

DRIVER-ONLY TRAINS : THE USERS' POINT OF VIEW

Should trains be operated by just one person?

What about the point of view of the rail user, whether passenger or freight customer?

The Railway Development Society and its many associated local users' groups here put the users' point of view. We think the following points should be borne in mind:

FREIGHT TRAINS

It is technically possible for certain freight trains to be operated by one person. In these cases, Driver-Only Operation should go ahead -but there is also a strong case for radio control between driver and signalman. The weight of responsibility on the driver is greater and must be recognised by management with appropriate pay and conditions.

Certain freight trains are less safe when operated by one person, and in such cases a second person is needed on the train. However, the Railway Development Society recognises that Driver-Only Operation of trains will open up many more opportunities for rail, allow British Rail to gain a larger share of a very competitive market and take many heavy lorries off the road.

PASSENGER TRAINS

1. British Rail's current proposal is to remove guards on some suburban trains. BR's Eastern Region has said that guards would not be removed from other trains "in the foreseeable future."

2. It is technically possible for newly-built suburban passenger trains to be operated by one person.

3. If, however, a train is operated by one person, there is an increased risk of vandalism, hooliganism and especially fare evasion.

4. British Rail could lose revenue from parcels and cycle traffic. (Already cycles are banned from Driver-Only trains between Bedford and London - and BR's own research shows that fewer restrictions on cycles would increase passenger revenue.)

5. As a quarter of BR's stations are unstaffed, and some others only partially staffed, a second member of staff on the train has a useful role in customer relations, passenger comfort and revenue protection.

6. **WE SAY:** (a) Driver-Only Operation is not acceptable on any Inter-City or long-distance train.

(b) Driver-Only Operation is not suitable for Paytrain services except perhaps in very special circumstances.

(c) Any Driver-Only scheme must allow for transport of cycles.

(d) Where technically possible, suburban trains *can* be Driver-Only Operated, but this does not mean that they always *should* be. Passengers should always be aware that a second member of staff *may* be on the train, for all or part of the journey - to check tickets and help ensure a smooth, swift and trouble-free journey.

The Railway Development Society is a national pro-rail pressure group and consumer body, which campaigns for better rail services and more use of rail. It is a voluntary organisation, independent of British Rail management and unions.

For information about membership, write to the Membership Promotion Officer (D.O.), 15 Athenaeum Road, London, N20 9AA.

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