

# Rail and Underground Panel Meeting



**Date:** 16 October 2015

**Item:** London Underground Customer Information

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## **This paper will be considered in public**

### **1 Summary**

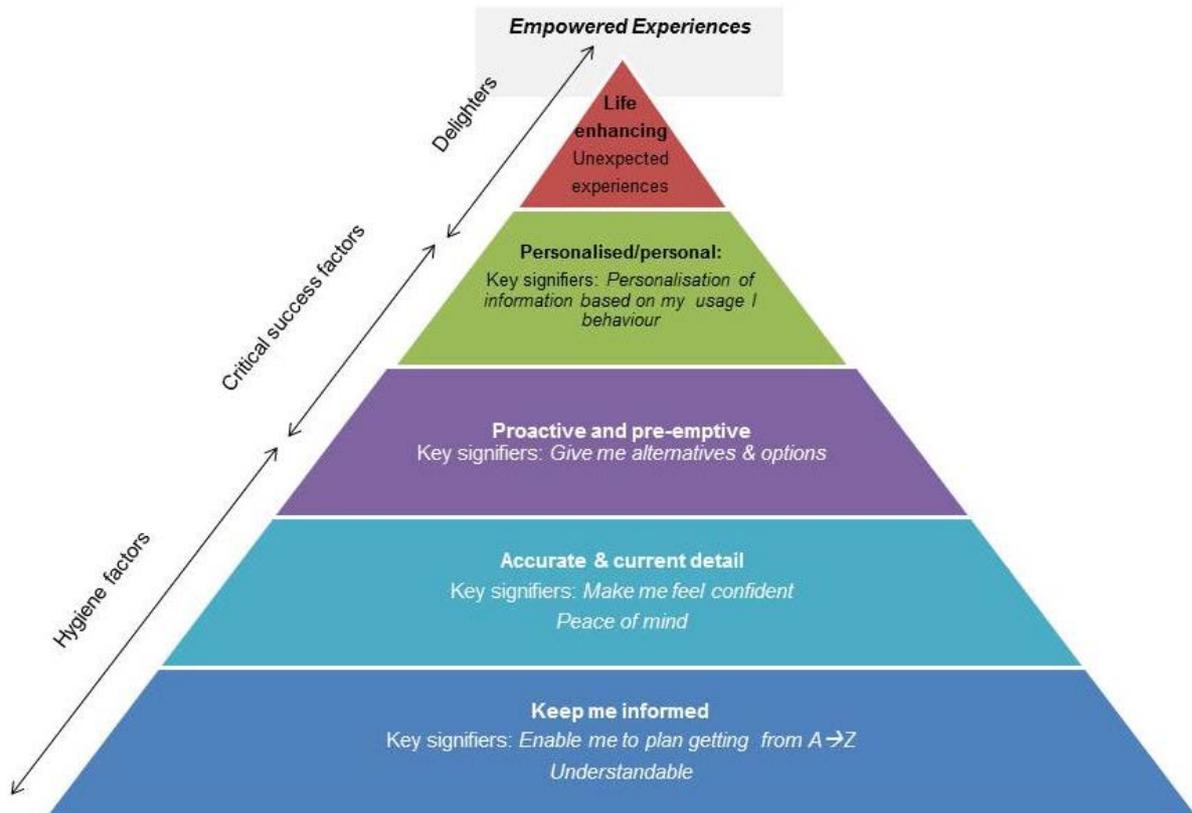
- 1.1 This paper summarises London Underground's (LU's) approach to improving customer information.
- 1.2 It notes improvements in the information delivered, changing customer requirements and our plans for improvements and trials.
- 1.3 The paper does not directly address customer information provision for Rail operations, though this is being considered in an integrated way as part of work on TfL's customer information strategy.

