

GBTA Position: Passenger Rights are a Precondition for Modal Shift to Rail in Business Travel

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Business travel in Europe represents close to [€400 billion](#) in annual spend and is under increasing pressure to decarbonise. The sector is doing its part to reduce its carbon footprint, with initiatives such as the [GBTA Sustainability Acceleration Challenge](#). Rail has an essential role to play in this, particularly for short- and medium-haul journeys. However, the lack of consistent passenger rights in rail remains a significant barrier to the wider use of rail in business travel.

Business travel is often managed travel, and companies have a duty of care towards their employees and need travel options that are reliable, predictable, and workable in practice.

Unfortunately, today's European rail system does not consistently provide this reliability, specially across borders or operators. As a result, companies default to air or road, even where rail would otherwise be viable.

The upcoming revision of the Rail Passenger Rights Regulation, as part of the Passenger Package, is a decisive opportunity to remove these barriers and unlock modal shift at scale.

The Problem: Fragmented Rights Undermine Rail as a Business Travel Option

1. No guarantee of journey completion across operators

For business travellers, continuity of journey is particularly important, as trips are usually taken for a specific and time-sensitive purpose, such as a meeting, event, or operational task. Where a delay or cancellation affects one leg of the journey, uncertainty over onward travel may negate the value of the trip as a whole.

In the case of rail, where journeys involve multiple rail segments or different transport modes, passengers today lack the certainty of end-to-end protection. Unlike air travel, where passengers benefit from well-established rights, or car rental, where reaching the destination is contractually assured; rail journeys involving connections often leave travellers in a position of uncertainty. If a connection is missed, passengers may risk losing the validity of their onward ticket, face additional costs, and receive no guaranteed assistance or re-routing.

2. Lack of through-ticketing limits protection

In addition, the limited availability of through-tickets means that even when rail journeys are technically connected, they are not legally protected as such. Protection applies only within a single contract. Multi-leg journeys often require separate bookings, and platforms cannot guarantee full journey coverage.

3. Operational fragmentation increases complexity and risk

From a booking standpoint, booking multi-operator rail journeys remains complex and often requires redirection across platforms, in particular when the trip is cross-border. This lack of integration leads to off-platform bookings, removing the duty of care and emissions tracking that companies are committed to.

The Solutions: Enabling choice, competitiveness and regional development

Introducing robust passenger rights for multi-operator rail trips and multimodal journeys would fundamentally shift the dynamic, allowing for business travellers to trust rail as a reliable option. By ensuring protection across the entire journey, it would give travellers the confidence to consider rail as part of more complex itineraries, including those involving multiple connections or operators.

Specifically, the review of the passenger rights framework should focus on the following:

1. *Ensure full journey protection regardless of ticket structure*
 - Passenger rights must apply across the entire journey, including in multi-operator itineraries
 - Missed connections due to delays must trigger re-routing and compensation rights
2. *Enable and incentivise through-ticketing*
 - Require availability of protected single tickets across operators
 - Align liability frameworks to support commercial cooperation
3. *Guarantee right to onward travel*
 - Establish a clear obligation for operators to ensure continuation of journey
 - Remove ambiguity in cross-border disruption scenarios
4. *Strengthen clarity and enforcement*
 - Simplify compensation processes
 - Ensure consistent application across Member States
 - Close enforcement gaps between national authorities

While some rail operators have expressed concerns about the implications of extended passenger rights, it is important to recognize the opportunity this presents. Greater protection would expand the addressable market for rail by enabling journeys that passengers currently avoid due to perceived risk. European travellers are already the most likely in the world to use rail on business trips (38% [reported](#) having used rail on their last trip, compared to just 8% in North America and 4% in Latin America). A more reliable passenger rights framework would certainly increase those numbers, providing an increase in market share for rail operators.

By making multi-leg rail and multimodal combinations more viable, passenger rights can drive increased usage, enhance network connectivity, and position rail as a more competitive and integral part of Europe's mobility system.