

Date: 7 July 2015

Item: TfL's response to the London Assembly Next Steps Report on Customer Service

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**This paper will be considered in public**

**1 Summary**

1.1 This paper summarises the commitments we have made to the Transport Committee of the London Assembly in response to their next steps 2015 report and recommendations on customer service. A separate paper on this agenda describes our overall strategy and action plan for improving customer service.

**2 Recommendation**

2.1 **The Panel is asked to note the commitments made.**

**3 Background**

3.1 In July 2011, the Transport Committee appointed Val Shawcross to:

(a) assess TfL's effectiveness and efficiency in dealing with customer enquiries, identify any difference in standards across its service and assess how it uses such customer feedback to develop its services; and

(b) investigate how Project Horizon and other organisational changes might affect our customer service in the future and make recommendations which aim to increase the quality of customer service.

3.2 The Committee's subsequent and highly constructive report published in January 2012 is at appendix 1. Our submission to the investigation and our response to the recommendations are at appendix 2.

3.3 In late 2014, the Committee conducted a follow-up investigation to test our progress. The Committee's latest report, which again was highly constructive, was published in March 2015 and is attached at appendix 3. Our submission and response to the further recommendations made are at appendix 4.

**4 Our latest commitments**

4.1 We agreed with virtually all of the latest recommendations which continue to work with the grain of where we are taking our customer service strategy and delivery plan. The main commitments made, and in certain areas already delivered, are:

- (a) bringing together all of our 'customer promises' eg how to complain and how to obtain a refund – into a more accessible form by the end of the year;
- (b) re-designing the 'contact us' section of the website to making it easier for customers to leave feedback and make complaints. This will be delivered by the end of July;
- (c) adding a fifth option to our Contact Centre telephone menu to make it easier to make complaints. This will be completed by the end of June;
- (d) commission and publish an independent review of our complaints handling process, including how, when necessary, complaints are escalated;
- (e) implement any directive introduced by Government in relation to alternative dispute resolution;
- (f) include further customer service metrics in our main Board reporting via the Operational and Financial Performance report. This will happen with effect from the quarter one reporting made to the Board in September;
- (g) furthermore, customer service issues will be scrutinised by the Board's Safety, Accessibility and Sustainability Panel on a regular basis. We believe that this is a more effective means of enabling scrutiny than the Committee's recommendation of appointing a single Board Member as 'customer champion';
- (h) all staff new to a customer service role will receive training, including the relevant elements of that being provided as part of the London Underground's Fit for the Future programme. Elements of this are all being incorporated in our revised training for bus drivers. This also includes re-design of the existing BTEC qualification undertaken by all bus drivers; and
- (i) renew our customer information campaign on priority space for wheelchair users on buses.

4.2 Our wider plan for improving customer service is described in the separate note on the agenda.

**List of appendices to this report:**

Appendix 1 – London Assembly, Transport Committee report, Transport for London's Customer Service, January 2012

Appendix 2 – TfL's submission to the January 2012 report and response to recommendations

Appendix 3 – London Assembly, Transport Committee report – TfL customer service, March 2015

Appendix 4 – TfL's submission to the March 2015 report and response to recommendations

**List of Background Papers:**

None

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# Transport for London's Customer Service

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At its meeting on 14 July 2011, the Committee agreed to appoint Valerie Shawcross AM as Rapporteur to undertake an investigation into TfL's customer service with the following terms of reference:

- To assess TfL's effectiveness and efficiency in dealing with customer enquiries, identify any difference in standards across its service and assess how it uses such customer feedback to develop its services; and
- To investigate how Project Horizon and other organisational changes might affect TfL's customer service in the future and make recommendations which aim to increase the quality of customer service.

The Committee welcomes feedback on its report. For further information, contact Ian O' Sullivan in the Scrutiny Team by: letter c/o of City Hall, More London, SE1 2AA; email Ian O' Sullivan on [ian.osullivan@london.gov.uk](mailto:ian.osullivan@london.gov.uk); or telephone: 020 7983 6540. For press enquiries contact Dana Rothenberg by telephone: 020 7983 4603 or email [dana.rothenberg@london.gov.uk](mailto:dana.rothenberg@london.gov.uk)

# Contents

<b>Rapporteur's Foreword</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Chapter 1 – Improving passenger communication</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Chapter 2 – Publishing customer service performance</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Chapter 3 – A 'one stop shop'</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Chapter 4 - Making the most of 'free intelligence'</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Appendix 1 – Recommendations</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Appendix 2 – Stages in the Investigation</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Appendix 3 – Orders and Translations</b>	<b>36</b>

# Rapporteur's Foreword

However well-run a service may be, there are always occasions when things will go wrong and customers will need information and advice to make a complaint or suggestion. Handling these essential communications poorly compounds the problem, and can lead to a loss of overall passenger confidence. On the other hand, dealing with them efficiently, with a friendly and helpful manner, builds support for public transport services and can play a large role in maintaining a good relationship between Transport for London (TfL) and Londoners. Complaints are also an essential source of management information to help direct service improvement.



TfL has taken some steps towards untangling the complex and inefficient system of customer information and complaint handling it inherited from its plethora of predecessor organisations back in 2000. Despite this initial good work, it is clear both from the correspondence that we regularly receive and the case work of London TravelWatch, that more needs to be done to improve both the efficiency of the process and, perhaps more importantly, the tone and quality of responses.

As TfL attempts the tricky balancing act of continuing to make improvements while, simultaneously reducing overall costs, we want to ensure that passengers' needs are properly understood and attended to. Londoners have told us that they want a clear, easy to access service that is answered promptly and responsive to their concerns. The principles we have outlined in this report, which draw on best practice across all sectors, are simple, common sense approaches to achieving this.

Ensuring clear lines of communication and accountability, setting challenging targets and then publicly demonstrating how well you have met them, providing an improved 'one stop shop' for all customer service information, and then backing these aspirations up with concrete actions like a new Customer Charter and regular performance reports would do much to improve the service for customers.

But it is the final principle which is perhaps the most important in changing the long-term attitude of TfL management and Board. Customer feedback and complaints are invaluable, real-time evidence of how London's transport system is performing: TfL should be doing much more to both make it easier for passengers to make regular

suggestions and embed those suggestions into the highest levels of strategic decision making.

It is time that TfL made across the board attempts to develop a more customer friendly culture that assumes its passengers have something useful and valid to contribute. TfL senior managers and board need to change what is perceived by some to be a defensive culture which risks alienating its customer base and the wider community by what can appear insensitive reactions to commentary and complaint.

In putting together this report, we would like to particularly highlight and thank the contribution from passenger groups, particularly Bryan Davey of London TravelWatch and David Sidebottom and colleagues from Passenger Focus.

**Valerie Shawcross AM, Deputy Chair Transport Committee**

# Executive Summary

This report examines how Transport for London (TfL) can improve its customer service provision. In particular, it outlines how TfL can ensure that the processes it has in place to handle the tens of thousands of complaints and suggestions it receives each year can ensure the best possible outcome for passengers. This report is published at a time when TfL is undergoing major organisational re-structuring in this area: our goal is to make sure that the passenger voice is paramount during these developments.

## **The challenge facing TfL**

Since TfL was established in 2000, customer services have suffered from the legacy of differing work practices, cultures and locations. As the role it plays in Londoners' lives grows more complex and wide-ranging, TfL must do more to deliver a better and more informative service, which is geared towards satisfying the needs of passengers. This includes ensuring that its responses are timely, easily accessed through a variety of media, sympathetic to the circumstances of passengers, and, crucially, informative about the context of their decisions. The views outlined in this report show that, as TfL recognises, this is not always the experience of those who contact TfL.

## **Towards a passenger-centred service**

This report uses best practice outlined by customer service experts, as well as the valued insights and experiences from passenger groups and Londoners themselves, to establish a set of principles which should guide TfL's current and future customer service provision. These principles will also serve as the basis for the Committee's continued scrutiny of customer service provision in the future.

## **Principle 1: It should be clear to passengers who they should contact and what they should expect in response.**

It is not always clear to passengers how to contact TfL: there are currently 12 phone numbers on the TfL website and an overly-complex online form system. TfL should work towards reducing the current system into one number, form and postal address and ensuring this information is freely available at stations and bus stops. TfL will also have to do more to improve the overall quality of responses to ensure a consistent level of information and context is given to each passenger. A new Customer Charter should be published which outlines TfL's responsibilities with regards to customer services which provides information to passengers on the entire process and which is made available at each station.

**Principle 2: TfL should set itself challenging customer service targets which reflect what matters to passengers and publish performance against them.**

TfL is currently examining its internal customer service targets to investigate how they can be rationalised across the organisation. Once these targets have been established, TfL should become a standard bearer for publishing performance information on customer service by examining best practice from other transport providers and sectors. These reports should also benchmark performance against a range of organisations to provide reports which offer meaningful information to passengers and help to drive internal improvement.

**Principle 3: There should be a one stop shop for TfL customer information.**

The forthcoming 'My TfL' online portal is an opportunity to create a resource which revolutionises the relationship between TfL and passengers and reduces the need for passengers to contact TfL repeatedly. To achieve this, TfL should: ensure the site contains all relevant contact and performance information; allow passengers to track their enquiry or complaint online; and provide real-time updates on issues directly affecting customer service. For those with Freedom Passes, who may not have access to online resources, TfL should also provide a free 0800 number for information and complaints.

**Principle 4: Passenger complaints should be viewed as an opportunity and not a threat.**

Suggestions and complaints from customers are an invaluable source of 'free intelligence'. This intelligence should be embedded at all levels of TfL, helping to both drive day-to-day improvements and the broader strategic goals of the organisation. To help ensure this, TfL must: continue to examine ways to make providing ongoing feedback easier for passengers by examining how other organisations create a more customer focused outlook; and make customer service reporting, particularly around key recurring themes, a part of the TfL Board's regular monitoring activities.

**We welcome TfL's commitment to improving how it deals with customer complaints and suggestions. In order to be successful, these improvements must deliver a service which encourages greater participation from passengers, as well as provide the basis for real improvements to service design and delivery in the future.**

# Introduction

For most people, it is impossible to live and work in London without using a service managed by Transport for London (TfL). The Tube alone carries more than a billion people each year and with around 2.2 billion passengers, London's buses account for nearly half of all bus journeys in the entire country. Our taxes and fares pay for the system: therefore managing the relationship with passengers should be one of TfL's key priorities and indicators of success.

When something does go wrong and customers wish to make a formal complaint, query a decision, or seek specific information, TfL is responsible for ensuring that it has the appropriate systems to deal with these issues in a timely and constructive manner that meets the needs of passengers.

In the context of the number of daily journeys, the volume of people contacting TfL for the reasons outlined above is relatively small. In 2010/11, TfL received:

- Over 25,000 written enquiries;
- Over 3.7 million telephone calls, an average of 10,000 a day;
- 170 million visits to its website, an average of 465,000 a day; and
- Over 2.5 million visits to Travel Information Centres, nearly 7,000 a day.

In absolute terms though, these contacts represent a huge logistical challenge, and one which is likely to get more complex over the next decade. This year alone, TfL will face challenges caused by the Olympics, the introduction of a new ticketing system and the ongoing disruption caused by infrastructure work for Crossrail and the Tube upgrades. The Mayor's Office and TfL recognise that this is a part of TfL's work that needs attention. The Transport Commissioner told the Committee: "we are very conscious that we can improve our handling of complaints and ... a number of steps are being taken to do so".<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the Deputy Mayor for Transport said "Customer service ... is an area where ... I believe there are significant opportunities for improvement".<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Letter to Rapporteur from Peter Hendy, Transport Commissioner, 22 September 2011

<sup>2</sup> Letter to Rapporteur from Isabel Dedring, Deputy Mayor for Transport, 9 August 2011

### **Principles for customer service reforms**

The aim of this report is to seek to influence the strategic direction and core values of TfL's customer service, and particularly, to ensure that the needs of passengers are central to the design of the new directorate. Our investigation sought to evaluate what a passenger who accessed TfL's customer service should expect.

Passengers expect customer services that are easily accessible, that are handled efficiently, proportionally and transparently by customer service staff and finally, that TfL has the processes in place to systematically review this ongoing feedback to help drive service design and improvement.

This report will help to ensure that those common sense standards are backed up by concrete actions. The following chapters outline four principles which will help to ensure TfL's continued improvement. These principles are:

1. It should be clear to passengers who they should contact and what they should expect in response;
2. TfL should set itself challenging customer service targets which reflect what matters to passengers and publish performance against them;
3. There should be a simple 'one stop shop' for TfL customer services; and
4. Passenger complaints should be viewed as an opportunity and not a threat.

In formulating these principles, the Committee has used expertise and best practice from both general customer service standards bodies such as the Institute of Customer Service, and specialised knowledge from passenger groups to determine what a 'gold standard' for customer service would look like for passengers. We have also used the personal experiences of Londoners who contacted the Committee during our investigation, and case work from London TravelWatch to inform our work.

### **The operational context for improving customer service**

TfL's customer service has traditionally been beset by outdated work practices and structures. When TfL was created in 2000, it inherited various customer service departments with differing methods, locations and targets. This resulted in a system which is "complex and disjointed leading to highly complex complaints handling procedures".<sup>3</sup>

Improvements to customer service provision have accelerated over the last few years. TfL has brought together most of its customer service staff at two locations and changed call centre training to increase the number of issues any one operator can handle. In 2008, TfL rolled out a new software platform for all customer service functions across London Underground, Surface Transport, Oyster and Travel Information. TfL said this has made operations more efficient, while increasing the ability of various organisations to share experience.

Customer service is also in the final stages of a major re-structure. As part of Project Horizon,<sup>4</sup> TfL has established a new Director of Customer Experience who will be responsible for most of TfL's customer service activities and will oversee the design and targets for the new directorate.

**The principles outlined above will form the core of the Committee's follow-up work in the future as we seek to evaluate the success of TfL's current programme for improvement. We hope to help TfL achieve a cultural shift in how it views customer contacts: we want TfL to see itself as an organisation which primarily provides services to people rather than one that simply manages infrastructure. Customer service reform is one part of this cultural shift and the positive comments and steps already taken by TfL suggest now is very much the time to push this agenda. In doing so we aim to ensure that TfL's statements of intent are followed up with actions which make a tangible difference to the passenger experience and put the organisation at the forefront of customer services.**

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<sup>3</sup> TfL written submission to the Transport Committee September 2011

<sup>4</sup> Project Horizon is examining how TfL provides various back office functions, including customer service, across the organisation. It is attempting to streamline operations in order to save up to 20 per cent in costs by 2018.

# Chapter 1 – Improving passenger communication

## Principle 1: It should be clear to passengers who they should contact and what they should expect in response

Creating clear, simple lines of communication is the first step in building a passenger focused complaints and feedback policy. Reducing the number of phone, written or online communication options, ideally down to a single route for each, will help minimise confusion and encourage more passengers to make use of the service.<sup>5</sup> Customers should also be able to use phone, email or written correspondence for each service.<sup>6</sup>

In this area, TfL continues to suffer from the legacy of confusion and complexity inherited from previous incarnations:

- There are 12 different telephone numbers on TfL's website.
- There is little guidance to help passengers to determine the best route.
- Some services only have a single contact method.
- Customer service contact information given to passengers at bus stops and shelters does not always: include TfL phone numbers for information or complaints; explain what information is required by TfL to make a complaint about poor service; actively encourage feedback of any kind to TfL.
- In some cases the information is out of date and the numbers have been disconnected.<sup>7</sup>
- The online comment system leads to a confused jumble of pages depending on system or mode eg, some skip the comment form and simply take you to a general information page, while others require registration before they can be accessed.<sup>8</sup>

TfL has made attempts at improving access to its information and complaints. In October 2010, it set up a new 0843 Travel Information line, which has allowed it to increase the capacity of its call centre to

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<sup>5</sup> *Fact Sheet Series: Complaints Handling*, Institute of Customer Service, 2007

<sup>6</sup> *Review of Complaint Handling in Banking Groups*, Financial Services Authority, April 2010

<sup>7</sup> The Customer Service and Complaints Policy available for download on the website still contains the old 0203 contact number which has been disconnected since 2010.

<sup>8</sup> TfL's 'Help and Contact' page – as accessed in January 2012 - <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/helpandcontact>

handle large volumes of calls simultaneously.<sup>9</sup> However, not all issues (such as some Oyster functions) can be dealt with through this number and services run by outside contractors, such as the Cycle Hire Scheme and the Congestion Charge, are subject to separate call centre operations with highly variable levels of quality.<sup>10</sup>

Passengers who contacted this investigation described their difficulty in finding the right person to deal with their issue. They expressed frustration at being transferred repeatedly between departments with no resolution available. Likewise, during our visit to TfL's customer call centre in October 2011, we noted that call centre operators still appeared to work across several different systems in order to deal with a single phone call. During one such session, the customer service operator had to switch between two different systems while attempting to deal with a customer issue, before finally transferring the caller to a separate department so a refund could be issued by another call centre. Clearly further work needs to be done to harmonise customer service systems and operations to make it easier for passengers to have issues resolved.

**The Deputy Mayor for Transport told us that TfL will review all contact options, and admitted that the online form system in particular, was potentially confusing. Any steps to reduce the current tangle of contact numbers and forms would be welcomed by passengers. In its review of contact options, TfL should examine the example provided by other transport providers such as National Express and Southeastern Rail who have both introduced a single phone number, address and online form for all customer enquiries.**

#### **Recommendation 1**

**TfL should report back to the Committee in May 2012 on how it will make it more straightforward for passengers to provide feedback, including: its plans to reduce the number of contact numbers; how it will continue to improve call centre operations to benefit customers; and how it will ensure this information is more easily available to**

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<sup>9</sup> Please see page 25 for further discussion on issues related to TfL's switch to the 0843 number

<sup>10</sup> TfL written submission to the Transport Committee, September 2011. TfL's submission also provides internal performance information for the last three years, along with various contextual information relevant to this performance.

**passengers at stations, at bus stops and shelters, and online.**

### **Improving the quality of response**

It should also be clear to customers before they contact TfL what to expect in response to their feedback or complaint. Industry best practice advises that responses should be prompt and sympathetic while demonstrating clear lines of accountability and providing details of how an issue has been resolved, and if needed, escalated further.<sup>11</sup>

TfL's Customer Service and Complaints Policy does set out some of this information: for example, it guarantees an initial response within two days and aims to close all enquiries within ten days, as well as outline some general quality standards.<sup>12</sup> TfL said it has a robust monitoring regime for this across the organisation, which includes 'secret shopper' tests, annual auditing reports and randomised checks from managers on both call centre and written responses.<sup>13</sup>

Despite these checks, views submitted to this investigation from passengers indicate that TfL still has some difficulty in applying this policy consistently across the organisation. The Committee has examined a selection of London TravelWatch's casework from late 2011 when many improvements had apparently already been made to TfL's processes. These indicate that some passengers are being poorly served by TfL's customer service. These issues were also backed up by similar comments from Londoners who responded to the Committee's online survey on TfL's customer service. Criticisms of TfL, along with illustrative case studies, are set out below:

- Failing to respond to repeated requests for information;

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<sup>11</sup> *Fact Sheet Series: Complaints Handling*, Institute of Customer Service, 2007

<sup>12</sup> *Customer Complaints and Handling Policy*, Transport for London, 2009

<sup>13</sup> TfL written submission to the Transport Committee September 2011

### **Case Study 1 – Barclays Cycle Hire Refund**

Passenger A had an incorrect charge levied on their Cycle Hire account while working abroad. The passenger emailed the Cycle Hire helpdesk on 14 May 2011. The helpdesk did not reply until 23 May 2011 and advised that the refund department would be in further contact. As of 26 July 2011, no further contact had been received by the passenger to arrange the refund. The passenger then felt they had no choice but to contact London TravelWatch to resolve their issue.

- Failing to sufficiently explain the rationale for decisions, leaving customers confused and unhappy;

### **Case Study 2 – Passenger rights and refunds**

Passenger C travelled from Barking to West Hampstead and then another journey from West Hampstead Thameslink to London Bridge. As the journey exceeded the maximum journey time for a journey between Barking and London Bridge, the passenger was charged for two incomplete journeys instead of one complete. The Oyster Helpline refunded the difference between what he paid and the correct fare for the journey but failed to explain to him what he (or the system, depending on your view) did wrong. If the rules are not explained, the passenger will not be able to prevent a similar thing happening again.

