

**Jacqui Russell**  
Head of Consumer Policy



Train Operator Passenger Information leads

7 March 2024

Dear Passenger Information leads,

### **Passenger information when rail replacement services are in use**

In November 2023 we published our [report](#) into the information that is provided to passengers when planned rail replacement services are in use. Planning and making a journey on a rail replacement bus service should be as straightforward as when travelling by train, however our study showed this is not always the case. Our priority now is to ensure that the issues that we identified are being addressed.

Through this work, we are seeking to hold operators to account against their obligations under the passenger information licence condition and, in particular, the [customer information pledges](#) that operators have adopted as their regulated code of practice under the licence.

I welcome the steps that industry has taken collectively to explore and address the issues related to rail replacement buses since we published our report, The Customer Information Group (CIG) has established a working group on rail replacement buses. Chaired by Transport Focus, this group is looking to address some of the issues in our report at an industry level. The Smarter Information Smarter Journeys programme is exploring options for making real-time running information for planned rail replacement services available to passengers.

Our follow-up work with train operators is focussing on key issues that have the potential to make the most difference for passengers:

- Improving the quality of advance information provided online; including by ensuring **better consistency of information**, and by making it clearer **which part of the route** will have a train service and which will be operated by a rail replacement service.
- Ensuring that rail replacement services are **shown in live departure information** at stations and online so that it is clear that it is possible to travel to a destination even though trains are not running.
- Improving information provided about stations on National Rail Enquiries, including providing information about engineering works on station pages and **links to onward travel posters** that include bus-stop maps and local information.

- Ensuring that rail replacement services **display their destination**, and that passengers on the bus are informed when it is approaching a stop, especially when this is not at a station
- While realtime tracking of buses is being explored by SISJ, operators should ensure that when **buses are cancelled this is reflected in Darwin**

I am writing to request that each train operator provides us with *evidence* of what they do now and their plans to *address* any gaps. Details of the information that I am requesting are given in the annex to this letter. Please reply to [consumer@orr.gov.uk](mailto:consumer@orr.gov.uk) by **Friday 5 April 2024**. We will use the responses to this information request to consider compliance with the Customer Information Pledges and to inform our fieldwork that is scheduled for summer 2024.

I am copying this letter to John Till, in his role as Chair of CIG, Dan Taylor, in his role as Chair of the CIG replacement buses working group, and to all members of CIG.

Yours sincerely

*Jacqui Russell*

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## Information request for train operators

Provide ORR with *evidence* of what you do now and your plans to *address* any gaps. Evidence can include screenshots, weblinks or images which can be submitted separately. Otherwise please use the form to outline the current position, whether there are any gaps and if so, how you plan to address them

Expectation	Points to answer	Evidence and plans
<b>Before the start</b> of the line closure – considering information provided online		
Improve the quality of advance information provided online when major works are planned, including by ensuring better consistency with information provided by Network Rail and NRE	When dealing with major line closures lasting a week or more, do you normally create a specific webpage that provides information on the changes that are being made?	
	Is this page available when the closure period appears in journey planners, even if updated later, or at a different milestone? [D1, D3]	
	Is your webpage linked to relevant Network Rail and NRE webpages and using recognisable, consistent descriptions and branding for the works?	
	Are you working with Network Rail to ensure that press releases are issued when information is complete and consistent?	
	Do you provide maps showing how the route is affected, e.g. which part of the route will be buses and which will be trains?	

Expectation	Points to answer	Evidence and plans
	Do you provide bus stop location information in your advance publicity? If not, how can passengers find out where the bus will stop?	
	Are the links to “onward travel maps” or similar local area information working on both NRE and your station pages?	
<b>During the works</b> – considering information provided at stations and online		
Ensure that it is clear to passengers that although part of the network is closed it is still possible to reach the normal destinations for that route	Do you provide maps showing how the route is affected, e.g. which part of the route is buses and which is trains?	
	How do you indicate to passengers at the station that the train is not following its normal route and a change to a bus will be required for some destinations, e.g. what is shown on CIS displays?	
	Where the replacement requires train–bus–train how do you ensure that passengers at the origin station are aware of how to complete their journey?	
	Do bus departures from that station appear on station summary of departure screens?	
	Do bus departures appear on your website live departures including Journeycheck where used?	

Expectation	Points to answer	Evidence and plans
	Do bus departures appear on your app live departures?	
	In your rainbow boards or service indicator how do you show that part of your network is closed and buses are in use?	
	Where bus journeys are cancelled are these entered into Darwin?	
During the works - On the bus		
Rail replacement buses must display their destination [D7] [G2]	How do you ensure that buses display their destination?	
	What information do you display on the buses, e.g. logo, name, destination, calling points and in what format e.g. electronic, paper?	
	How do you ensure that passengers are aware that they are arriving at a station stop, especially if this is not at a station?	