



## Subway Passenger Survey

**Committee** Operations

**Date of meeting** 4 May 2018

**Date of report** 11 April 2018

### Report by Senior Director

#### 1. Object of report

To inform the committee of the results of a survey<sup>1</sup> of Subway passengers conducted in late 2017, and to inform the committee of improvement plans informed by the survey results.

#### 2. Background

The Subway contributes to SPT's objectives to provide an excellent transport system and to encourage modal shift to sustainable travel modes.

SPT delivers a co-ordinated programme of activities to encourage use of the Subway. The Subway Modernisation programme is a significant part of this. Other actions include delivery of a marketing plan, the staff-led Customer Promise and providing attractive ticketing options.

Short and long-term trends in Subway patronage are closely monitored on an ongoing basis. It is also important to understand passenger opinions and perception of the Subway, to establish factors which influence travel behaviour, and to identify improvements which could attract increased patronage.

In 2017, SPT approached Transport Focus to undertake an independent and objective survey of Subway passengers.

Transport Focus is an independent watchdog for public transport passengers, and is described as "an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Transport". Transport Focus undertakes a rolling programme of public transport passenger surveys (Bus Passenger Surveys<sup>2</sup>, Rail Passenger Surveys<sup>3</sup> and Tram Passenger Surveys<sup>4</sup>).

For practical reasons, Transport Focus grouped the Subway into the Tram Passenger Survey but noted that the Subway is "quite different to tram networks". Subway results

<sup>1</sup> Link to published Subway report when available

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research-publications/publications/bus-passenger-survey/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research-publications/research/national-passenger-survey-introduction/>

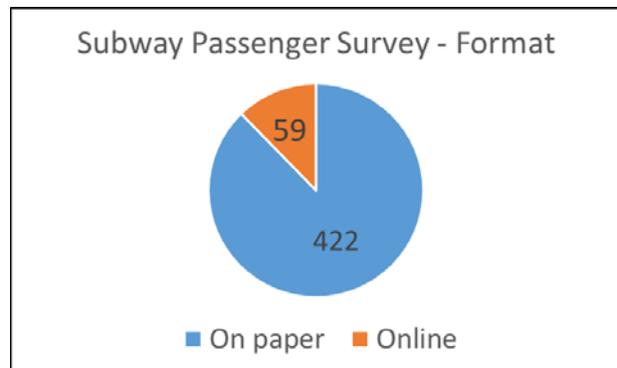
<sup>4</sup> <https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research-publications/publications/tram-passenger-survey-2017/>

have therefore been published separately and not included in the main Tram Passenger Survey report.

However, the Bus, Rail and Tram Passenger Surveys do provide a useful benchmark for general comparisons with Subway results. The most recent Bus and Rail surveys (both undertaken in 2017) include other public transport operators in the SPT area.

The fieldwork was undertaken on behalf of Transport Focus by BDRG Continental, an agency registered with the Market Research Society. Surveys were undertaken between 18 September and 8 December 2017.

Surveys were undertaken at all fifteen Subway stations and at all times of day (from 06:00-22:00). Passengers were given the option to complete a survey on paper with the interviewer, or to self-complete online, with 88% choosing the paper option.



The standard Tram Passenger Survey questionnaire was amended slightly to accommodate differences between tram systems and the Subway.

Satisfaction was measured on a five-point scale:

- Very satisfied;
- Fairly satisfied;
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied;
- Fairly dissatisfied; and
- Very dissatisfied.

### 3. Outline of proposals

The results of the Subway Passenger Survey were very positive and compare well with other public transport operators. There are several areas where passenger feedback provides areas on which SPT can improve.

#### 3.1 Passenger experience: key measures

Passengers were asked to answer questions in relation to the journey they were making at the time of the survey.

Overall passenger satisfaction was very high, with 97% of passengers very satisfied or fairly satisfied with their Subway journey. A further 2% of passengers were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, with 1% dissatisfied.

There are some differences in the methodology used for surveying Subway passengers, and the methodologies used for the Tram, Bus and Rail Passenger Surveys. As a result, any comparison between surveys should be made cautiously.

**Table 3.1: overall satisfaction across all surveys**

Survey	Number of Operators	Measure	Score/Range of Scores
Subway	1	Very satisfied or fairly satisfied	97%
Bus	78	Very satisfied or fairly satisfied	72% - 96%
Rail	26	Satisfied or good	72% - 95%
Tram	5	Very satisfied or fairly satisfied	89% - 97%

Of the “key measures” noted by Transport Focus in the Subway Passenger Survey, the lowest scored was Value for Money which 80% of passengers were very satisfied or fairly satisfied with. This figure reduces to 78% if passengers paying a concessionary fare are excluded.

