

Vernon Everitt
Managing Director of Customers, Communication & Technology
Transport for London
(sent via email)

18 March 2021

Dear Vernon,

TfL's changing position on the option to use cash at ticket vending machines

I'm writing to you to express my concern that TfL are back-tracking on their commitment to reinstate the option to pay by cash at the stations where it was removed at the start of the pandemic. And furthermore, that your reassurance to me when we met on 12th February, that there is no proposition to change to all-cashless at the moment, is being contradicted by your colleagues.

When we met, I reported to you that I had heard your colleague Alex Williams tell a Transport Committee Investigation on 11th February that the option to remove cash at all stations was still under consideration. You told me that I was mistaken, but I've now got an official transcript of that Assembly session, which would have been approved by Alex, which quotes him as saying:

"When we come out of the pandemic, clearly there has to be a debate about the extent to which we go down the trajectory of more cashless or whether you have some cash in there as well. Where we are now, in a pandemic, retail, transport, everything is moving to cashless, which is entirely appropriate. When we come out of it, there is a debate for us to have with TravelWatch and other stakeholders about whether some of that returns."

The letter that we received from Andy Byford on 12th February on this issue did not cause us any immediate concern and when Andy was questioned at the Transport Committee on 8th March, he said nothing to contradict what you told us.

Asked by Assembly Member Caroline Pidgeon when cash would be reinstated he said: "we're not expanding that any further but those stations that don't currently handle cash will continue to not handle cash. As the lockdown lifts it's something that we'll look to update" and later, "We've got that under review. We haven't planned to not bring it back. But I don't want to say when because this is such a moving feast."

But when I met with Heidi Alexander last week, on 10th March, she told me for the first time, about a piece of research that TfL are conducting through an independent agency into who would be affected by a move to cashless, to identify any potential mitigations, or if TfL will need to keep cash in some form. I expressed concern that the 'story' on the return of cash seemed to be changing, and my concern was reinforced by an email that I got from Sam Gould the following day after which I expressed a concern to Sam that it sounded as if this research was being used to justify a new decision not to reinstate cash at all of the stations where it's been removed.

My worst fears were confirmed when I met Andy Lord on 12th March and he said that TfL were doing a further consultation with a third party (referring to the research project) to find out “what is the feedback and engagement around the potential to use cash on the network” and that TfL want to do the research before they decide to either reinstate cash or rollout further removal of the cash option from other stations.

Having just listened to Mayor’s Question Time this morning, the Mayor’s response to a question on this issue was also less than reassuring.

I hope you’ll be able to see why I’m developing a sense of unease, both about whether there is an intention to reinstate cash at the stations where it’s been withdrawn, and whether, contrary to your reassurance on 12th February, there is in fact a plan to explore extending the removal of the option to pay by cash, to more stations.

I’d be grateful if you could give me TfL’s latest position on these two matters.

Yours,



Emma Gibson
Director, London TravelWatch