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Valerie Shawcross CBE AM
London Assembly
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London
SE1 2AA

Peter Hendy CBE

Commissioner of Transport

Transport for London
Windsor House
42-50 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0TL

Phone 020 7222 5600

Fax 020 7126 4249

Email peterhendy@tfl.gov.uk

www.tfl.gov.uk

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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.