



UIC PASSENGER DEPARTMENT
**How to improve the attractiveness of
Commuter and Regional Train Services
in post Covid-19 Era**

March 2023



INTERNATIONAL UNION
OF RAILWAYS

How to improve the attractiveness of Commuter and Regional Train Services in post Covid-19 Era

UIC Commuter and Regional Train Services Sector (CRTS) with the technical support of Polytechnic University of Madrid (UPM).

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With the contribution of UIC CRTS Sector Members

ISBN 978-2-7461-3264-1

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Forewords

The development of railways has always been linked to the needs of mass transport and fast communications of both goods and people.

Commuter and regional train services is a very peculiar sector as it is not completely besides a business-oriented approach, since most of the service are covered by a public service obligation's contract, where revenues are regulated by the Local Authorities and coming mainly from commuters traveling with seasonal tickets.

And Covid-19 changed our scenario!

As a side effect of Covid-19 pandemic, Commuters stopped being our first passenger and probably we will never reach former levels of revenues from seasonal tickets. So, we must look at new business options as leisure and tourist travellers. Actually, they are not new for regional trains, but it is now they have become really relevant!

CRTS group is a forum, a common place where companies can share experiences and best practices, discuss problems, attention points and opportunities.

It was hard to continue working during the pandemic, but thanks to the technology it was possible to share feelings and experiences in that period after which our discussions were focused on Covid effects and, then, on how to improve the attractiveness of CRTS in post Covid-19 era.

In 2020 we focused on how to improve the feeling that travelling by train was safe; in 2021 we focused on how to react to the changes and we could observe how strong this reaction was in all the companies; and 2022 the activity was dedicated to a particular kind of passenger: the young generation, also related to the EU program that was dedicated to European Youth Year.

Within the UIC CRTS sector we investigated this field in three actions: (1) a survey, (2) a video challenge (involving young people from 15 to 29-years-old) to describe visually how and why it is cool to travel by train, (3) a Design Thinking Session held in Paris in collaboration with Universidad Politécnica de Madrid.

The results were presented in a workshop linked to the 5th Commuter and Regional Train Services Training, that took place in Paris from 26 to 28 October 2022.

CRTS organizes every year this training, for stakeholders interested in being updating to the most important themes regarding commuter and regional train services from an international point of view.

So... I am very glad to be able to share the results of our work during 2022 on CRTS group, that could not have been possible with the contribution of its members: I am sure that the reader, despite its side of the business, will find some insights, views and information directly linked to its daily activities in this report that also collects ideas and inspirations!

Let me finish by inviting you join us and to share with UIC CRTS your points of view and considerations on this report and join us to share your experiences and best practices.

I would be glad to welcome you at CRTS meetings and establish a first-hand fruitful discussion and I am happy to invite you to the next 6th Commuter and Regional Train Services Training, that will take place in Athens from 25 to 27 October 2023.



**Federica Follesa, Commuter and Regional Train Service (CRTS) group Chairwoman
Trenitalia – Head of PSO (Public Service Obligation)’s contracts, Fares, Terms and Conditions
for the Regional Business Department**

Summary

The main objective of this report is to identify and share effective ways to improve the attractiveness of trains after the Covid-19 Pandemic crisis. It is based on a double direction analysis of the interactions between trains and customers (Figure 1).

At the beginning there is a compendium of novelties collected by academic literature as well as implemented or planned by railway operators. Then, it presents a complete set of recommendations, suggestions and opinions coming from different stakeholders through five qualitative studies. As a result, the actions and good practices proposed to improve railway attractiveness have been contrasted both from the demand and the service supply side.

Related to the state of the art, more than 50 papers including cases studies around the world have been consulted allowing to stablish five main thresholds on current railways attractiveness research:

- **High level Operation** is the most common topic, focused on new technologies applications and intelligent systems implementations.
- The improvement of **High-Speed Mobility** becomes by itself one of the most powerful element to increase rail attractiveness.
- Moreover, recent trends, such as the **Cultural Added Value** generated when travelling by train and the **Sustainability Concern, mainly of young people**, define railways as a “fashion transport mode” for the new generations.
- In addition, railways **Tourism Inducement** effects studies are increasing in importance.

These five aspects are already present on UIC Working Groups plans and strategies for recovery and attractiveness’ improvement after Covid-19. **CEMP** and **CRTS** members are developing on their respective territories new services and products to attract new customers online with the trends registered on literature review. For example, Danish app’s innovations as *Kørmil* or Chinese touristic passes and services as “Panda Express”. As well, stations, as Japan station’s international hub, are able to meet culture and business exchanges and promotion of sustainable benefits.

The most tangible contributions of the report come when contrasting the above results with those obtained from the five qualitative studies launched by the UIC, two surveys, a video-contest, a workshops and a Round Table in the framework of “The cool project”.

The questions and works addressed mainly to the new generations indicate that for young people:

- The main concern to improve the attractiveness of rail is the **Reduction of Prices** and the **Offer of Passes or Discounts**.

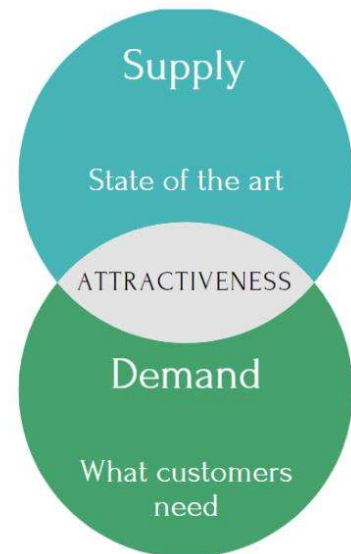


Figure 1: Report's work methodology scope

- **High Level Operation** could be quite attractive, and it's really demanded, in terms of service **Comfort**, **Communication** routes or **Connections** and **Itineraries** proposed.
- **Cultural Benefits** and **social externalities** of rail are taken into account when travelling
- **Knowledge of the Landscape and Territory allowing** to improve customer experience are appreciated.
- There is **Sustainability** concern when travelling.
- **Leisure and Entertainment** are very important to attract new customers.

Ultimately, the report notes the correspondence between the general trend set by the academic literature and the expectation of customers with the services currently offered and planned in the near future. Supply and demand are at close levels, but this does not mean success but a path to continue working on.

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Published by: UIC - Passenger Department
Director of publication: Vanessa Perez Miranda
Cover and layout: Ludovic Wattignies
Photo credit: UIC, Adobe Stock
Printing: UIC

ISBN 978-2-7461-3264-1
Copyright deposit: March 2023

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