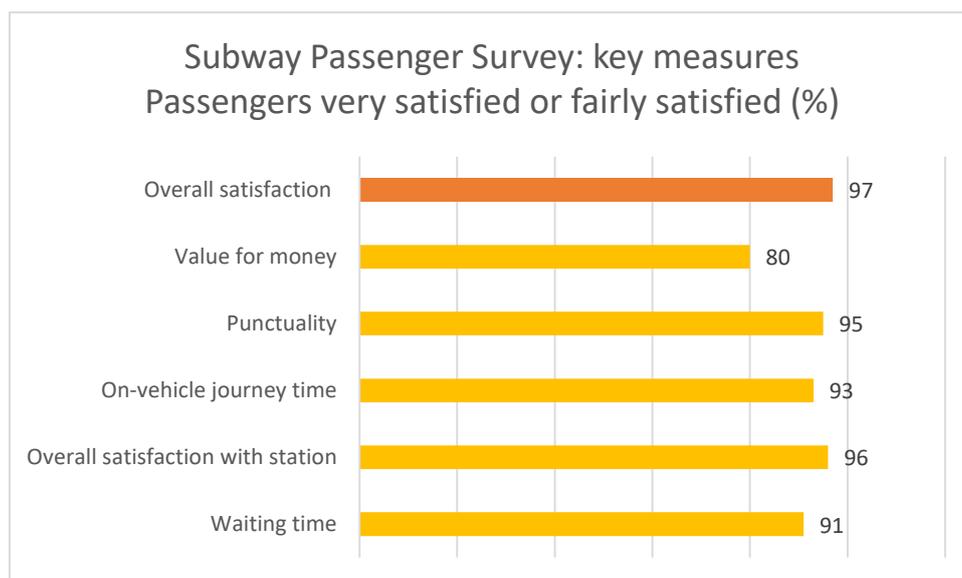
There is a consistent pattern across all operators surveyed by Transport Focus that Value for Money is scored lower than overall satisfaction.

In the Bus, Rail and Tram passenger surveys, two tram operators scored higher than 78% and one bus operator scored exactly 78% for Value for Money. All other bus, rail and tram operators (106 operators in total) scored lower, with the lowest score 36%.

The results for key measures in the Subway passenger survey are shown below. For all measures with the exception of Value for Money, more than 90% of passengers were very satisfied or fairly satisfied.

Through examination of the detailed survey results, passenger satisfaction with stations is higher where station modernisation work has been completed.

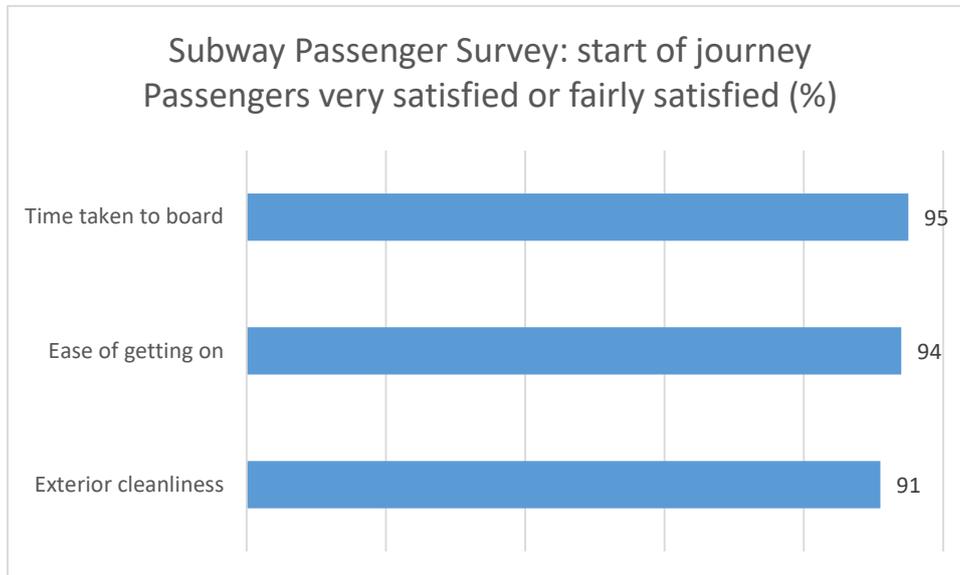
**Figure 3.1**



### 3.2 Passenger experience: start of journey

Satisfaction scores for start of journey are generally very high as shown below.