### **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 **The Panel is asked to note the paper.**

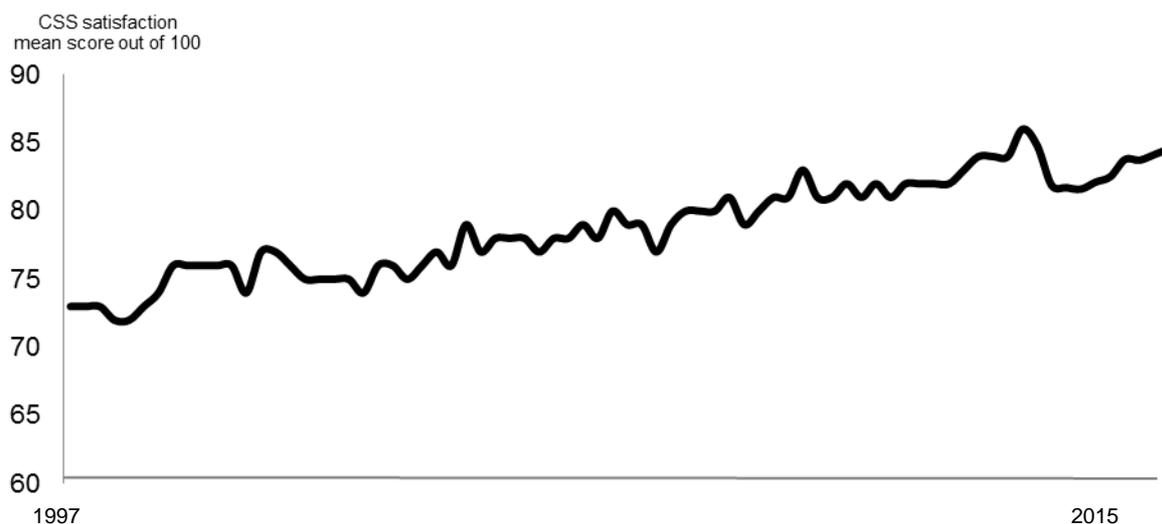
### **3 Background**

- 3.1 Information is an important driver of customer satisfaction.
- 3.2 Customers have wide range of information needs depending on their familiarity with the network, where they are and the service they are experiencing. These needs are described below.



**Figure 1: Customer information hierarchy of needs**

3.3 Customers generally speak highly of the information provided on LU, which is reflected in the current Customer Satisfaction Survey (CSS) score of 83 for trains and stations information. This is significantly higher than when the survey began in the late 1990s when performance was as low as 71.



*Includes: Ease of hearing PA; Helpfulness of PA; Train driver announcements; Maps and information on train; Usefulness of visual information in ticket hall; The information and signs available in the station; and Information on delays.*

*Note: the drop in scores in Q1 13/14 is related to the addition of questions on information on delays, and that scores have now returned to the same level as before this addition.*

## Figure 2: CSS Trains and Station Information

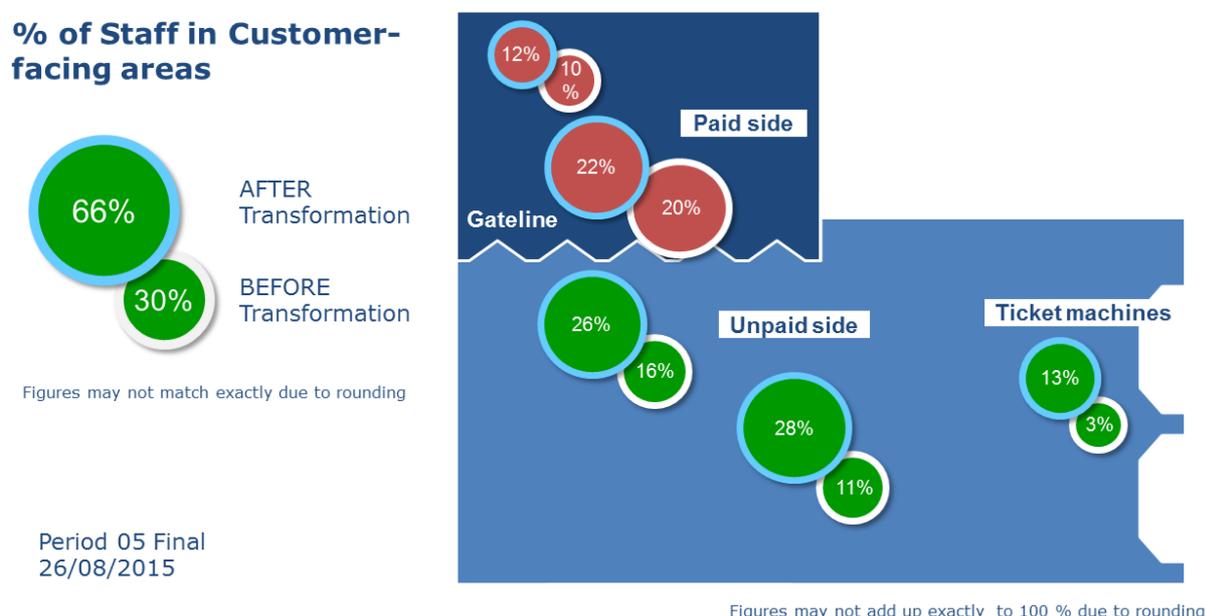
- 3.4 Over the past few years, technology advancement, especially the prevalence of smartphones and the improved service proposition across other industry sectors, has dramatically changed customer expectations. Customers expect personalised real-time information (RTI) to be accessible to them continuously. It is essential to respond to these expectations and use the opportunities that technology offers to continually improve the way we communicate directly to customers in a consistent and timely manner.
- 3.5 Simultaneously, there remains a significant proportion of customers – particularly disabled and older people – who continue to rely primarily on the information we provide at stations and on trains. Consequently, the production of timely and relevant information to customers via station and train infrastructure remains a core provision upon which other elements of service rest.
- 3.6 The following sections address these categories of information needs, starting with Hygiene factors.

