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Cabinet Member – Transport, Environment and Regeneration
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Our Ref HUXTABLE/CD/CAB13203 (please quote when responding)
Date 21 March 2011

Passenger Focus
Freepost (RRE-ETTC-LEET)
PO Box 4257
Manchester
M60 3AR

Dear Sir/Madam

LONDON MIDLAND TRAINS - TICKET OFFICE PROPOSALS

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this consultation. I am making this response on behalf of Birmingham City Council as the Cabinet Member for Transport, Environment and Regeneration.

We note that London Midland Trains have made an application to Department for Transport (DfT) to vary the hours of operation of station ticket offices in the West Midlands and their franchise area from summer 2011. London Midland Trains currently operate thirty-five stations within or close to Birmingham's boundary and run local services from Birmingham to: Walsall; Lichfield; Coventry/Northampton; Dorridge/Stratford upon Avon; Redditch; Stourbridge/Worcester; and Wolverhampton /Shrewsbury.

Within the Centro area there is a requirement for ticket offices to be open from first to last trains of the day. This was included in Centro's requirements when they were signatories to the franchise which runs to 2015. We note that many of these stations will be affected by the proposals, with significant curtailments of ticket office opening hours as well as full ticket office closures at five stations within the City, these being: Adderley Park, Duddeston, Jewellery Quarter, Small Heath and Witton.

Although reference is made by London Midland to matching ticket office opening hours to demand, this is not substantiated by actual evidence of the demand profile throughout the day for each station nor how tickets are bought. Our main concerns are:

- Severe diminution in customer service – machines will not give advice on ticket types or train services and are occasionally out of use;
- Loss of waiting and toilet facilities at some stations, the former being heated;
- Loss of help to passengers who are mobility impaired – inner city stations are worst affected and they tend to be areas where assistance is needed, therefore, we believe this presents a health and safety concern; and
- Loss of security and surveillance especially in the evening leading to increased vandalism and anti-social behaviour – again this is particularly of concern at the inner city stations.

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These proposals are contrary to national and local imperatives to encourage travellers to use more environmentally sustainable modes such as rail. I am certain that these closures will only serve to deter people from travelling by rail. They are particularly disappointing and perplexing in view of continuing passenger growth at London Midland stations. It is not a progressive step, with the proposals being wholly unacceptable given the diminution of service to passengers.

We strongly request that these unacceptable proposals are reconsidered and that London Midland undertake a comprehensive and robust assessment of opening hours proposed at each station with further thorough and meaningful consultation being undertaken with all affected parties.

We wish to also express our dissatisfaction at the continuing long-running employee relation problems at London Midland; this has resulted in a number of train cancellations, particularly on Sundays. We believe it is essential for those involved to reach agreement so that passengers are not inconvenienced any longer.

We look forward to the above issues being addressed. City Council Members may respond to this consultation separately as individual Members.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy Huxtable". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Councillor Timothy Huxtable
Cabinet Member - Transport, Environment and Regeneration