**Figure 3.2**

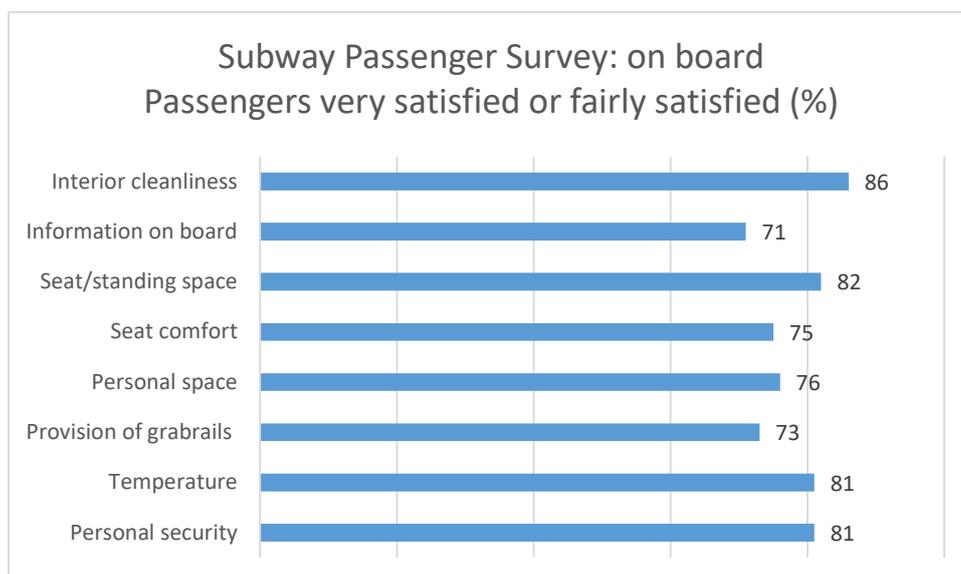


### 3.3 Passenger experience: on board

Satisfaction scores on board are lower than for other categories, as shown below. Various aspects of this will be addressed by the introduction of new rolling stock, however short term actions can also be considered such as replacement of seat cushions in the existing trains, which is ongoing.

Some perceptions may be addressed through marketing and communications, for example crime and other incidents are very rare on the Subway but the survey results (19% of passengers not satisfied regarding personal security) indicate the perception of this may not match with the reality.

**Figure 3.3**

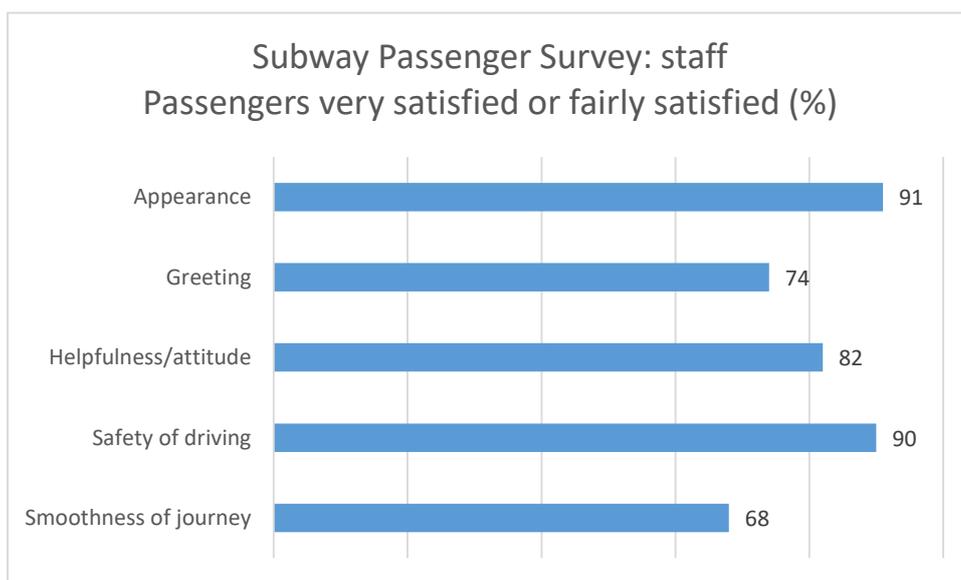


### 3.4 Passenger experience: staff

Passenger satisfaction is generally high with regard to Subway staff. SPT continue to strive for staff to deliver the best possible passenger experience, through initiatives such as a comprehensive training programme, the staff-led Customer Promise, and regular Mystery Shopper assessments.

The lowest score in this category is for “Smoothness of journey” which is classed as a staff issue in the Transport Focus survey. In the case of the Subway there are factors out with the driver’s control which detract from the smoothness of the journey. There will be improvements to smoothness of journeys with introduction of new rolling stock.

**Figure 3.4**



### 3.5 Passengers’ suggested improvements

During the survey, passengers were invited to make suggestions to improve the Subway. 67% of passengers surveyed had no suggestions for improvements.

