

The post-COVID railway carriage: Go-Ahead and Angel Trains plan flexible spaces for commuter and leisure travellers

May 24, 2021



Carriages that can be adjusted from 'commuter mode' to 'leisure mode' are among the concepts for the future being considered by The Go-Ahead Group, Britain's largest rail operator, as the industry prepares for a return of passengers to the network.

Working in partnership with the rolling stock company Angel Trains, Go-Ahead today releases early blueprints for train carriages that feature flexible zones to accommodate an increased provision for passenger bicycles or luggage.

Under the design concepts, sliding armrests allow seats to be switched from airline-style individual seats to communal benches for family groups. Neighbouring seats can be folded down when pressure on space is less acute to provide additional surfaces for travellers' belongings, for laptops or for food and drink.

Secure cabinets are under consideration to store folding bicycles, with vertical racks at the end of carriages capable of holding full-size bikes.

Other changes being examined include the installation of permanent hand sanitiser dispensers, antimicrobial finishes and touchless doors, to reflect greater public awareness of hygiene.

Digital displays are being designed show passengers where seats are available on board a train, and new under-seat storage areas could be created in anticipation that passengers will be carrying more luggage.

In some carriages, perch seats and benches could be created offering extra space for passengers to plug in and work on electronic devices, reflecting an increasing expectation that it should be possible to work or stay connected anywhere.

Katy Taylor, Go-Ahead's Chief Strategy and Customer Officer, said: "Passengers are returning to the railways and we expect to welcome many more back as further COVID-19 restrictions are lifted. Travel habits are changing, though, and we need to plan for the future.

"The morning rush hour is likely to be less acute, with more demand for off-peak services during the day, as people space their journeys out. Commuting patterns will be more flexible than the traditional nine-to-five for many of our passengers, and we want our trains to reflect that flexibility.

"We're anticipating a long-term increase in demand for leisure travel by rail as people are encouraged to leave their cars at home. And we believe many more of our customers will arrive at stations by bicycle, with an expectation that their bikes can be accommodated comfortably on board trains."

David Jordan, Angel Trains Chief Operating Officer said: "Angel Trains is excited to work with Go-Ahead and Seymourpowell on concepts drawn up to meet the changing needs of UK rail passengers following the COVID-19 pandemic.

"These demonstrate the flexibility of modern train interiors, and show how innovations in design can improve the comfort of travellers, while putting safety first. We look forward to working with our customers and partners to support the UK rail industry."

Photo credit: Go-Ahead