- An abrupt or dismissive tone which can lead to a perception of defensiveness and a lack of ownership of the issue at hand;

### **Case Study 3 – Providing feedback on policies**

Passenger C had some difficulties applying for a discounted Oyster card and in getting a journey history and wished to provide some feedback and suggestions on what could be improved. The passenger was sent a three line email in reply which completely failed to display any empathy or engage with the points raised: instead, the passenger was told to pass their suggestions on to London TravelWatch.

- Providing variable quality of response, depending on the service. Concerns have been raised to the Committee that bus services in particular are more challenging for passengers to receive a satisfactory response. This is as a result of having to liaise with several different bus companies, leading to generally longer lead times and more difficulty in getting the detail needed to give passengers the appropriate context and information. TfL must take

ultimate responsibility for the experience of passengers across all the services it provides, and not use its contract relations as an excuse for poor customer service. Responses from passengers and from our Members' mailbags also show that Oyster card issues continue to be a major problem, particularly with regards to refunds;

#### **Case Study 4 – Oyster Refunds**

Passenger D was seeking a refund for an Oyster 18+ card that was wrongly taken from them at a station. The situation was complex, but after failing to receive a reply when contacting the web helpdesk, the passenger rang the helpline and was transferred a total of six times within one call. The level of service from staff was variable, and the information given out about the refund entitlement changed depending on who the passenger spoke with. This also took place while speaking on a more expensive 0843 number.

- Failing to provide guidance or correct information on their products and services.<sup>14</sup>

#### **Case Study 5 – Congestion Charge Exemptions**

Passenger E is a Blue Badge holder with chronic ill health, who has had previous difficulties with TfL in gaining a Congestion Charge Exemption. Despite being eligible, TfL has repeatedly failed to issue the Exemption, despite interventions from the passenger's local MP. The passenger is on a limited income and has had to miss medical appointments due to TfL. The passenger felt that they were repeatedly blamed by TfL for the difficulties and was still waiting for the Exemption to be issued.

**The Deputy Mayor for Transport said that improving the tone of communications, and particularly emphasising empathy, honesty and clarity, would be a priority moving forward.<sup>15</sup> We want to ensure these improvements happen, and to ensure that consistency and standardisation across all parts of TfL is improved.**

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<sup>14</sup> Information from case studies was gathered through examining casework from London Travelwatch for the second and third quarters of 2011, as well as views submitted to the investigation through the online survey.

<sup>15</sup> Transcript of the 14 June 2011 Transport Committee meeting, page 38

## **Towards a new Customer Charter**

The experiences outlined above suggest that confusion continues to exist amongst both passengers and TfL staff about their respective rights and responsibilities with regards to customer service. A Customer Charter would help to focus TfL on providing quality customer service, whilst also encouraging more passengers to contribute towards improving services. The purpose of the Charter is to provide the foundation for a relationship between customers and an organisation by outlining what customers should expect, particularly when providing feedback or a complaint.

TfL's current Customer Service and Complaints policy suffers from being out of date, over long, and badly formatted for ordinary passengers, as well as being difficult to locate on the website. Additionally, TfL has a series of inconsistent and sometimes contradictory charters and policies depending on the service in question.<sup>16</sup>

This new Charter should:

- Clearly state that TfL takes responsibility for the experience of passengers on the services it provides;
- Clearly define all targets for closing correspondence;
- Outline the route of enquiries through TfL – As can be seen by some of the case studies above, and in other responses to the Committee, there is confusion amongst some passengers as to how their complaint or suggestion is to be handled by TfL, leading to frustration and disappointment;
- Provide information on what data TfL needs in order to proceed with a complaint or information request;
- Provide an outline of the type of response passengers can expect and provide information on how to escalate an issue; and
- Be placed prominently on any update of the TfL website or portal and made available at all stations.

During our investigation, Passenger Focus praised the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive as having a particularly good example

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<sup>16</sup> For example, the Barclay's Cycle Hire Scheme aims to close all enquiries within three working days, the DLR within five working days, and TfL as a whole within ten days. These commitments are all contained within separate charters and can create confusion for passengers.

of this kind of Customer Charter.<sup>17</sup> It provides all the relevant detail outlined in the best practice in a comprehensive two page format which could easily be downloaded and understood by all passengers.

**The Project Horizon review provides an opportunity for a fresh start for passengers and TfL. A new Customer Charter would help to establish the 'ground rules' for communications between TfL and its stakeholders, establish the responsibilities of TfL towards all passengers, as well as help to drive improvements to quality and responsiveness.**

#### **Recommendation 2**

**By May 2012, TfL should report back on: how it will ensure greater consistency in its responses to customers; and, produce a single Customer Charter for consultation which covers all services and gives specific guarantees about the timescale and quality of its responses.**

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<sup>17</sup> 'Our Commitment to You' – South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive – [www.sypte.co.uk](http://www.sypte.co.uk)

# Chapter 2 – Publishing customer service performance

## **Principle 2: TfL should set itself challenging customer service targets which reflect what matters to passengers and publish performance against them**

Organisations, and particularly those that deliver a public service or utility, have a duty to demonstrate that they take the public's views seriously and respond promptly and appropriately. Setting demanding targets, properly indexed to industry norms, and reported on regularly and openly, will measure TfL's effectiveness in meeting this duty.

TfL currently monitors its performance against a range of internal targets. The targets are generally within industry norms for responding to customer service enquiries though they vary, sometimes widely, depending on the service and the mode of communication. For example, Train Operating Companies (TOCs) report the percentage of complaints closed within 20 working days to the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR),<sup>18</sup> while the majority of TfL's targets range from 10 to 15 days. Passenger Focus states their operators should aim for 80 per cent of all calls answered within 20 seconds which most, but not all, of TfL's call centres have adopted.<sup>19</sup>

TfL's new Director of Customer Experience will begin a review of all customer service targets in early 2012 to examine the historical and service rationale behind each. The aim of the review is to establish a common set of standards across all services. The Director should consider establishing targets that measure the full range of passenger experiences of customer service. Currently, the internal targets are largely related to the process (ie the speed or efficiency) and not to the quality of passenger satisfaction with how they were treated, or the outcome. This review, and any continuing evaluation of targets, should be based on direct feedback from passengers who have been through the system to establish their priorities.

### *Publishing data and benchmarking*

Once established, these new targets should form the basis for regular, published reports. To be effective, consumer rights group Customer Focus said these reports should include both raw performance data

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<sup>18</sup> Data available from the ORR website – [www.rail-reg.gov.uk](http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk)

<sup>19</sup> TfL written submission to the Transport Committee, September 2011

and the key operational and industry context.<sup>20</sup> This will help drive service improvements, ensure wider patterns and issues are detected and help improve access to complaints channels for customers.<sup>21</sup>

TfL used to publish some customer service information as part of its Board sub-committee papers up to Summer 2010, an issue which the Deputy Mayor for Transport has committed to re-examining. Other sectors and organisations provide valuable lessons to TfL on how to create reports which are meaningful to passengers:

- Train Operating Companies (TOCs) report across a range of customer service targets as part of their regular monitoring by the ORR, which makes these freely available on its website. Passengers can download individual TOCs' data or even create their own comparative reports.
- The Financial Standards Authority (FSA) collects and publishes customer service data for 260 financial institutions and provides some comparative analysis and important industry context.<sup>22</sup>
- Ofgem, the electricity and gas regulator, only requires basic complaint numbers and process information to be reported by the 'Big Six' energy companies, a level of reporting which has been criticised as inadequate by consumer rights groups.<sup>23</sup>
- The Parliamentary and Health Ombudsman creates a comprehensive annual report which includes a mixture of statistics and case studies drawn from the NHS, which are further broken down into national and regional sub-sets.<sup>24</sup>

TfL should also look to benchmark its performance against comparable transport organisations. This would help to demonstrate the effectiveness of its systems and how robust its reporting mechanisms are against best practice demonstrated by others. Currently, TfL only benchmarks itself against Train Operating Companies (TOCs) using the metric 'Complaints per 100,000 Passenger Journeys' which is also

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<sup>20</sup> *Energy supplier performance against Complaint Handling Standards*, Consumer Focus, 2010

<sup>21</sup> *Energy supplier performance against Complaint Handling Standards*, Consumer Focus, 2010

<sup>22</sup> *Review of Complaint Handling in Banking Groups*, Financial Services Authority, April 2010

<sup>23</sup> *Energy supplier performance against Complaint Handling Standards*, Consumer Focus, 2010

<sup>24</sup> *Listening and Learning: review of complaint handling by the NHS in England 2010-11*, Parliamentary and Health Ombudsman, 2012

promoted by the ORR.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, this statistic is a better demonstration of the performance of the transport network, rather than TfL's customer service function.

In addition to TOCs, the Committee would also encourage TfL to be more imaginative in using other industries as benchmarking comparisons. It already does this to some degree: the London Underground Customer Call Centre came 14<sup>th</sup> in a list of 50 best call centres in the UK as a result of a comparative study undertaken by the customer service industry.<sup>26</sup> Major financial institutions and the 'Big Six' energy companies, which face similar challenges of large volumes of complaints and complex data, might cast a different light on TfL's performance and provide an enlightening comparison for passengers.

**We welcome TfL's commitment to publishing regular performance data on its customer service operations. The reports should examine what would provide the most meaningful context for passengers, as well as making it easier to compare TfL against both other transport operators and, potentially, other large complex and capital intensive public bodies.**

### **Recommendation 3**

**By May 2012, TfL should report back to the Committee on how it will work towards increasing transparency, including: confirming the new set of customer service targets; outlining the proposals for published customer service reports; and any work to extend benchmarking beyond the 'complaints per 100,000 journeys' metric.**

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<sup>25</sup> TfL written submission to the Transport Committee, September 2011

<sup>26</sup> Information provided by TfL and through the ICMI awards website – as accessed on January 2011 - <http://www.callcentre.co.uk/page.cfm/link=8>

# Chapter 3 – A ‘one stop shop’

## Principle 3: There should be a ‘one stop shop’ for TfL customer information

Services directed towards customers should be designed primarily with their needs in mind. TfL’s plans for a new web portal, to be launched in 2012, provide an excellent opportunity to create a truly useful, passenger-centred resource that is freely accessible, relevant to passengers’ experiences and timely. Its ultimate aim should be to reduce pressure on call centre operations and allow back office staff to deal with more specialised enquiries.

TfL told the Committee that this new portal, dubbed ‘My TfL’, is intended to make it “easier for passengers to do business with them”.<sup>27</sup> While the portal is likely to provide a range of services, this section will deal with proposals for customer service information in general and ways that it can help passengers avoid having to make unnecessary contact with TfL.

- **Information Access** – The ‘My TfL’ portal should be where the new Customer Charter and all performance reports are kept and updated. It should also provide information on all relevant contact options as well as provide a clear, easy to use online form. Network Rail’s Passenger FAQ<sup>28</sup> provides a useful, basic example: the site includes the most important information on targets and quality issues as well as general information related to the most relevant issues for customers.
- **Tracking Issues** – A common frustration amongst those in our survey, and in the examples from TravelWatch’s caseload, was a failure to respond to first stage communications. TfL should explore the possibility of allowing passengers to ‘track’ their issue once it has been submitted to TfL, especially for issues which take longer than the standard 10 day deadline. A unique number is already generated for each communication through TfL’s internal system: passengers could use this to keep abreast of their issue and help to ensure enquiries are not ‘lost’. A similar system of order tracking is already available in many retail organisations, such as the award-winning John Lewis site.

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<sup>27</sup> TfL written submission to the Transport Committee, September 2011

<sup>28</sup> Network Rail Passenger FAQ – as accessed on January 2011 - <http://www.networkrail.co.uk/asp/7665.aspx>

- **Relevant updates** – TfL already offers real-time travel information across various modes which is constantly updated and a valuable resource for passengers to check before they travel. In a similar vein, TfL could use the 'My TfL' portal to provide real-time updates on issues directly affecting customer service functions. For example, issues with a local post sorting office in Greenwich led to some major delays in processing discounted Oyster cards in 2011, leading to a larger than normal volume of calls and longer waiting times for passengers ringing the Oyster helpline. Had the 'My TfL' portal existed, this information could have been posted and may have diverted many of these calls and saved passengers time and money.

**By combining broad information on customer service processes and performance, with the ability to track complaints and receive real-time updates on issues, the 'My TfL' portal could help to make passengers better informed and potentially help to reduce wait times at the call centres.**

#### **Recommendation 4**

**TfL should report back to the Committee by May 2012 on the development of the 'My TfL' portal, including: how the portal will improve customer service provision for passengers; any study on the opportunity to provide a complaint 'tracking' system; and how TfL can use real-time information to keep passengers informed of general issues.**

#### *Accessibility*

While the Committee welcomes the development of 'My TfL', and acknowledges the marked increase in mobile web use which makes its development a suitable future investment,<sup>29</sup> many Londoners, especially older people and those with sensory or motor disabilities, will continue to rely on TfL's customer information line.

In 2010, the Committee heard about the difficulties many Londoners with reduced mobility face when trying to plan a journey. Due to the complexity and lack of access within much of the transport system,

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<sup>29</sup> The volume of calls to TfL's Customer Information Line fell by about a third between 2009/10 and 2010/11. TfL estimates that much of this can be attributed to increased use of mobile phone and internet options.

journey planning can be a more complicated task.<sup>30</sup> In 2010, TfL switched their travel information line from a local 020 number to a 0843 number. This has led to concern that the increased price of calls will act as a barrier to people accessing information or providing feedback. In its submission to TfL's Draft Accessibility Plan, Transport for All said some older or disabled people, who are often on extremely tight budgets and with lower levels of internet use, would be put off from using TfL's phone services.<sup>31</sup> Passenger Focus and London TravelWatch have also criticised the increased move towards more expensive 0843 numbers amongst transport operators.<sup>32</sup>

An Equalities Impact Assessment was carried out by TfL before the switch to the 0843 number. This acknowledged some effect on older and disabled people.<sup>33</sup> Though a specialised travel information line is run by Transport for All linked to a local 020 number, we consider there is sufficient basis for investing in a free phone number which is geared towards giving information about how to make accessible journeys, and to take specific complaints and feedback related to those trips. To ensure it is geared only to those in most need, access to the service could be linked to a Freedom Pass account.

A dedicated line for passengers of reduced mobility would allow them to make complaints or provide feedback in real time: for example, if a wheelchair user is abandoned at a kerb, or a ramp fails to operate, they could potentially make the complaint immediately, or when they return home, to a customer care operator who is knowledgeable about their issues. While most mobile phone users would still be charged for a free phone call, the free landline service would still provide a separate but valued 'one stop shop' for those who are most vulnerable and in need of advice on navigating London's transport network as well as increasing the amount of data available to TfL about the difficulties people with reduced mobility face.

**TfL must do more to help support older and disabled Londoners to access information and make complaints. It should investigate the possibility of offering a dedicated free phone number available to all Freedom Pass holders. This**

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<sup>30</sup> *Accessibility of the Transport Network*, London Assembly Transport Committee, November 2010, page 22

<sup>31</sup> Transport for All submission to the Mayor's Transport Accessibility Strategy, November 2011

<sup>32</sup> *Review of the handling of bus and coach appeals*, Passenger Focus, March 2011

<sup>33</sup> TfL written submission to the Transport Committee, September 2011

**would help to target information and resources at groups which need additional support to make use of London's transport network.**

**Recommendation 5**

**TfL should report back to the Committee by May 2012 on how it will help to support Freedom Pass holders with a low-cost information and complaint handling resource.**

# Chapter 4 - Making the most of 'free intelligence'

## Principle 4: Passenger complaints should be viewed as an opportunity and not a threat

Thus far, we have been concerned mainly with ensuring that TfL's processes are developed with passengers' needs at the forefront. But these processes can only work if passengers are confident enough that their voices will be heard and acted upon and actually get in contact.<sup>34</sup>

To ensure that it maximises this valuable intelligence, TfL needs to demonstrate the importance placed on the views of passengers are at the highest levels of the company. This involves continuing to find new ways to gather views and opinions, and ensuring that this information is used at all levels of the organisation to provide meaningful long-term development of passenger services.<sup>35</sup>

It is useful to examine some ways in which other organisations encourage greater participation from customers on an ongoing basis:

- The customer section of the John Lewis Partnership website<sup>36</sup> has a special section outlining its responsibilities to its customers, and goes into depth on the importance of listening to views and criticism;
- Internet bank First Direct has built an online platform, similar to a social network, which allows customers to share information and ideas with other customers and bank employees;<sup>37</sup>
- British Gas, one of the 'Big Six' energy companies, has set up a continuous online survey for customers that has received over one million submissions since December 2010.<sup>38</sup>

What these examples share is a public declaration that organisations care about the day-to-day issues of passengers and encourage consistent, regular, feedback. Passengers notice these values: in

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<sup>34</sup> *Principles of good complaint handling*, Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, February 2009

<sup>35</sup> *Principles of good complaint handling*, Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, February 2009

<sup>36</sup> John Lewis Partnership Stakeholders section – as accessed in January 2011 - <http://www.johnlewispartnership.co.uk/csr/our-approach/engaging-our-stakeholders.html>

<sup>37</sup> First Direct 'Talking Point' – as accessed in January 2011 - [http://www.interactive.firstdirect.com/talkingpoint.html?WT.ac=FSDT\\_HB\\_TalkingPoint](http://www.interactive.firstdirect.com/talkingpoint.html?WT.ac=FSDT_HB_TalkingPoint)

<sup>38</sup> *Annual Consumer Complaints Report 2010/2011*, British Gas, October 2011

2011, both John Lewis<sup>39</sup> and First Direct<sup>40</sup> received awards in their respective industries for customer service excellence.

In addition to continuing to find ways to facilitate dialogue with passengers, TfL should examine ways to shrink the distance between those who manage the strategic vision of the organisation and passengers. Some improvements have been made: TfL now uses new technology from the customer service call centre to provide daily and weekly updates to managers about passenger concerns.

Unfortunately, the Deputy Mayor for Transport said that this information is still not used “systematically” throughout the organisation.

To help ensure this systematic approach in the future, TfL’s Board should receive exceptional customer services reports as part of their monitoring duties. These reports should highlight key recurring complaints and feedback received over monthly or quarterly periods, helping to make the Board more accountable to passengers and improve its oversight of TfL’s activities.

A recent example of where high-level customer service monitoring could have been useful occurred during the launch of the Cycle Hire Scheme in Summer 2010. This Committee first raised the issue of poor customer service at the launch of the Barclay’s Cycle Hire Scheme during our investigation in Autumn 2010. This included: poorly trained staff; personnel overwhelmed with the volume of calls; money being incorrectly taken from customers’ bank accounts; and a poor record at returning calls.<sup>41</sup> In 2010/11, specific complaints about the Serco call centre were four times that of any other service. It took almost a year for TfL to force Serco to make improvements when it issued a Critical Improvement Plan in June 2011.<sup>42</sup>

The Board has not addressed these concerns in public: no mention of customer service issues are made in reports to the main Board, or in the minutes of the meetings until after the Critical Improvement Plan had been issued. An institutional culture which took complaints more seriously at the highest levels may have done more to put pressure on

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<sup>39</sup> <http://www.johnlewis.com/Help/Help.aspx?HelpId=4>

<sup>40</sup> <http://www3.firstdirect.com/ourawards/index-non-flash.shtml>

<sup>41</sup> *Pedal power: the cycle hire scheme and cycle superhighways*, London Assembly Transport Committee, November 2010, page 20

<sup>42</sup> TfL written submission to the Transport Committee, September 2011

Serco to make improvements earlier in the process and save Londoners, and TfL, a great deal of trouble.

**Culture change within an organisation must start at the top and continue down to the day-to-day communications with customers. By engaging more directly with customer service information at Executive and Board level, and examining new ways to get that information, TfL can help to ensure that passenger views are the driver behind future strategic development.**

**Recommendation 6**

**TfL should report back by May 2012 on how it plans to increase the amount of information reported to the Board about customer feedback and complaints.**

# Conclusion

The most important relationship for TfL to maintain is with its passengers. Too often in the past, we have found TfL more interested in the technical side of running such a vast transport network, without the appropriate balance and attention paid to those who actually make use of, and are affected by, its services.

