

THE FUTURE OF THE UNDERGROUND

On 21 November 2013 Mayor of London, Boris Johnson and the Managing Director of London Underground, Mike Brown, made public their vision for the future of the Underground, which includes station staffing reductions and the closure of Underground ticket offices, but also a new 24-hour all-night Underground service at weekends.

STATION STAFF AND STATION SERVICES

The trend of ticket sales away from ticket offices has surged over recent years and today less than three per cent of all Underground journeys involve a visit to a ticket office. In future therefore, rather than being remote from passengers behind closed doors or glass windows, Underground station staff will not be based in ticket offices, but in ticket halls, on gate lines and on platforms, ready and available to give the best personal and face-to-face service to passengers. As now, all Underground stations will continue to be staffed and controlled in future, with more staff visible and available than today in ticket halls and on gate lines and with the same number of staff on platforms. Staff equipped with the latest mobile technology, such as tablet computers, will be able to monitor and manage stations on the move.

The huge Underground improvement programme underway will continue, with billions of pounds of investment to deliver more frequent, reliable and accessible services and enhanced stations, providing greater capacity to tackle increasing numbers of passengers. It also includes a continued rigorous focus on improving passenger journeys and meeting the Mayor's commitment of reducing delays by a further 30 per cent by 2015, when compared to 2011 reliability levels.

More frequent trains will be introduced across a wide range of lines, including a 20 per cent increase in capacity on the Northern Line next year and further uplifts to the frequency of Jubilee and Victoria Line services, to 33 and 36 trains per hour respectively at the busiest times.

Improvements to make journeys easier and more convenient for passengers include:

- Contactless bank card payment technology will be rolled-out on the Underground network from next year, providing passengers with another convenient way to pay for their travel. Passengers will no longer need to queue just to convert their currency (pounds and pence) into the Underground's currency (Oyster and tickets).
- Wi-Fi coverage will be rolled out to all remaining below-ground Underground stations by the end of 2014, with the exception of four stations that are currently undergoing major upgrade work, so that passengers can more easily access web and other digital content on the move at stations across the entire network.
- Improved training and technology will be provided to all station staff, and mobile devices with up-to-the-minute information on ticketing, train services and the local area will be provided to staff across the network so they can help customers on the spot.
- The network will become more accessible. More raised platform sections and boarding ramps are being introduced, information and signage is being improved and, building on the 66 Underground stations which are already step-free, 27 additional Underground and Overground stations will be made step-free over the next eight years. The proposed staffing changes will ensure that the current turn up and go service for disabled and visually impaired passengers continues and the disability training given to staff will be further enhanced.
- More and better ticket machines will be introduced as part of a strategy to make life easier for passengers. Improvements include providing quicker and easier refunds – by Underground staff, at ticket machines or online – automatically completing journeys when passengers forget to swipe out and introducing personalised customer accounts on the TfL website to give increasingly tailored information and services. The number of TfL's contact numbers has also been reduced from over 40 to less than 10, with one local rate 0343 number for all Oyster and travel information passenger queries.
- Work is also underway to improve the Underground's stations, with major redevelopments underway at Tottenham Court Road, Victoria and Bond Street. Improvements to retail and services at stations are planned, with more than 30 stations already identified where real improvements could be made over the next few years, including Canary Wharf and Embankment.

FUTURE UNDERGROUND STATIONS

LU staff are, and will remain, the operational heart of the station. In future, they will be equipped with the latest mobile technology which allows full control of the station, even while they are mobile. No longer will they have to be confined to station control rooms or ticket offices in order to serve passengers, manage stations and ensure the highest standards of safety and security. A new, simplified staffing model will reflect the fact that passengers have different needs at each of the different types of station across the network.

Many busy Underground stations will have to deal with queries from less familiar passengers, including tourists, so enhanced 'visitor centres' will be provided at those stations.

All Underground stations will continue to be staffed by LU employees across the whole day while services are operating, providing face-to-face passenger service and information across the whole network. The changes to the operation of stations and improvements to passenger service will be delivered while also reducing the overall cost of running stations, to provide better value for money for passengers and tax payers. It is reported that the 'new' Station Supervisor may supervise six stations – in reality that will mean that five of them will be un-supervised at any given time

From 2015, LU proposes to operate stations in four different categories:

GATEWAY STATIONS

The main visitor entry points to London, with a high proportion of people unfamiliar with the Underground network. These stations – Euston, Heathrow Terminals 123, King's Cross St. Pancras, Liverpool Street, Paddington and Victoria – will all have enhanced and redeveloped Visitor Information Centres to ensure tourists and visitors are welcomed and offered the best possible service. Passengers will be able to purchase Oyster cards, pick up maps and other information such as interchange information on other TfL transport modes, like bus services or Barclays Cycle Hire. There will be 30 per cent more staff in ticket halls than today, and an increase in overall ticket selling capacity of 33 per cent.

DESTINATION STATIONS

Busy stations in Central London that have high volumes of passengers and include busy commuter and tourist destinations, such as Bank/Monument, Embankment, Leicester Square and Oxford Circus. These stations will have 30 per cent more staff in the ticket hall than today.

METRO STATIONS

Serving predominantly inner London communities, with many regular users, such as Clapham South and Mile End. These stations will have dedicated staff with the latest in mobile technology permanently located in ticket halls.

LOCAL STATIONS

Smaller stations, mostly in Outer London or beyond that have lower passenger numbers and serve mainly regular customers, such as Rickmansworth and East Putney, will have staff stationed in ticket halls providing help to passengers who need it.

ALL-NIGHT RUNNING

From 2015, Londoners and visitors to the capital will be able to take the Underground home at any hour of the night on Fridays and Saturdays. The new all-night Underground network has been made possible because significant parts of the LU network have been successfully modernised. From 2015, weekend services will run through the night on certain parts of the system, initially comprising the Piccadilly, Victoria, Central, Jubilee and Northern lines over the following sections as follows:

- Piccadilly Line: Cockfosters – Heathrow Terminal 5.
- Victoria Line: Walthamstow Central – Brixton.
- Central Line: Ealing Broadway – Hainault via Newbury Park.
- Jubilee Line: Stanmore – Stratford.
- Northern Line: Edgware and High Barnet – Morden via Charing Cross.

This network, which will be expanded to include other lines in subsequent years, will dovetail with existing 24-hour and Night Bus services to give passengers an extensive and integrated service throughout the night.

IN CONCLUSION

The proposals, when coupled with the introduction of the all-night Underground, would mean a net reduction of around 750 posts. Currently, LU employs a total of around 18,000 staff, which includes around 5,500 station staff. LU is committed to delivering the reduction in operational staff numbers without any compulsory redundancies. When implemented, the savings delivered by these proposals would equate to around £50m per annum, or around £270m over the term of the TfL Business Plan to 2020/21.