Policy committee
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Secretariat memorandum

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London Underground ticket office closures

1 Purpose of report

1.1 To advise the Board of the results from the survey London TravelWatch carried out regarding how passengers currently buy tickets from London Underground stations.

2 Information

2.1 Transport for London (TfL) has outlined a number of far reaching changes that they plan to make to the London Underground network from 2015; under their “Future of the Tube” programme.

2.2 TfL’s background papers can be found at: - http://www.tfl.gov.uk/campaign/tube-improvements/the-future-of-the-tube

2.3 These papers set out TfL’s plans to close all ticket offices on the Underground network, to introduce a night tube service on some lines and days, and to bring in additional new trains. These are each individual schemes which can be implemented without the others. Neither TfL nor London Underground has consulted passengers on any of these schemes.

2.4 London TravelWatch undertook a survey on how passengers currently purchase tickets, along with any other comments they may have on the proposals. This will allow it to take the experiences of the travelling public into account when it responds to TfL. This survey was hosted by Survey Monkey and linked from the London TravelWatch website. The survey ran from 15th August 2014 until 28th September 2014.

2.5 The survey was designed to gain evidence regarding how passengers currently use ticket offices (and ticket vending machines), as well as to examine any station specific issues that may not have been accounted for to date. We are still analysing the station specific comments that we have received.

2.6 The survey data was analysed independently by Ipsos MORI, with the results supplied to us on the 5th November 2014. 2052 valid[1] responses were

[1] 7 responses were received from Under-16s. These were not included as Ipsos MORI require parental consent to include Under 16s in their analysis

completed, with responses relating to 251 out of the 269 London Underground stations received.

2.7 TfL has categorised each of their stations, with stations falling under Gateway, Destination, Metro, Local A or Local B. There are also seven stations outside the scope of the plans, as the National Rail operator at these stations controls the ticket office. Which category a station falls under can generally be seen to relate to how much staffing is required at the station, with Gateway stations requiring more staffing than a Local station for example. An explanation of each category, along with a map detailing which stations belong to which category can be found at https://fitforthefuture.tfl.gov.uk/future-stations/

2.8 London TravelWatch continues to analyse the proposals further, with demographic splits as well as ticket sales data remaining to analyse, along with staffing levels. This report is a summary of the data analysed to date, which has concentrated on categorisation of stations. Further analysis is needed on station by station specific issues, based on the results of our survey.

2.9 Appendix A is Ipsos MORI's report on their analysis of the responses, which includes the survey questions asked, as well as the responses to these. Appendix B lists the stations that received posters to promote the survey, and Appendix C shows the comparison of ticket purchasing outlets before and after the proposed changes, along with station entry figures for each station.

3 Recommendation

3.1 That London TravelWatch recommend to Transport for London that the following station categories are changed:

- Oxford Circus, Waterloo and London Bridge from Destination to Gateway
- Covent Garden, Vauxhall, Tower Hill and Charing Cross from Metro to Destination
- Leyton, Leytonstone and West Hampstead from Local to Metro.

These recommendations are not exclusive, there may be further additional recommendations following further analysis.

3.2 That London TravelWatch recommend to Transport for London that they improve awareness of the proposals, as the public do not appear to understand the details and implications of the proposals at present. TfL should work with London TravelWatch to ensure that passengers are kept informed and have an opportunity to have their say.

3.3 That the Board consider any other responses to the ticket office closure programme in the light of the evidence collected.

4 Impact on passengers

4.1 The proposals to close all ticket offices on the London Underground network will have extremely far reaching impacts on passengers. Our recent research on how passengers wish to buy their tickets, "Passengers' ticket purchasing and journey experiences", published in July 2013[2], clearly demonstrated the strong

[2] **http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/documents/get_lob?id=3710&field=file**

feeling that passengers place significant value on the presence of ticket offices, and while additional multi-functional staff may be of benefit in some circumstances, this was usually considered to be of benefit only in addition to the ticket office staff, or with the possibility to conclude transactions via a ticket office counter. Ticket offices were considered to be the focal point of a station, where staff assistance could always be found, and were usually considered to be more valuable for assistance and problem solving than the actual purchasing of tickets. During the focus groups for our additional research from August 2013, "Value for money on London's transport services: what consumers think"[3] passengers also considered ticket offices to contribute to the increased value for money present on London Underground as opposed to some National Rail stations which do not have ticket offices.

4.2 In addition to the analysis by Ipsos MORI, London TravelWatch additionally has analysed as much data as we have been able to obtain on the number and type of ticket sales at present at each station, along with the change in proposed staffing levels. We have analysed the number of ticket purchasing outlets (ticket office windows plus ticket vending machines) at present, and compared this to the number of ticket machines proposed after the ticket office has closed. We have also compared the proposals to the number of passengers at each station on 2013 data. This has highlighted a number of stations that we feel would be more appropriate in a different category.