Improving customer service is about more than solving day to day issues: it is also vital to changing the entire ethos of the organisation. The Committee welcomes the steps TfL has taken under Project Horizon to address some of the long standing organisational issues. This report looks to support this work by ensuring that the needs of passengers remain paramount as efficiencies are found throughout the customer service function.

The four principles outlined in this report will help to improve the transparency, accessibility and effectiveness of TfL's customer service. They help to address both the processes needed to maintain daily functions and, perhaps more importantly, ensure that recurring issues are used to drive the strategic direction of TfL's service delivery. This is ultimately something which must come from the top: the TfL Board must ensure that it is more actively involved in monitoring broad customer service issues and that this is followed through at all levels of the organisation.

Maintaining good customer service is of huge benefit to TfL in the long term. Not only does it improve communication between TfL and its most important stakeholders, but also provides the type of ground-level feedback which is vital to the continued improvement of services. By responding to these concerns, TfL can ensure it keeps one foot in the present even as it continues to deliver for the future.

# Appendix 1 – Recommendations

## **Recommendation 1**

TfL should report back to the Committee in May 2012 on how it will make it more straightforward for passengers to provide feedback, including: its plans to reduce the number of contact numbers; how it will continue to improve call centre operations to benefit customers; and how it will ensure this information is more easily available to passengers at stations, at bus stops and shelters, and online.

## **Recommendation 2**

By May 2012, TfL should report back on: how it will ensure greater consistency in its responses to customers; and, produce a single Customer Charter for consultation which covers all services and gives specific guarantees about the timescale and quality of its responses.

## **Recommendation 3**

By May 2012, TfL should report back to the Committee on how it will work towards increasing transparency, including: confirming the new set of customer service targets; outlining the proposals for published customer service reports; and any work to extend benchmarking beyond the 'complaints per 100,000 journeys' metric.

## **Recommendation 4**

TfL should report back to the Committee by May 2012 on the development of the 'My TfL' portal, including: how the portal will improve customer service provision for passengers; any study on the opportunity to provide a complaint 'tracking' system; and how TfL can use real-time information to keep passengers informed of general issues.

## **Recommendation 5**

TfL should report back to the Committee by May 2012 on how it will help to support Freedom Pass holders with a low-cost information and complaint handling resource.

## **Recommendation 6**

TfL should report back by May 2012 on how it plans to increase the amount of information reported to the Board about customer feedback and complaints.

## Appendix 2 – Stages in the Investigation

The rapporteur, Valerie Shawcross AM, held three meetings for this investigation.

- On October 7th 2011, a meeting was held with Shashi Verma, TfL's Director of Customer Experience, Vernon Everitt, Managing Director of Marketing and Communications, and customer service staff at TfL's customer service call centre in North Greenwich. This meeting also provided the opportunity to observe call centre staff dealing with passenger enquiries.
- On November 25th 2011, a meeting was held with the Deputy Mayor for Transport, Isabel Dedring, to discuss priorities for customer service improvements in the coming year.
- On December 5th 2011, the rapporteur explored emerging issues with representatives from Passenger Focus, including Anthony Smith (Chief Executive), Mike Bartram, Policy Adviser, and David Sidebottom, Passenger Team Director.

The Committee received written views and information from various organisations, including: Transport for London, the Deputy Mayor for Transport and London TravelWatch. Recent casework from London TravelWatch was also examined to determine recurring customer service issues. The views of passengers were solicited through an online survey publicly available from September 2011 to January 2012.

# Appendix 3 – Orders and Translations

## How to order

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### Chinese

如您需要这份文件的简介的翻译本，  
请电话联系我们或按上面所提供的邮寄地址或  
Email 与我们联系。

### Vietnamese

Nếu ông (bà) muốn nội dung văn bản này được dịch sang tiếng Việt, xin vui lòng liên hệ với chúng tôi bằng điện thoại, thư hoặc thư điện tử theo địa chỉ ở trên.

### Greek

*Εάν επιθυμείτε περίληψη αυτού του κειμένου στην γλώσσα σας, παρακαλώ καλέστε τον αριθμό ή επικοινωνήστε μαζί μας στην ανωτέρω ταχυδρομική ή την ηλεκτρονική διεύθυνση.*

### Turkish

Bu belgenin kendi dilinize çevrilmiş bir özetini okumak isterseniz, lütfen yukarıdaki telefon numarasını arayın, veya posta ya da e-posta adresi aracılığıyla bizimle temasa geçin.

### Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਦਾ ਸੰਖੇਪ ਆਪਣੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਫ਼ੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜਾਂ ਉਪਰ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਡਾਕ ਜਾਂ ਈਮੇਲ ਪਤੇ 'ਤੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

### Hindi

यदि आपको इस दस्तावेज का सारांश अपनी भाषा में चाहिए तो उपर दिये हुए नंबर पर फोन करें या उपर दिये गये डाक पते या ई मेल पते पर हम से संपर्क करें।

### Bengali

আপনি যদি এই দলিলের একটা সারাংশ নিজের ভাষায় পেতে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে ফো করবেন অথবা উল্লেখিত ডাক ঠিকানায় বা ই-মেইল ঠিকানায় আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করবেন।

### Urdu

اگر آپ کو اس دستاویز کا خلاصہ اپنی زبان میں درکار ہو تو، براہ کرم نمبر پر فون کریں یا مذکورہ بالا ڈاک کے پتے یا ای میل پتے پر ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

### Arabic

الحصول على ملخص لهذا المستند بلغة،  
فرجاء الاتصال برقم الهاتف أو الاتصال على  
العنوان البريدي أو عنوان البريد  
الإلكتروني أعلاه.

### Gujarati

જો તમારે આ દસ્તાવેજનો સાર તમારી ભાષામાં જાણીતા હોય તો ઉપર આપેલ નંબર પર ફોન કરો અથવા ઉપર આપેલ ટપાલ અથવા ઇ-મેઇલ સરનામા પર અમારો સંપર્ક કરો.

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# Transport for London



Our ref: TFL115486

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM  
Deputy Chair Transport Committee  
London Assembly  
City Hall  
The Queen's Walk  
London, SE1 2AA

22 September 2011

Dear *Val*

## **London Assembly investigation into customer service in Transport for London (TfL)**

Thank you for your letter of 28 July regarding your investigation into customer services at TfL.

I enclose answers to your specific questions as an appendix to this letter.

We are committed to delivering high quality customer service and effective complaints handling is a key element of that. We are very conscious that we can improve our handling of complaints, and, as explained in greater detail below, a number of steps are being taken to do so.

Handling complaints which are not resolved immediately (e.g. by staff at a station or on one of our vehicles) forms part of the wider customer services we provide. In 2010/11 we received:

- Over 25,000 written enquiries;
- Over 3.7 million telephone calls, an average of 10,000 a day;
- 170 million visits to our website, an average of 465,000 a day making tfl.gov.uk one of the top 10 websites in the country; and
- Over 2.5 million visits to our Travel Information Centres at key London stations; an average of nearly 7,000 a day.

These contacts cover a wide range of issues including journey planning, requests for information on specific events, transport policy and Oyster cards.

By doing our utmost to provide good levels of service on a huge and complex system, we try to resolve issues immediately. However, that is not always possible, leading to complaints being made in writing or by telephone. We received around two complaints per 100,000 passenger journeys on our services in the fourth quarter of the last financial year. By way of comparison, during the same period, the Train

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Operating Companies received 53 complaints per 100,000 journeys on rail services. In her latest review, the Local Government Ombudsman also noted the “significant reduction” in the number of complaints being investigated at TfL with a fall of 29 per cent compared to the previous financial year.

When TfL was created in 2000 from a number of separate organisations, its customer service structures and functions were complex and disjointed, leading to highly complex complaints handling processes. London Underground, Surface Transport and Oyster support had separate customer service centres for example, with separate knowledge bases and different capabilities. A number of steps have been taken, with more to soon follow, to improve this for the benefit of our customers.

Significant progress is being made. We have brought together our services covering Travel Information, Oyster and Surface Transport, leading to joined-up working and greater efficiency. Staff have been brought together at two key sites rather than in multiple locations across the Capital to improve team work, knowledge sharing and to spread good customer service practice. They have been trained to answer queries and complaints across the full range of our services, while retaining specialist knowledge and skills, significantly improving our ability to resolve complaints in one call.

Good practice is shared proactively. For example, the London Underground Customer Service Centre, which will also be integrated into our other services in January 2012, has been recognised as one of the Top 50 contact centres in the country for the third successive year. The elements leading to this success are proactively shared across all customer service areas.

Although there is undoubtedly more we can do to get better at it, we do use complaints and customer feedback to improve our services. For example, feedback has led to the provision of an additional gate line at Brockley station to provide better access, improvements to the customer information displays at Dalston Junction and the adjustment in audio levels of iBus announcements. On the Tube, all Line General Managers receive twice daily reports on all customer comments and complaints. They then use this information to address operational issues and make decisions as to where they deploy their staff to help customers. The improvements we are delivering to our Oyster services, for example, automatically completing journeys for those who occasionally fail to swipe out, has been heavily influenced by customer feedback.

We are also taking the opportunity of our restructure and cost reduction programme to further improve our customer services. Ownership of customer engagement will now sit with a single Managing Director, Vernon Everitt (Managing Director of Marketing and Communications). Working with his colleagues and TfL’s key external stakeholders, he is responsible for delivering further improvements. These include:

- Creating a single set of quality standards and performance targets across TfL Customer Services – these must be realistic but drive better service for customers;

- Introducing a new “Your TfL” one-stop portal for customers to make it easier for them to do business with us;
- Finding better ways to analyse and use customer feedback to improve services;
- Simplifying the number of forms on our website relating to claims for compensation; and
- Rationalising the complaints process at TfL to make it easier for customers to complain and make TfL more responsive to their needs.

We will also shortly publish performance information about our complaints handling, to enable comparison to be made with other providers of transport and other services.

I know we have arranged a visit to our Pier Walk offices for you next month. I hope you find that useful.

A huge amount of work is already going on to improve how TfL deals with its customers, including the handling of complaints, but we know that we must do better. Your investigation is very timely and we look forward to hearing your views and those of others.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Hendy', with a stylized, cursive script.

**Peter Hendy**

## Transport for London submission to Transport Committee's investigation into customer services at TfL

### Structure of Customer Services

- ***Please outline the current stage of the Customer Service Integration Programme (CSIP) including: length of development period; the reason for any delays in implementation; total cost; expected outcomes; and, any preliminary evaluation done on its implementation.***

The Customer Services Integration Programme (CSIP), completed in 2008, replaced ageing technology and systems which were a major impediment to the delivery of better customer services.

It provided the Travel Information Contact Centre, the Oyster Helpdesk, Surface Transport and London Underground with a single customer relations management system. This meant all contact with customers could be allocated a unique reference number and tracked easily through the business, leading to joined-up working and greater efficiency.

CSIP laid the groundwork for the Contact Centre Transformation Programme (CCTP) which is ongoing and is about providing TfL with the tools to do more for less, bringing an improvement in the level of service and quality offered to our customers.

The CCTP has already seen the introduction of Natural Voice Recognition technology allowing near infinite capacity for self service travel information, massively reducing call waiting times. It has also seen staff brought together at two key sites rather than at multiple locations across the Capital to improve team work, knowledge sharing and to spread good practice. The London Underground Contact Centre will also be integrated with our other services in January 2012.

Without CCTP we would not have the capability to handle the extra contacts generated by the natural growth in passenger numbers or the increase in demand following the expansion of Oyster on National Rail or surges in demand, such as that expected during next year's Olympic and Paralympic Games. In the near future we will also introduce self service Oyster assistance to further reduce customer waiting times.

The overall cost of CSIP was £27.5m, providing £40m in cash savings. CCTP has cost £5.8m to date and has already generated £24.4m of savings. CCTP is on track to deliver an additional £40m in savings over the course of TfL's Business Plan.

- ***Please outline the current proposals for customer service within the Project Horizon programme, including: areas for improvement and how they were identified (e.g. customer research, focus groups, industry benchmarking etc); how Project Horizon will directly address those; how resources and staff structures will change as a result; how it is addressing front-line staff information provision; and, the overall expected outcomes and how TfL plans to monitor and assess them.***

TfL is looking afresh at how to improve customer service.

Drawing on extensive customer research, consultation with consumer and user groups, and staff consultation, TfL will look to learn lessons from other comparable providers to develop a renewed plan for customer services. This includes:

- Creating a single set of quality standards and performance targets across TfL Customer Services – these must be realistic but drive better service for customers;
- Introducing a new “Your TfL” one-stop portal for customers to make it easier for them to do business with us;
- Finding better ways to analyse and use customer feedback to improve services;
- Simplifying the number of forms on our website relating to claims for compensation; and
- Rationalising the complaints process at TfL to make it easier for customers to complain and make TfL more responsive to their needs.

## **Management of Enquiries**

- ***How many (i) written and (ii) online enquiries did TfL receive in the last three financial years?***

The figures for 2009/10 and 2010/11 are set out in the table below. We are unable to provide comparable figures for 2008/09 due to a change to our correspondence management system.

	2009/10	2010/11
Written	25,583	20,101
Online	52,694	67,425

- **For phone centre contacts (please note this should include separate listings for the Travel Information Centre, Oyster Card and Cycle Hire Scheme help lines, where relevant), please state (i) the number of calls offered, (ii) the number of calls answered, (iii) average wait time, (iv) average talk time (v) the number of calls abandoned before talking to an operator and (vi) the number of complaints lodged about call centre operations in the last three financial years.**

All available information is set out in the tables below. Please note that the Barclays Cycle Hire scheme was launched in 2010 and no data is available for Congestion Charging in 2008/09 as the scheme was administered by a different contractor during that period. In addition, our systems were not sophisticated enough to record average wait time/call times and numbers of complaints prior to late 2009.

We have encouraged our customers to access information through cost-free routes, such as Journey Planner, our mobile website and mobile phone applications. As a result there has been a reduction in the number of people calling our Travel Information Contact Centre between 2009/10 and 2010/11.

<b>2008/09</b>	<b>Calls received</b>	<b>Calls answered</b>	<b>Customer ends call</b>
Travel Information Contact Centre	3,394,494	3,139,908	254,586*
Oyster Help Desk	926,590	843,030	83,560
Barclays Cycle Hire	N/A	N/A	N/A
Congestion Charge	Scheme administered by different contractor so data is not available	Scheme administered by different contractor so data is not available	Scheme administered by different contractor so data is not available

<b>2009/10</b>	<b>Calls received</b>	<b>Calls answered</b>	<b>Customer ends call</b>
Travel Information Contact Centre	3,182,696	2,843,043	339,653*
Oyster Help Desk	1,130,528	902,442	228,086

Barclays Cycle Hire	N/A	N/A	N/A
Congestion Charge	3,735,069	3,525,462	196,719**

\* This excludes the very large numbers of callers who would have received an 'engaged' tone given that, prior to the introduction of Natural Voice Recognition, only 70 telephone lines existed. This means that the 'customer ends call' numbers significantly understate the number of callers unable to obtain an answer.

\*\* IBM defines abandoned calls to be those where the customer has ended the call after a call option has been selected as it was assumed that in the vast majority of cases where calls were abandoned before this that customers had misdialled their services in error. The 'customer ends call' figures are therefore lower than the difference between the number of calls received and the number of calls answered.

<b>2010/11</b>	Number of calls received	Number of calls answered	Average wait time (seconds)	Average talk time (seconds)	Customer ends call	Number of complaints about call centre operations
Travel Information Contact Centre	2,207,551	1,977,064	44	120	228,032*	236
Oyster Help Desk	1,049,945	834,493	158**	236	209,903*	158
Barclays Cycle Hire	254,220	237,623	29.7	277.3	16,597	1,076***
Congestion Charge	3,499,196	3,364,896	27	171	134,300	345

\* Following the introduction of more sophisticated systems, calls ended by a customer in less than 10 seconds are not considered abandoned as it was assumed in the vast majority of those cases that customers had misdialled our services in error. The 'customer ends call' figures for the Travel Information Contact Centre and Oyster Help Desk are therefore lower than the difference between the number of calls received and the number of calls answered.

\*\* Customer waiting times will be further reduced following the introduction of an Oyster self service help line in the near future.

\*\*\* TfL issued Serco with a Critical Improvement Plan earlier this year and Serco is making good progress on addressing the issues identified.

- ***How many people have accessed station-based Travel Information Centres in the last three financial years?***

2008/09	2,484,248
2009/10	2,616,682
2010/11	2,678,664

- ***Please outline the route of (i) written, (ii) call centre and (iii) online enquiries through the organisation, and how this is tracked through its various stages?***

The route of all enquiries is set out below but regardless of the channel through which an enquiry is sent to TfL it will always be logged and tracked through a single correspondence management system.

#### Written (letter)

Upon receipt of a letter from a customer, the letter is scanned into TfL's correspondence management system. It is then allocated a unique reference number so the response can be tracked and allocated to the relevant team to handle.

Once a response is drafted it is reviewed by a manager and then sent to the customer.

#### Call centre

Assuming the caller wishes to speak to an agent and not use the Voice Recognition software to obtain travel information, their call is registered and tracked through to our call centre until an agent is free to take the call. The customer will hear announcements advising them of estimated wait times or information relating to their enquiry if they have to wait for an agent.

Once through to an agent, the customer's call is allocated a unique reference number. The call is then either dealt with by the agent there and then or the case is logged on TfL's correspondence management system and allocated to the relevant team to handle.

Once a response is drafted it is reviewed by a manager and then sent to the customer.

#### Online (and email)

Upon receipt of an email or online submission from a customer, an acknowledgement email is sent to the customer.

The email or online submission is automatically registered into TfL's correspondence management system. As with letters, the email or online submission is allocated a unique reference number and allocated to the relevant team to handle.

Once a response is drafted it is reviewed by a manager and then sent to the customer.

- ***What internal auditing or monitoring does TfL undertake of its customer service processes and those of its service providers?***

All of TfL's customer service processes are developed in line with compliance regulations and best practice. Our internal compliance team then performs an annual audit of TfL's contact centres to ensure processes are being followed or that any problems are addressed where they are not.

The performance of TfL Customer Services is reported monthly to the Managing Director of Marketing and Communications who also frequently reviews the quality and tone of written correspondence, where further improvements are being made, and how telephone calls are handled.

The London Underground Customer Service Centre also produces an annual Quality Audit Plan, which reviews and updates both internal and customer-facing processes throughout the year. As part of this, independent mystery shoppers send 416 items of correspondence per year (32 per period) which allow detailed independent evaluation of performance and highlight any areas of weakness.

For the Barclays Cycle Hire scheme, TfL monitors the performance of Serco by listening in on telephone calls and checking correspondence, for quality assurance purposes. Where recurring problems with the quality or timeliness of responses are identified, TfL can issue Serco with a Critical Improvement Plan designed to bring about improvements. TfL did issue such a plan earlier this year and Serco is making good progress on addressing the issues identified.

For Congestion Charging, TfL holds weekly operational meetings with senior managers from IBM to review performance. There is also a contractual review meeting held each month to assess IBM's performance against its contractual requirements and performance regime. TfL also has a team of Policy and Monitoring Advisors based in IBM's offices in Coventry. They continually monitor the service to ensure that IBM is adhering to the Congestion Charge Scheme order and our required levels of quality.

- ***Does TfL make service providers comply with its Customer Feedback and Complaint Policy? If not, what standards does TfL insist providers adhere to when responding to customer enquiries brought to them by TfL?***

TfL's current Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy gives guiding principles for the customer service that is delivered directly by TfL. Where third parties are involved, as is the case with the Congestion Charge and Barclays Cycle Hire, stringent clauses within contracts set the standard we expect of our service providers. As mentioned above, we hold weekly checkpoint meetings with our contractors to monitor performance.

- ***How does TfL monitor the quality of responses to customers (e.g. 'secret shopper') from both (i) written, (ii) online and (iii) call centre operations?***

TfL managers review the quality and consistency (including adherence to the TfL 'Style Guide') of written and online responses from all customer service staff every period. Feedback and coaching is provided to each member of staff on a one-to-one basis.

