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Dear Abigail

Centro response: Amending licences to give passengers the information they need to plan and make journeys – a consultation

Please find attached the Centro response to the consultation papers issued on the 29 March 2011.

For your information, this response has been shared with other Passenger Transport Executives, which support the general principles contained within it.

Therefore this response should also be taken as representing the views of Passenger Transport Executive Group (PTEG).

Yours sincerely

Chris Lane
Head of Passenger Information

cc.
Matt Brunt, Assistant Director, Passenger Transport Executive Group
Steven Fisher, Partnerships Manager Rail, Centro
Peter Sargant. Head of Rail Development, Centro

enc(s).
- *Centro response document*
- *Centro Integrated Passenger Information Strategy: The Way Ahead*
- *Centro response (made on the 17 June '11) concerning the "Review of Real Time Information Code of Practice"*

Office of Rail Regulation Consultation: issued 29 March 2011

Amending licences to give passengers the information they need to plan and make journeys – a consultation

The Office of the Rail Regulator is undertaking a consultation on their proposal to amend operator licences to give passengers the information they need to plan and make journeys.

1) The paper proposes an amendment to licences **to make clear that train operators have lead responsibility for getting good quality information to their passengers,** building on the existing obligation to work with Network Rail on timetable planning.

2) It proposes a corresponding amendment to Network Rail's network licence to clarify its lead role in planning services and providing the vital information to train operators that they need to do their job.

3) It also proposes an obligation in station licences for station operators to play their part in delivering the information.

The Centro response:

All such information needs to be appropriate, accurate and timely to allow passengers (and perspective passengers) to plan their journeys.

- Information plays a critical role in the public perception of the railway industry and dictates how the individual is able to make an informed choice about their opportunities for travel and connectivity on public transport.

- As has been confirmed in recent survey work carried out by Passenger Focus, passengers want better information, earlier notification of delays and more help from railway staff when delays happen.

- The Autumn 2010 National Passenger Survey indicated that only 40% of passengers are satisfied with the way delays are handled compared to an overall satisfaction levels of over 80%.

- The severe weather of late 2010 once again placed a strain on industry information systems and staff just when passengers were seeking extra information and advice.

- Passengers need access to accurate, timely, up to date and easy to understand information <u>at all stages of a journey</u>.

- Rapid developments in information technology are continually opening up new ways to inform passengers and raising their expectations. But

while Information Technology is transforming the way in which public transport information can be distributed and personalised, the need to get the basics right remains as important as ever.

▪ For most rail passengers across the West Midlands there are plenty of 'information holes' still to be plugged. It is all too easy for a rail journey to be inconvenienced through the lack of timely, appropriate and accurate information, be it through a missed connection or buying the incorrect ticket.

To summarise:

• Throughout the Centro area there has been positive steps forward in the provision of passenger information, but at the same time demands and expectations are rising.

• Despite the rail industry generally providing an adequate service, it is the 'one-off' "bad experiences" that create the lasting impression.

• Inconsistency of information remains a problem

• Lack of information creates frustration and lack of confidence in the network

• Development of new technology should not divert attention from getting the basics right!

• Arrangements are less satisfactory when there is severe disruption to services. However this is the time of greatest need!

Do you agree that there is a lack of clear accountability in the current framework for providing information to passengers?

Centro agree that the full responsibilities for providing good quality information to passengers are not clearly defined anywhere and this lack of clarity is particularly noticeable at times of unplanned disruption. Conditions in operator franchise agreements can vary meaning there is often an inconsistent approach to information across the network. There is often an inability for the industry to disseminate useful information quickly to passengers. This includes the opportunities that other modes of public transport may provide for alternative travel arrangements.

Do you agree that licences are the best place to set out aligned accountabilities for providing information?

Whilst accepting that this method represents a suitable way to align responsibilities and accountabilities in a clear but flexible way, it does place on train operators more administrative burden. Notably there is no increased obligation for them to do any more than they have already committed to do voluntarily. Such a measure may actually deflect them from practical cross – party working to deliver noticeable and substantive change to attitudes and cultures across complex and diverse operating environments such as that centred on the West Midlands. There is also a risk that by over-specifying requirements in operator licences, this will actually act as a disincentive to innovation. It is critical in multi operator environments that operator's are encouraged to look beyond their own obligations, to deliver solutions that cover all operators and also other modes, where appropriate. For example, between Wolverhampton and Birmingham there are four rail operators, a metro line and bus links, all of which need effective co-ordination from an information perspective.

Do you agree the split of responsibilities described is sensible?