## 4 Hygiene factors: improving core provision

- 4.1 The CSS's conducted after individual customers complete their journeys, measure customer satisfaction in relation to all aspects of our core customer information provision on both stations and trains. Current scores indicate that we mostly 'get the basics right'; however, research suggests that we do not always provide adequate support when there are problems on the network. This represents a significant issue for those customers whom it affects.

## Stations

- 4.2 One aspect of the Fit for the Future – Stations (FftFS) programme is focused on increasing the ease with which customers can access core customer information in our stations, for example by making it easier for customers to locate mapping and planning products through the creation of specific customer information zones in ticket halls. The information zone also provides a focal point for staff presence. Implementing similar zones on platforms may also be of benefit, and is being explored.
- 4.3 It is also known from research that regardless of the quality of static information, there is no substitute for real time personal information from staff. The new station operating model means that more staff will be present in the parts of the station most used by customers to provide help and information when needed. The impact of the new operating model is depicted below.



**Figure 3: Station staff presence – before and after transformation**

- 4.4 At smaller stations, where staff might conceivably not be able to be in the ticket hall at all times, additional Help Points will be installed in ticket halls to enable customers to contact someone for help if required.
- 4.5 In addition to ensuring there is sufficient access to information, it is important to simplify messages, in order to make them more easily understandable to customers. Recent research has indicated that customers would like TfL to move towards a model of prioritising the most relevant information, thus making it quicker to digest. In response to this, changes have recently been made to Electronic Service Update Board (ESUB) screens, changing them to provide 'reporting by exception'. 'Good Service' messages are collapsed together and service disruption information moved to the top of the screen. This mirrors service update information provided on the TfL website, which has been extremely well received by customers.

- 4.6 The same research said, despite being automated, customers didn't have confidence that ESUBs were up-to-date and therefore questioned the accuracy of the information. As part of the ESUB refresh programme, screens have been updated to include a moving clock to reassure customers that the information is continually updated. Future development of ESUBs will include making the information provided more localised and actionable for customers.



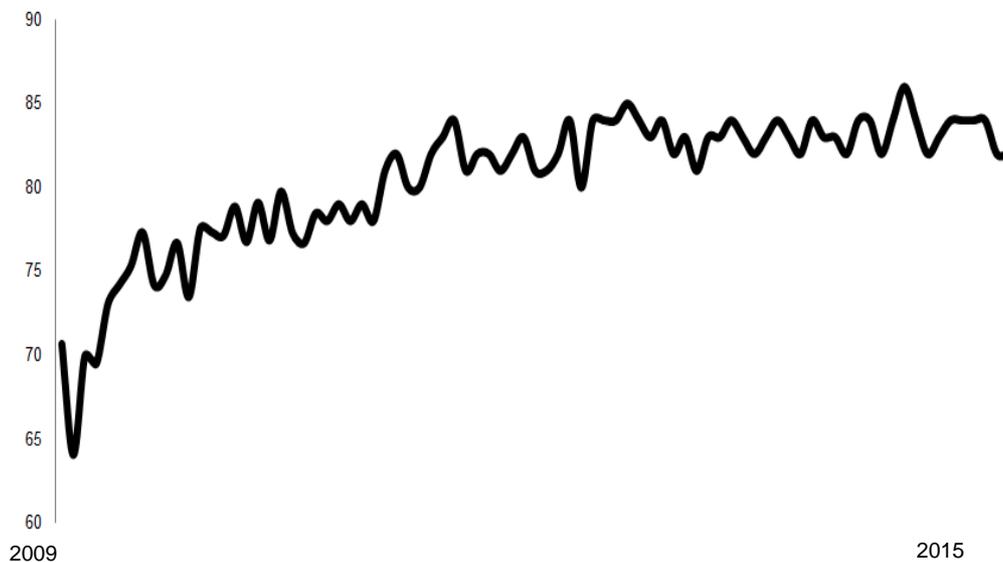
**Figure 4: Updated Electronic Service Update Board (ESUB)**

- 4.7 Research has also shown that, as reliability has improved, customers have less need for regular 'Good Service' PA messages. Further, at larger, busier stations, frequent 'Good Service' messages can become lost within the overall increased noise levels. LU will seek ways to address these issues, while recognising that service update PAs remain crucial during times of disruption, and that at smaller stations, where there are fewer visible staff or other customers, regular PA messages still fulfil an important role in 'connecting' customers to the network.
- 4.8 Simplicity of information has been a core principle for developing information supporting Night Tube services. This is reflected in the fact that maps, in-train line diagrams and ESUB screens showing only information about the Night Tube network have been specifically designed for the new service, stripping out unnecessary detail and enabling customers to better understand the 'shape' of the Night Tube network.

