



The voice of transport users

Good practice guide: short-notice events

October 2013



Dealing with short-term timetable changes and irregular passenger demand

London TravelWatch is the official body set up by Parliament to provide a voice for London's travelling public.

Our role is to:

- Speak up for transport users in discussions with policy-makers and the media;
- Consult with the transport industry, its regulators and funders on matters affecting users;
- Investigate complaints users have been unable to resolve with service providers, and;
- Monitor trends in service quality.

Our aim is to press in all that we do for a better travel experience all those living, working or visiting London and its surrounding region.

This document has been produced with the assistance of Passenger Focus and the Association of Train Operating Companies.

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Executive summary

In 2012 the transport network successfully met the challenge presented by the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Thousands of athletes, spectators, officials and the media were able to move around the capital at the same time as Londoners went about their usual business. The public transport network operated more services and carried more people than ever before at high levels of reliability.

However, transport planners had several years to plan, prepare and test the network ahead of the largest sporting competition on earth. The same luxury is not afforded for some short-notice, yet large-scale events, even less so the unexpected coincidence of several medium-scale events. How can train companies (TOCs) provide the right level of service, enabling people to get to entertainment events on time and home safely afterwards?

This document provides a good practice guide for operators to follow. Most operators will already adopt some of the recommendations which follow, but generally on an ad-hoc or partial basis. By following this guide, operators can significantly improve the service offered to passengers.

1 Introduction and background

London TravelWatch represents the views of London's transport users, covering all transport modes. The organisation's role is to act as an intermediary between the travelling public and transport operators, to assess the impact of recommendations about changes to rail services and to produce authoritative reports on issues affecting transport users.

London TravelWatch wished to investigate the way in which the TOC community plans for 'event-shock', following a number of instances in recent years where potentially unnecessary inconvenience has been caused to the travelling public.

'Event Shock' Case Study 1: Late finish unplanned for

Nightmare journey home for fans after Madonna turns up late for O2 concert

Thousands of Madonna fans faced delays of up to six hours getting home from the Material Girl's Saturday night concert at The O2 arena after she turned up late and some tube line services were suspended...

The Jubilee line was hit by engineering works and, although some ferry services ran later than normal and taxi companies were alerted by the venue, by the time many people reached central London, Tube services had ended for the night.

Following a collaborative discussion between members of the train operator community, Passenger Focus and London TravelWatch, 13 general recommendations have been developed. These recommendations will help train companies to improve current working practices, and in doing so improve the journey experience for the event-goers amongst their customers.

'Event Shock' Case Studies 2 & 3: Poor short-term flexibility

Virgin Trains statement delivers final insult to FA Cup final fans

The last train from London Euston to Wigan North Western leaves at 8.31pm, while the last departure to Manchester Piccadilly is at 9pm. Today, Virgin spelt out what that means for supporters.

"The cup presentation ceremony and celebrations, together with the possibility of extra time and a penalty shoot out, all mean that by the time supporters reach London Euston following a journey from Wembley last trains will have departed," read a statement on Virgin's website.

'Fans are taken for granted'- Dalglish hits out at Cup Final train chaos

Rail maintenance work over the Bank Holiday weekend, coupled with a 5.15pm kick-off on May 5, means thousands travelling from the North West will have to find alternative transport.

'Event Shock' Case Study 4: Good short-term flexibility

FA Cup anti-chaos travel plan

The Football Association (FA) has announced a series of measures designed to avoid travel chaos in Cardiff on FA Cup final day. The FA said it is satisfied that the problems of the Worthington Cup final in February can be avoided.

The start of that match was delayed due to traffic congestion after the transport system became completely overwhelmed by the number of fans travelling into the capital.

A number of key parties involved in the planning of the event on 12 May attended a meeting at the Millennium Stadium on Friday...

In order to encourage some supporters to use train services Great Western Railway have agreed to double the number of trains from London. There will now be 10 on the Saturday and they are considering extra services for the Sunday as well.

Unlike the Worthington Cup final, if the match goes to extra time and penalties, trains to take fans home will be held back at Cardiff station.

Railtrack have also agreed put engineering works in Severn tunnel on hold on the Saturday...

2 Streamlined procedures and event intelligence

In the rail industry, timetable changes must be published 12 weeks before implementation. To achieve this, train companies must 'bid' the changes required to the base timetable 18 weeks before. When events are scheduled with less notice, it still may be possible to plan efficiently and produce a short-notice timetable that satisfies all needs.

Following a revision of the timetable-planning rulebook in November last year, TOCs no longer need apply for a General Consent Order for short-term timetable changes. TOCs can now alter up to 33% of any service group on a short-term basis, without having to consult. This slimming of the bureaucracy should improve flexibility.

Recommendation 1: Review short-notice procedures. Ensure you are taking advantage of the increased flexibility which train companies now have within franchise agreements to make short-term timetable changes to accommodate events. Compare and contrast short-term timetable changes before and after the rule change. Have you adapted your procedures accordingly?

