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Dear Jac

**Smarter Information Smarter Journeys, work package 1, priority 1:  
'business rules' in the event that the timetable changes after purchase**

Transport Focus is proud of its part in championing the need for, and helping the Smarter Information Smarter Journeys (SISJ) team deliver, the system that triggers an email alert to passengers with tickets on a train that is cancelled or amended after purchase. It has been a great example of collaboration between Transport Focus, RDG, Network Rail, train operators and ticket retailers.

However, I am writing to express concern that the industry seems to be backtracking on the 'business rules' that had been agreed would apply if the timetable changes after someone has bought a ticket. The principle that if the *railway* changes the timetable after purchase a *passenger* should not be charged more to make their journey is in danger of being lost.

The right to a refund was never in question: if the revised service doesn't meet your needs you can choose to have your money back as per National Rail Conditions of Travel (NRCoT). However, the proposition your team negotiated with train operators was that passengers would not be charged extra to make their journey, either on the original date using trains/replacement buses in the revised timetable or on a different date within a limited period before or after the original date. This was both principled, customer-friendly thinking (we're messing you about by changing the timetable, we're not charging you more as well) and a hard-nosed financial decision (not *forcing* people to have their money back which they could then spend with Ryanair/National Express or buy a tank of petrol instead).

As we understand it, that proposition has not been implemented and – while retailers are being encouraged to be reasonable – the underlying position is that passengers must ask for a refund and buy again against the revised timetable at whatever price tickets then are. I understand that there are two stumbling blocks. First, reticence about extending passenger entitlement beyond the NRCoT minimum, however reasonable and commercially sensible it would be. Second, funding to make one off changes to retailers' systems to facilitate it (apparently, LNER is the only operator currently equipped to do it).

Whatever the blockers, we feel strongly that in a situation where the railway is changing the timetable after a passenger has bought a ticket in good faith, the railway should allow the passenger to still make that journey at no extra charge – within reasonable parameters. Simply refunding people and asking them to pay again at a potentially higher price is not reasonable. If the railway wants to exploit the commercial opportunity of selling tickets further ahead than traditionally, it must surely accept that if it changes the timetable later it cannot expect passengers to pay more?

While I am aware that the SISJ team understands the importance Transport Focus attaches to implementing the ‘business rules’ as envisaged, I should be grateful for broader RDG support to land this in the right place for passengers – and for the industry.

I look forward to hearing from you. Of course, very happy to discuss.

Yours sincerely



**Guy Dangerfield**  
**Head of Strategy**