
Secretariat memorandum

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Agenda item:
LTW520
Drafted:15.03.16

GTR ticket office closures

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To inform members about Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) proposals regarding proposed ticket office closures at 41 stations in the London TravelWatch area and reducing the hours at a further 14 stations within the London TravelWatch area.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 Members are recommended to note the report and receive the petitions and consultation response outlined below.
- 2.2. Members are recommended to respond to GTR as follows:
- That the proposed 'station host' hours for model 2 and 3 stations are incorporated in the formal schedule 17 hours
 - That for those model 1 stations where transactions exceed 12 per hour during the peak, ticket offices should remain open during those hours. In addition, the staffing hours for station hosts should be included in the formal schedule 17 hours
 - That GTR reconsider the detailed implementation of plans at Tulse Hill and West Norwood stations due to the problems outlined in paragraph 5.4. In addition, GTR should bring forward revised plans for these stations for London TravelWatch's further review and comment.
 - For all stations, GTR should submit detailed implementation plans for London TravelWatch's review and comment.
- 2.3 Subject to the above, members are recommended to view the proposals as acceptable.

3 Background

- 3.1 Included in the GTR franchise that commenced in September 2014 was a commitment to review the opening hours of station ticket offices and their operating model.
- 3.2. In 2015 GTR informally approached London TravelWatch for its view of what passengers think about the process of buying tickets and how stations should be managed.
- 3.3 Subsequently, on 22 February 2016, GTR formally proposed changes to its ticket offices, with a 21 day consultation period. Their letter is attached in Appendix A.

4 The GTR proposals

- 4.1 GTR propose to introduce new working arrangements based on three models. The stations in each model are set out in GTR's letter to London TravelWatch.

Model 1

These stations (all in the London TravelWatch area) would see their ticket offices closed and replaced by a member of staff based in the ticket hall area who would act as a 'station host'. Generally, these stations have less than 12 transactions per hour at the ticket office. The 'station host' would be equipped with a mobile ticketing device and would be able to issue most tickets that are currently available at the ticket office. Station hosts would be available for longer periods than the existing ticket office hours, especially at the weekends and in the evenings with the station staffed from first to last train.

Model 2

These stations (all except four in the London TravelWatch area) would see their ticket office machines relocating to a 'station hosting point', but with the ticket office formally closed. The station 'host' would operate in the same way as in Model 1. The range of tickets currently available from the ticket office would continue to be available. Station hosts would be available for longer periods than the existing ticket office hours, especially at the weekends and in the evenings with the station staffed from first to last train. All Model 2 stations have periods when transactions exceed 12 per hour.

Model 3

These stations (14 out of 38 in the London TravelWatch area) would see their ticket offices retained during the morning peak period, but with one ticket office machine relocated to a 'station hosting point'. The range of tickets currently available from the ticket office would continue to be available. Station hosts would be visible and available seven days a week, with the station staffed from first to last train. All Model 3 stations have periods when transactions exceed 12 per hour.

5 Discussion

- 5.1 The Secretary of State has determined that, where there are fewer than 12 transactions per hour or 3 per fifteen minutes, it is not appropriate to consider closing a ticket office. London TravelWatch has a policy of not opposing proposals where the average numbers of transactions are less than this 12-per-hour (or 3-per-fifteen minutes) threshold, unless there are any other reasons for concern.
- 5.2 The 12 transactions per hour threshold was a very hard won standard by us with the DfT in the face of considerable pressure from train operators. It remains an important determinant of current policy and has served a variety of useful purposes in forcing train operators to think about closing ticket offices and what measures would need to be put in place to mitigate disbenefits to passengers. London TravelWatch should work to uphold this standard.
- 5.3 GTR state that ticket offices at Model 1 stations generally issue fewer than 12 tickets per hour. Our analysis of GTR's data shows that for most of the day, and days of the week, this is correct. However, at almost all of the stations ticket offices recorded more than this consistently on Mondays and Tuesdays between 0700 and 1000, with some stations also experiencing this on other days of the week. This is attributable to passengers purchasing weekly point to point and Travelcard season tickets. The station host would still be available to issue tickets from their mobile device throughout these periods. However, because of the volume of transactions involved, it is recommended that ticket offices in Model 1 stations remain open for the periods that they dispense more than 12 tickets per hour.
- 5.4 At some stations, notably Tulse Hill and West Norwood, the location of ticket vending machines now is problematic because they are outside the station with minimal protection from the elements, limited circulation space for a 'station host' to assist in, and are located in two separate parts of the station some distance apart at different entrances. Tulse Hill also has other issues related to personal security for passengers and staff, and congestion in the subway and at gatelines at peak times. There is very limited space in the ticket hall and it is difficult to see where a ticket vending machine might be located except in the space currently occupied by the ticket office. At both West Norwood and Tulse Hill it is recommended that further detailed work is carried out to identify mitigating measures at these stations.
- 5.5 Model 1 stations are all located within the Oyster/Contactless zones and so the majority of passengers do not need to purchase tickets from the ticket office. Oyster products are not sold from these stations.
- 5.6 Model 2 stations include 17 stations within the Oyster/Contactless area and so a significant proportion of the passengers affected by this proposal do not need to purchase tickets from the ticket office.
- 5.7 Model 3 stations are all outside the Oyster/Contactless area.
- 5.8 In terms of ticket types available at stations there will be very little change compared to now, except under model 1 stations where the use of mobile