As mentioned previously, a third party mystery shopping supplier sends the London Underground Customer Service Centre 416 items of correspondence per year (32 per period) which provides detailed independent evaluation of performance and highlights any areas of weakness.

For call centres, every call is recorded and managers have a target to listen to five calls, per agent, per period. These are scored against set quality criteria and are followed up by one-to-one sessions with agents to improve the service they are providing to customers. A third party mystery shopping supplier also calls 832 times per year (64 per period). This again provides an independent evaluation of responses and indicates where improvements can be made.

As mentioned previously, TfL directly monitors samples of telephone calls and written and online responses from its service providers to ensure responses meet the same high quality standards TfL expects of its own customer service functions. Quality control can also form part of service level agreements. For example, IBM has a contractual requirement to perform its own quality monitoring each month. Failure to meet the required levels of quality monitoring will result in financial penalties being applied.

- ***How does TfL assess the accessibility, availability and consistency of information about complaint procedures, e.g. online sources, station and bus information, directions given by providers etc?***

A compliance team monitors the procedures of the TfL contact centres to ensure processes and policies are current. It also works with other areas of TfL to ensure that the content of customer facing media, such as our website, is accurate and in line with correct procedures and work practices.

## **Performance**

- **What are TfL's internal performance targets for (i) written, (ii) call centre and (iii) online enquiries, broken down by mode or provider (where relevant)?**

Existing performance targets are set out in the tables overleaf but we are now looking to create a single set of performance targets across TfL Customer Services. These will be realistic, taking into account relative demand on resources, but must also drive improved results for customers.

### **WRITTEN AND ONLINE**

TfL Customer Services (Travel information, Oyster Help Desk, Surface Transport including Dial-a-Ride)	80 per cent of cases closed within 15 working days
London Underground (which will merge with TfL Customer Services in January 2012)*	Current target is 80 per cent of cases closed within 10 working days

<b>Other providers</b>	
Barclays Cycle Hire	95 per cent within 3 working days
Congestion Charge	100 per cent within 10 working days
Docklands Light Railway (DLR)	100 per cent of cases within 5 working days
LOROL	100 per cent of cases within 7 working days
London Tramlink	100 per cent of cases in 10 working days

### **CALL CENTRE**

TfL Customer Services (Travel information, Oyster Help Desk, Surface Transport including Dial-a-Ride)	To answer 60 per cent of calls within 30 seconds
London Underground (which will merge with TfL Customer Services in January 2012)	To answer 80 per cent of calls within 20 seconds*

<b>Other providers</b>	
Barclays Cycle Hire**	95 per cent within 3 working days
Congestion Charge	80 per cent of calls answered within 20 seconds
DLR**	100 per cent of cases within 5 working days
LOROL**	100 per cent of cases within 7 working days
London Tramlink	Does not have a customer service number but travel information is provided via TfL Customer Services

\* London Underground has more demanding targets than TfL Customer Services as they handle lower volumes of enquiries. Last year London Underground's call centre received 131,120 calls compared to 3,769,490 calls to TfL Customer Services. However, the performance targets for TfL Customer Services are being reviewed.

\*\* Barclays Cycle Hire, DLR and London Overground call centres treat telephone enquiries as per written enquiries and therefore apply the same performance target.

- **How successful has it been in meeting those targets for the last three financial years (i.e. 2008/2009, 2009/2010 and 2010/2011)?**

Results are set out in the tables overleaf. Although service providers are in most cases performing well against TfL's own internal targets, they have in the main been set stretching targets as part of their service level agreements.

As set out elsewhere, if recurring problems with the quality or timeliness of responses are identified, steps will be taken to address these.

IBM's performance handling congestion charge enquiries is improving following poorer than expected results in its first year.

LOROL's performance against its own targets has also been lower than expected, particularly in 2009/10. This was attributed to resourcing issues and higher than usual demand due to the opening of the extended East London Line and a 14 week closure of the North London Line for rail improvement works.

To address these issues, permanent headcount has been increased in LOROL's customer service team and correspondence systems are being upgraded and improved. This resulted in improved performance from the second half of 2010/11. In 2011/12 to date LOROL is responding to all cases in an average of five working days.

### **WRITTEN AND ONLINE**

<b>TfL</b>	<b>2008/09</b>	<b>2009/10</b>	<b>2010/2011</b>
TfL Customer Services (Travel information, Oyster Help Desk, Surface Transport including Dial-a-Ride)	87 per cent closed within 20 working days	84 per cent closed within 20 working days	85 per cent closed within 15 working days
London Underground	82.9 per cent closed within 10 working days [against a target of 70 per cent]	76.6 per cent closed within 10 working days [against a target of 75 per cent]	87.1 per cent closed within 10 working days [against a target of 80 per cent]

<b>Other providers</b>	<b>2008/09</b>	<b>2009/10</b>	<b>2010/2011</b>
Barclays Cycle Hire	N/A	N/A	94 per cent closed within 3 working days
Congestion Charge	Scheme administered by different contractor so data is not available	59 per cent within 10 working days	96 per cent within 10 working days
DLR	DLR does not currently have software to track complaints but this is being rectified as of 1 September 2011.		
LOROL	83 per cent closed within 7 working days	41 per cent closed within 7 working	67 per cent closed within 7 working days

		days	
London Tramlink	96.92 per cent closed within 10 working days	98.15 per cent closed within 10 working days	98.46 per cent closed within 10 working days

## CALL CENTRE

TfL	2008/09	2009/10	2010/2011
TfL Customer Services (Travel information, Oyster Help Desk, Surface Transport including Dial-a-Ride)	91.5 per cent of calls answered within 30 seconds	89.7 per cent of calls answered within 30 seconds	90.7 per cent of calls answered within 30 seconds
London Underground	89.9 per cent of calls answered within 20 seconds	88.8 per cent of calls answered within 20 seconds	94.5 per cent of calls answered within 20 seconds

Other providers	2008/09	2009/10	2010/2011
Barclays Cycle Hire	N/A	N/A	94.18 per cent closed within 3 working days
Congestion Charge	Scheme administered by different contractor so data is not available	68 per cent of calls answered within 20 seconds [ against target of 74 per cent]	81 per cent of calls answered within 20 seconds [against target of 80 per cent]
DLR	DLR does not currently have software to track complaints but this is being rectified as of 1 September 2011.		
LOROL	83 per cent closed within 7 working days	41 per cent closed within 7 working days	67 per cent closed within 7 working days.
London Tramlink	Does not have a customer service number but travel information is provided via TfL Customer Services		

- ***Does TfL benchmark its performance against other transport providers or sectors?***

TfL benchmarks itself against the Train Operating Companies.

Using the figures for the fourth quarter of the last financial year, TfL received two complaints per 100,000 passenger journeys compared with 53 per 100,000 on

National Rail services. In her latest review, the Local Government Ombudsman also noted the “significant reduction” in the number of complaints being investigated at TfL with a fall of 29 per cent compared to the previous financial year.

The London Underground Customer Service Centre has been recognised as one of the Top 50 call centres in the country for the third successive year. This national benchmarking exercise reflects the excellent quality the team has provided and the accuracy of our own mystery shopping scores. Ninety three leading companies (including Marks and Spencer, Coca Cola, Virgin group and Dyson) took part in the exercise this year.

As part of Project Horizon we are looking what further changes and improvements we can make to our benchmarking processes.

- ***What is the average length of call for TfL’s 0845 number?***

After speaking to Committee officers, it was confirmed this question relates to the TfL travel information number 0843 222 1234.

To be clear, this is a travel information line, not a complaints line.

Customers have two options when they call the 0843 number. They can either talk to an agent or use the Voice Recognition software. The average length of time to complete a call using the agent method is 1.5 to 2 minutes. When using Voice Recognition it is 1 to 1.5 minutes. These figures are dependent on circumstances and demand such as during adverse weather, but the introduction of Voice Recognition technology has provided near infinite capacity to deal with high demand as well as offer faster travel information service to our customers.

In addition to the 0843 number, there are many ways to obtain travel information without a charge while ‘on the move’:

- at stations (staff, leaflets, Tube service boards);
- via our mobile website;
- via our mobile journey planner on 60835; and
- by signing up to free travel texts on the TfL website, <http://alerts.tfl.gov.uk/>

We have made our travel data available to app developers for them to find innovative and creative ways to help customers.

- ***What is the average Oyster card refund?***

The average refund is £14.93. This figure covers all payments to customers including surrendered or cancelled tickets, tickets used while awaiting a replacement, as well as errors.

## **Using Customer information and Feedback**

- ***Examples of where (i) complaints and (ii) commendations have been used to improve services.***

There are many examples of where feedback from our customers has been used to improve our services. These include:

- The adjustment in volume of iBus announcements and station Public Address systems to ensure that levels meet the requirements of passengers and residents;
- Provision of additional gatelines at stations to provide better access;
- Improvements to customer information displays at stations;
- Improved processes to handle customer refunds during longer line closures;
- Provision of extra benches at some stations;
- Crime reports used to improve prioritisation of British Transport Police;
- Complaints about lack of notification of work on the East London Line extension helped to improve the distribution area of future letters. Complaints about noise often helped with rescheduling of noisy work to during the day time to limit the disturbance to the local community;
- A complaint was received about how London City Airport (LCA) station is operated when LCA flights are delayed. This resulted in a new joint contingency plan being developed and implemented between the DLR and LCA;
- A complaint was received about Oyster Validator locations on the DLR network. Following this, a review was commissioned and recommendations acted upon; and
- A complaint was received about glare on ticket vending machines. This resulted in anti-glare screens being rolled out across machines on the network.

We are looking at ways of making more use of customer feedback.

- ***How is the experience of achieving the Customer Service Excellent award for the Victoria Coach Station being shared across the organisation?***

The standards of service recognised through the awarding of the Customer Services Excellent award to Victoria Coach Station were shared across the organisation although similar standards were already expected throughout the business.

- ***What specific information do TfL's services (e.g. Oyster, Congestion Charge etc) collect on customers and how does TfL use this information to plan and improve services?***

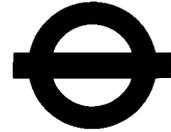
The Oyster card system retains contact details provided by the customer, payment details and journey information. This information is collected for customer service purposes, to check charges for particular journeys, and for refund enquiries. The usage history of each Oyster card is retained on an eight week rolling basis.

During the eight week period when the card number can be identified, this information is used to enable TfL to provide customer support and is monitored to detect fraud or other ticketing irregularities which may occur.

At the end of the eight week period, the travel information recorded against an individual Oyster card is permanently disassociated from it and can no longer be linked to either the card or the customer concerned.

The anonymous journey information is retained for research purposes such as counting the number of people passing through the ticket barriers at London Underground stations, determining the number of people travelling from one station to another at different times of day, and examining the time it takes for customers to travel from the start station to the end station of their journey. This information is used for planning future services and calibrating our estimated journey times.

- Ends -



Our ref: TFL121031

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6 June 2012

Dear *Val*

## Transport for London's Customer Service

We welcome your report, issued in January, on our customer service. Your findings and recommendations are fully aligned with the direction we are taking to put our customers at the heart of everything we do and to make it more convenient for customers to do business with us.

We have adopted the four principles you advocate as the framework for our customer service activity and our programme of improvements will be driven by them:

- It should be clear to those customers who wish to make a complaint, who they should contact and what they should expect in response.
- TfL should set itself challenging customer service targets which reflect what matters to customers and publish performance against them.
- There should be a one stop shop for TfL customer information.
- Passenger complaints should be viewed as an opportunity and not a threat.

There are a number of steps we are taking to deliver rapid improvements against these principles. These are delivering significant benefits to our customers, making interaction with TfL much quicker and easier

In the past few months we have made detailed statements of Oyster journeys available on-line, enabling customers to track their journeys and fares paid in one convenient place.

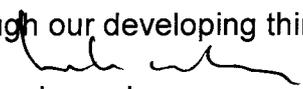
These statements also make it much more straightforward to make travel expense and refund claims. We have also taken further strides to help customers pay the right fare every time. Later this year, customers will be able to 'auto complete' journeys themselves on-line to deal with situations where, for one reason or another, they have been unable to touch in or out. This supplements the tools that we already use for reducing the number of incomplete journeys. 'Auto completion' of journeys during disruption has been done routinely for about five years now. In the last year we have built pattern recognition tools that 'auto-fill' incomplete journeys where the location of the incomplete journey can be established from the journey pattern.

These actions form part of a wider programme to improve the convenience of Oyster and reflect an increasingly proactive stance on our part to help customers better understand and pay the right fare. For the avoidance of doubt, we have absolutely no interest in our customers paying any more or less than the right fare for every journey they make.

These developments are already benefitting our customers but we fully recognise that there is much more to be done across the full range of TfL's products and services. We are therefore in the process of establishing a comprehensive customer service programme which will deliver continuous benefits across the full term of this Mayoralty and beyond. This will be regarded as a priority alongside other major themes such as operational service reliability, the Tube upgrade programme and smoothing traffic flow.

The Transport Committee made six recommendations in its report. A detailed response to each of these is attached at Appendix A.

Thank you very much for the investigation you conducted and the report you have produced. We are fully committed to improving our customer services and making TfL easier to do business with. We would be delighted to take you through a detailed presentation of our programme at your convenience and to keep you regularly updated on progress. In the meantime, perhaps it would be sensible in the next month or so to have an informal opportunity to take you through our developing thinking on our forward strategy.

  
Yours sincerely



**Peter Hendy**

## **Appendix A: TfL's detailed response to the recommendations of the London Assembly on TfL's Customer Services**

*Recommendation 1: TfL should report back to the Committee in May 2012 on how it will make it more straightforward for passengers to provide feedback, including: its plans to reduce the number of contact numbers; how it will continue to improve call centre operations to benefit customers; and how it will ensure this information is more easily available to passengers at stations, at bus stops and shelters, and online.*

We are in the process of completely updating our website as part of making it more straightforward for customers to do business with us. This includes making it easier to make complaints across the full range of TfL products and services and provide other feedback. As discussed below, we also agree that complaints are an opportunity for us to learn from our customers and to use that to improve services rather than some kind of 'threat'.

We have already undertaken an extensive review of the performance of our in-house and outsourced contact centres and have developed a plan to improve the customers' experience of contacting TfL.

Specifically, we have started to reduce the number of telephone numbers across TfL. For the last few months, the travel information number 0843 222 1234 provides access to all Tube, bus, streets and lost property services. These steps are aimed to help us move towards one 'primary' number through which a customer can access any TfL service. Other numbers would only be available where there was a clear customer need to provide one.

With regard to the display of information on how to complain, we keep our approach to the display of contact and complaints information under constant review and amend it regularly to reflect customer needs and feedback. Posters on trains and in buses remain one of the most flexible media for this, allowing us to present substantial detail to customers at the point at which there may have been an issue with the service we have delivered. As you will appreciate, space on bus stops and bus shelters is more constrained, and we will continue to have to balance the provision of this type of information with competing demands for maps, route information and service schedule information.

Within the next 12 months TfL should be able to offer all services that are currently not outsourced through one primary number. Services that are outsourced will be integrated when their respective contracts allow a cost effective integration.

*Recommendation 2: By May 2012, TfL should report back on: how it will ensure greater consistency in its responses to customers; and, produce a single Customer Charter for consultation which covers all services and gives specific guarantees about the timescale and quality of its responses.*

With respect to our in-house customer service operations, we are improving the way that we assess the performance of our customer service staff, placing much greater emphasis on the quality of their work than has previously been the case. Our training has also been improved to help our staff produce clearer correspondence which addresses the issue being raised, all with a more understanding and empathetic tone of voice. We are also looking in some cases at technical solutions which will better enable our staff to serve customers and will ensure greater links across TfL's services.

We recognise the opportunity that exists to bring all of this work together in a single Customer Charter for TfL and we are working towards harmonising the way in which we serve our customers irrespective of the particular service they use. We completely agree with your report that customers do not see themselves through the prism of the mode of transport they are using, so we should not fall into this trap either.

That said, we will need to recognise that the many different services that TfL provide have different characteristics and can serve different or specific groups of people, so some degree of flexibility will always be needed to take account of these varying needs. We will also need to take into account the large outsourced contracts for some of our services, such as the Congestion Charge and Barclays Cycle Hire. However, we will endeavour where possible and practical to embed the principles of good customer service in to all these contracts going forwards.

We plan to harmonise the Customer Charter as far as we can to ensure a consistent level of customer service. We are already working on a revised charter for all of our rail services and we hope to have this implemented by the end of this financial year.

### Recommendation 3

*By May 2012, TfL should report back to the Committee on how it will work towards increasing transparency, including: confirming the new set of customer service targets; outlining the proposals for published customer service reports; and any work to extend benchmarking beyond the complaints per 100,000 journeys' metric.*

We completely recognise that we need to improve visibility of our service standards and we are developing new performance targets for all staff. We have joined the 'Top 50 Contact Centres', an organisation that will independently assess and benchmark our performance against other organisations.

We have started mystery shopping of our contact centres. The first survey conducted recently gave an overall satisfaction score of 88.3%. It is normal to expect a score of 80% for such surveys, so this is an encouraging outcome. We will work hard to learn from the surveys and to make further improvements.

We are committed to regularly publishing the results of mystery shopping surveys and the other key measures we adopt as part of our overall financial and operating performance reports made to the TfL Board. We will also work with the TfL Board to develop a rigorous performance monitoring regime on customer service, reflecting the importance which we are placing on this.

#### *Recommendation 4*

*TfL should report back to the Committee by May 2012 on the development of the 'My TfL' portal, including: how the portal will improve customer service provision for passengers; any study on the opportunity to provide a complaint 'tracking' system; and how TfL can use real-time information to keep passengers informed of general issues.*

As mentioned, work has commenced on the delivery of the new TfL website. This includes the initiative previously referred to as 'MyTfL'.

TfL's online services are made up of over 60 websites, which have grown organically over time and currently lack the level of integration required to deliver personalised services for customers within a single, integrated site. For example, a customer cannot currently plan a journey, get a fare and buy travel products in a single interaction; this requires moving between three TfL sites, albeit that they look the same and have common navigation.

The project will bring together key customer information, live travel news, fares, ticketing products, customer services and journey planning into a single integrated function, requiring customers to log in only once and receive multiple services, organised around their travel preferences and journeys. This service will allow us to provide information in the way our customer want it. The target date for the delivery of this service in its initial form is March 2013.

Unfortunately, given the systems used by TfL for complaints handling it is not currently feasible to deliver a complaints tracking service of the sort recommended. However, these tools are currently under review as part of a wider review of systems used to manage customer services, as mentioned above.

More generally it should be noted that satisfaction with TfL's existing website is at an all-time peak of 90.4% (as at March 2012) and it is among the busiest sites in the UK with around 14 million visits per month. We believe these proposals will help to maintain and improve upon this level of satisfaction.

*Recommendation 5*

*TfL should report back to the Committee by May 2012 on how it will help to support Freedom Pass holders with a low-cost information and complaint handling resource.*

As mentioned previously, we are looking to simplify and reduce the number of entry points into TfL, including telephone numbers. The specific needs of Freedom Pass customers will be taken into account in this review.

*Recommendation 6*

*TfL should report back by May 2012 on how it plans to increase the amount of information reported to the Board about customer feedback and complaints.*

We completely agree. We have been developing various methods for synthesising the main trends and themes from customer contacts on Oyster, London Underground, London Buses and Streets, to identify the issues which are repeatedly causing customer dissatisfaction. This data will then be used to directly inform improvements to our front line services. As with our other performance measures, we will publish our complaints data along with details of what improvements have been made as a result alongside our other operational and financial measures. This work is already in progress and continuous improvement will be made in developing this into a useful resource for managing our services.

# TfL customer service

## Next steps

March 2015



## Contents

Foreword	<b>3</b>
Executive summary	<b>4</b>
1. Introduction	<b>5</b>
2. A single TfL customer charter	<b>6</b>
3. When things go wrong	<b>11</b>
4. How the TfL Board can improve customer service	<b>18</b>
5. Informing and engaging passengers	<b>20</b>
Recommendations	<b>24</b>
<i>Notes</i>	<b>26</b>
<i>Further information</i>	<b>27</b>

## Our investigation

The GLA Oversight Committee approved the appointment of Valerie Shawcross AM as a Rapporteur for the Transport Committee in July 2014 to undertake a follow-up investigation into Transport for London's customer service. The following terms of reference were agreed by the Transport Committee in September 2014:

- To explore TfL's progress in improving its customer service as per the recommendations in the Transport Committee's report *TfL's customer service* (January 2012);
- To consider TfL's passenger charters including the potential to develop an additional overarching customer charter and how TfL manages its staff use of the charters;
- To explore TfL's conditions of carriage including how it enforces them; and
- To make recommendations to the Mayor and TfL on any actions they could take to improve TfL's customer service further.