### **On train**

- 4.9 In addition to provision and clarity of message, information is only of value if customers have confidence that they can trust it. One way to give customers greater confidence during their journey is by making on-train announcements when a train stops. Standards have been enhanced to ensure that customers are informed of the reason for stopping in a timely way – within the first 30 seconds and every 90 seconds following that if necessary. There has been considerable focus on ensuring our train operators make these announcements and that they are of a consistently high quality. This is measured through our Staff and

Information survey (SIS), which has shown an overall trend of improvement since 2009.



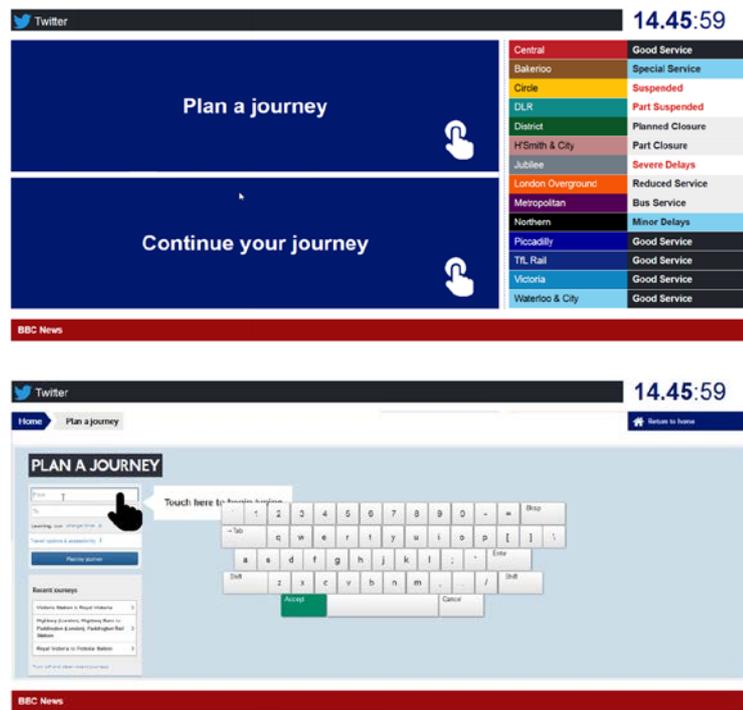
**Figure 5: SIS – Train Information Announcements made within 30/90 seconds**

- 4.10 4.10 The majority of tube platforms have a dot matrix screen showing the arrival time for the next three trains, derived from data generated by the signalling system. However, there are some platforms where no screens have been installed, as limitations of some of the older signalling systems have created ‘blackspots’ – such as the Wimbledon branch of the District line – where limited train running data is available. Additionally, the screens on some platforms have become life-expired and need to be replaced. A programme is in place to address these issues where it makes sense to do so. The new Thales signalling system will address these problems when installed.
- 4.11 4.11 In addition, part of the fleet upgrade works required to comply with Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (RVAR), LU installing visual information displays on the Bakerloo and Central lines, which will give deaf and hearing impaired customers access to information on these lines for the first time. Visual displays are already in place on the District, Circle, Hammersmith & City, Metropolitan, Jubilee, Victoria and Northern line train fleets.

## **5 Delivering critical success factors – going beyond the basics**

- 5.1 In order to improve the quality of information that staff can provide to customers, the FftFS programme is issuing all station staff with a handheld device (iPad). These will provide staff with the latest service information, helping to tackle one of our biggest areas for customer frustration – information dissonance – when there is a mismatch between the information we provide and the experience of our customers. As well as pushing service information to staff, the iPads will enable staff to provide personalised alternative route planning.

- 5.2 A five day customer service training course complements the provision of handheld devices. This focusses on the skills needed to deliver excellent customer service and emphasises the importance of being personable and proactive in assisting customers throughout their journey.
- 5.3 Small fixed touch-screen devices are soon to be trialled in two stations. These will give customers without their own smart phone the ability to access to service update information, journey planning and information about onward journeys from the station via a simple user-interface. Staff will always be on hand to assist, but many customers like to be empowered to do this themselves.



