
Secretariat memorandum

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AT025
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Countdown 2

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To update members of the Access to Transport Committee on the briefing the Streets and Surface Transport Policy Officer received from Transport for London (TfL) on Countdown 2.

2 Background

- 2.1 The first Countdown systems were introduced in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In 1997 a rollout of 4000 was proposed (a quarter of London's bus stops). We are uncertain as to whether all these sites were introduced as we understand that there are only 2000 in place at present. We believe the rollout was halted due to a number of issues that led to the decision to stop investing in aging technology and look at newer technology.
- 2.2 The research (London Transport Buses research; Countdown, the future for London buses, 1997) suggests that :
- Passengers were willing to pay values of 2p per journey;
 - Countdown changed perceptions of wait time;
 - Countdown influenced travel decisions;
 - Countdown had a positive effect on perceptions of security at night;
 - Countdown has a revenue generation effect of 1 to 2% (suggested as a conservative estimate). Note 1% of London Buses £1billion annual income would be £10million per annum.
- 2.3 TfL's Investment Programme 2008 of the outgoing Mayor planned the implementation of 4000 screens.

3 Present proposals

- 3.1 As part of the efficiency saving programme of the new Mayor the scale of Countdown 2 has been scaled down. Though the contract allows for 4000 screens it is only planned to install 2500, i.e. 1 in 6 stops.
- 3.2 The new technology available with the new systems will allow enhanced opportunities such as Countdown on mobile phones and privately funded screens supported by internet real time information as well as personal

computer use. These screens could be located in hospital foyers, train stations and shopping centres. This aspect of Countdown 2 will be heavily promoted by TfL to cover for the reduced numbers of bus stop signs.

- 3.3 Following presentations to the Access to Transport Committee, the Streets and Surface Transport Policy Officer has met with TfL to discuss how signs will be allocated to stops.
- 3.4 TfL gave us a ball park figure of £2500 per sign.
- 3.5 The criteria to select stops for Countdown 2 seem reasonable. The logic they have used is :
 - 3.5.1 They have put a floor number of sites in for each borough which means they will not have any less than present. This is to minimise complaints and means a spread across London's outer boroughs.
 - 3.5.2 They have looked at passenger usage and various attributes of a stop, for example, town centres, nearby schools, TfL interchange, number of night buses, etc. There is more logic to this than the previous allocation which was a bit random.
 - 3.5.3 They have sent a package to each borough for comment.
 - 3.5.4 They will consider comments, but it's a zero sum game. If a borough proposes another site they will probably have to lose one to balance.
 - 3.5.5 Theoretically boroughs could buy additional signs if they also include maintenance.
- 3.6 Members should note that whilst there is some sound logic being followed in choosing sites for the new screens. There will be both winners and losers in this process. Many passengers that lose their local bus stop Countdown will be disappointed.

4 Equalities and inclusion implications

- 4.1 Countdown is of particular importance to mobility impaired passengers to determine how long they will have to wait for a bus. It is also important for people travelling late at night.

5 Legal powers

- 5.1 Section 248 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 places upon London TravelWatch (as the London Transport Users Committee) a duty to consider - and where it appears to the Committee to be desirable, to make recommendations with respect to - any matter affecting the functions of the Greater London Authority or Transport for London which relate to transport (other than of freight).

6 Financial implications

6.1 There are no financial consequences for London TravelWatch.