## Foreword



Transport for London is undoubtedly an impressive public transport operator and has been successfully delivering improvements to London's tube, rail, tram and bus services over the last decade and a half. Coupled with this TfL has been paying attention to those support services which help passengers in enjoying convenient journeys, such as Oyster card and contactless ticketing, information, signage and better trained staff to deal with passengers needing special help or advice.

In my first report scrutinising TfL's customer services in 2012, I highlighted improvements that were needed to TfL's customer information, telephone and complaints systems. I am pleased that TfL responded very positively to the suggestions made in the report. In particular, their call centre operations were dramatically streamlined and improved for customers.

Nearly three years later, I am now checking on TfL's progress with its plans for improving customer services and examining what further steps they need to take now to make life better for passengers, including how they are applying advancing technology.

The remaining weaknesses in TfL's current customer services reflect the history of TfL as a number of different transport operators, which were brought together under one organisational roof. The single most important failing is one of overarching strategy. TfL does not yet offer a single customer charter for all of its operations. Despite often paying one fare to TfL for an entire journey, passengers' rights change with every mode used. For some it is not clear at all what those rights are. My strong plea is that TfL develops an overarching customer charter and uses this as a tool for training staff, informing customers and managing for improvement. Making complaints to TfL should not be a mysterious process – it should be visible, accessible and transparent.

In addition, TfL needs to be responding positively to European legislation which is advancing the idea that customers should have access to a reliable and independent arbitration process called an 'Alternate Dispute Resolution' system. In my personal view London TravelWatch would be well-placed to provide such a service.

To be effective, TfL's single customer charter needs a champion at Board level, who is able to maintain a detailed monitoring of customers' experiences, lead new developments and act as an advocate for passengers on the TfL Board.

TfL is an organisation that delivers a city of 8.6 million people with excellent public transport every day. With these small changes to the way TfL interacts with its customers it can provide even better services to Londoners.

**Valerie Shawcross AM**  
Deputy Chair, Transport Committee

## Executive summary

TfL's relationship with its customers is changing. The way customers pay for journeys is being transformed, with the introduction of contactless payment. On the London Underground, all station ticket offices are due to be closed. Meanwhile, the increasing use of social media and new regulatory requirements are creating new challenges.

The Transport Committee published a report on the standard of customer service at Transport for London in January 2012. Since then, TfL has made good progress in the way it informs and responds to passengers. In this follow-up investigation, we have identified further improvements that can be made.

We recommend TfL introduces a single, overarching customer charter. A number of different charters for some TfL services already exist, but the most heavily-used services have no charter. A new charter would set out the standards of service passengers can expect to receive from TfL, and how they can give feedback if these are not achieved. The charter should be backed up by robust customer service training for staff, based on the values it contains.

TfL should make it easier for passengers to complain. TfL has reduced the cost of calling its customer service centre and simplified menu options on its helpline, but an option to make a complaint needs to be added. Some flaws in the online complaint form also need to be ironed out, such as the inability of passengers to view their own complaint.

TfL needs to make certain it is dealing with feedback thoroughly and in a timely way. We propose an external auditor take a look at TfL's complaints handling to identify any necessary improvements. We also want to see positive engagement from TfL in ongoing discussions about setting up an Alternative Dispute Resolution body to consider unresolved complaints.

Sometimes, good customer service may need to involve managing tensions between passengers. We have seen this in disputes over access to the wheelchair space on buses. TfL has clear Conditions of Carriage and it must make every effort to see that these are known by passengers and enforced by staff.

Finally, customer service needs to be a priority for the people at the very top of the organisation. We want to see the TfL Board playing a more visible role in raising standards. Although some performance data on customer service is reported to the Board, a greater range of measures needs to be reported to give a fuller picture. This information should also be published so passengers can see for themselves how well TfL is meeting their needs.

# 1. Introduction

Transport users in London are right to have high expectations of Transport for London. In a recent comparative study of 15 major cities across the world, London was ranked as the city with the most expensive public transport network, but was only seventh for its ‘customer orientation’ behind Sydney, Tokyo, Zurich, Dubai, Paris and Singapore.<sup>1</sup> The high cost of travelling in London should be matched with high quality customer service.

The Transport Committee published a report on the standard of customer service at Transport for London in January 2012.<sup>2</sup> We called on TfL to develop a new passenger charter, make it easier for passengers to give feedback to TfL, and increase the level of transparency about how TfL is meeting customer service targets.

We have returned to this issue at a pivotal time. TfL has recently embarked on a programme, called Fit for the Future, involving the permanent closure of ticket offices at all London Underground stations. This, alongside other changes such as contactless payment and the rise of social media, will transform the way TfL relates to passengers.

In this investigation, led by Valerie Shawcross AM as a Rapporteur for the Transport Committee, we have considered the progress made by TfL since our previous report. We visited TfL’s customer service centre and, to find out about good practice elsewhere, the equivalent facility in Belfast. We have spoken to a wide range of stakeholders and received a number of written submissions.

First and foremost, customers want safe, punctual and reliable services that are reasonably priced. But they also need clear service standards and easy ways to complain when things go wrong. This report assesses the current position, and whether TfL – from Board level down – really understands customer service as it should.

## 2. A single TfL customer charter

Customer charters are documents that set out the standards of service that a customer can expect when using an organisation's service, as well as the organisation's missions and values. Such charters commonly include details of terms and conditions for refunds, response times for dealing with correspondence, staff conduct, and details of third party referral organisations such as industry watchdogs.

Over the course of this investigation, the Rapporteur has heard from several experts and stakeholders that producing a single passenger charter for TfL services would be worthwhile. It has been argued that a single passenger charter, if well-drafted and aligned with the quality of service that passengers receive, could be a vital document in ensuring that passengers have a clear understanding about the standards of service they can expect and the mission and values of the organisation.

### The benefits of customer charters

We heard that a charter could give TfL customers the confidence to challenge the customer service they receive from TfL. We have heard charters can help tackle the phenomenon of 'under-complaining' on the transport system, whereby passengers fail to report problems they have encountered.<sup>3</sup> This under-reporting is worrying, as transport providers such as TfL need to receive feedback so they can improve services. There may be various reasons for under-complaining, including a lack of knowledge about how to complain or a sense that it is pointless. Clear information about the process in a charter may help address this issue.

We also heard that a single passenger charter would give some vulnerable passengers greater confidence to travel on the transport network. This is a key objective for the Mayor, as set out in his and TfL's 2012 strategy for disabled passengers, *Your accessible transport network*.<sup>4</sup> At our roundtable event in December, we were told by the Institute of Customer Service that trust and reputation are important factors for consumers: people use services that they trust.<sup>5</sup> Transport for All reported that disabled passengers are less likely to use some stations at certain times of day because of a perceived lack of support. These users could benefit from more visible statements of service commitments, especially if these are specific to their needs.

Customer charters can improve standards, if the principles they contain become embedded in staff training. The Institute of Customer Service has argued that a charter's values should be aligned with the messages provided to staff, to ensure a high level of understanding and effective implementation. There is a risk, of course, that if this fails to happen then passengers will lose faith in the commitments made by the organisation in its charter.

The Rapporteur visited Belfast during this investigation to learn about good practice in customer service at Translink, Northern Ireland's public transport provider.<sup>6</sup> We heard how Translink uses its single passenger charter as a quality assurance document to inform staff training, to help ensure that customer care is embedded throughout its operations. See the box below for more information.

### ***Translink: The passenger charter as quality assurance***

Northern Ireland's transport provider, Translink, was formed in 1995 by integrating a number of separate bus and rail operators. The network, covering the whole of Northern Ireland, is made up of Metro, NIRailways and Ulsterbus. Translink provides over 75 million bus and rail passenger journeys each year and operates around 1,500 buses and 38 trains.

Passenger Focus has highlighted the Translink passenger charter as a good example of a passenger charter that covers multiple services.<sup>7</sup> The charter includes:<sup>8</sup>

- Commitments on performance;
- Standards of passenger comfort such as the cleanliness and ventilation of carriages;
- Employee and passenger behaviour; and
- Policies on accessibility for disabled passengers.

Where there are differences between transport modes, the Translink charter specifies just the core standard for each mode. For example, in the case of service performance it sets out its commitments for the two most important parts of its service according to passenger feedback: reliability and punctuality.

Translink advised the Rapporteur on our site visit that the passenger charter was one of the first documents to be produced when the organisation was established. It told the Rapporteur that it uses its passenger charter as a quality assurance document and that initiation training for staff is based on the principles of the charter.

Translink consults with its Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee on the accessibility aspects of its passenger charter, as well as Age Northern Ireland and other passenger groups. Service standards included in the charter are set by benchmarking and revised every five years under the advice of the Consumer Council of Northern Ireland.

## The benefits of a single customer charter

In our January 2012 report, *TfL's customer service*, we recommended that TfL should “produce a single Customer Charter for consultation which covers all services and gives specific guarantees about the timescale and quality of its responses.” We had found that passengers and TfL staff were confused about their respective rights and responsibilities. In addition, its separate passenger charters were inconsistent and sometimes contradictory.

In its initial response to this recommendation, TfL recognised the opportunity to harmonise the way in which it provided customer service to passengers, irrespective of the particular service they used.<sup>9</sup> In a later update in March 2013, TfL advised that it was testing a single customer charter with customers and would use their feedback to change its approach by the summer of 2013.<sup>10</sup> However, since then TfL has reported to the Rapporteur that a single charter was no longer being considered:<sup>11</sup>

*“during research undertaken in September and October 2012, customers warned us that they did not want to read about what we do and intend to do. Instead, the preference was for us to demonstrate the ‘promise’ of Every Journey Matters<sup>12</sup> through delivery in the areas customers care about.”*

TfL already publishes a number of different customer charters for transport modes. However, not all modes – including those with the greatest usage – have customer charters. It seems incredible that customers cannot easily find out what service standards they can expect on either the underground or buses. This needs to change. The table below sets out which of TfL's services currently have customer charters and how these can be found.

Mode	Is there a customer charter?
Underground	No charter for London Underground services.
Bus	No overall charter for London Bus services. Some bus operating companies have customer charters, but these are not necessarily specific to London services. For instance, Arriva publishes a UK-wide customer charter: <a href="http://www.arrivabus.co.uk/about-us/our-promise">www.arrivabus.co.uk/about-us/our-promise</a>
Docklands Light Railway (DLR)	Yes, <i>Our Customer Service Promise</i> , published by TfL and the operator Serco. Available at stations and on the DLR website (April 2013): <a href="http://www.dlrlondon.co.uk/Customer-Service-Promise/">www.dlrlondon.co.uk/Customer-Service-Promise/</a>
Tramlink	Yes, <i>A Charter for Tramlink Passengers</i> . Not published online, but has been distributed via stations.
London River Services (LRS)	The LRS licence with boat operators includes a <i>Statement of Passenger Commitment</i> , but this is not aimed at passengers and is not published.

London Overground	Yes, the <i>London Overground Customer Charter</i> , available on the TfL website (July 2014): <a href="http://www.tfl.gov.uk/cdn/static/cms/documents/london-overground-customer-charter.pdf">www.tfl.gov.uk/cdn/static/cms/documents/london-overground-customer-charter.pdf</a>
Barclays Cycle Hire	No charter for the Cycle Hire scheme.
Dial-a-Ride	Yes, a charter is contained in the <i>Your Guide to Dial-a-Ride</i> document (November 2013), published on the TfL website: <a href="http://www.tfl.gov.uk/cdn/static/cms/documents/guide-to-bookings.pdf">www.tfl.gov.uk/cdn/static/cms/documents/guide-to-bookings.pdf</a>
Emirates Air Line	No charter for the Emirates Air Line cable car.

A single passenger charter would provide a core set of standards that apply to all aspects of TfL customer service. There could be multiple benefits for TfL and passengers from developing a single customer charter. For instance, a single charter would:

- Be easier for customers to understand than multiple different charters with different commitments;
- Require passengers to access the charter only once;
- Fill the existing gaps in coverage of TfL's existing customer charters;
- Reflect the fact that many passenger journeys involve multiple transport modes;
- Help develop a common approach to customer service across TfL, including in the design of staff training;
- Be easier for the TfL Board to oversee, and understand when things go wrong; and
- Help TfL define its expectations of private operators delivering TfL services, to improve procurement.

During the investigation the Rapporteur received suggestions that a single passenger charter could cover a range of issues, such as service performance standards, staff behaviour, and commitments to levels of assistance available at stations. The single passenger charter could cover these broad areas for all modes and provide the context for more detailed, mode-specific commitments, which in some cases already exist.

The charter could also specify how people can complain, and how TfL will respond. This would include a clear account of all the different methods customers can use to complain, what information TfL will require, the process for handling and escalating complaints, and TfL's aims for the timeliness of responses. TfL's existing complaints handling is discussed further in the next chapter.

**It is clear that customers want excellent service on each journey, and TfL is right to redouble its efforts there. But passengers also need a clear understanding of the standards of service they can expect, and what they can do when things go wrong. Customer charters are an essential part of the relationship between TfL and its customers.**

**TfL has been very inconsistent in this area. Some customer charters have been produced for specific modes of transport. Inexplicably, these do not include the Underground or bus services, which have by far the heaviest usage of all TfL services.**

**If TfL were to be formed as a brand new organisation tomorrow, would it really draw up multiple different customer charters for its various modes, while leaving some without a charter? Of course not. It would want to provide its customers with a common set of service standards and processes that apply regardless of whether customers use the bus, the tube or any of TfL's services. That is what we are proposing it should do now.**

**Recommendation 1**

Transport for London should produce a single customer charter covering all of its services, applicable from 1 January 2016. TfL should respond to this recommendation by the end of May 2015, setting out its plans for the development of a charter.

### 3. When things go wrong

Transport for London receives around 70,000 complaints per year – over 1,300 per week – from passengers on its busiest public transport modes: the tube, buses, Docklands Light Railway and London Overground.<sup>13</sup> This investigation has considered how well TfL encourages customer feedback, deals with complaints and whether it could improve its response to passengers.

#### **Making it easier to complain**

Passengers can complain via TfL's customer service centre online or over the phone. In the Transport Committee's 2012 report, we noted problems such as the high cost of making calls to TfL, the range of different numbers available, call waiting times and the process for issuing Oyster refunds.

#### *Telephone*

Since our previous report, TfL has introduced a new, single helpline number (0343 222 1234) so people can contact customer services. The cost of calling customer services has been reduced to 2-10 pence per minute; TfL has reported that calls have increased by 40-50 per cent as a result.<sup>14</sup> TfL has also reported that its average call waiting time has fallen to 20 seconds, and that Oyster complaints are now dealt with in an average of 24 hours.

However, we also heard concerns from London TravelWatch that the helpline menu was hard to navigate for callers.<sup>15</sup> By placing test calls to the helpline we mapped the menu options and confirmed that this was the case. There were lots of different options, with some lacking in clarity about what service is provided behind them. Significantly, there was no obvious option to make a complaint, and while there were options for older and disabled callers to choose for more direct support, these were relatively deep within the menu system.

The Rapporteur raised concerns about the helpline with TfL during a site visit to the customer service Contact Centre in September 2014. Subsequently, TfL decided to review the helpline menu options, and in February announced that the menu had been modified to make it clearer and simpler. In the boxes overleaf, we show the previous and current menu options available on the helpline. The new menu is less complex, although it still does not have an option for complaints.

Transport for All argued that offering an alternative to complain by text message rather than a telephone may be appropriate.<sup>16</sup> This is because passengers may not be able to make a phone call on the move if it is too noisy, they feel self-conscious or they want to avoid disrupting other passengers.

**Previous menu options for callers to TfL customer services (before February 2015)**

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3
* To find out how we use your data	<i>[Recorded information on data usage]</i>	
HOLD for main menu	1) Oyster and Contactless payment	1) If your Oyster has your name and photo printed on it
		2) If your blue Oyster has been lost, stolen or stopped working
		3) To buy a product
		4) Contactless
		5) Anything else
	2) Travel information	1) Instant response using automated journey planner
		2) If you are an older or disabled caller requiring further support
	3) Information relating to a specific method of transport, including London Streets	1) London Streets
		2) Rail services or Crossrail 2 <i>[includes tube, DLR, Overground]</i>
		3) London Buses
		4) Emirates Air Line or Riverboat services
		5) If you are a driver wishing to check the status of your license
		6) Private Hire
	4) Lost property	* For lost Oyster cards
		HOLD for Lost Property office

**New menu options for callers to TfL customer services (from February 2015)**

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2
* To find out how we use your data	<i>[Recorded information on data usage]</i>
1) Ticketing, including Oyster and Contactless payment	1) If your Oyster has your name and photo printed on it
	2) If your blue Oyster has been lost, stolen or stopped working
	3) To buy a product
	4) Contactless
	5) Anything else
2) Help planning a journey	* If you are an older or disabled caller requiring further support
	HOLD for automated journey planner
3) Lost property	* For lost Oyster cards
	HOLD for Lost Property office
4) All other TfL enquiries	<i>[Put through to operator]</i>

The wording of some options has been summarised.

## Online

Customers can complete a form on the TfL website to make a complaint. By and large, this is a simple and clear process, although we have heard about some problems with the web form that TfL needs to put right:<sup>17</sup>

- People completing the form cannot retain a copy of their complaint, and it is not included in replies from TfL;
- The form can be difficult to complete on some mobile devices;
- Complainants cannot attach additional documents or photographs, which may provide useful evidence;
- TfL does not send 'read notices' to let people know their complaint has been read; and
- The form asks for complainants' Oyster card number, but does not allow people to add a Freedom Pass number instead, making it harder for older people to complain.

Some of these issues could be resolved with relatively minor modifications to the web form. Another option would be for TfL to provide a complaints email address as an alternative to the form. This would give users more control over the information they send, although it could mean some required information is not included.

Passengers can also contact TfL online via social media platforms. For instance, TfL manages a large number of Twitter accounts, so users can send messages directly to customer services if they encounter problems. Another possible method of complaining that may make the process easier is a dedicated smartphone application for complaints. There are third-party apps that allow people to complain to TfL, but these are unofficial and do not necessarily cover all TfL services or generate formal complaints.<sup>18</sup>

**It should be easy for passengers to make a complaint about TfL services, should they need to do so. A range of different methods should be available, with support available for complainants that need some extra help.**

**We welcome recent improvements in the responsiveness and accessibility of TfL customer services introduced since our 2012 report. We are also pleased to see that TfL has responded to concerns raised during this investigation and simplified the menu options for its customer services helpline.**

**During this investigation we have identified a number of further improvements that TfL should consider. There are flaws in the way the complaints web form is designed. The helpline continues to lack a complaints option on its main menu, leaving callers to guess which option they need to select to make a complaint. There are some additional methods for making a complaint that should also be considered.**

## **Recommendation 2**

Transport for London should:

- Add a specific option to make a complaint to the main menu of the customer services helpline.
- Modify the design of its web form for complaints, so people can save their own complaints, upload documents and enter a Freedom Pass number.
- Allow people to make a complaint via a direct email address, text message or smartphone application.

TfL should respond to this recommendation by the end of May 2015, setting out the findings of its review and next steps.

## **Dealing with customer complaints**

Receiving a complaint is only the first step of the process for TfL. To improve services and reassure passengers, TfL must act on the feedback provided and show passengers that it is doing so. This is an absolutely vital part of the feedback loop. TfL has reported improvements in how it does this, although we have heard that more could be done.

