

TfL Response to Mayoral review of ticket office closures

December 2016

1 Background

- 1.1 On 12 September 2016, London TravelWatch launched a six-week review into the customer impact of the Tube ticket office closures part of our Fit for the Future – Stations (FftFS) programme. This delivered on a Mayoral manifesto pledge to examine the customer impact of the ticket office closures, and to make recommendations for areas of improvement.
- 1.2 The London TravelWatch review identifies a number of issues experienced by our customers at Tube stations. This document organises our response to each recommendation into three thematic areas.
- 1.3 The themes covered are:
 - A. Staff visibility and availability** – ensuring our stations feel safe and secure, with visible and available staff.
 - B. Customer assistance** – making it easier to travel around the network and to get help when needed.
 - C. Purchasing tickets for travel** – making sure customers can purchase the tickets that they need.
- 1.4 Each recommendation made by London TravelWatch is reflected within these themes, alongside our response and the actions we will take to ensure we are delivering world-class customer service for all Tube customers.
- 1.5 While staffing levels, rosters and operational processes were outside of the terms of reference for the review, we have looked at ways to address concerns relate to these matters within the action plan. As agreed during FftFS consultation, there were plans for a post-implementation review with trade unions in early 2017. Recognising that there are improvements to be made to the station operating model, we have accelerated the first phase of this assessment and worked jointly with trade unions on review of staffing numbers and deployment. This commenced on 6 December and is being conducted with the support of ACAS. It is due to report initial findings and any scope for future work around the time of the 15 December Board meeting.
- 1.6 Attachment 1 details each London TravelWatch recommendation and our proposed action.

2 Theme one: Staff visibility and availability

- 2.1 London TravelWatch found that staff availability and visibility is highly important to assist customers travelling around the Tube network, and to ensure that they feel safe and secure.
- 2.2 It is clear that we need to do more to make sure that all customers can speak to a member of staff where and when they need to, and that staff can continue to provide excellent levels of customer service.

3 Staff availability

- 3.1 **London TravelWatch recommendation:** Staff should be visible in stations and available to assist passengers
- 3.2 We recognise that there is more to do to improve the visibility of staff at stations, particularly at our smaller and single-staffed stations.
- 3.3 As London TravelWatch have highlighted, there are times when customers may assume there are no staff at the station if they have been called away from the ticket hall, even if the station is staffed at the time. This could be to assist a visually impaired customer through the station and onto a train, or to carry out essential security checks.

Actions:

- A. A joint working group involving trade unions and supported by ACAS commenced a review of staffing numbers and deployment on 6 December. Initial findings and any scope for future work are due around the time of the 15 December TfL Board meeting (immediately).
- B. We are developing local action plans to improve staff visibility. We will prioritise stations where immediate action is needed, based on London TravelWatch's and our own research. At each station, and at groups of nearby stations, we are looking at ways to improve staff presence including by amending rosters and local work practices (immediately, with a review of progress in March).
- C. We will minimise the amount of time that station staff members are away from a ticket hall by reviewing what tasks could be completed in a ticket hall (immediately).
- D. We will introduce improved information and signs at stations, making it clearer to customers how to get assistance if a member of staff is not immediately visible. We will explore ways to make it clearer to customers that all our staff are able to provide assistance. This will be tested as part of the focal point trials detailed in section five (immediately).

4 Staff uniforms

- 4.1 **London TravelWatch recommendation:** Uniforms should be improved to increase staff visibility
- 4.2 The new Tube uniform was designed to be more standardised and recognisable for our customers, and practical for our staff. However, we recognise that in busy ticket halls it can be difficult to easily pick out a member of staff in a crowd.

Actions:

- A.** We will provide station staff with a high visibility garment (for example, a red vest) to help customers find them at busy stations. We will undertake customer testing to ensure that this garment increases visibility, particularly for those with accessibility requirements. Following testing with customers and staff, we will accelerate procurement, manufacturing, and delivery, with the aim of having the garment in place by August 2017. During the testing process, we will determine if interim solutions are viable.
- B.** We are introducing new cases to make it easier for staff to carry their handheld devices and use these to assist customers. These are currently being trialled and will be rolled out March 2017.