A second way to reduce the risk of 'event shock' is to improve event intelligence. Event intelligence-gathering is often an ad-hoc, yet time-consuming process based on open-source research. It is particularly difficult to identify and predict the impact of three or four simultaneous medium-scale events. However, the detection rate could often be improved if a more structured approach was taken and liaison with other events stakeholders was a more regular occurrence.

Recommendation 2: Appoint or nominate an 'event specialist'. This person should be the single point of contact for all events matters. Horizon-scanning and events liaison should form part of their job description. Such a specialist should also be capable of providing event organisers with advice regarding their public transport plan. They should advise how changes to an event would make it easier for the railway to serve people wanting to attend.

Recommendation 3: Establish a central contact and information dissemination point within ATOC. Ideally, event organisers should supply train companies with information on likely attendance at events, where passengers are likely to come from, as well as when the demand is expected to peak. However, event organisers often do not know who to inform regarding public transport provision, nor exactly what information is sought. Consequently, piecemeal information bounces around from inbox to inbox, delaying any action. If a single contact point within ATOC was established and well advertised, it would make it easy for event organisers to keep the rail industry informed. A standard pro forma could be used (as shown in the appendix).

Recommendation 4: Publish timetable amendments as close to T-12 as possible.

Train companies should do everything possible to publish timetable amendments related to special events at T-12. If the full 12 weeks' notice is not possible, amendments should be made in passenger-facing journey planners as quickly as possible thereafter. The impact of inaccurate information on passengers is identical whether the cause is an event or engineering work. Train companies should work with Network Rail to ensure that processing post- T-12 amendments is given high priority within operational planning.

3 Contingency planning

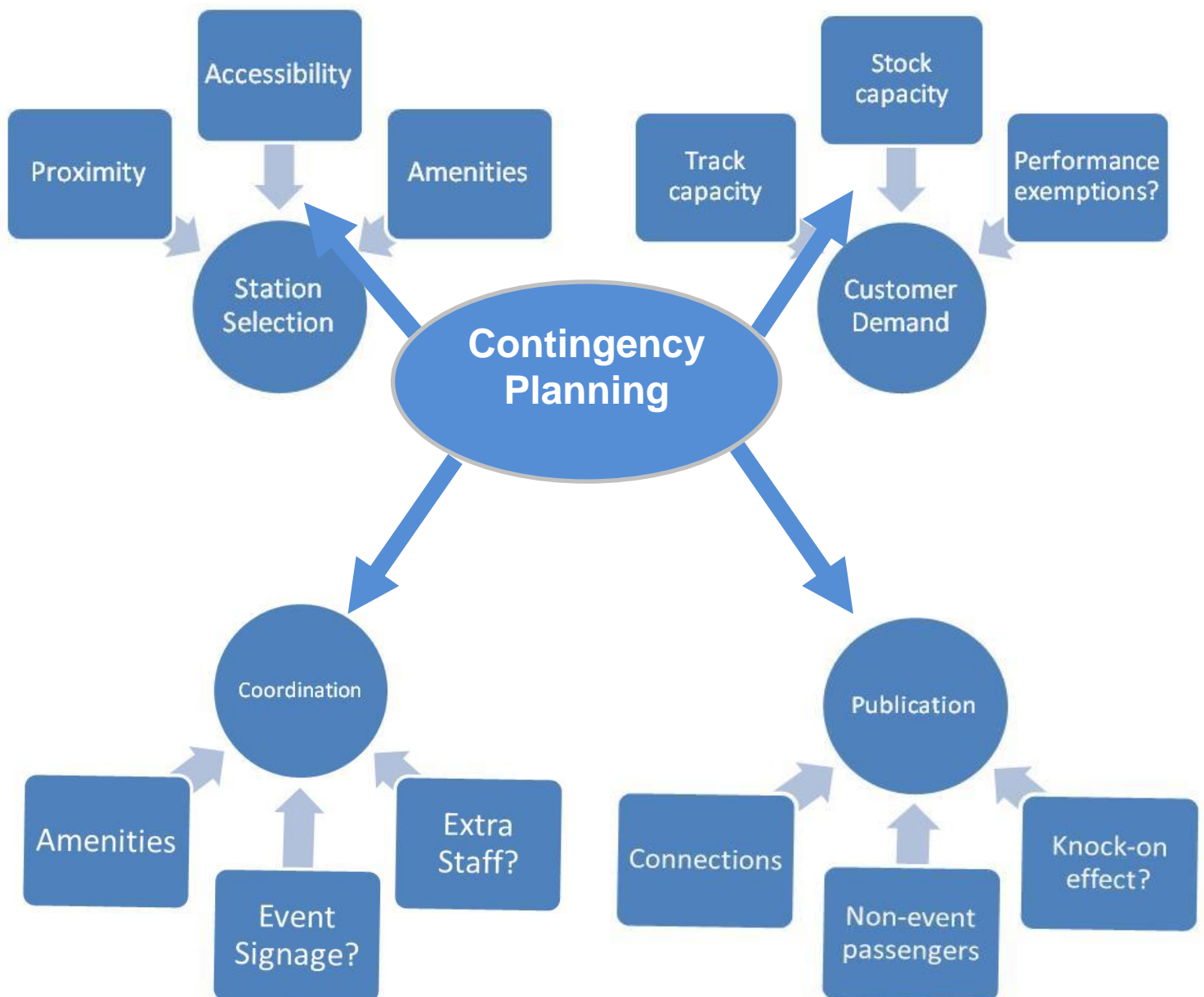
The timescale to prepare short-term timetable changes often includes activities that could be completed in advance. This is known as contingency planning. For example, train companies have expressed the difficulties associated with football 'play-off' matches and cup finals, which by their very nature are arranged with little notice time. However, the range of teams in contention for the match may be known further ahead, and thus train companies should carry out as much advance planning as possible.

