



Valerie Shawcross AM
Chair of the Transport Committee
London Assembly
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA

Mike Brown MVO
Managing Director

London Underground
55 Broadway
London SW1H 0BD

Phone 020 7027 8499
Fax 020 7918 4037
www.tfl.gov.uk/tube

Dear Val

Further to your letter of 2 December 2010, and in advance of the Transport Committee meeting on 2 February, I am writing as requested with some more information on the use of block closures.

LU's new approach to closures

I think it is appropriate to start by stressing that there have been significant changes in our approach to managing closures. In essence, rather than simply choosing between different methods of giving access for the work, we have focused on reducing the amount of access needed to undertake work in the first place. This has involved challenging the assumption that closures are inevitable in all cases (the PPP contracts effectively enshrined this attitude, leading to the unacceptable disruption that Jubilee line users have experienced) and instead moving to a situation where any closure has to be fully justified before it is accepted.

So, for some time we have been seeking to learn from our own and other Metros' experiences and to ensure that one of the key principles used in planning upgrade works is an imperative to limit the disruption caused to passengers. This is something we put at the core of our invitation to tender for the contract to supply the new signalling system on the Sub-surface lines. Potential suppliers responded positively and this will be reflected when we award the contract this spring.

London Underground Limited
trading as London Underground
whose registered office is
55 Broadway
London SW1H 0BD

Registered in England and Wales
Company number 1900907

VAT number 756 2770 08

London Underground Limited is
a company controlled by a local
authority within the meaning of
Part V Local Government and
Housing Act 1989. The controlling
authority is Transport for London.



TfL's acquisition of Tube Lines this summer (which in effect marked the end of the PPP structure), enabled further progress to be made in this respect. Under the PPP LU could not reject Tube Lines' closure demands. After taking control of Tube Lines, TfL cancelled the excessive programme of closures previously planned for the Northern line which included 65 weekend closures and 16 months of early evening closures. Since then, in reviewing the programme of works for the Northern line, our intention has been to take a new approach which reduces very significantly the amount of access needed, and therefore also significantly reduces the disruption caused to both customers and businesses through this work. I hope we will be in a position to confirm the details of a new programme shortly, once discussions with the signalling system supplier are concluded.

Since last autumn we have also sought to enhance the process of planning closures by initiating additional engagement with businesses and passengers affected by the works. We have established a new closures advisory panel comprising representatives from business groups and from London TravelWatch, where the benefits and impacts of particular work programmes can be discussed in detail. This is in addition to the already well established dialogue and close liaison with particular businesses affected by specific closures, and of course with other transport operators.

Block closures

I am aware that there has been previous correspondence and discussion about this issue, notably in the context of the Committee's investigation and report in 2009 (*Too close for comfort*). I know that more detail about the way we assess and evaluate the potential for using such extended closures was provided as part of the investigation.

Crucially, I think the central point that was made in TfL's response to the relevant recommendation in the report remains unchanged. This is that it would be very difficult to make a standard assessment of the likely duration of a block closure, and of the financial savings. Such assessments can only be made on a case by case basis for each piece of work, as they depend on a large number of variables:

- the nature and scope of the work to be carried out
- the design approach that has been taken in developing any new systems or equipment being installed
- the operational characteristics of the line concerned (including the number and capacity of train reversing points available and any operational interfaces with other lines)

- the nature of the areas served by the line and passenger volumes
- the availability of alternative travel options for displaced passengers, and the scope for providing adequate replacement services.

We will continue to use block closures where they offer significant benefits over weekend or other types of closures and where certain conditions can be met. Principal among these are that the number of customers affected and the availability of alternative transport must limit the disruption sufficiently, and that the gains, in reduced costs and acceleration of the programme, must be worthwhile.

In practice, this means that block closures do represent an efficient way of carrying out some work, such as the major track replacement planned in the Bayswater area later this year. However, they may not be the best way of doing other work, particularly on sections where the volume of journeys undertaken in the morning and evening peaks would make the level of disruption unacceptable. This would certainly apply, for example, to some parts of the Northern line.

As an illustration of the way block closures are assessed, more details are attached on the rationale for opting for this type of closure for the work in the Bayswater area, together with a review of the three week closure of the Hammersmith & City line last year.

I hope this is helpful. Of course, I will be happy to answer any queries on the above points at the Transport Committee's meeting on 2 February.

In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact Melanie Couldrey, Senior Corporate Communications Manager, on 020 7918 3904 or melanie.couldrey@tube.tfl.gov.uk if you need any further information or clarification.

Yours sincerely

Kind regards



Mike Brown