

# GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

Mayor's Office

*Abbas - can you please  
send to  
Lain Warden*

*V.*

RECEIVED 15 NOV 2010

City Hall  
The Queen's Walk  
More London  
London SE1 2AA  
Switchboard: 020 7983 4000  
Minicom: 020 7983 4458  
Web: [www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk)

**Valerie Shawcross AM**

City Hall  
Queen's Walk  
More London  
London SE1 2AA

**Our ref:** MGLA251010-2665

**Date:** 15 NOV 2010

Dear Val

## **Re: Disruption to London Underground Services**

Thank you for your letter of 21 October.

I fully understand the Transport Committee's concern about the recent disruption on the Tube. Londoners do indeed deserve the best service possible. I immediately asked Peter Hendy and Mike Brown for details of these events, and subsequently had detailed discussions with them to ensure that all necessary investigative and corrective action is being taken.

I know that you now have much of the background detail on the specific incidents by way of the email update sent by Mike Brown on 22 October to you and all other Assembly Members. However, enclosed with this letter is a summary of each of the incidents you refer to.

You will be aware that there has been some further disruption since then, including a suspension of the Piccadilly line during the evening of Monday 25 October due to a murder investigation at King's Cross St Pancras Station. The British Transport Police (BTP) declared the area a crime scene and as a result, passengers on one train stuck in the tunnel were walked along the track to Caledonian Road.

I would stress again that all these faults are absolutely unrelated, despite continuing allegations by elements of the RMT and TSSA.

You ask for details of the safety and maintenance programmes in place for each London Underground line and any changes to these since TfL assumed control for upgrading and maintaining the entire Tube network at the end of June. It would take several volumes to answer the first of those questions fully – all of LU's equipment and infrastructure is governed by detailed standards that cover these and other processes. Safety procedures are subject to certification and authorisation by the Office of Rail Regulation (who commented on LU's excellent safety record in their most recent report). More details of this framework are available on the TfL website at: <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/corporate/modesoftransport/londonunderground/performance/1600.aspx>.

I suggest the best way to deal with this aspect of your enquiry will be to arrange for a meeting with Mike Brown and his team, where they can talk through the overall framework and then provide you with such further information as necessary.

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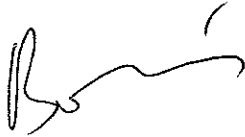
The short answer to the second question is that there have been no changes that have had any impact on any of these events. Tube Lines continues to function as a separate entity within TfL and its processes for maintenance are unchanged.

LU's own maintenance teams have, as set out in other correspondence, been conducting trials to determine the optimum frequency and content of maintenance examinations. This is part of a continuous improvement process which is designed to bring their practices in line with industry best practice and deliver a safe railway more efficiently and effectively. An example of this work in practice is a recent change in the maintenance frequency of some types of rolling stock. Such changes are only implemented after a rigorous trial and assurance process, in which the trades unions are fully involved, to determine what interval is actually needed – as opposed to just sticking with a maintenance regime that hasn't been changed for decades and does not reflect today's industry best practice.

Despite irresponsible attempts by the RMT to suggest otherwise, these changes have had no impact on recent failures. Indeed it is clear from the enclosed background that LU's and Tube Lines' inspection regimes remain effective in identifying potential faults and rectifying them promptly to prevent any risk to customers.

Recent issues do, however, highlight exactly why it was so vital to protect funding for the Tube upgrade programme to ensure Londoners get the Underground service they deserve, and why it will be worth the pain of the transformation to accomplish the result.

Yours ever,



**Boris Johnson**  
Mayor of London

Enc.

## Recent incidents on the Tube network

- District Line trains (32 years old). Routine inspection discovered that some cracks in the shoe beams, which transfer power from track to train, had grown. All trains were checked and this led to some being unavailable. Contrary to the claims made by the RMT, it is not the case that 'the entire fleet was withdrawn from service'. The issue was resolved within a week of the fault being identified.
- Metropolitan Line trains (50 years old), where an issue found in routine maintenance (wheel "pitting") arose which affected the train service until last weekend.
- On the morning of Monday 18 October, on the Jubilee line, power was lost to all trains on one section of line due to damaged tunnel telephone cables which had somehow fallen onto the track. Five trains could not be moved as the power was cut off, and passengers walked through the tunnel to the station platforms. An investigation as to the cause is in progress.
- Also on the morning of 18 October, on the Northern line there was a late finish of engineering works at Moorgate and then a broken-down train at Clapham North which had to be returned to the depot to have a problem with its suspension addressed. Both of these issues led to severe disruption. Late finishing engineering works also affected the Piccadilly line, and a signal failure on the Central line and two on the District line also caused problems.
- On the morning of Tuesday 19 October, a manufacturing fault on one of the new Victoria line trains led to the brakes being stuck 'on', and the train stranded in the tunnel. The passengers on it were walked out of the tunnel between Seven Sisters and Finsbury Park. Bombardier's technical investigation revealed that the fitting which failed had not been fully tightened on assembly and had gradually worked loose; LU has made explicitly clear to Bombardier that such manufacturing errors are not acceptable. Once the defect had occurred, the incident was compounded by a confusing error message displayed on the train operator's information screen in the cab – the clarity of error messages is now being improved (there is an ongoing process of modification and improvement across various elements of the new trains – something common to the introduction of any new stock).
- Also on the morning of 19 October, two signal failures on the District line caused problems very early in the morning, one of which, at South Kensington, also meant the Circle line had to be suspended while the problem was fixed. A defective rail block joint then caused a suspension of the Northern line between Finchley Central and High Barnet while the problem was fixed by the Emergency Response Unit (ERU). That afternoon there was a short suspension of the Bakerloo line caused by a defective train at Piccadilly Circus.
- On the morning of Thursday 21 October a broken rail on the Jubilee line was discovered by overnight maintenance checks. This necessitated emergency engineering work, and suspensions in the central area as running trains across such a fault could have resulted in a derailment. The replacement was a hugely complex job with cutting and welding on site at a set of points south of Green Park, but was done in time for the evening peak hour.

- Also on the morning of 21 October, a signal failure on the Piccadilly line led to severe delays on the line early in the morning. Later in the day, there was a short suspension of the District line to Olympia due to a signal failure, and a defective block joint caused the Metropolitan line to be suspended in the early afternoon between Wembley Park and Finchley Road.

Many of the incidents above are 'legacy' issues that will be obviated by upgrade work for which funding has been confirmed. Of course the age of the assets cannot always be blamed – and it is worth noting also that LU has a daily conference of its operational and maintenance managers at which every fault that occurs is dissected in order to ensure lessons are learned and action taken for the future. The same applies to engineering overruns.