

10 September 2013

LETTERS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**1. SUMMARY OF ISSUES**

- 1.1. Two letters have been received from members of the public since the last meeting of the Committee. The first of these relates to the behaviour of passengers on the tram who refuse to give up their seats for the elderly and criticises the response that has been provided by conductors. The second correspondent praises the behaviour of conductors when dealing with confrontational incidents and expresses concern about their proposed withdrawal from the system.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1. The views of the Committee are sought.

3. CORRESPONDENT A

- 3.1. Correspondent A, who is 59 years old and regularly travels between the city centre and Hucknall, describes her experiences on two particular occasions when she was unable to find a seat on the tram (see Appendix A). On the first occasion, a boy of under 5 years refused to vacate his seat when requested both by the correspondent and by the conductor. The parent who was with the child took no action to assist. On the second occasion, children and middle-aged people were occupying the disabled seats whilst elderly people were required to stand. The correspondent claims that such incidents occur on most days when she travels.
- 3.2. The correspondent believes that the conductors should be more forceful in requesting that passengers give up their seats in such circumstances and that parents should be asked to sit young children on their knees when no alternative seats are available. She is unhappy with the response that she received when she telephoned the NET customer helpline to complain.
- 3.3. Tramlink Nottingham have clarified that the issues raised by the correspondent with respect to the behaviour of passengers on the tram are regulated by both the NET Byelaws and Conditions of Carriage. Nottingham Trams, who operate NET on behalf of Tramlink Nottingham, are reviewing their staff training to ensure that front line staff on trams and in customer services are aware of these regulations and customer services teams have now been briefed accordingly. Tramlink state however that it is a matter for the staff on the spot to manage situations as they deem appropriate with regards to the interests and safety of all of the passengers.

4. CORRESPONDENT B

- 4.1. Correspondent B, who is also a regular tram user, is supportive of NET and the plans for expansion of the system (see Appendix B). He describes an incident when a passenger was racially abusive to another passenger and praises the way in which the conductor dealt with the incident by diffusing the situation and ensuring that the abusive passenger left the tram.
- 4.2. The correspondent states however that he is disheartened to learn that on-board conductors will be withdrawn later this year. He considers that conductors provide a friendly, convenient and familiar experience which will be lost when they are replaced by ticket inspectors and he hopes that the decision will be reconsidered and reversed.
- 4.3. Nottingham Trams has responded to the correspondent (also at Appendix B) by explaining that the convenience, safety and security of passengers was given full consideration when the decision to move to off-tram ticketing was taken and that the lessons learned from other tram systems across Europe and in the UK which operate on a driver-only basis have been observed and learned from. The drivers, who can be contacted by passengers via the emergency help points, will be trained in responding to incidents, and, in the case of personal safety issues, can communicate with the control centre which has a direct link to the police. Nottingham Trams has assured the correspondent that safety is their principle concern and that they will do all they can to make customers feel safe and secure under the new ticketing arrangements.

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APPENDIX A

Dear Sir / Madam

Regarding my lovely experiences, travelling to work on your Net work the train.

Firstly on 7/6/13 after working in Notts standing on my feet for 5 hrs at 59 years of age. I boarded the train at the Royal, where I ended up standing up all the way to Hucknall, because a little boy under 5 years old was sitting on a seat, I approached the child by asking nicely for a seat, boy replied NO in front of the irresponsible mother, I then approached the conductor, he asked the little boy to move, he replied NO, that was the end of it, so I've paid my fare, and I'm expected to stand, whilst the child has gone free. The conductor should have asked the Mother, to seat her boy on her knee. This is unacceptable, also the boy kept getting up, and making himself a nuisance, conductor said nothing, where does Health & Safety come in, especially if he had fell over and broke his leg?

2nd on 9/6/13 approx 4.30, 3 children again on the train, where sitting in disabled seats, also a middle age couple were sitting in disabled, who were not disabled caused a row, Most of the pensioners were standing up, but still the couple sat there in the seats. A 92 year old man stood up, again another conductor said nothing. Does this seem right to you?