devices will mean that some complex transactions that were previously available at ticket offices will not be feasible.

- 5.9 Model 2 stations all have periods when the number of transactions exceeds 12 per hour. However, because the proposal would see ticket office machines retained and a full range of products available, and because the hours of operation of these ticket machines is greater than currently offered, the closure of the physical ticket office would not be detrimental to the passenger. This is subject to the concerns in paragraph 5.12 below. Model 3 stations will retain ticket offices during high transaction periods.
- 5.10 In terms of principle the proposal has much to commend it, as it recognises a number of aspirations that London TravelWatch has had for improving staff availability at stations over a number of years.
- 5.11 However, the proposal does raise a fundamental question as to what constitutes a 'ticket office'. Under the proposal, Model 2 and 3 stations will continue to issue the full range of tickets from fully-functional ticket office machines. The only change is that the staff member will be located in the ticket hall rather than in the ticket office.
- 5.12 The closure of the physical ticket office implies that schedule 17 protection for these ticketing arrangements will be lost and that the hours of operation of the station host could be reduced in future without further consultation. This is a cause for significant concern. For these reasons, it is recommended that the proposed hours of operation for station hosts are incorporated into the protected schedule 17 hours.
- 5.13 Members should note however that the draft 'partnership' between TfL and the DfT envisages an increase in station staffing at stations within the London area.

6 Response to the public consultation

- 6.1 London TravelWatch conducted a public consultation between 22 February 2016 and 14 March 2016. Over 5,000 emails, postcards and letters were received from members of the public. Most were of a standard format and examples are attached as Appendix B.
- 6.2 Early on in the consultation process London TravelWatch staff and our IT support provider identified that some emails received as part of the consultation process had been sent fraudulently. This affected a small number of received emails from a single source. These have been removed from the statistics relating to the consultation response.
- 6.3 Petitions have been received from the following:
- Steve Reed OBE MP on behalf of constituents
 - Christian Peoples Alliance
 - Rail and Maritime Transport Workers Union
 - Various affected people
 - Users of Streatham Hill station

6.4 Representations have also been received from London Borough of Wandsworth, Joanne McCartney AM, Steve O'Connell AM, Lambeth councillors, Sam Gyimah MP, the Rail Maritime and Transport workers union and the Association of Public Transport Users. These are attached as Appendix C.

6.5 More details of the consultation responses will be provided at the meeting.

7 London TravelWatch priority

7.1 This issue falls within the core remit of London TravelWatch and the impact of the proposed changes will be substantial amongst the high number of current and future passengers using these stations.

8 Equalities and inclusion implications

8.1. Ticket office closures may have implications for passengers with disabilities.

9 Legal powers

9.1 Section 252A of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 places a duty upon London TravelWatch (as the London Transport Users Committee) to keep under review matters affecting the interests of the public in relation to railway passenger and station services provided wholly or partly within the London railway area, and to make representations about them to such persons as it thinks appropriate.

10 Financial implications

10.1 London TravelWatch had to take on additional resources in order to process the responses to the consultation.

Appendix A – letter from GTR outlining proposals

Appendix B – Issues raised within consultation responses

We received some bulk responses via the National Union of Rail Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) that were signed and sent in by individuals. The bulk response reads:

'Dear London TravelWatch,

I oppose the planned closure or reduction in opening hours of xxxxx station ticket office and other GTR station ticket offices. This is because i am concerned that:

- I would not be able to access the full range of tickets and services I need from a ticket machine;
- I would find it harder to obtain advice on ticket and fare options without a staffed ticket office;
- I am concerned that if there were insufficient numbers of ticket machines (due to them being in high demand or faulty) I would experience delays and the concourse would be more congested;
- I am concerned that vulnerable or less technically minded passengers, perhaps including the elderly, disabled or visitors, may be less confident using a ticket machine and could end up overspending or being deterred from travel; and
- I am concerned that leaving stations understaffed and sometimes unstaffed will make it harder to provide a safe network with CCTV left unmonitored.'

Appendix C – correspondence received from major stakeholders.