need to be analysed to see whether the improvements have led to a substantial increase in passenger numbers.

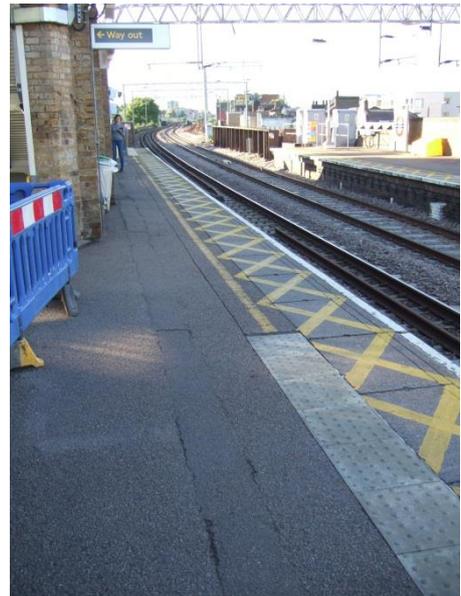


**Improved travel information**



**A well-lit corridor**

The station will look even better with a deep clean and repaint. Also, the station is not step-free, with about 30 stairs up to the platforms, but the station upgrade should improve the travel experience for visually impaired passengers by installing a missing strip of tactile paving along the edge of Platform 2.



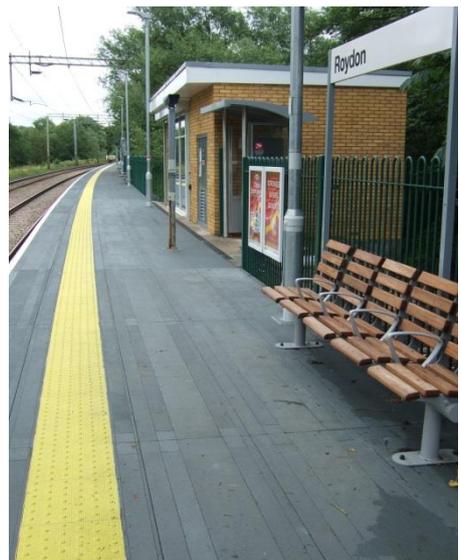
**A missing strip of tactile paving**

### Energy Garden Journey

Transport for London recently launched the Energy Garden Journey initiative in conjunction with Groundwork and Repowering London. The project aims to bring local residents, community groups, and station managers together to install community gardens powered by solar technologies at London Underground stations. The aim is to create a sense of ownership in local stations and environmental awareness among local residents. This type of initiative will likely improve station environments and the passenger experience.

### Roydon Station upgrades

In May 2016, Abellio Greater Anglia upgraded platforms, a waiting room, signage and Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs) at Roydon Station. The station also got new Customer Information Screens (CIS) and CCTV, as well as additional cycle parking hoops. Platform 2 has been repaired and repaved, while a large section of Platform 1 has been resurfaced using a plastic material, which may prove more resistant to wear.



**Plastic surfacing on Platform 1**



**New waiting room on Platform 1**

The new waiting room on Platform 1 has new seats, a CIS, and a new PA system. The PA system is audible in the waiting room, but not outside on the platform.

### Accessibility at Silver Street Station

Silver Street Station, operated by London Overground, is located near the Middlesex University Hospital, yet there are about 30 steps up to each platform, which may pose a challenge to passengers with health problems travelling to and from the hospital. Not only should a lift be installed, but the small step up to the sheltered seating area on Platform 1 should be made level.



**Steps to Platform 2**



**Small step up to sheltered seating area on Platform 1**