5 Lack of a focal point at stations

- 5.1 **London TravelWatch recommendation:** There should be a focal point in stations where passengers can find staff
- 5.2 There are currently three key areas where customers can find information:
- Information points
 - Staff at ticket machines
 - Staff at gatelines.
- 5.3 We recognise from London TravelWatch's research that some customers may prefer one to be prioritised to reduce confusion about where to find staff in stations.
- 5.4 To address this we are carrying out a series of trials at a variety of stations to evaluate what works best for customers. The outcome will be tailored to each station's requirements and we will look at a number of measures to address the issue London TravelWatch has highlighted.

Actions:

- A.** We are trialling a staffed information point at Westminster Tube station. This builds on an initial trial in 2015 as an area where customers can always speak to a member of staff, as well as getting leaflets and other printed information (Began November 2016, first phase to report January 2017).

- B.** Following the initial Westminster trial, we will immediately start trials at additional stations across the network to assess how focal points could work in different stations. In total we will test focal points at three stations from each category of station (12 in total):
- a. Gateways (for example, Paddington);
 - b. Destinations (for example, Stratford);
 - c. Metros (for example, Brixton); and
 - d. Locals (for example, Moor Park).

We will trial different hours of operation, locations, how these are signed, and how staff are positioned at these points (commence December 2016 to report March 2017).

6 Customer safety

- 6.1 **London TravelWatch recommendation:** Staff should also be visible as their presence is of fundamental importance to passenger feelings of safety.
- 6.2 The safety of our customers and staff is our top priority and we will make immediate changes to ensure that customers feel safe in our stations.
- 6.3 While our stations are staffed throughout the day, we will do more to improve the visibility of our staff.

Actions:

In addition to the actions outlined under 'staff availability' and 'staff uniform' we will also take the following actions to address the safety concerns highlighted by London TravelWatch.

- A.** We will use our customer communications and marketing channels to increase awareness of staffing levels and reassure customers on safety and security (immediately).
- B.** We will review the safety and security of our stations to determine if improvements need to be made, for example, through revised CCTV coverage or improved lighting (commence December 2016, to report planned improvements February 2017).

7 'Grouping' of staff can make it difficult for customers to ask questions

- 7.1 **London TravelWatch recommendation:** Staff should avoid grouping together where possible, and always be proactively looking for passengers who require assistance

- 7.2 We will raise awareness amongst staff that that where possible, they should avoid grouping together, as this may make some customers feel less able to approach them to ask for assistance.

Actions:

- A. We will issue updated guidance to encourage our staff to remain aware of customer needs and alert to customers needing assistance (immediately).
- B. We will include information on the above in station staff training and continuous development for both new and existing staff (design to start immediately, with material ready for use in next round of training in March 2017).
- C. We assess whether mystery shopping can be used to identify staff grouping hotspots, thereby aiding the development of tailored action plans at poorer performing stations (February 2017).

8 Staff local knowledge

- 8.1 **London TravelWatch recommendation:** Staff should have local knowledge of stations at which they work, and should use their iPads to assist passengers with onward journeys where necessary.
- 8.2 Following staff moves earlier this year some staff members have not yet built up as comprehensive a local knowledge as they had at their previous locations. We know our staff want to be as helpful as possible to customers, and we will take steps to ensure that they have the tools they need to do this.
- 8.3 We will also continue to work with local residents and community groups around our stations to promote partnership working and our stations positions in the local communities.

Actions:

- A. We will ensure staff have the information that they need to continue to provide excellent customer service. We will review the local information already contained on their hand-held devices to ensure that it is comprehensive and adequate for their needs (immediately).

9 Low levels of awareness of Visitor Centres

- 9.1 **London TravelWatch recommendation:** Visitor Centre messaging, branding and opening hours should be adjusted to increase usage
- 9.2 Visitor Centres are designed to provide transport and visitor information and tickets to first-time and infrequent customers and by doing so support the smooth operation of the station. We recognise that we need to do more to raise awareness of our Visitor Centres, both before visitors arrive and once they are in London.