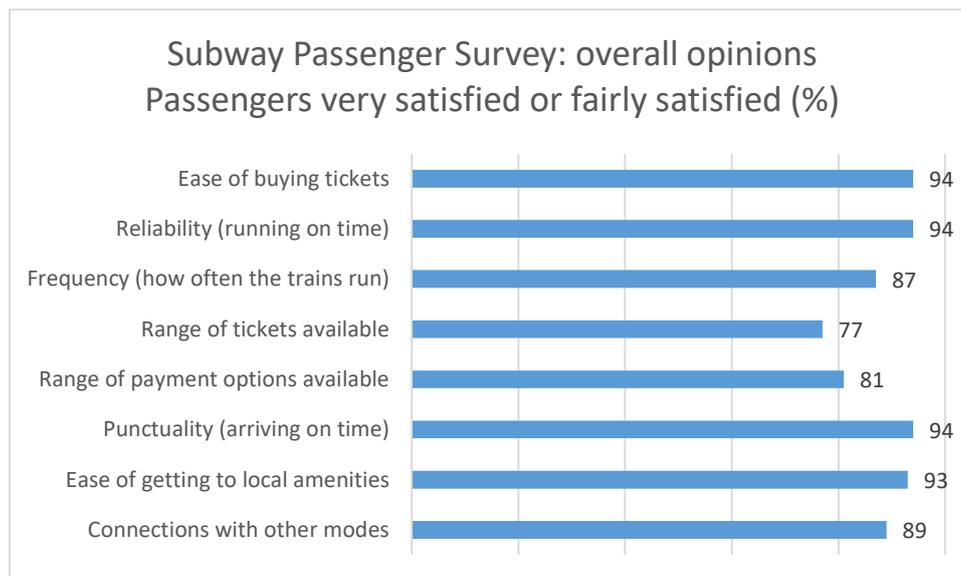
Of those making suggestions, the most common related to the design/comfort/condition of the Subway vehicles, which will be improved by the introduction of the new rolling stock.

### 3.6 Subway services overall

Passengers were also asked to give their opinions on the Subway generally. The results are shown below and scores were generally high. The lowest scoring category was the range of tickets available. Since the survey was undertaken, SPT has introduced three new ticket types expanding the range available:

- Child all-day disposable ticket;
- Adult 10-week season ticket; and
- Child 10-week season ticket.

**Figure 3.5**



### 3.7 Frequency and hours of operation

Passengers were invited to give their opinions on the frequency and hours of operation. Around one third (32%) were satisfied with the current services.

Around 1 in 5 passengers would like increased frequency of trains.

For Monday-Saturday, 10% of passengers would like earlier trains and 33% would like later trains.

For Sundays, 23% of passengers would like earlier trains and 49% would like later trains.

The frequency of trains is reviewed on an ongoing basis along with operational considerations, and changes to frequency are made to address short term demand (such as events and sports fixtures) as well as longer term trends.

Completion of the Subway modernisation programme will enable new opportunities for increased frequency and extended operating hours.

### 3.8 Additional data

The Passenger Survey also provided demographic information about respondents and classified passengers in various categories including by origin station (start of journey).

Transport Focus have made a full data set available to SPT for analysis.

Officers will continue to review the data in detail to inform future actions to encourage use of the Subway.

## 4. Conclusions

The Subway Passenger Survey has provided valuable insight into customer opinions and perceptions of the Subway. Overall passenger satisfaction levels are very high and compare favourably with other public transport operators. The survey also highlights areas

where passengers would like to see improvements, and such improvements could potentially encourage increased passenger numbers using the Subway.

In many cases where satisfaction with individual factors is relatively low, the completion of the Subway Modernisation Programme will provide substantial improvements, particularly in relation to the quality of the Subway rolling stock.

In other areas, SPT can consider shorter term actions to make improvements to the passenger experience.

In some cases, such as the range of ticketing options available, SPT has already implemented improvements since the survey was completed.

Transport Focus undertakes passenger surveys on an ongoing basis and some operators participate every year. A follow up survey of Subway passengers would be valuable to measure the effectiveness of improvements made in response to this survey, and to further enhance the data available to officers for planning purposes.

## 5. Committee action

The Committee is recommended to note the contents of this report.

## 6. Consequences

Policy consequences	<i>In line with Regional Transport Strategy.</i>
Legal consequences	<i>None</i>
Financial consequences	<i>None</i>
Personnel consequences	<i>None</i>
Equalities consequences	<i>The survey provides a snapshot of the demographics of Subway passengers.</i>
Risk consequences	<i>None</i>

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