Transport Focus's role in assessing major changes to ticket office opening hours

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Transport Focus has a formal role in assessing major changes to ticket office opening hours. If a train company wishes to make such a change it must follow the process set out in a document called the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement (TSA)[1].

Under clause 6-18 (1) of the TSA, changes to opening hours may be made under the major change procedure if:

- the change would represent an improvement on current arrangements in terms of quality of service and/or cost effectiveness and
- members of the public would continue to enjoy widespread and easy access to the purchase of rail products, notwithstanding the change.

An operator wishing to make a major change must display details of the proposed change at affected stations and invite people to make representations to Transport Focus (or London TravelWatch for stations in the wider London area). The TSA specifies a 21-day consultation period.

Transport Focus and London TravelWatch may object to a proposal on the grounds that the change does not meet one or both of the criteria above. If we object, the train company can either withdraw their proposal or refer it to the Secretary of State for a decision. The Department for Transport has published guidance setting out the approach the Secretary of State would take in these circumstances.

- **[1] Rail Delivery Group. Ticketing and Settlement Agreement. (1995). Available at: https://www.raildeliverygroup.com/our-services/fares-and-ticketing/rdg-accreditation/ticketing-settlement.html**

We believe it is important that there is as much transparency as possible surrounding the process and Transport Focus's role within it. To that end this note sets out the broad criteria Transport Focus will use to assess any proposals received. Any proposal must set out how these passenger expectations will be met in future were the proposal to go ahead.

- ***Passengers can easily buy the right ticket for the journey they want to make.*** This will include the product range available at the station, what support is available to advise/help with a purchase and access for people who need to use cash or do not have a smartphone.

- ***Passengers requiring assistance to travel receive that assistance in a timely and reliable manner.*** This will include arrangements for providing booked assistance (using the Passenger Assist process), assistance provided on a 'turn-up-and-go' basis, the support available when buying a ticket and the ease of requesting assistance.

- ***Passengers can get the information they require to plan and make a journey, including during periods of disruption.*** This will include the information channels available at the station and the support available to help passengers who need assistance.

- ***Passengers feel safe at a station.*** This will include perceptions of personal security and how train companies will provide reassurance for passengers wanting to travel.

- ***Passengers are not penalised if they cannot buy the ticket they require from the station and so board a train without a ticket.*** This will include arrangements for issuing tickets available at a ticket office but not at a ticket vending machine (TVM) and for amending revenue protection arrangements, including the issue of Penalty Fares and prosecution notices.

- ***Passengers can continue to use facilities at a station.*** This will include access to facilities such as waiting rooms, toilets, lifts and car parking.

These are intended to give an outline of the broad areas that will be considered. Transport Focus will focus its assessment on the impact of the proposals on passengers and whether, in accordance with the terms of the TSA, they represent 'an improvement on current arrangements in terms of quality of service'.

It is important to acknowledge that the presence of staff at a station plays a key role in the railway meeting passengers' expectations in many of these areas so station staffing will be a key consideration in our assessment. We will also take into account any specific circumstances surrounding a station as well as issues raised by members of the public during the public consultation stage.

When we have completed our analysis of the proposals and the comments received from members of the public, we will publish our response. This will include an overview of the number of representations we have received and the main issues raised in the consultation.

Transport Focus March 2026