Actions:

- A.** We will work with London and Partners to raise awareness of Visitor Centres before customers begin their trips, for example, by including more information online (immediately).
- B.** We will improve signage to Visitor Centres, particularly at stations with more than one ticket hall and working with Network Rail to improve the signage on National Rail concourses. We will also investigate other opportunities to promote Visitor Centres on Tube maps and other customer information (February, with opportunities to use other information products dependent on the timing of print runs).
- C.** We will review Visitor Centre opening hours and change these as needed to ensure we are meeting the needs of our visitors (immediately).

10 Theme two: Customer Assistance

- 10.1 It is clear from London TravelWatch's research that inconsistencies in service can create anxiety among customers, particularly those with accessibility needs.
- 10.2 We will take immediate action to prioritise personal assistance for those who need it.

11 Inconsistencies with the Turn Up and Go process

- 11.1 **London TravelWatch recommendation:** Assistance should be consistently available, which is particularly important for passengers with disabilities, or unfamiliar users of the network.
- 11.2 'Turn Up and Go' is the process where staff assist customers through a station and ring ahead to the destination station to make sure a customer is met and assisted.
- 11.3 The FftFS programme introduced a standardised process for staff in an attempt to improve the existing Turn Up and Go process.
- 11.4 Given the issues identified by London TravelWatch, we will take immediate steps to review the 'Turn Up and Go' process to identify where problems are occurring and make sure this service always works for our customers.

Actions

- A.** We will immediately review how and where this process is not working and fix or amend the process as appropriate (immediately).
- B.** We will determine whether staff iPads can be used to help improve the consistency of the service, for example by implementing a process where staff confirm they have called through to the destination station (immediately).

- C. We will work with our stakeholder groups, for example accessibility groups, to reassure their members that all staff can assist customers (immediately).

12 Induction/hearing loops

- 12.1 **London TravelWatch recommendation:** Hearing loops should be available and clearly signposted in stations.
- 12.2 While there are induction loops at all stations, we recognise that the removal of ticket offices has left a gap at some stations for hearing impaired customers to have face to face conversations with staff.
- 12.3 Help points include hearing loops, however this does not allow for face to face conversations. Where stations have a Service Control Point, the induction loop is located at the window.

Actions:

- A. We are trialling new portable hearing loops to provide this hearing link for customers. Following this trial we will ensure that these are linked to focal points, help points, or other easy to access locations for customers (trial to report January 2017 with findings incorporated into focal point trial outcomes in March 2017).
- B. We will improve the information on help points to highlight that these all contain induction loops (January 2017).
- C. We will launch an internal campaign to highlight to staff that their handheld devices can be used to communicate with customers with hearing impaired customers (immediately).

13 Inconsistent approach to how Help Points are answered

- 13.1 **London TravelWatch recommendation:** Help point routing procedures should be consistent to ensure that calls are always answered.
- 13.2 As London TravelWatch have highlighted, there is inconsistency in the way we respond to requests made at help points.
- 13.3 With the restrictions presented by the old and varied help point technology we now have a new help point strategy which will address the issues raised by London TravelWatch.
- 13.4 This will include making the best use of help points by ensuring they are in the right place, and using new technology to replace or complement our existing assets.

Actions:

- A. We will review and improve station information to highlight the location of help points (immediately).

- B. We will move help points if these are not in the most useful place for customers and operational requirements (immediately).
- C. We will explore using new technology to replace our existing help points, including using WiFi, customer mobile devices, and staff mobile devices, to provide a better solution for customers (June 2017).

14 Theme Three: Purchasing tickets for travel

- 14.1 While the majority of ticket functions are still available, London TravelWatch's findings indicate that we need to do more to ensure that customers know which tickets they can purchase from ticket machines.
- 14.2 Where possible we will increase the number of different types of tickets that customers can purchase on a ticket machine.
- 14.3 While not included as a specific recommendation, London TravelWatch note that the availability of ticket machines has slightly declined. While the reliability of the machines is good, some ticket machines are not serviced as frequently as before. We will work with staff to create plans to address this to improve the availability of our machines.
- 14.4 We will also develop a new mobile application to help customers self-serve and purchase more tickets before travel. This should relieve pressure on ticket machines which in turn should improve the availability of these for customers.

