Case Study:
Travel Demand Management

Providing customers with integrated information and advice

Recommendations for future projects to improve the joined-up marketing and communications

Network Rail, Transport for London (TfL) and other transport operators were committed to capturing the lessons of the London 2012 Olympic Games, including providing customers with integrated information and advice. Network Rail and TfL made a commitment to an ongoing programme of Travel Demand Management (TDM) around major ‘disruption’ events and capacity pinch points. Applying the Games-time TDM principles to the Thameslink Programme, specifically the changes impacting London Bridge station, and to integrate the transport industry’s response to the programme through consistent communications was essential.

At the start, time was taken to agree the;

- scope and objectives of the London Bridge TDM campaign and the approach of using the partner’s channels to distribute tailored messaging.
- governance structure for communications, including the responsibility of Network Rail to coordinate the story of the impacts of the London Bridge upgrade and to work with the communications teams of other partners to ensure messages were delivered.
- the channels that information was to be distributed through - in most cases it was anticipated that the operator’s channels would be sufficient and that they would be accountable for delivering the message to their users.
- sharing of data and analysis to help inform the understanding of customers who were using London Bridge and to help inform them of the travel advice required.

Background

During the London 2012 Games, travel demand was managed in an integrated way in response to identified hotspots. There was one goal and passengers, freight companies and businesses benefitted from the single message and the consistent customer advice that was aligned with operational requirements.

The integrated Games-time effort enabled record numbers of passengers to be carried, but also saw widespread behaviour change, enabling transport capacity to be used more efficiently. Critically it was demonstrated that marginal changes in individual behaviour, e.g. re-timing by short periods, could flatten and broaden peaks of demand to provide significant operational benefits.

As a result, political and other stakeholders saw a different industry, one that worked together and one that they liked. The customer response was also extremely positive, with numerous businesses and passengers commenting favourably on the quality of information and advice that they received. Organisations were keen that lessons learned from communicating at Games-time would be built into business as usual.

Building a Games legacy in regard to information at times of significant disruption was the challenge.

The transport industry had the opportunity to build on the Games experience by using forthcoming events and causes of disruption to demonstrate that the joined-up approach could work in other contexts and the industry could work collaboratively to deliver high quality customer information and advice.

Where were the opportunities?

The Thameslink Programme and it’s major changes at and around London Bridge station was due to involve transport users changing their behaviour (often changing transport mode), as a result of predictable disruption/ planned changes. The arrangements at the start of the programme seemed insufficient to provide customers with the sort of multi-modal and multi-operator advice that they enjoyed during the Games.
The recommendation was that the partner agencies committed to act in collaboration to provide joined up responses to changes.

The industry partners made a commitment to an ongoing programme of TDM around major disruption events and capacity pinch points. Specific projects included the Bank Station upgrade, peak crowding on the Northern Line, annual cycle events, potential recommendations arising from a review of strategic road management and the presentation to customers of information about regular hotspots. The aim was to integrate the rail industry’s response to this process, leading to scales of efficiency and more consistent programmes of communications.

It was recognised that in the London context, many customers would use multiple operators and modes to complete many of their trips. There was a reputational benefit to the city and the transport industry in providing as integrated-a-set of customer information as possible to the benefit of customers and businesses.

**Communicating at London Bridge**

The first instance where this was implemented was at London Bridge station where Network Rail began work on the major reconstruction in May 2013 (although there had been some more minor changes in advance). This was used as an opportunity to pilot the TDM approach.

During the five years of the upgrade project, customers required information that;

- was consistent, informative and delivered through all appropriate channels;
- recognised the wider impacts of some of these events (e.g. wider network improvement work that would impact passengers and the Northern Line upgrade work);
- provided advice on the available travel options across all modes and the benefits and dis-benefits of each; and
- was delivered in good time for them to plan and react.

The objectives of the customer messaging were:

- To ensure that customers were fully informed, able to avoid the worst disruption and understood how to carry out their journeys effectively. In order to enable the London Bridge area to continue to be an attractive destination and place to do business throughout the period of the redevelopment, the metric for this would be that journey numbers should continue to grow in line with expectations or, at the very least, not decline.

- To ensure that wider consequences within the transport network were identified and communicated to customers (e.g. the effect on services at Victoria and Cannon Street of diverting trains from London Bridge or increasing the number of trains to those stations at certain times).

Relevant customer groups included:

- Rail passengers using London Bridge station;
- Passengers using services onto which rail passengers may divert;
- Local businesses, local attractions and their representatives;
- Businesses in key employment centres served by London Bridge, e.g. The City, West End and Canary Wharf;
- Road users affected by construction traffic/utility works;
- Pedestrians affected by changes to walking routes; and
- Bus passengers affected by diversions.

**Practical considerations**

Develop a core story for the key TDM areas to align the messages of all partners (e.g. Northern Line, London Bridge), and their impact on the wider network. The story focussed on the impact on passengers and what they were being asked to do, NOT what work was being done to the transport network.

