
Secretariat memorandum

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Countdown 2 briefing for members

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To brief Board members for their discussion with the Transport Commissioner regarding the Countdown programme.

2 Background

- 2.1 The first Countdown systems were introduced in the late 80s and early 90s and researched in 1992. In 1997 a rollout of 4000 was proposed (a ¼ of London's bus stops). We are uncertain as to whether all these sites were introduced as we understand 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 £1bn annual income would be £10m 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.

3.2 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.

3.3 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 won't have any less than now – this is to minimize 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 – GLA town centre, nearby school, TfL interchange, number of night buses etc. It compares apples with oranges, but seems fine. 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 Questions for the Commissioner

4.1 Our research suggests bus passengers value Countdown. TfL's research suggests passengers value Countdown, they would be prepared to pay for it and it generates significant income. Why has the number of signs to be installed been cut so much?

4.2 Will you review this decision.