

London Councils' Transport and Environment Committee

Freedom Pass Progress Report Item No: 10

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Date: 23 March 2017
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Summary:

This report provides Members with information on two recent developments on the Freedom Pass scheme, namely customer service improvements to the Freedom Pass scheme and discussions with the Rail Delivery Group (formerly ATOC), regarding financial adjustments to account for rail service disruption.

Recommendations:

Members are asked to:

1. Note the contents of this report

Customer Service Improvements

1. In January 2017, London Councils launched the first phase of a new online service that allows passholders to create on-line accounts and make on-line payments for replacement Freedom Passes. This new service allows customers to transact with London Councils online, making their experience quicker and easier. In the longer term, London Councils should realise savings in administering the scheme.
2. The service improvements are being delivered in stages. The first stage, launched in January, allows passholders to log into an existing Freedom Pass account or create an on-line account. From their account, passholders have the option to make an on-line payment to replace a lost or damaged pass, and if stolen, provide a crime reference number to replace their pass free of charge.

3. The next stage of development, planned for spring/summer 2017, will allow passholders to log in to their on-line account to update their personal details and provide supporting evidence. This will also see benefits to the service offered to customers and cost savings in processing post and potentially fewer phone calls.
4. To date, London Councils has undertaken soft marketing of the new service, which has included information on the Freedom Pass website and a message on the call centre recorded message. As of 1 March 2017, 1,410 passholders had created a new account and replaced passes on-line. Of these, 1383 made an on-line payment to replace their pass, and the remainder replaced their pass free of charge. Between 16 January and 28 February, 15% of replaced passes were done on-line (as opposed to over the telephone).
5. London Councils expect to see uptake of the on-line service increase in the coming months as awareness of the option grows with the help of the Freedom Pass helpline messaging promoting this facility along with call agents endorsing it during calls. Once the second stage of development is complete London Councils will launch a wider publicity campaign using social media, borough channels and publications. London Councils aims to improve the uptake to 50% of passholders using the online service.

Rail Service Disruption

6. Following the severe disruption to rail services caused by the Southern Rail industrial dispute, on-going work to London Bridge station, and the derailment of a freight train near Lewisham station, a number of members, notably in Bexley and Sutton, have raised the question of compensation in relation to the Freedom Pass scheme.
7. Spencer Palmer, director, transport and mobility, has written to the Rail Delivery Group to open discussions. London Councils has proposed that an adjustment is made to the settlement for rail services that will compensate boroughs and their residents for the disruption they have experienced and offset costs transferred to other modes of transport.
8. London Councils will be meeting with the Rail Delivery Group on 21 March (before TEC, but after dispatch of papers) and will provide a verbal update to committee members on the outcome of this meeting.

Financial Implications for London Councils

None for London Councils, but boroughs could benefit from any compensation paid by the Rail Delivery Group for the journey disruptions outlined in paragraphs 6-8 above,

Legal Implications for London Councils

None

Equalities Implications for London Councils

None

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

1. Note the contents of this report

Background Papers

TEC – Freedom Pass Progress Report – 16 June 2016 (Item 14)

TEC – Freedom Pass Progress Report – 13 October 2016 (Item 8)