**Figure 6: Prototype touchscreen device homepage**

- 5.4 In October, a trial of large digital screens will commence, replacing existing tube maps in stations. These screens will display three or four different maps for customers to switch between, making it easier for customers to find what they are looking for and reducing the wall-space required, helping to de-clutter stations. In the future, these maps could reflect the real-time network status and assist customers with re-planning journeys or include a language translation function, including text-to-speech for visually impaired people. If successful this approach could be rolled out across the network in future years.
- 5.5 TfL's "Open Data" policy has enabled the creation of a wide range of apps and websites providing high-quality, up-to-date and personally relevant information to customers. Wi-Fi throughout the station environment enables customers to access this information before boarding a train. TfL leads the world in this area. Future developments in this area will look to improve ticketing-related functionality for customers.

## 6 Delighting our customers – customer service beyond their expectations

- 6.1 The overall focus is on tackling the areas customers find frustrating and ensuring that the information provided is increasingly personal and useful to customers, especially when things go wrong on the network.
- 6.2 Staff training focuses on a professional response to customer issues. However, staff are also encouraged to go beyond the routine, for example reuniting an owner with a precious lost item. To ensure a common understanding of what is meant by great customer service, staff have developed ‘Making Every Journey Matter’, a customer value proposition that sets out in our people’s own words how they should deliver excellent customer service. One element of this is ‘Letting your personality shine through’, which recognises that it is LU’s staff’s experience and personality that can make the difference between an average experience and a special one for customers.



**Figure 7: Components of the “Making Every Journey Matter” customer proposition**

- 6.3 Research shows that the quality of customers’ time on the LU network is as important to them as quantity of time, so LU is looking at how it can provide new customer information to enhance the quality of customers’ journeys. Trials are planned to provide customers with information on the crowding they can expect on their journey and any delay the crowding may cause. This would allow them to make better choices about the route they take and enable them to either re-plan their journey for one with less disruption or choose to take a quieter route, with greater likelihood of a seat. This work also aims to provide customers with information on the crowding levels of approaching trains while they wait on a platform, helping them to use a quieter carriage.

- 6.4 In addition, LU is investigating how it can use technology to push personalised information directly to customers' smartphones (on an 'opt-in' basis). One such opportunity involves the use of in-station beacons, which utilise small Bluetooth or near-field communication (NFC) transmitters to send location data to smartphones in close proximity to the beacon. This infrastructure could be used for a variety of things, such as pushing location relevant real-time information to customers, to provide audible wayfinding information for visually-impaired people and helping to share information that celebrates design and heritage aspects of our stations (e.g., station histories, explanations of art installations, architectural and design features). A trial will commence in spring 2016.

## **7 Key challenges**

- 7.1 The initiatives described above are all part of a constant effort to ensure that the information provided keeps up with and in some cases exceeds customer expectations. There are, however a number of inherent challenges set out below:
- 7.2 LU does not have a single integrated real time information system. The information systems available on stations vary and information flows through systems in a variety of different ways, some manual and some automatic. This can result in information that is out-of-date or inaccurate across different sources.
- 7.3 Exacerbating the system issue is the fact that customers are increasingly looking to 'triangulate' information from a variety of sources, including apps and social media. Social media poses a particular challenge because it is instant and mostly customer-generated. Customers can post a message about their experience before LU has confirmed information to pass on or may comment on a short-lived incident. The change in information sources affects both the channels through which we need to communicate and also the customer's expectation of being able to access the information they need instantly. This can result in information that is out-of-date or inaccurate across different sources.
- 7.4 Customers expect LU to communicate with them using rapidly emerging and evolving channels. As new technology is adopted, it is important to ensure that this is futureproofed as much as possible, for example, by using open platforms or generic hardware. Bringing these assets into one quickly is important given the pace of change in this area.

## **8 Conclusion**

- 8.1 Customer expectations in terms of the information they receive will inevitably grow over time. In recent years LU has observed a paradigm shift in expectations for both the immediacy and availability of information, driven by the use of smartphones.
- 8.2 There is a comprehensive strategy in place, based on customer research, to prioritise a range of initiatives ensuring that basic needs are met but also that new initiatives are trialled in order to keep pace with the pace of change.
- 8.3 The response to this need, in London, must be comprehensive and agnostic to the mode of travel used. While this paper focuses on development of customer information on the Underground, it is part of a pan-TfL strategy to ensure that

users of London's transport system continue to receive the information and support they need to move around the city.

**List of appendices to this report:**

None

**List of Background Papers:**

None

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