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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 on the progress of our investigation into the potential impact on passengers of London Underground's (LU) ticket office closures, and proposed next steps.

#### 2 Information

- 2.1 London Underground has begun to implement their planned alterations to their ticket offices, with South Wimbledon, Queensway and Shepherd's Bush ticket offices currently closed for conversion. A full timetable is attached at Appendix A
- 2.2 London TravelWatch wrote to Gareth Powell, Director of Strategy & Service Development, London Rail and Underground, on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2015 (Appendix B), to outline our position based on our research to date, and to re-iterate our key concerns. We requested a formal response to each of these issues.

The key concerns that we highlighted were:

- The proposals are being rushed through without the opportunity to consider passenger input, including our previous recommendations;
- The process must be flexible enough to both include any of our recommendations and to react to changing demand in the future, if necessary even after the works have been completed for the stations currently being converted;
- That London TravelWatch is consulted with before any part of the ticket hall is converted away from passenger use;
- A number of specific station categorisation changes;
- That our offer to work with Transport for London (TfL) on the design of the ticket machines is taken up; and
- That some LU stations are already refusing to sell tickets to National Rail stations.

We also reminded TfL of their statutory responsibility to consult regarding any closure of ticket offices at the former Silverlink stations.

We have not received a response from TfL at the time of writing.

2.3 London TravelWatch has been analysing the proposals in detail, checking demographic splits as well as ticket sales data in order to make our recommendations on station categorisation. Analysis of individual comments submitted to our survey has also been completed and has informed our recommendations.

2.4 Based on more detailed analysis, we have amended some of our previous recommendations.

2.5 Oxford Circus

We are no longer recommending changing the designation of Oxford Circus from Destination to Gateway. The Gateway status is designed for a station which has a high percentage of passengers who are beginning their journey at the station, and are not familiar with London's transport network. Whilst Oxford Circus has the highest number of passengers of any station not in the Gateway category, we feel that the evidence shows that it has a large proportion of users who will already understand how to make their next journey, and a limited number of first-time users of the network. For this reason, and assuming that it will be one of the better staffed Destination stations, we no longer feel it warrants a change in designation.

2.6 Stratford

Based on our analysis, we have added Stratford to the list of stations that we feel would benefit from Gateway designation. Stratford has a very high usage level (higher than most Gateway stations) and also a large number of passengers who will be accessing the network for the first time, whether from Coach and National Rail services (including from London Stansted Airport), the major bus interchange or the large number of hotels in the area. It also has multiple entrances and would benefit from the focal point that a Visitor Information Centre would provide.

2.7 Brixton

We are recommending that Brixton is included on the list of stations for the Destination category. Brixton has high passenger numbers compared to most Metro and some Destination stations, and it also attracts a large number of passengers from the National Rail and Bus networks who begin their Underground journey at Brixton. Brixton is also a destination in its own right, and an area of growth.

2.8 There is still very limited information in the public domain about what exactly will be happening at each station. There is some information from TfL which continues to describe the proposals as benefitting customers, although our research and all survey results suggest that the changes are unpopular with customers. The need to improve awareness amongst passengers of the changes, both the positive and negative elements, remains strong.

### **3 Evidence from research**

3.1 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<sup>1</sup>, found that 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. While additional multi-functional staff may be of benefit in some circumstances, this was usually considered to be of benefit only with the possibility to conclude transactions via a ticket office counter. During the focus groups for our additional research from August 2013, “Value for money on London’s transport services: what consumers think”<sup>2</sup> 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.

- 3.2 In addition to the analysis by Ipsos MORI, London TravelWatch additionally has analysed data 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.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 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/>
- 3.5 From our survey, it is clear that where there is support for some level of change, there is also the qualification that it must be flexible. 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. Some protection for passengers could be afforded by TfL consulting with London TravelWatch before leasing space currently used for ticket offices, as is a requirement of National Rail operators.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/documents/get\\_lob?id=3710&field=file](http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/documents/get_lob?id=3710&field=file)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/documents/get\\_lob?id=3734&field=file](http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/documents/get_lob?id=3734&field=file)

## **4 Recommendations**

- 4.1 That London TravelWatch recommend to Transport for London that the following station categories are changed:
- Waterloo, London Bridge and Stratford from Destination to Gateway
  - Covent Garden, Vauxhall, Tower Hill, Brixton and Charing Cross from Metro to Destination
  - Leyton, Leytonstone and West Hampstead from Local to Metro.
- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 That London TravelWatch pushes for a commitment from Transport for London to consult with us on the use of former ticket offices before they are leased away from public use.
- 4.4 That London TravelWatch use any available channel to ensure that Transport for London fulfil their statutory obligations regarding the ticket offices at the former Silverlink stations, raising the issue to the Department for Transport if there is not a satisfactory response forthcoming.
- 4.5 London TravelWatch should be consulted on any proposals to convert any part of the ticket office area to other use, as is an obligation on National Rail operators.

## **5 Equalities and inclusion implications**

- 5.1 Whilst the number of responses from those with disabilities or from minority groups was in some cases lower than can be called statistically significant, the data from our survey shows that ticket offices are used at a greater frequency 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, 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 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 There is no financial implication on London TravelWatch as a result of this report. Transport for London provided the funding for the independent analysis of our survey data, which was completed by Ipsos MORI.