Transport for London

Short URL and domain name standard

This document explains why no host name or domain name other than www.tfl.gov.uk or tfl.gov.uk should be used or promoted in connection with any public facing TfL website or online service. It also outlines when short URLs (forward slashes) can be used and how they should be formatted.

New short URL requests require a code change to implement. Therefore they cannot be created or changed quickly. There is a process map and a request form at the end of this standard

Audience

- Editors
- Content owners
- Project managers
- Technical team

Requirements

1. **Host name**
   1.1. The host name for TfL's public facing website is www.tfl.gov.uk
   1.2. The brand identity for TfL's public facing website is tfl.gov.uk
   1.3. You must not use or promote any other host names in connection with the site, including sub-domains of tfl.gov.uk. For example, the sub-domain newsitename.tfl.gov.uk must be promoted as tfl.gov.uk/newsitename
   1.4. Some similar-sounding domain names have been bought by TfL to protect the brand. You must not use these
2. **Sub-domains and pages hosted by third-parties**
   2.1. All TfL web services, even if hosted by a third-party, **must** use a name that is a sub-domain of tfl.gov.uk, and this name **must** be approved by TfL Online. You **must** also establish an approved short URL or 'forward slash' (ie a shortcut name in the form tfl.gov.uk/redirect-name) to ensure

NOTE: You must refer to www.tfl.gov.uk/toolkit for the latest version of this document

consistency of branding and promotion. These **must** be agreed with TfL Online prior to use or promotion

2.2. You **must not** promote any host name or domain name except tfl.gov.uk.

3. Directory names and short URLs (forward slashes)

3.1 Requirements

3.1.1 All short URLs **must** be approved by TfL Online's Content team. You **must not** use or promote any short URL until it has been approved

3.1.2 Short URLs may only be used:

- For clearly defined, permanent sections of the site such as modal homepages, eg: **www.tfl.gov.uk/tube** linking to **www.tfl.gov.uk/modes/tube**
- When linking to a specific campaign or consultation eg: **www.tfl.gov.uk/prudentialridelondon** linking to **www.tfl.gov.uk/campaigns/prudential-ridelondon**
- To help users navigate to core content when the site address (URL) is not clear or is too deep in the folder structure (see also point 3.2.1) eg: **www.tfl.gov.uk/congestioncharge** linking to **www.tfl.gov.uk/modes/driving/congestion-charge**

3.1.3 We should **avoid** creating more than one short URL pointing to the same page. It can cause confusion for customers, and makes it difficult to prevent conflict errors on the system. It is harder to manage and increases the risk of broken links.

3.1.4 All campaign and consultation-related short URLs **must** have an expiry date. If no specific date is agreed with TfL Online's Content team, this will default to three months.

On the review date, an email will be sent to the content owner and TfL Online's Content team, who will remove the redirect unless the owner makes a compelling case to extend it

3.2 Formatting

3.2.1 Short URLs **should** generally link to parent directories or high-level sections, not individual pages. The exception to this is the creation of temporary short URLs to campaign pages or similar promoted content

3.2.2 Directory names and short URLs **must** be unambiguous when written and spoken. They should also be short (<20-25 characters) and memorable

3.2.3 Directory names and short URLs **must not** feature abbreviations or acronyms unless it can be demonstrated there is a common understanding of what these mean

3.2.4 Directory names and short URLs **must not** begin with a definite or indefinite article (‘a’, ‘an’, ‘the’), even if this forms part of an existing brand, promotion or scheme

3.2.5 Directory names and short URLs **must not** begin with the letters ‘tfl’ as these are already included in the domain name

3.2.6 Website addresses and short URLs **must not** be printed in upper case. This includes forward slashes (eg tfl.gov.uk/NEWSITENAME is not acceptable)

3.2.7 Directory names and short URLs **must** only include lower case alphanumeric characters (a…z and 0…9) and hyphens, which can be used to separate individual words (eg: tfl.gov.uk/get-moving)

3.2.8 Directory names and short URLs **must not** contain spaces or any of the following special/reserved characters:

• Ampersand (&) • Dollar ($)	• Slash / virgule (/ or \ ) • Colon (:)
• Plus (+)	• Semi-colon (;)
• Comma (,)	• Question mark (?)
• Equals (=)	• Space (‘ ‘)
• Quotation marks (“ or ‘) • 'At' symbol (@) • Pound (#) • Tilde (~)	• Circumflex (^) • Brackets ([or]) • Less or greater than indicators (< or >)

NOTE: You must refer to www.tfl.gov.uk/toolkit for the latest version of this document