Some stakeholders have told us that TfL needs to improve the way it responds to complaints. Transport for All told the Rapporteur that a large proportion of calls to its advocacy line for disabled transport users were about unsatisfactory responses to complaints from TfL. Often, responses come in the form of a template response that a passenger may already have received several times before.<sup>19</sup> Similar concerns were echoed in a submission from the public transport team at the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea:<sup>20</sup>

*Residents are often left frustrated as TfL responses to complaints often don't directly deal with the complaint, but can come across as a generic response thanking the person for getting in touch and stating that TfL will look into the issue. We would like all responses to deal with the specific issue at hand, providing all of the necessary information.*

One of the potential pitfalls of this is that TfL could leave passengers with a sense that their complaint isn't getting to the necessary department. To take bus services as an example, some may feel that complaints are stuck at 'garage level'. This means that complaints may be forwarded to the bus garage concerned but are then

dismissed or dealt with in a minimal way, without feeding into change at the London-wide level.

TfL's submission to this investigation emphasised it had "*completely overhauled our culture surrounding complaints*" since 2012, moving from a defensive posture to an approach where staff are enabled to fix a customer's problem immediately. TfL provided details on how it reports complaints to the operational level:

*Reports are produced for each operational area of TfL setting out the nature of complaints and any emerging themes or trends. These are used to address issues at source. For example, a series of complaints identified an issue with ticket vending machines on the DLR. To resolve this, software has been upgraded, extra machines have been provided at busy stations and there is better signage. We produce a number of reports that provide feedback to our operational teams. These are often supplied overnight for senior managers to discuss in the morning and decide what action to take.*

It is important that TfL monitors the effectiveness of its complaints handling processes. TfL could consider commissioning external audits of complaints, similar to those conducted by Passenger Focus for train operating companies (TOCs).<sup>21</sup> For each audit, Passenger Focus checks a TOC's responses to a sample of complaints, judging them against the company's own standards and Passenger Focus standards on the tone and quality of response. Passenger Focus produces a report, with recommendations to the TOC on how it can make improvements. The team then returns after approximately nine months to conduct a follow-up review. Passenger Focus maintains that its rigorous approach has led to improved performance in some TOCs as staffing and complaint processes were modified.

TfL could also benefit from an independent audit of its complaints handling. We recognise that this would incur up-front costs, but we argue that this would be outweighed by much larger benefits for TfL and its customers over the long term. Dealing with complaints properly the first time every time would save TfL money, and help improve its services for millions of customers.

**TfL should deal with complaints from service users quickly and thoroughly. TfL should tell complainants what it has done with the information provided and how it has dealt with the problems identified.**

**We welcome TfL's acceptance that it needed to change its attitude to complaints. TfL – and customers – would benefit from a regular independent review of its complaints handling to help it improve further.**

### **Recommendation 3**

Transport for London should appoint an external organisation to carry out an audit of its response to complaints, including the process for internal escalation of complaints. TfL should respond to this recommendation by the end of May 2015.

## Resolving difficult complaints

When customers have been unable to resolve a complaint directly with TfL, they are directed to London TravelWatch for further assistance. It currently deals with 6,000 enquiries and complaints a year and has a budget of £1.1 million. Following a recent EU Directive regarding Alternative Dispute Resolution (see box below), TravelWatch is in discussions with the Department for Transport about becoming the new Alternative Dispute Resolution body for TfL customers, but no agreement has yet been reached.

TravelWatch told us that it supports the Directive, but believes some aspects of the Department's proposals are problematic:<sup>22</sup>

*We have welcomed the Directive in principle, as an enhancement of consumer rights. But we believe that it is essential that it (a) should be implemented in such a way as to complement and augment our existing conciliation function, not replace it, (b) should not be allowed to diminish or hamper our role as consumer advocates, (c) should be mandatory for operators to participate, (d) should lead to binding decisions, and (e) must be properly funded (but at no charge to users).*

### **EU Directive on Alternative Dispute Resolution**

Various forms of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) are available to consumers across many industries. These are mainly founded on a voluntary basis and provide for disputes between consumers and suppliers of goods and services to be resolved or mediated by an independent body, without recourse to the courts. For instance, the Property Ombudsman provides dispute resolution between consumers and sales and letting agents.

The recent EU Directive on Alternative Dispute Resolution mandates that this form of redress must be available for any dispute concerning contractual obligations between a consumer and a supplier from July 2015.<sup>23</sup> The Directive applies to public transport providers, including TfL, although suppliers are not obligated to take part in the ADR process or accept its outcomes.

TravelWatch has highlighted an example of good practice complaints resolution in the transport sector which may be applied to London, in order to meet the objectives of the Directive. Bus Users UK represents bus passengers outside London and handles complaints about bus operators. Where unresolved, these complaints can be referred to the Bus Appeals Body (BAB). The BAB has members representing industry and passengers, with a neutral chair; it is voluntarily funded by operators and makes binding decisions about unresolved complaints.

**The introduction of an Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanism for public transport would help enhance the rights of public transport users in London, as it gives passengers a new opportunity to have service failings addressed without onerous legal**

battles. It is disappointing that further progress toward this outcome has not been made to date.

Although Transport for London is not obliged to participate in the ADR system, we believe TfL should welcome this change and work to deliver an effective dispute resolution process for London. Options for how this can be achieved, including the suggestions put forward by London TravelWatch, should be discussed with the Department for Transport at the earliest opportunity.

**Recommendation 4**

Transport for London should engage in discussions with the Department for Transport, aimed at agreeing arrangements for the structure, funding and governance of a new Alternative Dispute Resolution system for TfL service users. TfL should respond to this recommendation by the end of May 2015 setting out its approach to the ADR Directive and plans for further discussions on this topic.

## 4. How the TfL Board can improve customer service

A customer service culture should, ideally, permeate any organisation that serves the public on the scale that Transport for London does, including the very top of the organisation. We have therefore looked at TfL's approach to customer service at Board level.

We have seen indications that TfL is getting better at dealing with customers, but there is still a long way to go. We think that the customer voice is still not being properly heard at Board level, and that the Board lacks the information it needs to understand how well TfL is performing in terms of customer complaints.

In the Committee's 2012 report we recommended that TfL should change the way it measures customer service performance. The key statistic used by TfL is the 'number of complaints per 100,000 journeys' across different transport modes, but this only gives a partial picture and can be misleading. For example, if TfL made it easier for customers to complain we would naturally expect to see an increase in the complaints rate, even if service levels were unchanged. A larger suite of indicators is needed, so we are pleased that TfL has recently introduced extra measures of customer service:<sup>24</sup>

- Call abandonment rate – target under 10 per cent;
- Correspondence Service Level Agreement<sup>25</sup> – target 80 per cent; and
- Mystery Shopper Quality assessment scores – target 85 per cent.

It would be helpful for this information to be made available to the TfL Board as part of the quarterly Operational and Financial Performance Reports, which currently only contains the complaints per 100,000 journeys figure for each mode.

It is important that the public as well as Board Members can see this customer service data. In its submission, TfL directed the Rapporteur toward a page on its website containing quarterly Complaints Reports, which provide further detail on the causes and responses to complaints.<sup>26</sup> However, the latest report on this page is from the second quarter of 2012/13. TfL has confirmed that the Complaints Reports are no longer produced.

We do not think, however, that better data will be enough by itself to drive improvements from the TfL Board – we think it is vital that one Board Member has overall direct responsibility for customer service. Senior TfL executives with responsibility for customer services – specifically the Managing Director of Customer Experience, Marketing and Communications and the Director of Customer Experience – do report to the Board, and the membership comprises people with experience in this field. But it is remarkable that the only Board Members with clear responsibility for

customers are those representing people using TfL's rail services outside London.<sup>27</sup> This needs to change, and TfL should appoint one Board Member to act as the customers' champion. The voice of the customer needs to be heard at TfL Board meetings, and this would be one way of achieving that.

**Transport for London says it is committed to improving customer service. We think that it can go further so that the voice of the customer reaches the decision-makers on the TfL Board. The Board needs to receive better customer service data, and one Board Member needs to take lead responsibility to act as the customer champion.**

#### **Recommendation 5**

The Transport for London Board should play a more visible role in championing good customer service. We recommend that:

- The Board should receive quarterly complaints reports, which include the full range of customer service metrics.
- A single Board Member should be designated as the customer champion to represent the interests of TfL's customers at Board level.

TfL should respond to this recommendation by the end of May 2015.

## 4. Informing and engaging passengers

Good customer service requires the provision of comprehensive, accurate and timely information for passengers, and taking on board their views in the design and delivery of services. TfL faces challenges in this area. Ticket office closures are changing the relationship between staff and passengers, for instance, while social media has opened up a new way of communicating. Here we consider how TfL is responding.

### How staff engage with customers

Passengers should be able to feel they can communicate directly with TfL. This is not just to complain, but to share suggestions, ask questions, receive information, provide intelligence, and so on. This can be done in many different ways.

#### *Stations*

The Mayor's decision to close TfL's underground ticket offices was highly contentious, and has been discussed at length. TfL's *Fit for the Future* programme will see all ticket offices closed by April 2016, with the loss of approximately 900 jobs. The remaining staff from ticket offices will be moved onto station concourses and platforms to sell tickets and help customers with their journeys. They will attend a five-day customer service training course, specially developed so they can receive feedback and coaching on a wide range of work-based situations in stations.<sup>28</sup> What TfL needs to do now is ensure that the customer experience is enhanced, not diminished, as a result of these changes. We will keep a close eye on developments over the next year.

#### *Public meetings*

A number of train operating companies hold regular 'meet the manager' sessions for their passengers. For instance, Southern holds these sessions on the concourse at its main hub stations, London Bridge and Victoria, so rail passengers can discuss any issues they have with senior representatives of the company face to face.

TfL undertakes similar activity for some services, for instance the local meetings in which Dial-a-Ride users can meet service managers. It may be possible to extend this approach, although we appreciate there will be practical challenges to consider, given the number of passengers TfL serves.

#### *Social media*

TfL has increased its use of social media in recent years. The Institute of Customer Service has reported that eight per cent of transport users prefer to make complaints

via social media because this allows other users to read about the problem. TfL now runs separate Twitter accounts for different services, and for each tube line. In total, these accounts are followed by around 1.8 million Twitter users, although there is likely to be some replication between accounts. TfL uses them to provide service updates to customers, and customers use them to make complaints directly to TfL.

Twitter has been used for other purposes by TfL, too: TfL's Director of Customer Experience held a live Q&A session on the site recently, and TfL monitors Twitter for evidence of customer dissatisfaction. Although it might be assumed this activity mainly targets younger Londoners, Age UK London reported that online communication with TfL is also important for growing numbers of older people.<sup>29</sup> As with text messaging, Twitter can allow customers and TfL service staff to communicate directly and in real time, helping TfL deal with problems as they arise.

**Transport for London should take all available opportunities to engage with its customers. This is important for dealing with issues passengers face getting around the transport network, as well as receiving feedback and identifying service improvements that need to be made.**

**We are pleased to see TfL embracing social media as a forum for doing this, but it is no substitute for direct contact between front-line staff and passengers. Clearly, the closure of ticket offices and reduction in staff at stations means there is a risk of reducing the level of contact. It is important that the Fit for the Future programme does instil high standards of customer service in staff, which are maintained in the future.**

#### **Recommendation 6**

Transport for London should take steps to build on the customer service training being provided for London Underground staff during the Fit for the Future programme. The training should be repeated regularly, and extended to staff on other modes. From 2016 it should also incorporate training in implementing the new single customer charter. TfL should respond to this recommendation by the end of May 2015.

### **Enforcing Conditions of Carriage**

All passengers using TfL services travel under specified Conditions of Carriage.<sup>30</sup> An important element of the customer service relationship is the understanding that these conditions will be respected by both parties. TfL seeks to enforce the Conditions of Carriage in a number of ways, for instance through highly visible ticket inspections. This can give confidence to passengers that rules are being followed, encouraging good behaviour.

We know that on an extremely busy, often overcrowded transport network the level of service passengers receive will be affected by the behaviour of other passengers.

For instance, older people and pregnant women often require a seat more than others, but may have to rely on other passengers being willing to stand. TfL places signage in carriages to encourage people to offer their seats to those in need, and in the case of pregnant women also provides free 'Baby on Board' badges.

One area of tension that has been explored in this investigation is that of access to wheelchair space, particularly on London bus services. There have been high profile cases involving parents with buggies and wheelchair users, but there will also be other types of passengers wanting to use this space, including those with other forms of disability, passengers with heavy luggage, or just those who cannot find any other space on the bus.

TfL's Conditions of Carriage are clear that wheelchair and mobility scooter users should be given priority access to this spaces on buses, and that drivers will enforce this rule:

*Wheelchair and mobility scooter users have priority over everyone else for the use of the wheelchair space, since this is the only space in which they can travel safely. If someone in a wheelchair wishes to board, and the wheelchair space is occupied by standing passengers or buggies, standing passengers will be asked by the driver to make room if possible, and buggy users will be asked to fold them and put them in the luggage space or keep them by their side. The driver will tell you what to do.*

Transport for All, representing disabled transport users, has highlighted a disparity between this policy and what happens in practice.<sup>31</sup> It has received reports from wheelchair users that they have been denied access to wheelchair spaces on buses. Furthermore, those complaining to TfL have sometimes been told that access to the space is a courtesy, rather than a reasonable adjustment as per TfL policy.

TfL and Passenger Focus both told the Rapporteur that conflict existed over what is clearly a contested space. They also highlighted the risk that strict enforcement of the Conditions of Carriage may exacerbate this by forcing staff into confrontations with passengers. TfL has previously run a publicity campaign on this issue, with posters being placed on buses asking passengers to respect the wheelchair priority in November 2012.<sup>32</sup>

**TfL's Conditions of Carriage help define the relationship between passengers and TfL as a service provider. The risk, if rules are not enforced, is that passengers will lose trust in the service. For some of the most vulnerable Londoners this could limit their mobility.**

**Nevertheless, we recognise TfL has a difficult job managing tensions over usage of priority space on buses. Proactive steps to avoid conflict from arising and to equip staff with necessary skills should be considered.**

### **Recommendation 7**

Transport for London should improve the way it informs passengers about their rights to use priority space on buses. Where necessary, clear, accessible signage should be on display, supported by further publicity campaigns and online information. The review should also consider how bus operators train staff to promote these messages and deal with any conflict between passengers, and identify any required improvements in staff training. TfL should respond to this recommendation by the end of May 2015.

### **Informing passengers of fare options**

The issue of TfL's fares has been considered recently by the London Assembly's Budget and Performance Committee.<sup>33</sup> In this investigation, we have considered how TfL informs passengers about fare options, as this is an important element of customer service.

TfL provides an online Journey Planner tool for passengers, helping them find the fastest or most convenient route for their journey, across all modes and tailored to individual needs. TfL also releases a range of real-time service data so other web developers can create tools designed to help people get around the city

There are different cost implications of different transport modes available to Londoners. Travelling by bus is cheaper than travelling by tube, for instance, while some modes are not yet integrated with Oyster. However, TfL's Journey Planner support does not include fares information. It is therefore difficult for passengers to identify in advance what their fare options are, including what the cheapest fare for their journey could be.

Some third-party London journey planning tools, such as the Citymapper website and app, do include fares information. Fares for different journey options are given, including a bus-only option, so users can decide which routes to take depending on the cost, as well as speed, convenience and so on. Citymapper and similar services use data released by TfL to do this.

**Station ticket offices are closing, new transport modes such as Crossrail are being introduced, and the rollout of contactless payment is changing the way Londoners pay for travel. In this context it is more important than ever that TfL does all it can to help people to identify the best available fares for their journey.**

### **Recommendation 8**

Transport for London should add fare information to its Journey Planner tool, including a 'best available fare' option, giving people the ability to tailor their journey according to the fares they will incur. TfL should respond to this recommendation by the end of May 2015.

# Recommendations

## **Recommendation 1**

Transport for London should produce a single customer charter covering all of its services, applicable from 1 January 2016. TfL should respond to this recommendation by the end of May 2015, setting out its plans for the development of a charter.

## **Recommendation 2**

Transport for London should:

- Add a specific option to make a complaint to the main menu of the customer services helpline.
- Modify the design of its web form for complaints, so people can save their own complaints, upload documents and enter a Freedom Pass number.
- Allow people to make a complaint via a direct email address, text message or smartphone application.

TfL should respond to this recommendation by the end of May 2015, setting out the findings of its review and next steps.

## **Recommendation 3**

Transport for London should appoint an external organisation to carry out an audit of its response to complaints, including the process for internal escalation of complaints. TfL should respond to this recommendation by the end of May 2015.

## **Recommendation 4**

Transport for London should engage in discussions with the Department for Transport, aimed at agreeing arrangements for the structure, funding and governance of a new Alternative Dispute Resolution system for TfL service users. TfL should respond to this recommendation by the end of May 2015 setting out its approach to the ADR Directive and plans for further discussions on this topic.

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- The Board should receive quarterly complaints reports, which include the full range of customer service metrics.
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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Simon Kucher and Partners, *Local Public Transportation Study*, January 2015
- <sup>2</sup> Transport Committee, Transport for London's customer service, January 2012
- <sup>3</sup> Institute of Customer Service, Roundtable discussion, 8 December 2014
- <sup>4</sup> <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/cdn/static/cms/documents/your-accessible-transport-network.pdf>
- <sup>5</sup> Roundtable discussion, 8 December 2014
- <sup>6</sup> Site visit to Translink, December 2014
- <sup>7</sup> Passenger Focus, Roundtable discussion, 8 December 2014
- <sup>8</sup> To view the Translink passenger charter please visit:  
<http://www.translink.co.uk/Documents/Corporate/publications/4644%20Passengers%20Charter.pdf>
- <sup>9</sup> Letter from Sir Peter Hendy to the Transport Committee, June 2012
- <sup>10</sup> Letter from Sir Peter Hendy to the Transport Committee, March 2013
- <sup>11</sup> Written submission from Transport for London, November 2014
- <sup>12</sup> Every Journey Matters was a TfL consultation programme about how to improve customer service in stations. For more information see: <https://fitforthefuture.tfl.gov.uk/category/every-journey-matters-and-the-proposals/>
- <sup>13</sup> Calculation based on quarter one complaints data for 2014/15, available in:  
<http://www.tfl.gov.uk/cdn/static/cms/documents/q1-2014-15-operational-and-financial-performance-report.pdf>
- <sup>14</sup> Site visit to TfL customer Contact Centre, September 2014. 034 numbers are typically included in free call packages from telephone service providers. Otherwise the cost from a landline will be 2-10p, and 10-40p from a mobile. For more information see: <https://www.tfl.gov.uk/corporate/terms-and-conditions/tfl-call-charges>
- <sup>15</sup> Meeting with London TravelWatch, September 2014
- <sup>16</sup> Roundtable discussion, 8 December 2014
- <sup>17</sup> Written submission from RB Kensington & Chelsea, November 2014; Meeting with London TravelWatch, September 2014; Transport for All, Roundtable discussion, 8 December 2014
- <sup>18</sup> For instance, the Resolver app allows people to complain about Oyster, Underground and Overground services, while the Complain app allows people to post complaints on several social media sites.
- <sup>19</sup> Roundtable discussion, 8 December 2014
- <sup>20</sup> Written submission from Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, November 2014
- <sup>21</sup> These audits are conducted jointly with London TravelWatch for TOCs running London routes; TravelWatch carries out London Overground audits exclusively.
- <sup>22</sup> Written submission from London TravelWatch, January 2015
- <sup>23</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/377522/bis-14-1122-alternative-dispute-resolution-for-consumers.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/377522/bis-14-1122-alternative-dispute-resolution-for-consumers.pdf)
- <sup>24</sup> Written submission from Transport for London, November 2014.
- <sup>25</sup> The correspondence service level agreement measures the speed of TfL's response to customer contact. The target is to respond within 24 hours, or within 10 days if the query/complaint requires further investigation.
- <sup>26</sup> <https://www.tfl.gov.uk/corporate/publications-and-reports/complaints-report>
- <sup>27</sup> <https://www.tfl.gov.uk/corporate/about-tfl/how-we-work/corporate-governance/board-members>
- <sup>28</sup> <https://fitforthefuture.tfl.gov.uk/new-training-course-to-help-station-staff-deliver-world-class-customer-service/>
- <sup>29</sup> Roundtable discussion, 8 December 2014
- <sup>30</sup> <https://www.tfl.gov.uk/corporate/terms-and-conditions/ticketing-and-travel-conditions-of-carriage>
- <sup>31</sup> Roundtable discussion, 8 December 2014
- <sup>32</sup> <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2012/november/wheelchair-priority-space-campaign-launched>
- <sup>33</sup> <http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor-assembly/london-assembly/publications/response-to-the-mayor-s-draft-consultation-budget-2015-16>

### Further information

#### Members of the Transport Committee

Caroline Pidgeon (Chair)	Liberal Democrat
Valerie Shawcross (Deputy Chair)	Labour
Victoria Borwick	Conservative
Tom Copley	Labour
Darren Johnson	Green
Onkar Sahota	Labour
Navin Shah	Labour
Richard Tracey	Conservative

#### Views and information received

The Committee received written submissions from the following individuals and organisations:

- Age UK London
- Andrew Bosi
- Go Ahead London
- London TravelWatch
- Nicola McDowall
- Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea
- Southern Railway
- Transport for London

#### Committee contacts

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You can find further information about the Committee and access reports at:

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**TRANSPORT  
FOR LONDON**

EVERY JOURNEY MATTERS

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7 November 2014

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*Dear Val,*

### **Transport Committee's follow up investigation into TfL's Customer Service**

Thank you for your letter of 3 September to Sir Peter Hendy. Peter has asked me to reply. I am sorry that it has taken a while to get back to you in writing, but I am glad that you were able to visit us at Pier Walk last month.

