



Ms K Cox
Stakeholder Manager
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Wandsworth Council

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Our ref: HCS/JSI
Your ref:
Date: 11 March 2016

Dear Ms Cox

Consultation on proposed changes to the opening hours of ticket offices

Thank you for the opportunity to provide an input into your consultation on changes to your ticket offices, and in particular the proposals to close ticket offices in our Borough. This letter constitutes an officer-level response which will be considered by our Councillors at our Passenger Transport Liaison Group on 14 March 2016. We will endeavour to let you know the outcome of this meeting the following day.

The following stations are in our borough: Battersea Park, Wandsworth Common, and Balham. In addition, whilst the following stations are just outside our borough, they serve our residents and businesses: Tooting (in the London Borough of Merton), and Streatham Common (in the London Borough of Lambeth).

We fully appreciate your need to make the best use of your resources at each station, and we welcome the proposal that all the affected stations would be staffed from the very first to the last train, 7 days a week, with facilities such as waiting rooms being open for longer, and with "Station Hosts" available to answer customer queries, provide advice and assist with ticket purchase. We also appreciate that your proposals are much more flexible than Transport for London's policy of closing virtually all their ticket offices on London Underground. However, we are concerned that many travellers may be disadvantaged by certain aspects of your proposals unless you can address their particular needs.

Ticket offices are currently the gateway to not only your network, but to the national rail system to the extremities of England, Scotland and Wales. Many ordinary travellers have little concept of the network, how to access it, alternative routes, fares and destinations. Without a known reference and inquiry point in the form of a

staffed ticket office, travellers may be discouraged from using the train. This may be particularly applicable for off-peak travel, which tends to be more flexible and optional, which is exactly the time you need to encourage travel on your trains when they are more likely to have spare capacity.

We can see that you have partially addressed our concerns in your proposal for station hosting points for "Model 2" stations like Balham, which would keep the facility at a known location on the station. But we cannot see the advantage of this arrangement over the existing, as the hosting point must surely be on the public side of the ticket barriers in the vicinity of the ticket office, as otherwise customers will need a ticket or pass to get through the barriers to reach the hosting point. I understand from your stakeholder conference on 7th March that this proposal is not aiming to reduce staffing, and that there would still be staff available at the barriers.

We have particular concerns over your proposals for "Model 1" stations, ie Battersea Park, Wandsworth Common, Streatham Common and Tooting Stations:-

1. In future it will not be possible to buy "add-on" tickets for rail journeys extending beyond the TfL boundary for those using Oyster Cards or Freedom Passes, or extensions beyond the limits of season tickets. This will be a major disincentive to people to make additional use of train services, contrary to national and local policies to encourage the use of public transport. Your ticket machines need to be reprogrammed to enable Oystercard /Travelcard holders to purchase the additional element when they need to journey beyond their Travelcard limits.
2. As mentioned above, the ticket offices currently provide a known location to find staff for assistance: once these are gone, staff would be free to move around the station. At the "Model 1" stations, and staff would not necessarily stay on the concourse as stated in your consultation document. These are large stations, and they may get called anywhere, and it will be difficult or impossible (eg Battersea Park and Tooting) to see from the station entrance into the station to establish their whereabouts. This will be a particular problem when ticket barriers are closed, thus preventing freedom of movement around the station, and for the mobility or visually impaired, who are even more restricted in their movement. It will, therefore, be important for a help point or some form of communication to be located within the entrance area of the station so as to enable first-time users, the disabled and others unsure of station arrangements to summon help.

At Wandsworth Common Station there is often a queue at the ticket machines, even when the ticket office is manned, frequently caused by travellers having difficulty in understanding how to operate the ticket machines. Consequently we would ask, if you decide to progress your proposals, that additional machines are provided, and that these new machines should be clearer and easier to use.

Finally, we would like to know your plans for the ticket offices once they do close. As you may know, Battersea Park Station is a listed building, and therefore listed building consent may be required to alter or remove this office.

We look forward to hearing your response to our concerns. Please contact us if you have any queries on this response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'John Stone', with a stylized, cursive script.

John Stone
Head of Spatial Planning and Transportation

cc. stationchanges@gtrailway.com
Mr T Bellenger, Director, Policy and Investigation, London TravelWatch