When complaining on your help line 10/6/13 @ 9 am the lady who answered didn't seem interested, defended the conductors and also the perpetrators not helpful, what so ever, saying its up to every ones discretion.

I thought the customer came first, no apology or anything so can you explain why she's getting paid for doing that job, it seems to me that she has no respect or morals neither. The Conductor his in charge of the train, to keep things in order

on a plane, staff, pilots ect take charge, on a plane young children sit on knees, when not paid.

They have to have some one to take charge.

A Notice should be put up on the train, Under 5 years must sit on parents knees, or you must inform the staff.

Also spoke to a young friend and she said the same and she said her fee a month as gone up to £48 saying some people travel with bags and brief cases on seats.

I am fuming about this, its no joy travelling on the train to work, this is happening mostly everyday not just twice!

Looking forward to hearing your comments

APPENDIX B

Dear Sirs,

Once, whilst taking a habitual tram journey, I witnessed a fellow passenger become racial abusive towards another. This was pure and unprovoked verbal venom. The female victim appeared shaken, but remained impassive. Unfazed and unfaltering, the tram conductor stepped in and at the very next tram stop ensured the vehicle remained stationary until the abusive passenger disembarked.

This was a relatively minor incident; indeed I'm sure that onboard conductors have capably coped with more significant events. Nevertheless, the memory has remained with me ever since. I don't know whether tram conductors are specially trained to handle such confrontational circumstances, or whether in this instance she acted out of civic duty. Either way, the tram conductor's actions ensured the situation was swiftly diffused and did not escalate into further aggression. The female passenger appeared grateful and relieved, and hopefully felt a more valued citizen; the very opposite of the intentions of the aggressor. It is unfortunate that this conductor remains anonymous to me, for, if her name was known to me, I would recommend she be recognised in some way for her heroic actions.

Tramlink Nottingham is rightly proud of the consistently high customer satisfaction levels achieved on its service, which, I believe, is amongst the highest across the UK light rail industry. Customer satisfaction is clearly influenced by factors such as cost, comfort, safety, frequency, efficiency and reliability. But I would say that the 'experience' of travelling onboard would also rate highly.

I'm disheartened, therefore, to learn that later this year we are set to see the installation of platform-side ticket machines and the withdrawal of onboard conductors. Having a tram conductor on board ensures an experience that is more akin to being a guest on their tram, rather than simply being another fare-paying passenger; it's friendly, it's convenient, it's familiar. With inspectors prowling the network, the experience is to be more one of a potential transgressor scrutinised and looked on with suspicion. I'm intentionally using emotive words here, and I must admit I am yet to have personal experience of

the inspection staff soon to be patrolling the network. But I believe these emotions to be relevant. The people of Nottingham are rightly proud of their tram network, and my belief is that the conductors with their ambassadorial role contribute significantly to this feeling. Will the removal of the conductors undermine this sense of pride? Only time will tell.

I remain fully supportive of NET, its refurbishment programme and expansion plans. My only hope is that the decision to replace the current system of onboard conductors with spot-checks from ticket inspectors is, in time, recognised as the mistake I believe it to be, reconsidered and reversed.

APPENDIX B

Dear

We are in receipt of your letter dated 19th July 2013

Thank you for your views, which we value. The decision to move to off-tram ticketing was taken after full consideration of passengers, convenience, safety and security. We have observed and learned from the many tram systems across Europe which operate on a driver only basis and use a system of off tram ticketing, as well as Croydon Tramlink, Manchester Metrolink in the UK and the Luas system in Dublin which all operate on a similar basis.

On every tram there is an emergency help point which connects directly to the driver who is trained in the necessary procedures to react accordingly. In case of personal safety issues the driver is in radio communication with our control centre which has a direct link to the police and a call can be placed for emergency assistance when necessary.

There will be roving ticket inspectors who will board trams on a random basis throughout the day added to which we are committed to a roving security presence on the tram system from the early evening through to end of service.

Let me assure you that passenger safety is our principle concern and we will do all we can to make our customers feel safe and secure under the new ticketing arrangements.

Your comments have been logged on our database and I can confirm that they will be viewed by our senior management team.

Thank you for being a valued customer.

Yours sincerely
