

**Written submissions received for the Transport Committee’s investigation into the customer relations at Transport for London**

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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*

**Peter Hendy CBE**  
Commissioner of Transport

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## **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](http://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

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 be 'Peter Hendy', written in a cursive style.

**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]	81per 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 -

Valerie Shawcross AM  
Deputy Chair Transport Committee  
7<sup>th</sup> Floor  
City Hall

Our ref:

Date: 9 August 2011

Dear Val

**London Assembly investigation into customer service in TfL**

Thank you for your letter of 28 July regarding your investigation into TfL's approach to customer service and information provision. As you know from our discussions on this in the past, and from the recent evidence session, this is an area where -- although much has been done in the last few years -- I believe there are significant opportunities for further improvement.

This is one of my top priorities and a key area of focus for the Mayor. Transport touches the lives of all Londoners. It is critical to quality of life and to the experience of living and working in London, and therefore the transport system must deliver what Londoners need and want. Delivering the right information, and listening to what comes back, is an important aspect of that.

As you allude to in your letter, I have been working with TfL on these issues and would categorise the current efforts into a few themes.

**Reducing complexity.** Partly for historical reasons, there are a wide range of contact avenues to raise queries or complaints with TfL. There are a number of different customer charters for different parts of the business, numerous complaints and claims forms, and over a dozen different TfL phone numbers.

There are understandable reasons why things developed in this way, but over the coming 6-12 months TfL will be reviewing these and looking to streamline the approach so that it is as simple as possible and makes sense from a customer perspective. The volume of general contact has increased dramatically over recent years, particularly through on-line channels, which makes having a coherent overall strategy for all approaches even more critical.

Tackling complexity includes actively working towards a much more rationalised set of phone numbers. TfL is also working to simplify the number of forms on the website relating to claims and customer charters.

***Listening: Using information.*** Whilst TfL does collect information about complaints and queries, this information can and should be better used. This means using the information internally to inform management about issues raised and - crucially - to then drive changes in the business where relevant. This does happen in large areas of the business, but not systematically across the organisation.

TfL is now planning to produce synthesised reports on complaints and queries which will be included in regular reports to the management teams. The information would also be regularly presented to the Board.

***Being transparent: Publishing information.*** Information about customer complaints and queries should also be available publicly. As part of delivering regular, comprehensive internal reports on this, TfL will be looking to publish complaints information online and through the publication of the Board papers. This will also include benchmarking against other organisations.

***Improving the tone of communications.*** This is not directly on point but it may be useful to note that in my view the tone of TfL's communication can be improved, particularly in certain parts of the business. The three points I have consistently emphasised with management are empathy, honesty and clarity. This includes things like apologising if we have made a mistake, demonstrating that we understand the customer's perspective even if we aren't able to help them on a given occasion, and explaining in simple layperson's terms why we have made a given decision. I am satisfied that TfL have taken the point on board and I have seen improvements already in correspondence, complaints handling, etc.

***Increasing awareness of what's available.*** There is a lot of information available through online and other channels of which in my experience people are often not aware. Once some of the changes above have been put in place, we are planning to do another push to make people aware of the different options available to them for accessing information and for getting in touch with TfL.

***Creating a senior owner for these issues.*** Through Project Horizon, the vast majority of people looking after these issues will now be brought together in one location. This places ownership of customer engagement with a single MD (Vernon Everitt). This also creates the opportunity to have a more efficient, effective and coherent approach to customer engagement. I will certainly be looking to ensure that this potential is realised in practice over the coming period as the changes are implemented.

This is not an exhaustive list but highlights the main issues we have agreed to tackle. I haven't picked up the broader issues regarding information provision on Tube performance etc above, as raised in the scrutiny recently, which as you know we are tackling separately.

