

David Coates
Programme Lead
Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR)

Trevor Rosenberg, Policy and Advocacy Officer
Alex Smith, Head of Campaigns
London TravelWatch

28 September 2023
Sent by email

RE: Ticket offices: emerging issues and clarification questions

Dear Trevor and Alex,

Thank you for your letter of 6 September regarding our proposals to change how tickets are sold at our stations. I would like to begin by thanking you and your team for your constructive challenge over the past few months. I appreciate that the questions in your letter are both to inform London TravelWatch's assessment and to help respond to those who were in contact with your organisation during the local public consultation.

As you know, the aspiration behind the proposals and a key outcome should they be taken forwards, is for our station colleagues to be available where customers will benefit from them the most. With a growing number of customers shifting to digital/smart payment options, ticket offices aren't used as they were in the mid-1990s. I know that London TravelWatch agrees in principle with the proposition that having our staff on the concourse alongside our customers is likely to be of benefit, both in terms of customer service and efficiency, thereby providing a better service for customers than today.

Our conversations and your letters have taken a holistic view spanning retail alongside wider concerns such as customer service, access to facilities and, of course, accessibility, all of which is vitally important to us.

Whilst we note that under the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement (TSA), we must consult all proposed changes to our ticket offices with yourselves, we understand the public have raised matters about general station staffing as part of their feedback. We value that feedback and have considered it in making our responses, noting that general station staffing hours do not form part of the TSA.

My team and I have responded to all your questions in the enclosed document. I would like to draw your particular attention to the positive changes made to address two key concerns, raised during the public consultation period. They also make a material difference to some of the questions you have asked. These positive changes are:

1. Retaining retail facilities at all stations within this proposal

Similar to the proposal for our larger stations, all GTR stations will now retain one ticket office retail (TOMTIS) machine. It would be used by staff, on request, for customers requiring the few specialist tickets that cannot be provided by TVMs or digitally. We expect this equipment would remain in situ while ticket types currently only available from a TOMTIS machine are steadily made available from either TVMs or digitally, depending on the product type. This equipment will continue to be available for use by our staff for the times it is available today, avoiding the need for a customer to travel to a hub station.



While we expect this equipment will be used increasingly rarely, as the industry makes more of these specialist tickets available to buy online and at TVMs, it will provide a useful additional day one mitigation while changes are made, and customers become used to the new environment.

This influences the answer to some of your clarification questions, for example around product types that as of now are not currently available via a TVM.

2. Enhanced accessibility meeting point

Responding to the feedback received in the consultation, we have reviewed all stations within this proposal and identified locations where, either due to the staffing arrangements or the physical layout of the buildings and/or platforms, it might not be possible to immediately see or locate a member of staff from the main entrance. We now propose introducing an enhanced accessibility meeting point which is being developed at a national industry level. It will be compatible with hearing loops with its core functionality being to notify a member of staff at the station that a customer who needs assistance has arrived. We believe this mitigation will represent a significant enhancement over both our current and the previously proposed arrangements.

Increased staffing hours

In addition, although this is outside the London TravelWatch area, we believe you'll be interested to learn we have made a significant improvement to station staffing hours in the Transport Focus area.

We initially proposed a reduction in overall staffing hours at 23 of the 186 stations affected by these proposals across our network, where there was a reasonable case on efficiency grounds and our retailing data suggested this was viable. After listening to the invaluable public input during this consultation and carrying out a further comprehensive internal review, we are proposing to make the following amendments:

- At 15 of the 23 stations (Arundel, Bexhill, Billingshurst, Carshalton, Cheam, Cooden Beach, Coulsdon Town, Emsworth, Ford, Ham Street, London Road, Moulsecoomb, Pulborough, Rye and Warblington), we are now proposing to keep the existing hours of retailing assistance exactly the same as they are today. We believe this is a positive response to concerns raised.
- At eight stations (Angmering, Chichester, Crawley, Falmer, Hove, Portslade, Shoreham-by-Sea and Worthing), we remain confident our proposal meets the needs of our customers with accessibility assistance and the need to buy tickets. Here, those needs would be met by the second member of staff who is always rostered to be on board every Southern train. In addition, at Crawley, the existing Mobile Assistance Team based at the station will now provide assistance at either end of the day, outside of retailing assistance hours.

As we continue to develop our plans, we would be happy to discuss them further and consider additional feedback from you. We look forward to continuing to work closely with you in the weeks ahead.

Yours sincerely,



David Coates
Programme Lead
Govia Thameslink Railway

