

Anthony Smith
cc John Larkinson (ORR)

Dear Anthony

Friday 31 July 2020

Ref: Informed Traveller T-12

Thank you for your letter of 10 July 2020 entitled 'Informed Traveller T-12'. I am responding on behalf of the letter recipients, Paul McMahon and Paul Plummer.

I am going to tackle each of your queries in turn and I will update you on the current progress of the recovery plan for 'T-12' and any applicable timescales we have met or need to meet in the future allied with any risks in meeting that.

To be clear at the outset, without a stable base plan it is not possible to plan Informed Traveller, the current need is flexibility within our approach to the timetable, and it is only now, with a degree of stability, that we are able to start setting the foundations of a plan for timetable change for the next twelve months. This has been part of a wider industry debate facilitated by the Industry Timetable Assurance Programme Management Office Steering Group (ITAPMOSG) focused on identifying the best strategy for timetable change from December 2020 and beyond.

The political and industry challenge to build the timetable back better creates significant challenges to providing prior information to passengers and it is likely to take time to recover T-12.

It would be remiss of me not to include a reference to the amount of detailed work that has been and is being carried out by planning communities across the rail industry during the pandemic, to respond to the needs of the nation. Unfortunately working this quickly and flexibly does impact on the delivery of Informed Traveller timescales as you have correctly pointed out within your letter, but I believe this is the right priority for the environment we are in.

Monday 6 July 2020 saw a further uplift in timetabled services in England & Wales; and we are now providing 83% of the 'normal' service level, and 85% of peak capacity. Performance has been strong during the pandemic and this excellent performance is, again, testament to the work delivered by everyone involved in planning the timetable change at such short notice.

We are now working towards further uplifts in services for Monday 7 September and Monday 14 September 2020, and in so doing this adds greater pressure to the delivery of T-12. Whilst alterations are constantly being made to the base plan it impacts the amount of time that can be provided for advance booking services to customers. Nonetheless, and despite significant pressures on the planning community we are creating a clear plan for T-12 restoration, and we will continue to work on delivering this as outlined below which matches your request for visibility of a robust and integrated plan to achieve this.

Fares structure and monitoring

Advance purchase fares, by virtue of being tied to a specific train service can be very closely matched to expected demand for that service, with prices being adjusted to suit not just the time of day but the day of the week, time of year and any special events.

Ensuring customers get the information they want, when and how they want it, is the vision at the heart of our customer information strategy. As part of our strategy and to drive improvement and consistency, we identified the need to improve our monitoring of key metrics that fundamentally influence our customers perception of how well we provide information. To that end, within the information improvement plan that RDG submitted to the ORR, it has committed to a Customer Information Measurement tool and we are working with consultants to run a pilot with three operators. In the interim, RDG have recently been in discussion with the ORR and Transport Focus about enhancing the weekly quality and consistency checks that the NRCC have been doing during COVID. We are currently reviewing the areas we monitor with Transport Focus and the ORR, and therefore there is an opportunity to include this area within that weekly check.

Booking horizons

On their websites each operator clearly maps out at what point (journey – x weeks) customers can make a reservation for their services, and/or documents where T-12 is not applicable to the operator e.g. c2c and Northern.

Customer demand quantified

Demand is currently (during COVID) tracking at around 80-90% below last year. Advance tickets are tracking at roughly the same rate across the industry, but long distance advance journeys now represent 40% of all journeys made, up from 30% last year. Across the industry as a whole this is much smaller, at an unchanged proportion of 5% of all journeys as LSE and regional TOCs don't have as many advance ticket types or such a big price difference as the long distance sector.

To benchmark this, pre COVID, demand tracked very differently. In 2019, we saw an average of 449,000 tickets sold for a single week of travel more than 4 weeks out – this represented around 5% of all sales, with most tickets purchased on the day of travel. However, when reviewing the sales of advance tickets only, for tickets sold in 2019, we saw on average of 359,000 tickets sold for a single week of travel more than four weeks out – a much higher share of all advance sales at around 26%.

Despite low demand we still recognise the need for passengers to have choice and to have normal levels of access to advanced fares. Therefore, it is very important for us to attain T-12 as expeditiously as possible and regardless of the levels of demand we are seeing, delivering as much choice for passengers and putting passengers first remains at the forefront of our thinking.

T-12 – robust and integrated plan for recovery

As alluded to above, changing the timetable in December 2020 will impact T-12 and as a consequence a customer's ability to purchase tickets in advance. By having fewer changes the more stable the plan becomes and this facilitates the ability to provide reliable information to customers.

The introduction of a stable plan with all operators working off the same base in December 2020 is positive, but the ability of all operators to achieve the previously bid December 2020 base represents a challenge. Given the challenges faced around achieving a stable plan for December 2020 the problem identified is potentially mirrored in subsequent timetables with May 2021 and beyond representing a risk which we have considered when factoring in the recovery to T-12 in the table below.

Nonetheless, a recovery plan for Informed Traveller has been drafted and is currently in discussions across the industry. The high-level timescales have recently been passed through ITAPMOSG and will be taken through Operational Planning Practitioners Group for agreement. We expect the plan to be finalised by Friday 7 August 2020. We are currently at a varying position of 'T- compliance' with Informed Traveller currently paused and we are yet to agree further timetables, but the table below shows a current roadmap for achieving full T-12 compliance. This is currently draft and may be subject to change.

Planning Month	Offer	Publication	Timetable operates
November / December 2020	TW-4	TW-3	December 2020
January / February 2021	TW-6 / TW-5	TW-4 / TW-3	January / February 2021
February / March 2021	TW-8 / TW-7	TW-6 / TW-5	March / April 2021
March / April 2021	TW-10 / TW-8	TW-8 / TW-6	May / June 2021
May / June 2021	TW-8 / TW-7	TW-6 / TW-5	June / July 2021
July / August 2021	TW-10 / TW-9	TW-8 / TW-7	August / September 2021
August / September 2021	TW-11 / TW-10	TW-9 / TW-8	October / November 2021
September / October 2021	TW-12 / TW-11	TW-10 / TW-9	November / December 2021
October / November 2021	TW-13 / TW-14	TW-11 / TW-12	January 2022

In addition to this the industry is looking to provide as much advance booking opportunity as possible for key travel times e.g. Christmas/Easter and for these times we are working to give customers as near as possible to T-12 as we can achieve. It should also be noted that a Long Distance Operator (LNER) and the System Operator are challenging themselves to find new and novel solutions to this planning shortfall to allow as many customers as possible to plan their travel in advance.

At present the industry is balancing three priorities of; flexibility to respond to customer demand, maintaining the improved performance of our service and providing as much notice to book services as possible. All of these areas are important to customers. At present the desire to book in advance is reduced, use of our services are increasing but still low compared to typical demand and so it would seem appropriate to take this opportunity to focus on improving the performance of our services so they are reliable for when our customers return. This approach is aligned with the feedback from Transport Focus' latest passenger survey which shows that the top priority for passengers is improvement with reliability and punctuality.

I realise this response doesn't immediately provide you with all of the detail you are looking for, but as you can see in the milestone plan above we are committed to working up dates which will give assurances around T-12 compliance in the final T-12 recovery plan. System

Operator will commit to providing you and the ORR with the details of the recovery plan post full industry agreement. Post sharing of the T-12 recovery plan with you we will also provide regular updates of the progress we are making in achieving full T-12 compliance and we very much welcome a two way dialogue with Transport Focus as we make progress in achieving this.

Your sincerely



Susie Homan

Director, Planning, Engineering, Operations

Rail Delivery Group