

Dr Alison Moore AM
Chair of the London Assembly Transport Committee
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London
SE1A 2AA

4 January 2020

Dear Alison,

Thank you very much for your letter regarding the impact of Covid-19 on London's transport network. With Paul Plummer now having left the organisation, I am grateful for the opportunity to provide you with a response to the questions you have raised.

Face covering compliance on the railway

In September 2020, the British Transport Police (BTP), together with the Rail Delivery Group (RDG), Southeastern and Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) launched an 8-week pilot to further increase compliance with face covering rules on trains and at stations.

Up until then, rail staff had been reminding people to follow the rules to wear face coverings and the BTP was responsible for enforcing the law if someone still refused to comply. The trial combined these two roles and paired a member of railway staff – a Railway Enforcement Officer – with a BTP officer to patrol stations and trains together.

Throughout the trial, the Railway Enforcement Officer undertook the first three 'Es', namely:

- **Enquire:** Ask if there is a reason someone is not wearing a face covering or if they require assistance.
- **Encourage:** Remind those not wearing a covering that it is mandatory.
- **Explain:** Detail why it is important that everyone who can wear a face covering does so.

Where this did not work, the BTP officer was on hand to **Enforce**.

Four train operators, Southeastern, Great Northern, Southern and Thameslink, worked with the BTP on the pilot in and around London, and this saw already high levels of face covering compliance rising from 90.8% to 98.4%. The trial built on ongoing engagement with the public about wearing face coverings, and train operators, unions and the BTP are working together to see how this success can be replicated elsewhere.

Ensuring the safety of all railway staff

The tragic loss of members of frontline rail staff who have died from the disease since the outbreak of the pandemic in March 2020 should serve as a reminder that at the height of the pandemic, rail staff put their lives on the line to ensure other key workers got to where they were needed, supermarkets stayed stocked and power stations stayed fueled. We are rightly

proud of them and we are doing everything we can to keep everyone safe, including by providing PPE and increasing cleaning on trains and at stations; we also changed guidance for staff and passengers to reduce the risk of transmission.

In addition, the industry formed a focus group to consider this matter. It was a key concern for the Rail Industry Coronavirus Forum that all Train Operating Companies were re-evaluated to ensure robust mitigations were in place to support protection of all employees, including – of course – BAME colleagues.

Managing key transport interchanges

In June 2020, the rail industry announced a new technology which allows National Rail Enquiries (NRE) to alert rail passengers to busy trains and stations before they leave home, using Facebook messenger. The NRE system takes operational messages about busy trains and stations that are sent by frontline rail staff to control rooms and, within five minutes, displays these in passenger-friendly language on journey planning websites and apps.

In practice, this means that when people see a red or yellow warning triangle when they search their journey and by clicking on it, they can find out more information and advice.

This journey information is complemented by a new information service that updates passengers on how disruption and overcrowding will affect their journey. In addition, this new technology provides alternative travel options, helping people maintain social distancing. Passengers can sign up to alerts from National Rail on 'Alert me by Messenger'.

We believe this technology can play a vital role in giving people confidence when travelling by rail, and have therefore been encouraging customers to sign up to this service. More information on this service can be found on the National Rail website [here](#).

On top of this, we launched the [Safer Travel Pledge](#) which outlines the actions the rail industry is taking to ensure customer safety when they do travel on the railway network.

On the subject of assisted travel, RDG updated its guidance for station staff at the beginning of the pandemic so that rail workers could remain safe while still providing assistance for all passengers who needed to use the rail network during this time. All train and station operators continue supporting disabled passengers and others who need assistance as they did before the Covid-19 crisis.

Generally, staff will act with the direction of the customer, ensuring that where possible, they can provide the right assistance tailored to each person. This will include using notepads to write down information, clear face visors when talking to customers who rely on lip reading or facial expressions and protective wear when providing sighted guidance. It is unlikely that staff will remain within two meters of customers for more than 15 minutes; this ensures the protection of both staff and passengers.

Additional measures

Finally, in your letter, you mentioned the additional measures that could be considered by the Department for Transport (DfT), Transport for London and Train Operating Companies to assist passengers in choosing alternative routes to allow for social distancing. For instance, adding Thameslink to the Tube Map, or incorporating the Southeastern High Speed route between St Pancras International and Stratford International into the Travelcard zonal system.

With regard to the latter, it is worth noting that the exclusion of Southeastern High Speed services between Stratford and London from Travelcards and ordinary zonal fares is bound up in the original operating model for these services which means that they are premium priced. It is part of Southeastern's franchise agreement with the DfT, and is moreover linked to the wider Travelcard agreements, meaning that it is for the Government to amend if it wishes to do so.

As for Thameslink, you will be pleased to learn that this is being added to the Tube map.

I hope you find this useful, but should you have any remaining queries, or if there is anything else with which we can assist the Committee, then please do not hesitate to contact me or a member of RDG's Public Affairs team at public.affairs@raildeliverygroup.com.

Yours sincerely,



Jacqueline Starr
Chief Executive Officer