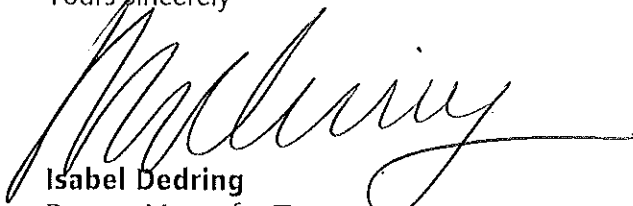
I believe Vernon will be writing to you separately and I imagine will lay out the specific changes that have been made over the last few years, and what more is planned, which

should be relatively complementary to this note. As you can see quite a lot of change is proposed, so input on this subject is very timely and I am sure TfL will welcome your views. On all of the proposed changes above, Vernon can comment on the timescales and specific formats for delivering the new approach.

In terms of how are working together on these issues, in addition to very regular discussions on the subject with the Commissioner and different members of his team, from next month Vernon and I (along with relevant leads) will be meeting specifically on the subject of customer engagement once a month to ensure progress is being made on the matters above, and we have agreed that meeting can and should pick up any other issues arising from your investigation.

Hope this is helpful and responsive to the issues you have raised. I would be more than happy to discuss this in person as well if you would find that useful. In any case I look forward to seeing the result of your work.

Yours sincerely



**Isabel Dedring**  
Deputy Mayor for Transport

## **Passenger feedback on Transport for London's customer service**

The experience of passengers who have contacted Transport for London's (TfL) customer service in the recent past played an important role in the Committee's investigation. It helped highlight some of the areas that TfL should look to improve in the future, and gave valuable real world examples of how those issues directly affect passengers.

### **How we gathered passenger feedback**

Members of the public were encouraged to contact the investigation to share their perspective on how accessible, efficient and passenger-friendly TfL's customer service is. A range of media was used to gather this data, including: a structured online Q+A which was available through the investigation's website and publicised during the launch; correspondence to Committee Members from members of the public; and those who contacted the investigation directly through email or post. Overall, the investigation drew on the personal experiences of over 80 people and the data was primarily used in Chapter 1 of the Committee's report.

### **Key issues raised by passenger feedback**

As expected, the over-whelming majority of people who contacted our investigation did so because of a bad experience with TfL's customer service.

Email and phone enquiries were the most popular methods used to make contact with TfL, and most related to issues with buses, the tube or fares and ticketing.

Some of the more detailed reasons given for contacting TfL included:

- Over-charging on London Overground.
- Refunds for incorrect Oyster charges.
- Problems with registering and paying for Oyster discount cards.
- Buying tickets for journeys between TfL and other transport regions.
- Bus driver behaviour.
- Congestion charge exemptions for disabled travellers.
- Clarity and accuracy in audio information being given through the iBus system or over station announcements.
- Safety concerns at a road junction.
- Delays and inconvenience caused on the tube.

Likewise, the reasons given for their disappointment in TfL's customer service were varied:

- Failure to respond to repeated messages through phone and email
- Difficulty in finding the right person to talk to
- Being passed around to various departments without resolution
- Customer service workers not having the right information about TfL's policies
- The expense of the 0843 number and the length of time customers have been put on hold
- No action taken after an initial acknowledgement of the contact

Passengers also offered suggestions on how TfL could improve the process:

- Better data and IT systems which could keep track of issues across departments.
- Stop using 08XX numbers which were more expensive for those who need to use mobile phones.
- Provide an updated contact list for passenger issues.
- Be more responsive and consistent when replying to enquiries.
- Ensure that procedures around initial responses and investigations are followed.
- Provide more detail in their response and make sure it is addressing the right issues.
- Be more open and constructive in their response.
- Improve the online form system to allow more actions to be done through the website.

About half of those who contacted us had decided to escalate their issue, either because they were unhappy with the decision, or how they were treated during the process. Passengers escalated these issues by: using TfL's own internal escalation system; contacting London TravelWatch; involving their local elected representative (Assembly Member, Councillor or MP); and their local media.