It is important that Network Rail is correctly and fully aligned into any new arrangements as the ability to reschedule timetables at times of disruption is critical to ensuring that train operator resources are best deployed and that national electronic databases are accurately and speedily updated.

Are there any other changes in the way the industry handles information for passengers that would complement new licence obligations and help the industry deliver the needed improvements?

There is need for increased dialogue with PTEG and Integrated Passenger Transport Authorities and we would expect this to be included in any licence amendments.

Centro would welcome alignment of requirements to our *"Integrated Passenger Transport Strategy" (see Appendix I)* which was approved by our Transport Strategy Committee earlier this year. The Strategy identifies 10 key Passenger Information Principles which have universal relevance regardless of mode.

Centro now has regular dialogue with London Midland over a range of information and knowledge sharing issues. London Midland (alongside the other operators) was fully consulted on our Strategy and therefore understands our future aims and objectives.

Centro recently provided £4.5m of funding support to deliver "real-time" Passenger Information systems at over 60 local rail stations. In response to this commitment London Midland have delivered a dedicated "Local Information Control Centre" within their Control function and operational information is now more freely disseminated across their network for both generic and "line of route" specific incidents.

Whilst information at stations has significantly improved there remains far less impetus to operators to provide "on vehicle" information. Centro believe this represents a significantly "gap" where future improvements can be delivered.

Do you have any suggestions to improve the proposed licence drafting?

The new obligation for station operators should take full account of proposals by Centro and other PTEs to take a greater control of local stations, and also needs to be flexible enough to reflect other rail industry changes which are likely to emerge as a result of the McNulty review.

Who do you think should be covered by these proposals?

There remains a need for the rail industry (i.e. NRES, TOCs & Network Rail) to pro-actively share their "rail data feeds" with public transport bodies so that users can optimise their travel opportunities. Nowadays this is particularly relevant given the increased access and convenience of web-based "journey planning" tools to interrogate information "on the move" and the continuing commitment to roll-out complementary information systems "off the rail network" at interchanges, tram stops, travel shops and at roadside locations.

This knowledge base should include access to train operator retailing information including local rail fares and ticketing validities.

There should also be consideration of the role ROSCO's have to play in delivery of progressive "on board" passenger information facilities such as "real-time" displays and Wi-Fi.

What impact do you think these proposals would have?

There should be improved awareness of the total public transport offering across metropolitan areas such as the West Midlands.

Information sharing needs to become a "two way process" with Integrated Transport Authorities offering similar "open access" to their electronic databases, real-time information systems and timetables etc

Centro would welcome if such proposals supported the need for appropriate staffing of stations to provide the required assurances to passengers in the offering of personalised travel information.

What extra information about how these conditions would work in practice would be useful?

How will the proposed measures manifest themselves in a visible and tangible way to passengers in the next year?

From a PR perspective it would be beneficial for the rail industry to communicate a more "joined-up" Passenger Information Improvement Plan for this autumn in expectation of the forthcoming winter months when disruption is more likely.

How would these new conditions impact on providing better and easier "way-finding" at stations and across the network?

How is the need for better "Information for All" incorporated in your proposals?

END

Integrated Passenger Information
The Way Ahead

1. Our Vision

To provide integrated, world-class information that helps passengers to make informed journey choices
Public transport information in the West Midlands has been transformed. Significant investment into interchange and on-street information, customer literature and digital media has helped passengers and visitors to the region find and use the public transport services they need. Consolidating and building on this work will play a major part in delivering our vision of a 'world-class public transport system'.

Providing clear, comprehensive, relevant information when it is needed is vital because it helps customers to:
• Consider using public transport as a genuine alternative to the car
• Effectively plan the most appropriate and cost-effective route
• Have confidence in the public transport system, at every stage of their journey
• Plan their whole journey, from door to destination

2. The information journey so far

Public transport information has dramatically improved in recent years. Prior to this, patchy information had put many people off using public transport. This has since changed for the better. Centro now provides:

- Comprehensive passenger information at more than 13,000 bus stops, shelters and interchanges
- Re-developed bus stations, new bus shelters, poles, information points and improved signage
- Network West Midlands branding now shown on all public transport modes, including cycling, and has been rolled out across all infrastructure such as bus shelters, ticketing, signage, Travel Information Centres and on passenger information and campaign publicity
- New computer systems supply customer friendly on-street information
- Roll out of Real Time Information at all rail stations, Metro stops and key bus stops
- Interactive maps for all forms of public transport, Real Time Information (live departure times) and journey planning on www.networkwestmidlands.com
- Journey planning and Real Time Information available on digital TV and mobile phones
- Simple multi-operator printed timetables
- Awareness campaigns including TV and leafleting to 1.2 million households
- Operational changes introduced to ensure information remains robust and 'fit for purpose'

Our Customers

Customers are at the forefront of everything we do. To increase public transport use and improve the passenger experience we have been working closely with current and would-be passengers to better understand what their information needs are, and to make sure these are at the forefront of our information strategy.

