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Coronavirus, transport and transport users – an update

As you have a further session with the Secretary of State on coronavirus, I thought it would be helpful to update you on what Transport Focus and London Travelwatch have been doing since your last evidence session with him. Both organisations have continued to engage with key stakeholders across the country, including Transport for London, Transport for Wales, Transport Scotland and the English regions. Here is a flavour of this and also copies of some of the blogs and statements issued.

Bus package (statement attached)

We welcome the Government's package for bus companies (outside London) announced on 3 April. We know that the bus service is valued by many with our latest Bus Passenger Survey of around 44,000 passengers showing an 89 per cent satisfaction rate, with around half of those taking part saying that they had no other easy access to transport. It will be vital for many people that there is a viable industry when the virus crisis is over. The package is an important element in helping the industry to have an economically sustainable future.

Rail – ticket refunds (blog attached)

We very much welcomed the announcement at the end of last month that those with Advance tickets will now get refunds.

Season ticket holders can seek a refund on the unused portion of their tickets. However, we believe there is a more the railway can do to provide clarity and ensure consistency across the country. We have called on the rail industry to make the following crystal clear to passengers:

- That claims will be backdated to a 17 March 'hand in' date (the day after Government said 'stay at home') and not the date they are received by the train company or retailer
- That passengers do not have to physically go to their station to hand in their ticket
- That the amount to be refunded will not be affected by how quickly claims are processed

We would also like the £10 admin fee for processing season ticket refunds to be waived in England, as has already happened in Scotland and Wales.

Highways England's roads (blog attached)

Roads are still being used, but less. It is right that people should remain at home as much as possible. It is therefore welcome that measures are being taken to prevent drivers from venturing out such as extending the MOT deadlines for people.

But there will be drivers on the network delivering essential supplies for the NHS and also food around the country. With the period that drivers can drive having been increased to 11 hours, having rest and sustenance, as well as access to fuel, are even more important. Road users on essential journeys need good information about which motorway services stations are open and. We wrote to Highways England to urge them to provide this information to users and they are now displaying details on their website <http://www.trafficengland.com/motorway-service-areas>

Transport users with disabilities (blog attached)

Those with disabilities need certainty about the services that are available and confidence that any assistance requested will be provided. The needs of staff must not be forgotten. They are working in very challenging circumstances and they also need very clear guidance about how to help people travel while staying safe.

Transport Focus's Transport User Panel

Transport Focus is conducting a survey designed to capture the experience of those who still have to travel and, for those not travelling, to better understand the experience of refunding season tickets. This is still ongoing - we will send a copy of the results once collated.

Anthony Smith
Chief executive