Recommendation 5: Balance the customer demand with the need to comply with performance targets. The potential impact of events on track capacity and performance need to be assessed as regularly as possible. This will make a trade-off possible between moving people from A to B and absolute compliance with the performance regime. For example, certain trains could be exempted, so that they can run at a different time (e.g. late) if necessary. Train companies also need to consider whether large or additional trains would be (or are) required in order to cope with projected demand, with associated performance loss.

Recommendation 6: Ensure that the increased or altered service runs to a station that has appropriate facilities, access and interchange information. This will not necessarily be the nearest station to the venue. Include local amenities in your assessment such as pubs or coffee shops. These may be capable of providing facilities not available at the station, such as food, drink and toilets. Special attention should be given to accessibility arrangements, particularly if the station closest to an event has no (or limited) step-free access. Consider using temporary entrances or if minor works would permanently enable step-free access.

Recommendation 7: Ensure that any knock-on timetable changes are well publicised and 'last-train' opportunities are protected. Knock-on timetable changes due to special events (e.g. Glastonbury) should be well publicised particularly if this information was not in the public domain at T-12. The revised train plan should ensure that existing journey opportunities remain viable, including how the revised service marries up with other operators' services. This is especially important where last trains are concerned. Where 'reservable' trains are materially amended after reservations have opened, operators should use their retailing records to contact affected passengers. Connections should not be severed, especially later in the day where last trains are concerned. Those connections might be operated by a different TOC. However, other passengers (not attending the event) should be considered. Some may have already made their enquiries before such late-notice change occurs. Their needs should not be overlooked. They should be given as much warning as can reasonably be provided that their service will be affected.

Recommendation 8: Create a station coordination plan. This should include a plan to provide for the expected extra customers. Measures as simple as a member of staff to direct passengers from the station to the venue can greatly enhance the overall journey experience. Local amenities may be able to stay open later than normal. Temporary signage may be required, especially when additional disruptions come into consideration e.g. car park closure / road closure / subsidiary events.



4 Communication

Communication with all stakeholders is a crucial aspect of good practice. Have you considered all available channels? A good communication strategy does not rely too heavily on any one particular mode.

Recommendation 9: Use all available channels to communicate travel information. Printing leaflets at short notice may not be possible in the time available or be cost-efficient. Electronic communication via the event organisers may be the most effective method, highlighting the importance of building stakeholder relationships. Social media is a further option – is there an event Facebook you could write on, or could you use Twitter?

Recommendation 10: Engage with other train companies, Transport for London, Passenger Transport Executives and other service operators about special events and any likely effects on interchange and connectional arrangements, or where a greater number of people than normal might be expected to change trains.

Recommendation 11: Communicate revised ticketing arrangements (if any) with passengers and with TOC retail / revenue-protection staff any special arrangements for ticketing prior to the event to ensure that misunderstandings are kept to a minimum and that passengers are able to purchase and use the correct ticket for their journey.

Recommendation 12: After the event, review what worked well and how you would handle matters differently another time. Over time, build up considerable knowledge of what does and what does not work.

Recommendation 13: Consult with transportation experts for further advice. Transport watchdogs such as London TravelWatch and Passenger Focus will provide train companies with as much advice as possible in relation to passenger issues surrounding events.

5 Appendix: Example event pro forma

Wembley Stadium Major Event Outline Planning Specification

Week No / Date:	08 / Saturday 18 May 2013
Event:	League 2 Play Off Final
Teams:	>
Start Time:	13:30
Finish Time:	15:20
Delayed Finish Time:	Up to 16:20
Expected Event Attendance:	40,000 Max
Expected Chiltern Demand :	1,500 London / 1,500 North

Expected Traffic Profile:	
From (and back to) Marylebone:	Light
From (and back to) outer-London stations (NLT - SRU - WRU - DNM):	Light
From (and back to) Heartlands stations (GER - BCF - HWY - PRR - HDM - BCS) :	Light
From (and back to) West Midlands stations (BAN - LMS - WRW - WRP - DDG - SOL - BMO - BSW):	Light
From (and back to) other station/s: (N/A)	N/A

Peak WCX Arrival Period (Forward Traffic):	11:30 to 13:00
Peak WCX Departure Period (Return Traffic):	15:15 to 17:45

Charter Train Requirements:	Times:	Unit/s:
Birmingham to Wembley:	Nil	Nil

Wembley to Birmingham:	Nil	Nil
Marylebone to Wembley:	Nil	Nil
Wembley to Marylebone:	Nil	Nil

Other Notes:
Nil