What have customers asked for?

Customers want the information we provide to be:

• **Accurate** – correct and up-to-date, especially live departure times
• **Accessible** – easily available via a range of formats and media, convenient to all passengers
• **Sufficient** – all the information passengers need to make their travel decisions
• **Timely** – available when passengers need it, especially during service changes and at times of disruption and delay
• **Clear** – understandable, easy to read or hear
• **Unbiased** – fair and without preference to any individual mode or operator

3. 10 Passenger Information Principles

After listening to the needs and wishes of customers, we have developed 10 principles for providing integrated world class passenger information.

1. Providing integrated, comprehensive and accurate information
We take responsibility for helping you confidently plan the whole trip (including walking and cycling) by providing, displaying and maintaining information to a high level of accuracy. To achieve this we will obtain information from operators and provide it as quickly and simply as possible through digital services, reducing the reliance on printed information.

2. Delivering information in person
Where possible, we will develop Travel Information Centres into world-class 'one-stop-shops', offering information for all forms of public transport.

3. Information for all
We put equality at the heart of public transport services. It is important that everyone has the opportunity to use public transport in the West Midlands. We will ensure travel information is accessible for everyone and in language that is easy to use and understand.

4. Improving signage and way finding (how to get around)
We will make interchanging simple. We will work in partnership with Local Authorities to improve direction signs in key areas and interchanges, allowing you to find what you need 'at a glance'.

5. Offering personalised travel information
We will develop web and mobile services to provide personalised journey planning and individual, timely travel information.

6. Delivering 'help yourself' services
Outside Travel Information Centre hours, or where it is not practical to provide a staffed facility, we will provide innovative 'help yourself' digital kiosk services for information and ticketing.

7. Delivering digital information 'pre-trip'
We will use existing technologies, such as mobile phones, the web and social networking, to deliver simple, personalised information. Our information will be available to other service providers, with Centro ensuring its quality and accuracy.

8. Enhancing information at interchanges, visitor attractions and businesses
Through partnerships we will develop comprehensive, world class, information at interchanges for all types of public transport, and also at key visitor attractions and major employment sites in the region.

9. Providing 'on vehicle' information
We will work with partners to provide accurate, integrated on-board information to assist you at this key stage of their journey.

10. Delivering digital information 'on the move'
We will harness new technology to provide digital information across all types of travel, to give you information on your whole journey, on the move. This step-by-step Real Time Information –will be at stops and interchanges, public transport and on your own portable devices (i.e. mobile phones). We will also provide 'at a glance' information through digital displays and self-service kiosks.

4. What can you expect?

An extensive range of passenger information services are already provided. Here are the future services we plan to provide through this strategy.

Accurate and up-to-date digital information
• Digital and Real Time Information at all locations, including details of disruptions and diversions
• Multi-modal information to assist changing from one kind of travel to another (e.g. bus to rail)

On the vehicle information
• Information on public transport providing next stop, disruptions, interchanges and destinations both on displays and by audio

Bus stations, stations and interchanges
• 'Help yourself' facilities inside and outside Travel Information Centres offering information, ticketing and local information
• Travel information services or self-service where possible for all travel forms and at key trip locations

New media
• Portable, personalised travel assistance using technology-based methods - e.g. instant messages, Twitter, e-mails and web browsing with the phone acting as a NetNav – the SatNav for public transport (showing your route to destination)

Information on the web
• Simple websites giving all public transport information, including cycling and walking, available through your preferred social network
• Distribution of public transport information by other providers, to the widest possible audience, via Centro

Timetables - on the network
• Digital and Real Time Information displays supported by interactive kiosks for information, timetables, route maps and ticketing
• High quality location-specific printed information
• 'At a glance' signs and directions making use of digital services

Timetables - on the vehicles
• All kinds of digital and audio information, particularly highlighting changes to regular services

Telephone call centre
• More web enquiries supported by email replies
• Bringing call centre operations together

Timetable leaflets and maps
• Greater use of the web and interactive kiosks

Information for all
• Information that meets the needs of all passengers and visitors, making personalised digital information the service of first choice
• Supporting key groups such as schoolchildren, jobseekers, Ring & Ride passengers and commuters

If you would like a copy of this document in a form more suited to your needs please contact us: 0121 214 7214 or email: customerrelations@centro.org.uk