4.3 We have used station entry figures as the proxy to compare all stations equally for demand levels. This was used as our survey showed that the majority of interactions between passengers and the ticket office do not actually result in a ticket being purchased, and so would not be accounted for in ticket sales figures. It is true that the use of station entry figures will also under-count the level of demand for ticket offices, as resolving ticket problems and getting information from staff exceeded the number of tickets bought by some distance in our survey, and these interactions would not be seen in either ticket sales or station entry figures.

4.4 It is clear from our Question 13 (a free form question for any other comments) that a substantial proportion of passengers believe that the closure of ticket offices would lead to entirely unstaffed stations. From this it is clear that public awareness of the detail of the scheme is limited, and TfL must do more to inform the public of what is actually being proposed.

4.5 We have undertaken further analysis on publically available data from TfL's website in order to recommend to TfL which stations we feel could benefit from a change in categorisation. TfL have provided a station by station review, with proposed staffing levels, numbers of ticket office windows and ticket machines, and number of tenancies (retail outlets within the station). These are available from https://fitforthefuture.tfl.gov.uk/taking-it-station-by-station/

4.6 Appendix C shows our analysis of each station by fare zone, proposed station category, current number of ticket office windows and ticket vending machines, proposed number of ticket vending machines and station entry and exit annual figures. We then analysed these figures against each other to see if there were any trends or outlying stations that appear to be inappropriately categorised.

[3] **http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/documents/get_lob?id=3734&field=file**

4.7 When compared with the present number of ticket issuing points (the current number of ticket office windows and ticket vending machines together), only 9 stations are proposed to have an increase in the number of ticket issuing points. These are King's Cross St. Pancras, Liverpool Street, Tottenham Court Road, Heathrow T1-3, Paddington, London Bridge, Euston, Waterloo and Sloane Square. 34 stations retain their current number of ticket issuing points, and 209 see a reduction. The 17 other stations will have no London Underground ticket issuing facilities, but may be served by National Rail ticket issuing facilities.

4.8 When comparing the number of passengers entering a station[4] with the station category, the categorisation largely corresponds although there are some outliers. Oxford Circus, London Bridge and Waterloo appear in the top 5 but are not considered Gateway stations. Hammersmith, Brixton, Knightsbridge, Vauxhall, Shepherd's Bush, Tower Hill, Covent Garden and Charing Cross all rank highly amongst Metro stations, and Ealing Broadway, Leyton, East Ham, Upton Park, Leytonstone and West Hampstead appear highly amongst Local stations.

4.9 One additional comparison that we undertook was to compare the number of station entries with the number of ticket vending machines proposed once the ticket offices are closed. The top five stations currently under the destination category are Leicester Square, Camden Town, Finsbury Park, Oxford Circus and Stratford. From the Metro category, Queen's Park, Covent Garden, Charing Cross, Vauxhall and Tower Hill rank the highest, and from the Local category, Leyton, Leytonstone and West Hampstead were highest. Victoria is the clear highest amongst the Gateway stations with no increase in ticket issuing facilities from today.

4.10 Regardless of the categories that each station is given, it must be easy for the system to be flexible. Whether a specific event causes significant extra demand, such as at Tower Hill for the poppy display, or a more long-term change such as Crossrail opening at Farringdon, London Underground must retain the capacity to increase both staffing and potentially restore a fixed location for information and ticket purchasing. The permanent conversion of ticket office facilities to retail outlets should not be something that is done in the near term. If the situation is that ticket offices are required at some point in the future then there must be an easy way to return to stations having these facilities.

4.11 We will analyse the survey results further to see if we think that there are other recommendations that can be made based on unique station circumstances. This process is on-going.

5 Equalities and inclusion implications

5.1 Further analysis is needed, but the data from our survey indicates that ticket offices are more used by minority groups, and the loss of ticket offices could present a significant barrier to travel for the elderly and those who consider themselves to have disabilities in particular. Some passengers have also commented that they experience considerable difficulty in using ticket machines,

[4] entering being through the ticket barriers, and not including passengers getting information or resolving problems at the ticket office before leaving the station again

especially if they have learning difficulties or dyslexia and the needs of these passengers will have to be further considered.

6 London TravelWatch priority

6.1 This issue falls within the core remit of London TravelWatch and the impact of such a project will be substantial amongst a large proportion of London's transport users.

7 Legal powers

7.1 Section 248 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 places upon London TravelWatch (as the London Transport Users Committee) a duty to consider - and where it appears to the Committee to be desirable, to make recommendations with respect to - any matter affecting the functions of the Greater London Authority or Transport for London which relate to transport (other than of freight). Section 252A of the same Act (as amended by Schedule 6 of the Railways Act 2005) places a similar duty upon the 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. The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 (annex N, page 33) requires that regard is paid to the desirability of including among the members of London TravelWatch one or more people with experience of working with disabled persons.

8 Financial implications

8.1 Transport for London was keen that there should be no question that the analysis of the survey was unbiased and independent, so they commissioned Ipsos MORI to conduct all the analysis on our behalf. Transport for London was not given any access to the data or to the Ipsos MORI report prior to the release of this paper. London TravelWatch met the cost of the Ipsos MORI report on the survey.