Improved internet connectivity on trains can help UK reach net zero by 2050

June 15, 2022

evo-rail has published its latest report on the need for a modal shift in the transport industry to achieve the UK's net zero goals. The report argues that improved internet connectivity on trains help in achieving that shift.

Rail transport represents under 2% of the UK's transport sector emissions while road transport on the other hand is close to 70%. A shift from dependency on cars towards a less carbon intensive mode of transport, such as rail, is essential. The only way to achieve a modal shift is to ensure that rail is the most attractive form of travel for the passenger – so that they feel empowered to make that choice. The paper argues that fast and reliable Wi-Fi is one of the key ways that rail companies can entice travellers, especially the young, to make that modal shift.

Recent polling commissioned by evo-rail found that a majority of young adults in the UK would be more likely to consider taking the train over other, more carbon-intensive, modes of transport (e.g., car, plane, etc.), if train companies provided fast, reliable on-board Wi-Fi. 64% of respondents aged 16-24 and 59% of those aged 25-34 said they were more likely to choose rail travel over other modes of transport. In total 41% of adults (16-75) in the UK would be likely to switch to rail if they had access to improved on-board

Wi-Fi.

The paper also includes a foreword by Steve Montgomery, Managing Director of First Rail, where he argues that the railways must play an important part in our journey to net zero. He states that the industry must ensure train travel is attractive to the passenger, and that reliable and superfast on-board Wi-Fi is central to this.

The polling also showed that less than half of customers were satisfied with the Wi-Fi connectivity available on their journey. There are also poor levels of confidence on the ability to access a reliable connection during the train journey. Almost a third (32%) of regular rail users are not confident that they would have access to reliable on-board Wi-Fi coverage.

evo-rail has developed rail-5G – the first multi-gigabit internet solution built for the railways. rail- 5G can dramatically improve connectivity on trains and their technology enables delivery of superfast continuous internet, 50 times today's average speeds.

With rail-5G, passengers will be able to enjoy unprecedented levels of connectivity, similar to what they are used to at home or in the office, allowing them to stream videos, make video calls and download large files among other online activities.

Simon Holmes, Managing Director, evo-rail, said: "If policymakers want to place rail at the heart of its long-term sustainable transport plans, then an emphasis needs to be placed on delivering an enhanced experience for passengers. Improving services for passengers through superfast and reliable connectivity – especially on-board Wi-Fi services – will be the keystone in rail becoming the mode of choice.

"evo-rail's solution can dramatically improve connectivity on passenger trains and the technology allows passengers to have constant, uninterrupted and consistent internet 50 times the average speed of today's mobile connection.

"The railway industry must prioritise technology which will encourage passengers back onto our railways and help with the UK's transition to net zero, while also delivering a quick return on investment. rail-5G provides a unique opportunity to do all three, all at a fraction of the cost of other mobile solutions."

Paul Tuohy, Chief Executive of Campaign for Better Transport, said: "One of the great advantages of rail travel is that passengers can use their travel time productively and enjoyably, whether for work or relaxation. Faster and more reliable Wi-Fi on trains would strengthen this advantage, encourage more people to travel by rail, and contribute to a cleaner, greener transport future."

David Sidebottom, Director at the independent watchdog Transport Focus, said: "For passengers to see rail as an attractive choice their priorities need to be met. Reliability, value for money and the provision of Wi-Fi are all important. We know from our research that only three in 10 passengers were satisfied with the internet connection they usually receive on trains. Almost three quarters of train users also told us that they think it is important that internet connectivity on trains is improved."

Click here to view the full report.