15 Customers are unaware of the different type of tickets available

- 15.1 **London TravelWatch Recommendation:** Signage on ticket machines should be updated, and passengers informed of the different functions available at the different machine types.
- 15.2 We will improve the customer information on our ticket machines to assist customers and make them aware of the range of functions that they can carry out. This is in addition to many of the staff availability and visibility issues addressed earlier in this report.

Actions:

- A. We will update signage on our ticket machines where needed to make sure that the differences between machine types are made clear to customers (March 2017).
- B. We will amend our fare posters to include information on alternative ways to purchase tickets, for example Online or via Contactless (*May 2017, in line with fares revision*).

16 Customers cannot purchase a number of ticket types from ticket machines.

- 16.1 **London TravelWatch Recommendation:** Ticket machines should be updated to provide a wider range of functionality.

Issues raised:

- 16.2 **Boundary extension tickets and National Rail discounts:** Previously customers were able to purchase boundary extensions and obtain National Rail discounts at ticket offices and we are now taking immediate steps to improve our ticket machines to offer this for customers.
- 16.3 **Oyster print outs:** Customers can view their journey history online and on ticket machines at stations, and if required, a print out can be requested via the customer service centre. Customers can also sign up to receive their journey statements automatically every week if they register for Oyster online. Our improved online offer and the new ticketing app will also make it easier for customers to access their journey history.
- 16.4 **Tickets for future travel:** We recognise that there are a number of tickets that customers want to purchase from ticket machines. While Day, Weekly and Monthly Travelcards are available in advance, advance single and return tickets were not available in ticket offices and are not available on ticket machines. We are currently working with train operators and the Department for Transport to improve ticketing integration across the south-east by seeking to build on the existing interoperability achieved by Oyster, contactless and ITSO.
- 16.5 **Oyster top ups:** Ticket machines already allow any cash value (in coins and notes) to be used to top up pay as you go credit. This benefits low income customers who may not have access to a bank account. Those wishing to top up their pay as you go credit and pay using a bank card could find switching to using their contactless card for pay as you go travel a suitable alternative.

Actions:

- A.** We are trialling boundary extensions at Buckhurst Hill. We plan to launch a phased introduction of improved boundary extensions in 2017 (May 2017).
- B.** We began trialling the sale of National Rail discounts on LU/NR through-tickets in September 2016. We plan to launch a phased introduction of National Rail discounts in 2017, commencing with the first 70 stations in January 2017.
- C.** We will introduce a new ticketing mobile application for customers to improve their ability to self-serve and access tickets more easily (this is currently being designed and trialled to be introduced before the end of 2017).

- D. Combined with the new app we are planning for a new way for customers to purchase tickets online, and pick these up within 30 mins of purchase (this is currently being designed and trialled to be introduced before the end of 2017).

17 Customers can no longer purchase annual season tickets from ticket machines

- 17.1 **London TravelWatch Recommendation:** Annual season tickets should be made available on ticket machines
- 17.2 Customers unable to access the internet can buy an annual ticket through TfL Customer Services (0343 222 1234) for collection at a station, or at Visitor Centres.
- 17.3 While we do not plan to sell annuals on ticket machines, we will introduce improvements to the ticket purchasing process to make it easier to purchase a range of tickets online. We will also improve communications for customers to make it clearer how the new process works.

Actions:

- A. We will issue email reminders to customers on how to purchase annual travelcards (*December 2016*).