As we explained in our response to the Committee's earlier reports in this area, we welcome the positive contribution you and the Committee have made to help frame our approach to customer service.

We have continued to deliver rapid improvements against the four principles you advocated to improve customer service and take as much hassle out of journeys as possible. I believe that, as a result, we are much more customer-focussed as an organisation. There is, of course, much more to do.

Details on this work and the specific information you have requested are set out in the attachments to this letter.

Thank you again for the Committee's constructive contribution to improving customer service.

*Yours sincerely,*

*Vernon*

**Vernon Everitt**  
Managing Director, Customer Experience, Marketing and Communications

## **Our approach to customer service: Every Journey Matters**

### Introduction

Transport is not an end in itself. It is a means of economic growth and development and social cohesion to enable people to make the most of life's opportunities.

Our purpose as an organisation is to keep London working and growing and to make life in London better. Despite profound changes in technology, our industry essentially remains a people business. It is our staff and those of our contractors who are at the front line of delivering high quality customer service.

### What our customers and users want

Our customers and users tell us that they want four things:

- clear understanding of who we are and what we stand for;
- safe and reliable transport services day in, day out;
- value for money, which is as much about how we treat people as it is about fares and charges; and
- progress and innovation: they want to see a clear return to them personally on all of the investment that is being made to improve our transport.

In short, our customers and users want us to recognise that every journey they make matters whether it is to get to work, school, a hospital appointment or to see friends and family. They rightly demand to see us work tirelessly to improve their transport, to put it right when things go wrong and to take as much hassle out of travel as possible.

### Our action plan

We use this simple framework, under the umbrella of Every Journey Matters, to drive an action plan in a range of areas to deliver better customer service. Delivering this is central to the work of everyone at TfL and Customer Care is formally one of our core priorities.

To bring this together as a prioritised programme, we have a dedicated Customer Group, chaired by the Managing Director of Customer Experience, Marketing and Communications, to lead the planning and delivery. The Customer Group brings together senior representatives from every area of the

organisation to ensure that we continue to make progress quickly and in a joined-up way. The group meets monthly and makes regular reports to the Transport Commissioner, his Leadership Team and to the TfL Board.

Action is prioritised against feedback from customers and users and from organisations such as London TravelWatch and Passenger Focus. We listen carefully to comments, complaints and commendations and take action to deal with the root causes of problems. We report publicly on what we have done to resolve complaints at meetings of the TfL Board through our Operational and Financial Report.

This is a constantly evolving programme but is centred on tackling the biggest areas of concern for customers and on identifying more ways in which we can make ourselves easier to do business with. The core themes are described below.

#### Safe and reliable transport services

Customer service begins with providing safe and reliable services day in, day out as the core of what the whole organisation does.

Sustained investment is delivering, and will continue to deliver, very significant improvements to the safety and reliability of our public transport and road networks. Reflecting the fact that transport is a people business, our staff will remain at the forefront of delivering high quality customer service. As you know, on London Underground, more staff than ever before will be visible and accessible to customers. Improved customer service training will ensure that standards continue to rise in keeping with best practice in other industries.

#### Real-time and co-ordinated information

Reliable real-time travel information is fundamental to meeting the needs of our customers. We have overhauled and modernised our approach to its provision over the last few years.

Customers want travel information that is integrated, real-time, human in tone, consistent and personalised. And while technology has moved on, we never lose sight of the need to provide information through a wide range of channels, including face-to-face and over the telephone.

Information from our operational control centres on the status of public transport and the roads is supplied automatically in real-time to the public and to television and radio stations. This means that the information we have, our customers have too.

Seventy per cent of Londoners now own a smartphone. Eighty seven per cent use the internet for maps and directions. We have well over 1.8 million followers of our social media channels such as Twitter and our website has been completely redesigned in partnership with our customers to provide real-

time information on the move. The site, which receives over 250 million visits a year, automatically fits whatever device it is being accessed from. Demand for these services continues to grow very rapidly.

We also recognise that customers want to receive this information in different ways and that third parties have an important part to play in bringing new products to market quickly.

This is why we have become a world leader in the provision of free open data feeds. Over 30 data sets, such as the real-time location of trains and buses, are made available in convenient 'plug in and use' formats via the Developers Section of our website. This information is used by App developers and others to power over 200 products over and above the information we provide directly to customers ourselves.

We work closely with the developer community to stimulate innovation in this area. The Shakespeare report for the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills identified our open data provision as an exemplar, estimating the annual benefit to be up to £58m in time saved by our customers.

Our live bus, Tube and rail information systems, delivered online, on mobile phones and at thousands of bus stops and hundreds of stations, means that passengers are kept up-to-date on the status of their services. Tube and rail staff make regular unscripted announcements to reassure passengers and to provide information in the event of disruption.

We use the data derived from our Oyster and contactless payment systems to provide regular tailored emails to the 4.5 million customers who have provided us with their email addresses. These include a weekly update on planned improvement work at the weekends, how that work will benefit customers and how to avoid disruption.

Building on what we learned during the London 2012 Games, our Travel Demand Management (TDM) programme now forms a core part of our operational planning on public transport and the roads.

In essence, TDM is an integrated approach to being open and transparent with businesses, customers and users and to make available the information they need – for example the impact of weekend improvement works or major events such as the Tour de France.

We work with Network Rail, ATOC, train operating companies and highway authorities to coordinate the operational and communications elements of this so that customers receive a joined-up message regardless of who operates the service.

Integrated ticketing

Since its launch in 2002, the Oyster card has evolved to meet the changing needs of customers. This includes the accommodation of Travelcards (2003), 'pay as you go' journeys (2004) and daily fare capping (2005). All of this was to create greater convenience, enabling customers to simply 'tap and go', with the system automatically delivering the best available price for the journey.

Concession cards such as the Freedom Pass (2004), Zip cards for children (2006) and the 60+ card (2012) have all migrated to the Oyster platform.

Oyster was extended to London Overground when TfL took on these services in 2007. It was further extended to the non-TfL suburban national rail services serving London in 2008 and 2010.

There are now nearly 10 million Oyster cards in use regularly and over 14 million Oyster transactions per day.

Ticketing technology has now advanced to offer customers further choices. The recent introduction of contactless payment on Tube and rail services, following its success on London's buses since December 2012, highlights the capital's position as a world leader in making travel more convenient. The flexibility of contactless provides exciting opportunities in the future for further integration and simplification of ticketing.

We will continue to make ticketing as convenient as possible including through the introduction of more flexible ticketing for part-time workers.

There is also a growing consensus that national policy needs clear objectives to drive effective implementation of a more integrated and transparent ticketing system. The technology and know how already exists and, with focus, significant progress can be made drawing on London's experience over the next few years.

#### Putting it right when things go wrong

Our objective is to treat our customers and users fairly, listen to their concerns and act swiftly to address problems when they arise.

We constantly monitor customer feedback, complaints and mystery traveller surveys across all of our services. This allows us to identify trends and take action to fix problems at source.

This involves getting the big things right, like improving service reliability, journey information and enabling customers to obtain the best value for money. It is also about how our staff and those of our contractors serve our customers and show a human face.

We will continue to tackle the main concerns our customers tell us about. Actions include:

- Introducing automatic refunds for customers who have been charged a maximum fare for an incomplete journey and making it easy to get a refund through an online Oyster account, if it has not been possible to do so automatically;
- Running campaigns reminding customers that it is easy to get a refund on Oyster card balances they no longer need;
- Protecting road users from unofficial Congestion Charge websites which mislead them into paying unnecessary additional charges;
- Making major changes to our customer contact centres to ensure customers receive human, timely and consistent responses to queries and complaints by telephone, email or social media;
- Providing accessibility champions to help everyone to make full use of public transport; and
- Providing 'All Aboard' training to all bus drivers to reinforce how good customer service is vitally important in assisting older and disabled passengers.

**-ENDS-**

## Request for specific information on TfL's Customer Service

### Overview of progress in improving customer service

- **Recommendation 1**

*TfL should report back to the Committee in May 2012 on how it will make it more straightforward for passengers to provide feedback, including: its plans to reduce the number of contact numbers; how it will continue to improve call centre operations to benefit customers; and how it will ensure this information is more easily available to passengers at stations, at bus stops and shelters, and online.*

Our customers are used to dealing with Amazon, Apple and John Lewis. Their expectation is that the process for doing business with us for tickets, information and to provide feedback or to complain should be just as straightforward.

We have responded to this by overhauling our online services, including self-service refunds, a completely new website designed around customer needs and made a range of processes easier to conduct online such as:

- We have made a number of improvements to our Zip Oyster photocard applications by enabling the entire process to be completed online. This has reduced the timeframe for delivery from one week to just one day; and
- We have introduced a new 'print at home' ticket facility under our School Party travel scheme, where tickets are emailed out rather than sent by post. The schools participating in the London Curriculum will be the first to trial this before we extend it to other schools. This financial year, almost 910,000 children and over 22,000 teachers have travelled free on the scheme.

### Simpler and cheaper ways to contact us

All of our customer service telephone lines have been moved to lower cost 0343 numbers. At the same time, we have rationalised the number of telephone lines to make it easier for customers to get through to the right people first time. Having a small number of low cost numbers has resulted in a large drop in the number of calls transferred, so people do not suffer the frustration of being passed from one area to another.

We recognise that improvements need to be made to our Interactive Voice Recognition System. To rectify this, we intend to further rationalise our phone lines to one number.

For all lines, customers will now pay a cheaper rate irrespective of where they are calling from. From landlines, these calls are usually free. They are also included in the 'minute bundles' on mobile phone contracts. On pay as you go phones, charges are the same as geographical 01 or 02 numbers.

Further detail on how we are continuing to improve our contact centre operations is set out in my response to recommendation 2.

#### A new website putting customers in control

We launched our new website in March 2014 focusing on its primary function of providing reliable real-time travel information to customers. It receives 20 million visits every month and has become a core part of London life. More than three quarters of Londoners use it. It has already won awards for high-quality user experience, reflecting the fact that it was designed with our customers during an extended period of 'beta' testing.

The site is designed for use on the move and has improved Journey Planner and integrated information tools. It configures to fit all forms of devices such as tablets and smartphones. A 'Nearby' function' provides customers with all of the transport services around them at the touch of a button, including walking routes.

#### Other mobile services

We are developing mobile phone payment Apps for Congestion Charge, Barclays Cycle Hire and Oyster services. Our Taxi and Private Hire team will introduce online customer accounts and a self service application next year. This will reduce call demand as a large proportion of current calls are customers checking their application status.

- **Recommendation 2**

*By May 2012, TfL should report back on: how it will ensure greater consistency in its responses to customers; and, produce a single Customer Charter for consultation which covers all services and gives specific guarantees about the timescale and quality of its responses.*

As part of our new co-ordinated approach to customer service, our Customer Contact Centre in North Greenwich has been transformed to deliver better service and response times at the same time as demand has increased.

Over the past financial year, we have received over 3.3 million contacts. 2.8 million of these were phone calls and the remainder written communication, including e-mails. This level of contact represents a 15 per cent increase on

the year before. This is likely to have been driven by the natural increase we are seeing in passenger numbers and the cheaper rate telephone numbers described earlier, which have made it easier and cheaper to contact us.

### Complaints

In keeping with our commitment made at the time of the Committee's previous report, we have completely overhauled our culture surrounding complaints.

Reports are produced for each operational area of TfL setting out the nature of complaints and any emerging themes or trends. These are used to address issues at source. For example, a series of complaints identified an issue with ticket vending machines on the DLR. To resolve this, software has been upgraded, extra machines have been provided at busy stations and there is better signage.

We produce a number of reports that provide feedback to our operational teams. These are often supplied overnight for senior managers to discuss in the morning and decide what action to take. This is another area where there has been significant progress since the Committee's original report.

There has also been a cultural shift in the organisation. Where we were once defensive about complaints, we now enable staff to fix a customer's problem straight away by allowing them greater flexibility in decision making. As a result, our service level agreement is now 10 days for correspondence (it used to be 20 days) with approximately 80 per cent being settled within one day.

Our approach to handling complaints is attached as Appendix A and can be found via the link below:

<http://www.tfl.gov.uk/cdn/static/cms/documents/contact-centre-operations-customer-policy.pdf>

Our complaints data is also published quarterly in our Operational and Financial reports and can be found on the link below:

<https://www.tfl.gov.uk/corporate/publications-and-reports/complaints-report>

### Benchmarking

In 2012, the Customer Contact Centre entered the 'Top 50' national benchmarking scheme for customer service with the International Customer Management Institute. Hundreds of contact centres across the country compete to be ranked among the top 50 and rising standards across the industry makes achieving this status progressively harder.

In their latest assessment of us, we were ranked 16<sup>th</sup> for social media (up 6 places), 22<sup>nd</sup> on e-mails and 44<sup>th</sup> on calls. We also won member of the year for applying best practice towards achieving Top 50 standards.

In addition, we are assessed periodically by a mystery shopping company. Each contact centre is benchmarked against industry standards and receives individual feedback to target improvement. In our most recent mystery shopping survey, we scored 98.7 per cent on the quality of call handling.

Information regarding our customer charters is set out on page 8 of our response.

- **Recommendation 3**

*By May 2012, TfL should report back to the Committee on how it will work towards increasing transparency, including: confirming the new set of customer service targets; outlining the proposals for published customer service reports; and any work to extend benchmarking beyond the 'complaints per 100,000 journeys' metric.*

We are determined to become ever more transparent with our customers and stakeholders. We now publish more information than ever before on a routine basis on all aspects of how we operate. Much of this is designed to explain how we reinvest public money to improve transport for customers and road users.

Following the Assembly's report on transparency in June 2013, we committed to publish contracts which meet certain criteria, redacting only limited information where it would be exempt from disclosure under Freedom of Information. Since then, a range of contracts has been published, particularly for the supply of bus services, and more will follow.

Our transparency pages are available at [www.tfl.gov.uk/transparency](http://www.tfl.gov.uk/transparency).

Later this year, we will consult publicly on our overall approach to transparency. We will invite customers, users and stakeholders to comment on the main areas where we might improve.

Our customer service metrics comprise three measures:

- Call abandonment rate – target under 10 per cent;
- Correspondence Service Level Agreement – target 80 per cent; and
- Mystery Shopper Quality assessment scores – target 85 per cent.

Customer satisfaction levels are on or above target across most services, maintaining the high levels of customer satisfaction seen since the 2012 Games. Significant improvements have been seen in relation to the DLR, Barclays Cycle Hire and Congestion Charge, the latter seeing a reduction in complaints of almost 40 per cent over the past year.

- **Recommendation 4**

*TfL should report back to the Committee by May 2012 on the development of the 'My TfL' portal, including: how the portal will improve customer service provision for passengers; any study on the opportunity to provide a complaint 'tracking' system; and how TfL can use real-time information to keep passengers informed of general issues.*

We are creating a more personalised digital customer experience for users of our website irrespective of whether it is accessed from a desktop, tablet or mobile. This will be branded 'My TfL' and future improvements currently being developed include:

- A single login to all our services and unified online account hub to provide a one-stop shop e.g. Barclays Cycle Hire, Congestion Charging and Oyster combined;
- A unified messaging service, by which all our messages are prioritised and delivered to customers in line with their preferences; and
- Using favourite places, journeys and services to personalise customers online experience.

Our social media channels, such as Twitter and Facebook, are another way of providing our customers with personalised and real-time information. Posts on Facebook about the launch of the 24-hour Tube and changes to stations were seen by more than one million people, while 6,600 comments were posted. We have also promoted our Twitter feeds to accelerate the rate of growth from virtually no Twitter followers to well over 1.8 million in less than two years. Our website gets 250 million visits a year. Twitter has also proved helpful in managing disruptive events, cascading information quickly and providing advice and guidance on alternative routes.

As mentioned earlier, we also continue to provide travel information through other channels such as our website and via numerous third-party Apps made possible through our provision of free, open data.

The great work of our customer service team was highlighted in the first episode of the Channel 4 series, 'The Complainers', televised on 27 May. The episode focused on our relationship with repeat complainers and looked at the customer service provided directly by bus drivers in response to issues raised by passengers.

The episode was watched by around 1.5 million viewers and was followed with a live Twitter session with Shashi Verma, Director of Customer Experience, and our social media team in the contact centre. The response on Twitter was excellent with over 3,000 mentions of the episode and more than 1,500 mentions directly to our Twitter feed. Most of the feedback praised the hard work of our staff and revealed a genuine interest on the part of customers at seeing another, very human, side to our organisation.

- **Recommendation 5**

*TfL should report back to the Committee by May 2012 on how it will help to support Freedom Pass holders with a low-cost information and complaint handling resource.*

We are working tirelessly to make journeys easier for millions of disabled and older Londoners. Eleven per cent of Londoners describe themselves as disabled in some way, 1.3 million trips a day are made by disabled people and 4.9 million trips a day involve people carrying heavy luggage.

Since we last wrote to you, the Mayoral initiative to restore free travel for Londoners between age 60 and 65 was launched on 1 November 2012, with majority of these applications now made online. The concessionary pass allows free travel on all TfL services and some National Rail services 24 hours a day, seven days a week and free travel outside of morning peak hours on other National Rail services in the capital. This service fills in the gap when free travel for Londoners aged between 60 and 65 was withdrawn.

As set out in our first recommendation, we have moved all of our customer service telephone lines to lower cost 0343 numbers to reduce the costs of contacting us. In addition to this, the Freedom Pass page on our website provides clear, free guidance and advises the customer of the Freedom Pass direct website: <https://www.tfl.gov.uk/fares-and-payments/adult-discounts-and-concessions/freedom-pass/>. We also pass on data to London Councils so those eligible can be issued with Freedom Passes.

#### Improving accessibility

Providing more effective customer service for people with disabilities is, of course, central to our work.

Our 'Your Accessible Transport Network' action plan builds on the legacy of the London 2012 Games. Action includes installing boarding ramps at 35 Underground stations, introducing new, low-floor trains on the Metropolitan, Circle, Hammersmith & City and District lines, improving signage and investing heavily in accessibility training for staff. Much of the focus on our new website was also to ensure the experience for those with disabilities was radically improved.

More staff will be available in London Underground ticket halls and on platforms, something that will particularly benefit tourists, disabled customers and those unfamiliar with our network, by helping them buy the right ticket, plan their journeys and stay safe and secure.

The journeys of millions of disabled and older Londoners are set to become even easier thanks to new measures aimed at improving accessibility. All Tube stations will remain staffed at all times when services are operating, and a 24-hour service on core parts of the network at weekends will be introduced during 2015.

On 14 March 2014, we launched the extension of the very successful turn-up-and-go assistance that operates on the Tube and London Overground. We will introduce boarding ramps at more stations and provide more information to disabled customers through our website.

As you are aware, we have reaffirmed our plans to make the entire Crossrail route accessible as joint sponsors with Crossrail and the Department for Transport (DfT) and we have published options to make the remaining seven stations step free.

We have also introduced 'accessibility champions', who are being empowered to use their knowledge to give our more vulnerable customers the confidence they need to use our network. The accessibility champions work with others across the business to help plan and deliver our services in a way that responds to the needs of all our customers.