Budget provision and how this would be financed. This included the requirement to conduct research to better understand the audience and recognition that the proposed approach would require media buying at key moments of disruption. Although this would ordinarily happen, it would not have been integrated or of the same scale.
TDM delivery team

A core TDM team, initially hosted by Transport for London and later driven by Depart for Transport and Network Rail was accountable for developing projects on behalf of the participating organisations. The role of the TDM team was to develop integrated communications plans for implementation by the delivery partners, supported by appropriate messaging, creative executions and collateral. Their scope included the TDM team defining processes for the exchange and promulgation of real-time information, as was done during the London 2012 Games.

The London Bridge project would be specified and funded in collaboration with delivery partners and subject to a transparent governance process (see below). The broad relationship of the TDM team to the affected delivery partners is illustrated in Fig 1, below.

The coordinating team would work with delivery partners to deploy the messaging using their own on and off-system channels. Delivery partners would retain editorial control over their own channels. It is possible that some paid channels will also be required in some circumstances. The scope of activity by the TDM team would encompass:

- All modes affected by disruption, on both highway and public transport networks
- Relevant geographies e.g. with regard to Network Rail’s London Bridge station upgrade, while the centre of disruption was London Bridge, the requirement for customer communication would include all significantly affected geographies, e.g. East Sussex, Kent etc. This replicated the London 2012 situation where TfL had taken responsibility for TDM communications on routes outside London, in affected communities such as Eton Dorney and Weymouth and Portland.

Governance

Collaborative, multi-operator projects were subject to a programme board that agreed strategy, messaging and provided assurance on behalf of the participating organisations and provided a forum for ensuring integration of messaging. The Board was initially convened and chaired by TFL but later by the Department for Transport and Network Rail.

Outputs (above) included a forecast of the impact of passenger flows as a result of TDM.
Membership was made up of the key participating organisations:

- Network Rail
- Department for Transport
- Association of Travel Operating Companies
- Southern Railway
- First Capital Connect
- Southeastern
- Highways Agency
- Transport for London

The board met monthly and a ‘Communications Group’ was set up to ensure that the communications teams of the affected organisations contributed to the project development and that non-operator delivery partners such as local Business Improvement Districts were engaged in developing and implementing the project.

**Example of initial draft comms – Southeastern Train Services**

**Date: January 2015 to August 2016**

**What is happening?**

Removal of Southeastern train platforms 4, 5 and 6 from service and all Southeastern services which are bound for Charing Cross will not call at London Bridge. Note the exact platform numbers and removal of during specific phases are to be confirmed.

**Customer impact**

Services via Deptford, Greenwich, Maze Hill, Westcombe Park, New Cross and St Johns will only operate to and from Cannon Street station.

Customers who currently travel to London Bridge to interchange for Charing Cross services will no longer be able to do so via train. Customers will also no longer be able to turn up and go on Southeastern services with an expectation that all destinations will be served (e.g. the service may only operate to/from Charing Cross).

Likely to see a greater number of passengers transferring to Underground services at London Bridge, Charing Cross and Cannon Street stations.

Likely that passengers who previously used the Jubilee Line and Northern Line from London Bridge will use the DLR to travel towards Canary Wharf and Bank for connecting services. London Underground and Docklands Light Railway stations such as Lewisham, Bank, London Bridge and Canary Wharf may be busier.

**Potential Customer Advice**

Customers are advised to check whether their services will call at London Bridge and adapt travel plans accordingly. Customers on Charing Cross bound services who previously interchanged at London Bridge will no longer be able to do so and should plan to use other Southeastern services. Travelling on services via Ebbsfleet to St. Pancras will avoid London Bridge and customers may find this a more suitable journey.

Customers should allow additional time, checking real time travel information, during period of bad weather or disruption on the rail network.

 Longer trains may be operating at platforms and customers are encouraged to use the full length of the train at London Bridge station.

1. **Key challenges**

- Integrating information regarding the different modes of travel
- Sharing potentially sensitive information between stakeholders
- Timing of communications
• Co-ordinating major engineering works on the overground, underground and highways alongside major events
• Understanding that although the focus is on London, many of the changes impact locations much further away
• Ensuring that all the forms of media had consistent and accurate messaging.

2. Recommendations for future projects

The following recommendations, based on the direct experiences of the Network Rail and the Train Operating Companies involved, will result in a more operationally focussed delivery of infrastructure changes:

• Take TDM seriously – hold regular meetings with senior representatives from each organisation
• Appoint one person as the ‘owner’ of the communications messages
• Request each organisation to promptly review material circulated for accuracy and comprehensiveness
• Plan early!
• Key messages and scripts to be agreed centrally and used for communications – ask parties to confirm all staff are briefed.

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Further information
For more information on this Learning Legacy case study please email contact@thameslinkprogramme.co.uk