18 There is a 48 hour restriction in obtaining refunds from Oystercards

- 18.1 **London TravelWatch Recommendation:** The 48 hour restriction on Oyster card refunds should be lifted.
- 18.2 The restrictions were introduced in response to fraudsters using stolen or cloned credit or debit cards to buy large numbers of Oyster cards that were then cancelled to get refunds. The time-delay allows us time to identify and stop such fraudulent activity.
- 18.3 Refunds can be obtained without restriction by calling TfL customer services, or at visitor centres.
- 18.4 We will reduce the duration of this restriction to make this easier for customers, while keeping a short restriction in place to minimise fraud on the network.
- 18.5 Once introduced, we will also aim to introduce exceptions to the 24 hour rule, for example so that we could give immediate refunds at Stanmore on Wembley event days. This is a complex change that requires careful consideration of fraud risks.

Actions:

- A.** Reduce the restriction to 24 hours (to be completed by the end of 2017, sooner if possible).
- B.** Update the ticket machine screens to make customers aware of this restriction before they purchase a new Oystercard (targeting May 2017, but timing linked to work programme for action A).

Attachment 1

London TravelWatch Recommendation	Action
Staff should be visible in stations and available to assist passengers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Staffing review with the Trade Union (6 – 13 December) B. Local action plans to improve staff visibility (immediately) C. Enable more staff tasks to be carried out in the ticket hall (immediately) D. Improve customer information in stations (immediately)
Staff should also be visible as their presence is of fundamental importance to passenger feelings of safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Launch marketing campaign on customer safety (immediately) B. Improve CCTV or lighting coverage in stations (immediately)
There should be a focal point in stations where passengers can find staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Trial how this would work, beginning at Westminster Tube station (began November 2016) B. Wider trial at a wider range of stations before introducing a solution across the network (immediately)
Assistance should be consistently available, which is particularly important for passengers with disabilities, or unfamiliar users of the network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Review and improve the 'Turn Up and Go' process (immediately) B. Plan to use staff iPads to help staff assisting customers (immediately) C. Targeted work with accessibility stakeholders (immediately)
Uniforms should be improved to increase staff visibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. We will provide station staff with a high visibility garment, to be tested with customers and staff (August) B. We are trialling new cases to make it easier for staff to carry their iPad cases (March)
Staff should avoid grouping together where possible, and always be proactively looking for passengers who require assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Remind our staff of the importance of proactively looking for passengers (immediately) B. Include this information in staff training (March) C. Measure this through our mystery

	shopping to allow us to identify and address this more easily (February)
Staff should have local knowledge of stations at which they work, and should use their iPads to assist passengers with onward journeys where necessary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Review the local information staff get on their hand-held devices (immediately) B. We are trialling new cases to make it easier for staff to carry their iPad cases (March)
Signage on ticket machines should be updated, and passengers informed of the different functions available at the different machine types.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Update signage on ticket machines to make this clearer (March) B. Amend our fare posters to include information on alternative ways to pay (May)
Ticket machines should be updated to provide a wider range of functionality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Trial boundary extension tickets (Began November, to be implemented May) B. Trial of National Rail discounts (Began in September) C. Launch a new mobile application so customers have easy access to a range of tickets (by end 2017) D. Allow customers to purchase tickets over the phone or online and pick these up at stations.
Annual season tickets should be made available on ticket machines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Remind customers how to purchase annual tickets online or by phone (December)
The 48 hour restriction on Oyster card refunds should be lifted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Reduce the restriction to 24 hours (by the end of 2017) B. Update the ticket machine screens to make customers aware of this (May 2017)
Help point routing procedures should be consistent to ensure that calls are always answered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Improve the signage to help points (immediately) B. Move help points to better locations (immediately) C. Look at introducing new, better technology to improve the way help points work (June)

<p>Hearing loops should be available and clearly signposted in stations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Trial portable hearing loops (trial to report January 2017) B. Let customers know that all help points have hearing loops (January) C. Highlight to staff that they can use their handheld devices to communicate with hearing impaired customers (immediately)
<p>Visitor Centre messaging, branding and opening hours should be adjusted to increase usage</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Promote Visitor Centres to more customers (immediately) B. Improve the signage to Visitor Centres (February, with opportunities to use other information products dependent on the timing of print runs). C. Review Visitor Centre opening hours (immediately)