We have also been running an engagement campaign, 'Come on Board', with local groups across London to raise awareness of the range of accessible services we provide. This has focused on previously difficult to reach grassroots communities. Engagement and research with older and disabled passengers and stakeholders has shown that many people are not aware of the services we have to help them travel. So we have spoken to around 70 community groups and their members to give disabled and older customers the knowledge and confidence to use, or use more of, the transport options available.

On 2 October 2014, we held a pioneering event; Access All Areas at ExCel, to help more disabled and older people to get out and about on our network. Hundreds of people came along to our exhibition to experience some of our latest accessibility innovations and to become a bit more familiar with our services.

Feedback from the day was extremely positive, with attendees feeling they gained useful information, had excellent networking opportunities and felt positive about our work in this area. The post-event survey shows that 90 per cent of attendees agreed we are making it easier for disabled people to get around, 94 per cent rated the event as 'good' or 'very good' and 92 per cent want to attend a similar event in future.

- **Recommendation 6**

*TfL should report back by May 2012 on how it plans to increase the amount of information reported to the Board about customer feedback and complaints.*

As mentioned, we now publish details of our complaints data and customer satisfaction scores in our quarterly Operational and Financial Performance reports to the Board. These set out trends and explain what action we are taking to fix problems.

Our most recent report can be found on the link below, with customer information outlined on pages 21-27:

<http://www.tfl.gov.uk/cdn/static/cms/documents/board-20140924-part-1-item06-ofr-ipr-amended.pdf>

We have been developing various methods for bringing together the main trends and themes from customer contacts on Oyster, London Underground, London Buses and Streets to identify the issues which are repeatedly causing customer dissatisfaction. This intelligence is fed back to the business on a regular basis to inform improvements and business change.

- **TfL's use of passenger charters**

During research undertaken in September and October 2012, customers warned us that they did not want to read about what we do and intend to do. Instead, the preference was for us to demonstrate the 'promise' of Every Journey Matters through delivery in the areas customers care about.

We have therefore used the model of what customers want – described in our cover note – to deliver in practice, high quality customer service day in, day out. We measure the effectiveness of this through our Customer Satisfaction Scores, mystery shopping and analysis of complaints.

As a result, we have taken action such as introducing a more convenient way for customers to get a refund when they experience a delay to their journey on the Tube, DLR or London Overground (LO) services by replacing the Charter refund scheme.

Under the Charter refund scheme, customers had to complete a paper or electronic form providing all their details with each application. The process was time consuming and it took up to one month before customers received a letter with a Charter refund voucher, which was redeemable only at Tube and London Overground ticket offices.

The new system requires customers simply to provide details of their delayed journey via their TfL online account. Customers are contacted by email within seven days to let them know the status of their refund application. Oyster customers have the option of having their refund added back to their Oyster card, to their bank account or as a web account credit redeemable when they next top up or buy a Travelcard online. Contactless payment card customers have refunds credited to their contactless payment card and paper ticket customers directly to their bank account.

Not only is the process quicker and simpler for customers, it has also enabled us to make savings in administration which can be reinvested in transport and tighten up our processes to detect fraud. Customers have been informed about the changes through social media, posters displayed at Tube and LO stations, media coverage and additional information on our website.

We have worked to ensure that all staff are trained and briefed, making sure they use appropriate behaviours to deliver a high quality customer service. This approach ensures the creation and delivery of a human experience for our customers. We also look to benchmark ourselves against the likes of John Lewis, ie role modelling and delivering strong customer-focused behaviours.

Staff training (including refresher training and relevant briefings) support the promise. We favour a direct, hands on, approach, in which customers experience for themselves frequent services, clear information and clean, safe environments. Through our recruitment and training programmes, we seek to provide the best staff giving high levels of customer service.

**How many times were the following documents accessed online over the last three financial years (ie 2011/2012, 2012/2013 and 2013/2014)?**

- **TfL's Conditions of Carriage;**
- **London Overground Customer Charter;**
- **DLR Customer Promise; and**
- **Barclays Cycle Hire terms and conditions.**

This has been completed for the last financial year (1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014) as in general we do not have the data requested from the old TfL website. The information set out below therefore largely relates to documents being accessed from the new website, launched in March this year.

#### TfL's Conditions of Carriage

Has been accessed 8,930 times (5,798 times from the new website and 3,132 times from the old website).

#### London Overground Customer Charter

Data is not available for the last financial year as this information was added to the new website on 4 April 2014.

#### DLR Customer Promise

Has been accessed 114 times on the new website.

#### Barclays Cycle Hire terms and conditions

Has been accessed 2,836 times on the new website.

**How many hard copies of the following documents were printed during the last three financial years and where were these distributed?**

- **London Overground Customer Charter;**
- **DLR Customer Promise;**
- **A Charter for Tramlink Passengers; and**
- **London River Services Statement of Passenger Commitment.**

## London Overground

Charter leaflets were distributed to all the London Overground stations that existed at the time during each leaflet's lifespan. Stations have the Charter leaflets on display for customers to pick up and copies were also sent to customers upon request. Figures of those printed are set out below. Please note that this represents leaflets produced for stock, not requests for leaflets.

- **2010-11:** 25,000
- **2011-12:** 0 (*stock remained from 2010-11 print run*)
- **2012-13:** 0 (*stock remained from 2010-11 print run*)
- **2013-14:** 5,000
- **2013-14:** 7,500 (New version issued June 2014)

## DLR Customer Promise

5,000 Customer Service Promise leaflets were last printed in April 2013. These are distributed from station information points, our Customer Contact Centre and through community centres, community open days and events and through local hotels. 4,000 have been distributed to date.

## A Charter for Tramlink Passengers

The current Charter was issued in January 2011 and 2,000 leaflets were printed then. They have been distributed via direct Tramlink outlets.

## London River Services (LRS) Statement of Passenger Commitment

As the licensing authority, LRS does not publish the Conditions of Carriage as these define the relationship between boat operators and the passenger. The LRS licence with boat operators, which includes the Statement of Passenger Commitment, does though encourage them to display the Conditions of Carriage on their boats.

- **TfL's Conditions of Carriage**

Our Conditions of Carriage are reviewed and updated every quarter in line with changes to the network. They are available at [www.tfl.gov.uk/terms](http://www.tfl.gov.uk/terms) and we also send copies to customers on request. This information can be easily accessed via our website - whether from home, work or on the move - and modified for individual needs for example those who are visually impaired.

We also take steps to encourage considerate behaviour and also tackle anti-social behaviour in line with our conditions of carriage. Our 'Travel Better London' campaign specifically addresses the need to think of others when travelling.

The behaviours expected include co-operating with our staff and treating them and other passengers with respect, using language that does not cause

offence to others, not playing loud music and keeping your feet off the seats. This reminds passengers that their behaviour helps improve transport for everyone.

#### Provisions for pregnant women

All our trains and buses have priority seating, clearly marked next to doors. These are for disabled people, pregnant women, older people, those travelling with children and anyone less able to stand. Customers are expected to give priority to these customers.

'Baby on board' badges were introduced to help pregnant women identify themselves to others. Our research shows that some women prefer not to announce that they are pregnant and others may not wish to be offered a seat. Equally, we want to avoid the situation where someone who has a hidden or less obvious disability is not obliged to give up a seat that they themselves need.

#### Enforcement of our Conditions of Carriage

In addition to our campaigns about travel behaviour, we also take steps to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour on the transport network. We fund more than 2,500 uniformed officers from the Metropolitan Police Service, British Transport Police and the City of London Police.

We can also withdraw travel concessions from young people who are found to be in breach of our Behaviour Code <<https://www.tfl.gov.uk/fares-and-payments/penalties-and-enforcement/young-persons-behaviour-code>>.

When a travel concession is removed, a young person can earn it back by volunteering in their local community.

Customers who have experienced anti-social behaviour are actively encouraged to report it to police. More detailed guidance about reporting crime and anti-social behaviour is available on the following link:

<https://www.tfl.gov.uk/travel-information/safety/report-a-crime-or-incident?intcmp=5340>

As well as detecting and preventing fare evasion, our Revenue Control Inspectors play a vital role in reporting any breaches of the Conditions of Carriage and Railway Byelaws.

**-ENDS-**

## **Contact Centre Operations Customer Promise**

### **Our commitment to excellent customer service**

At Transport for London we are committed to providing a high-quality service to everyone we come into contact with. We welcome your comments and want you to tell us when things go wrong.

For us, a complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction with our service that calls for a response. We will listen to complaints, treat them seriously, resolve them as quickly as possible and learn from them so that we can continue improving our service.

### **That is why we promise to:**

- Make it easy to access our services
- Listen to you so we can better understand your needs
- Be polite, professional and helpful
- Treat you fairly and with respect
- Protect your confidential information and privacy
- Keep you informed
- Aim to get things right first time
- Welcome your feedback and use it as an opportunity to put our customers at the heart of everything we do

### **Making a comment, compliment or complaint:**

- Every member of staff can tell you how to do this
- We like to know when we get it right. We also welcome suggestions on how we can improve our services
- If you are not satisfied with the way we respond, you have the right to ask for a review. We will write to let you know the outcome of a review within 10 working days of receiving the complaint. If we cannot complete a review within this time, we will tell you why
- If you are still dissatisfied after the review we will let you know what to do next
- If we have got things wrong we will apologise and try to put them right

**When you call us:**

- We will answer within 40 seconds
- We will greet you politely. Our agents will always provide their name and the area of the business they deal with
- We will always confirm your identity if we are discussing your personal information
- If we need to get in touch with you, we will do so in a way that is convenient to you (eg email, fax, letter)
- When our lines are closed we will ensure you hear a recorded message explaining our service opening hours and alternative access methods

**When you visit our website:**

- Information will be up to date and easy to understand
- We will publish updates promptly when there are changes or disruption to our services
- We will try to ensure that you are only three clicks away from the information you need
- We will make it easy to carry out payments online
- We will ensure our website is secure so you can be confident your personal information is safe when making transactions

**When you write or email us:**

- We will acknowledge your letter or email within 48 hours. We will contact you with a full response within 10 working days **or** let you know what is happening with your inquiry, how long it is likely to take to complete, and the name and contact details of the person dealing with it
- If you use a publicised email address you will receive an automatic message informing you of our standard for responding to emails
- If we know you need a response in a different format (such as large print or audio) we will respond within 10 working days whenever possible
- Our agents will reply using plain English and will always provide their name and full contact details

**Escalation and external review:**

- If your complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction you can ask to escalate the issue to a manager for further review. After this, if you feel we still have not dealt with your complaint appropriately, you can ask for it to be given further consideration by a senior manager
- If, after following the above process, you are still unhappy with the outcome, you can refer your complaint, depending on the issue, to London TravelWatch or the Local Government Ombudsman. Contact details are shown below:

London TravelWatch	
Phone	020 3176 2999 (09:00 – 17:00, Monday to Friday)
Online	<a href="http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/complaints/online">www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/complaints/online</a>
Email	<a href="mailto:enquiries@londontravelwatch.org.uk">enquiries@londontravelwatch.org.uk</a>
Post	London TravelWatch, Dexter House, 2 Royal Mint Court, London, EC3N 4QN

Local Government Ombudsman	
Phone	0300 061 0614 (08:30 – 17:00, Monday – Friday)
Online	<a href="http://www.lgo.org.uk/making-a-complaint">www.lgo.org.uk/making-a-complaint</a>
Post	The Local Government Ombudsman, PO Box 4771, Coventry, CV4 0EH

**How to contact us:**

TfL Customer Services	
Phone	<p>0343 222 1234</p> <p>Travel information and journey planning enquiries for all modes of transport (24 hours)</p> <p>Oyster enquiries (08:00 – 20:00, seven days a week)</p> <p>London Underground enquiries (08:00 – 20:00, seven days a week)</p> <p>Buses enquiries (08:00 – 20:00, Monday to Friday)</p> <p>Streets enquiries (24 hours)</p> <p>Emirates Air Line (08:00 – 20:00, seven days a week)</p> <p>Lost Property (08:30 – 16:00, Monday to Friday)</p>
Textphone	0800 112 3456
Online	<a href="http://www.tfl.gov.uk/contact">www.tfl.gov.uk/contact</a>
Post	TfL Customer Services, 4th Floor, 14 Pier Walk, London, SE10 0ES



Valerie Shawcross CBE AM  
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29 May 2015

*Dear Val,*

### **TfL Customer Service – next steps**

Thank you for your follow-up report into customer service at TfL.

As I mentioned when we met recently, your reports have helped shape our customer service strategy and action plan.

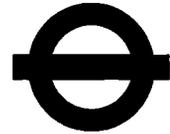
We agree with almost all of your recommendations and we have started to implement many of them. Our full response to your report is set out in the attached note and we will provide the Committee with an update later in the year on the progress we are making.

Thank you again for your constructive contribution to improving customer service.

*Yours sincerely,  
Vernon*

**Vernon Everitt**

Managing Director, Customer Experience, Marketing and Communications



## TfL Customer Service – next steps

### Recommendation 1

**Transport for London should produce a single customer charter covering all of its services, applicable from 1 January 2016. TfL should respond to this recommendation by the end of May 2015, setting out its plans for the development of a charter.**

We agree. We will bring together all of our promises under a single customer charter. This will cover customer service commitments from all parts of our business.

With improved navigation on our website, we will clarify our commitments to our customers in the following areas:

- Fares and ticketing
- Standards of service
- Keeping customers informed
- Queries and complaints
- Performance targets
- Getting in touch

We are developing this now and it will be introduced, with accompanying publicity, by the end of the year.

### Recommendation 2

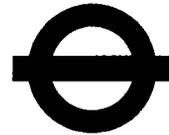
**Transport for London should:**

- **Add a specific option to make a complaint to the main menu of the customer services helpline.**
- **Modify the design of its web form for complaints, so people can save their own complaints, upload documents and enter a Freedom Pass number.**
- **Allow people to make a complaint via a direct email address, text message or smartphone application.**

**TfL should respond to this recommendation by the end of May 2015, setting out the findings of its review and next steps.**

Customers can make a complaint using a variety of channels including via social media, to a member of staff at a station, online or by telephone. We recognise that we can make these processes even more transparent.

For the three quarters of Londoners who use it, our website is the main gateway to the services we offer. We will redesign the 'Contact us' section to make it easier to use and allow customers to leave feedback and make a



complaint about any aspect of our services. This redesign will be introduced over the summer.

As you identified in your report, we have reduced the cost for customers contacting us by telephone through introducing our 0343 222 1234 number. We have also simplified the options available when customers call us. Later this month we will introduce a fifth option to the menu which will allow for complaints to be made more easily by telephone.

The outdated technology we currently used to support our web forms will be replaced. We have been looking into technology that would enable a simpler process for complaints and enquiries, including adding files using a smartphone. Provided that the costs are proportionate to the number of customers who would use the service, we would like to see this happen in the next 18 months.

We are already able to receive uploaded documents from customers and, as part of an investigation into a complaint, our staff routinely ask for any additional information customers are willing to share with us, in any format. This will continue.

### **Recommendation 3**

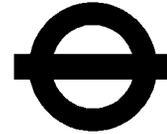
**Transport for London should appoint an external organisation to carry out an audit of its response to complaints, including the process for internal escalation of complaints. TfL should respond to this recommendation by the end of May 2015.**

We agree. Over the summer we will appoint a firm with expertise in this area to conduct this review. It would be very helpful to gather the views of the people who use our services, and we would welcome the Assembly's involvement in this exercise. We will also provide you with their findings once the audit has been completed.

### **Recommendation 4**

**Transport for London should engage in discussions with the Department for Transport, aimed at agreeing arrangements for the structure, funding and governance of a new Alternative Dispute Resolution system for TfL service users. TfL should respond to this recommendation by the end of May 2015 setting out its approach to the ADR Directive and plans for further discussions on this topic.**

We welcome the Government's aim to find simpler, cheaper and more efficient ways to resolving disputes.



In its November 2014 response to the consultation on implementation of the ADR Directive, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) indicated that it was still considering how the Directive should apply to the transport industry where passengers already have access to independent complaints handling bodies to help them resolve their disputes with transport providers, such as London TravelWatch and Transport Focus.

We understand that BIS is still considering the matter, but we stand ready to work with any new Directive that is introduced.

### **Recommendation 5**

**The Transport for London Board should play a more visible role in championing good customer service. We recommend that:**

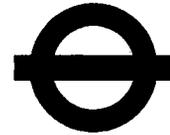
- **The Board should receive quarterly complaints reports, which include the full range of customer service metrics.**
- **A single Board Member should be designated as the customer champion to represent the interests of TfL's customers at Board level.**

**TfL should respond to this recommendation by the end of May 2015.**

From September 2015, more customer service related data will be included in the quarterly Operational and Financial Performance report submitted to the Board. We already detail the number of complaints received across our services and what we have done to address them and this will be given greater prominence, alongside other performance measures. Board members will therefore be better able to scrutinise our performance in this area.

We will also submit papers on our customer strategy for scrutiny by the Safety, Accessibility and Sustainability Panel, which feeds directly into the Board. This will take effect from the next meeting of the Panel on 7 July.

All Members of the TfL Board play a core role in ensuring that we deliver for our customers and users. The Commissioner and the Managing Directors of London Underground and Rail, Surface Transport and Customer Experience, Marketing and Communications are directly held to account by the Board against challenging customer service targets set out in the published scorecards for TfL overall and our individual operating businesses. Appointing a single board member would, in our view, relegate customer service to a marginal activity, rather than, as it currently is, it being a central consideration for every Board member.



## **Recommendation 6**

**Transport for London should take steps to build on the customer service training being provided for London Underground staff during the Fit for the Future programme. The training should be repeated regularly, and extended to staff on other modes. From 2016 it should also incorporate training in implementing the new single customer charter. TfL should respond to this recommendation by the end of May 2015.**

The programme to improve customer service at London Underground stations includes an innovative training programme that equips our staff to deliver high quality customer service. Staff participate in a range of scenarios and learn techniques for serving our customers more effectively. They are also given the confidence to resolve customer issues themselves, reducing the need for escalation. Feedback has been excellent and over the next two years nearly 5,000 staff will take part in this training.

Building on this programme, all new recruits to a customer service role across the organisation will receive similar training and this is also being factored in to new training for bus drivers.

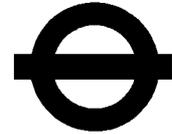
Training on a new, single customer charter will be incorporated once the charter itself is finalised.

## **Recommendation 7**

**Transport for London should improve the way it informs passengers about their rights to use priority space on buses. Where necessary, clear, accessible signage should be on display, supported by further publicity campaigns and online information. The review should also consider how bus operators train staff to promote these messages and deal with any conflict between passengers, and identify any required improvements in staff training. TfL should respond to this recommendation by the end of May 2015.**

We agree. A renewed customer awareness campaign will be launched shortly, informing passengers about their rights in using priority space on buses. Posters will be displayed on buses and at shelters across the network and there will be extensive social media, including our accessibility Twitter and Facebook channels which reach over three quarters of a million followers. This campaign will be delivered with the direct involvement of stakeholders. By September, all 24,500 bus drivers will have participated in All Aboard! training, which promotes empathy with the needs of our customers, particularly towards accessibility. All Aboard! was developed in collaboration with Transport for All and Age UK London.

The way drivers are trained is currently being reviewed as part of the formal BTEC qualification that all drivers are required to take. We will start talking to



stakeholders soon but we intend to improve the current equality and inclusion module as part of this review.

### **Recommendation 8**

**Transport for London should add fare information to its Journey Planner tool, including a 'best available fare' option, giving people the ability to tailor their journey according to the fares they will incur. TfL should respond to this recommendation by the end of May 2015.**

We launched our new website in March 2014 focusing on its primary function of providing reliable real-time travel information to customers. It receives over 20 million visits every month and has become a core part of London life.

During its development, we looked closely at integrating fares information with the Journey Planner tool. However, because of the complexity of the fares structure and the huge number of possible routes, it was not possible to match on a completely reliable basis journeys to fares with our current systems.

This is, however, a change that we are committed to making, and we will investigate again how we can make it happen.

Separately, from this summer 'bus only' journeys will be visible by default alongside Tube, rail, cycling and walking options in Journey Planner, providing a lower cost journey option to customers in a more visible way.