



## LONDON OVERGROUND BARKING – GOSPEL OAK LINE CLOSURES FOR ELECTRIFICATION WORKS - PASSENGER CONCERNS UPDATE – AUGUST 2016

This update follows on from previous papers regarding:

- Passenger concerns during the closure of the line including replacement bus provision and fares protection for passengers having to use alternative routes during the closure (see <http://tinyurl.com/jhxc5y> & <http://tinyurl.com/z576duk>)
- The urgent case for provision of 4-car trains from June 2017 (<http://tinyurl.com/zbxym54>)

In reply to several questions asked by Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Hackney, Islington & Waltham Forest) on 20 July, the Mayor replied:

*As of 6 June, we had identified 1,247 regular users of the line defined as those using the service three times per week in each of the preceding eight weeks.*

*Following your meeting with the Deputy Mayor for Transport, TfL has now changed the definition of a regular user to someone making five or more non-Zone 1 trips over the eight week period before the closure began.*

*This should mean a far greater number of customers will receive automated refunds and will minimise the need for anyone have to claim a refund. Any customer who contacts us for a refund will be added to the list of regular users, meaning they will then receive refunds for the duration of the closure.*

**BGORUG sincerely thanks Jennette Arnold for asking these questions and the Deputy Mayor for Transport, Val Shawcross CBE for her assistance in broadening TfL's definition of a regular user of the Barking – Gospel Oak rail service. However, only regular users who choose to travel via the central area Zone 1 will benefit from this change. As the Barking – Gospel Oak rail line does not enter Zone 1, many passengers are using alternative routes which are wholly within Zones 2-4. At present, these passengers have no protection if they use Oyster or contactless pay-as-you-go and their new fare is higher than their normal rail fare.**

### **Definition of regular user of the Barking – Gospel Oak rail service**

BGORUG's original proposal (see our paper dated 20 March <http://tinyurl.com/jhxc5y>) was to provide fares protection for anyone who had made a journey on BGO within four weeks prior to a specified date.

TfL's initial definition was for anyone who had travelled three days every week since the start of April and continued to use the same Oyster or contactless card. This meant that if one had a holiday or been off sick, only just started a job, worked just one or two days per week, or changed one's card for whatever reason - they got no protection (see our update paper of 26 May <http://tinyurl.com/z576duk>).

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TfL's new definition, following representations on our behalf by Jennette Arnold to Val Shawcross (see replies to Mayor's Questions 2016/2557, 2016/2558, 2016/2559 & 2016/2560 of 20 July) is someone making five or more non-Zone 1 trips over the eight week period before the closure began. This new definition resolves most of the issues on this point which we identified, so therefore represents substantial progress.

There remains one point which it does not resolve, namely where a passenger changes their Oyster or contactless card. BGORUG suggests that TfL should contact all holders of cards which qualify under the new definition and advise them that if they change their card they must contact the Oyster helpline to arrange for their fares protection to be transferred to their new card. Also, when publicity is issued for the forthcoming complete line closure in September, this advice - and the new definition of regular user (with appropriate new start date) - should be included. At the time of writing, TfL have still not updated the relevant page on their website.

### **Fares protection for those NOT travelling via Zone 1**

What has not yet been addressed is the question of fares protection for regular users who do not now travel via Zone 1 (i.e. who remain within Zones 2 - 4), but who use a combination of other TfL and / or National Rail services that results in them paying more than their previous fares (see our update paper of 26 May <http://tinyurl.com/z576duk>). BGORUG has calculated a common extra cost of **£15** for someone travelling five days per week - which could be **£510** over the whole of the closures.

The details of the answers to Mayor's Questions 2016/2557 - 2016/2560 indicate that there are potentially many passengers who fall into this category. The answer states that on the old definition of regular user there were 1,247 passengers using Oyster or contactless pay-as-you-go who potentially qualified for refunds. Of these, up to 4 July 559 had actually qualified - i.e. had travelled via Zone 1. This leaves 688 who had not gone via Zone 1, i.e. 55%.

We do not know how many of these 688 are now travelling in ways which result in them paying more than before the Barking - South Tottenham closure. However given the shortcomings of the Rail Replacement Buses - long (and unpredictable) journey times, low frequencies at certain times, stops which are a long distance from some stations, and the gap between Walthamstow and South Tottenham - a considerable proportion of them might be affected. The new definition of regular user will increase the number, as will the extension of the weekday closure to the South Tottenham - Gospel Oak section in September. This is therefore an important issue which must continue to be pressed.

### **TfL's decision making process**

Whilst welcoming TfL's change of stance regarding the definition of regular user, BGORUG suggest that at some stage there should be an investigation of the process by which TfL came to make such a manifestly unfair and unreasonable initial definition, why they failed to change their stance when BGORUG made numerous representations to their Stakeholder Communications Manager, and why they only eventually did so when pressed by senior London politicians.

**12<sup>th</sup> August 2016**