4. Reserved forward slashes

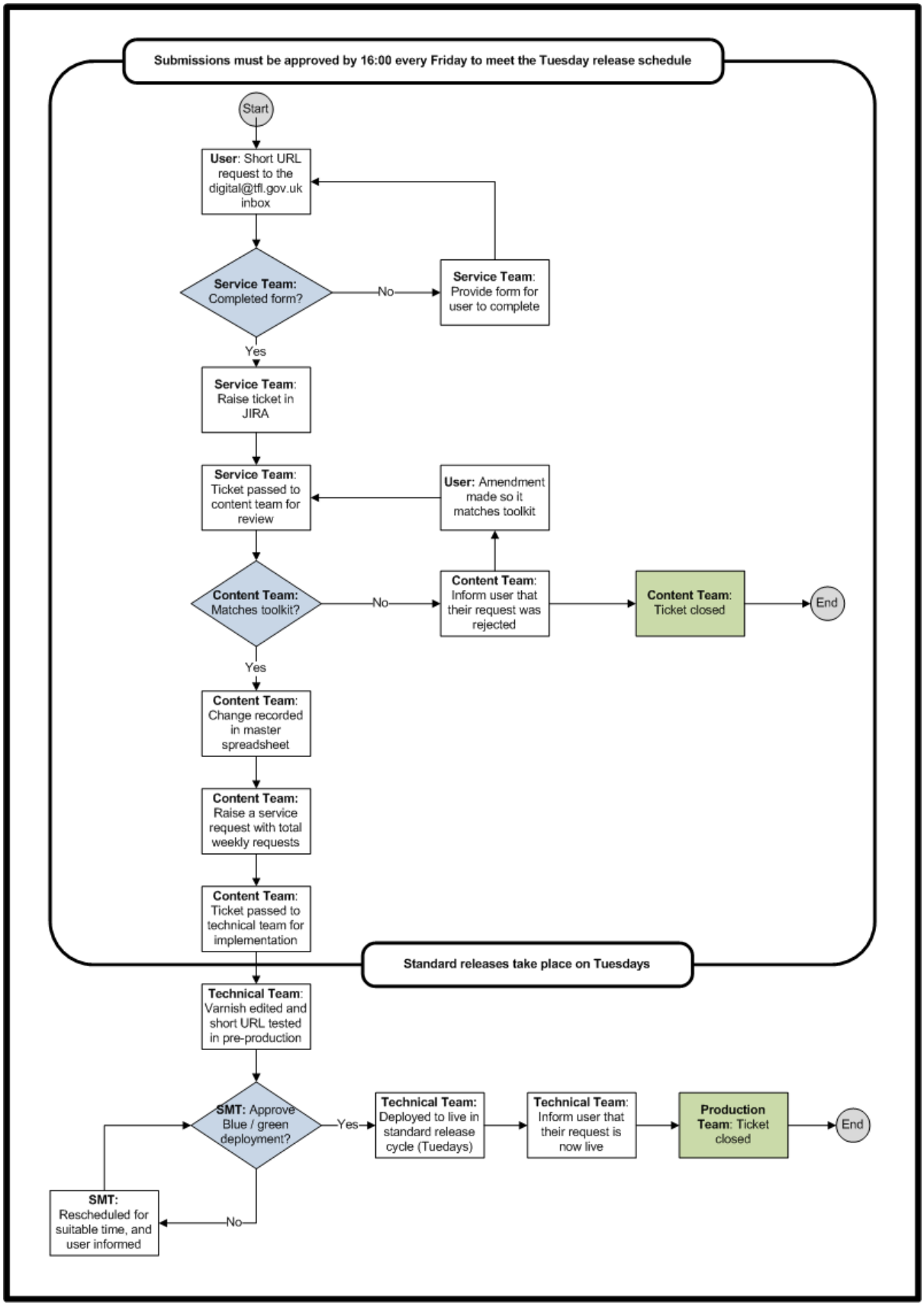
4.1 Some short URLs are reserved for specific pages or sections. We will not allocate short URLs that could be misleading to the user.
Even if a short URL has not already been created, we will not allocate it to a page if it is likely that the user would expect to be taken elsewhere.

- Station names are reserved for station pages. For example /bank or /bank-station should point to the Bank station page and should not be used for an improvements & projects page
- Section titles are reserved for their sections. For example /oyster should point to the Oyster section page and should not be used for a campaign page

Evaluation

We measure the effectiveness of short URLs by checking the stats from time to time. Short URLs will be deleted if they are not being used.

Process



NOTE: You must refer to www.tfl.gov.uk/toolkit for the latest version of this document

Appendix: short URL request form

Owner Name	
Owner Email	
Owner Department	
Cost Centre	
Short URL	
Target URL	
Start Date	
End Date	

Where is your URL used?	Required? Yes / No	Details	Start Date	End Date (re-print)
Printed material – poster, leaflet, publication or letter	○ Yes ◉ No			
TV – Advertisement, interview or statement	○ Yes ◉ No			
Radio – Advertisement, interview or statement	○ Yes ◉ No			
Signage – Station level, street level or other	○ Yes ◉ No			
Online – Press release or email	○ Yes ◉ No			
Other – Any other media channel that is no listed above	○ Yes ◉ No			

NOTE: You must refer to www.tfl.gov.uk/toolkit for the latest version of this document

Why we do this

Applying a consistent approach to URLs and redirects:

- Protects the TfL brand
- Promotes a consistent user experience
- Reduces the risk of errors and confusion
- Assists intuitive users
- Supports marketing efforts

Type: Standard
Owner: TfL Online Compliance
Department: TfL Online

Version history

Version	Date	Summary of changes
1.0	06/12/2013	First issue
2.0	29/04/2014	Updated to include request form
3.0	30/06/2014	New request form added
4.0	16/07/2014	Metadata updated and form made writable

Review history

Name	Title	Date	Comments

NOTE: You must refer to www.tfl.gov.uk/toolkit for the latest version of this document