

The Bus Industry and its People Working Together to Support London

The Coronavirus crisis represents the biggest challenge to the UK, London and the bus industry in recent times. The scale of this unprecedented event necessitates emergency but temporary measures to ensure we can continue to serve London whilst operating in a sustainable manner and to do so effectively, will require TfL, the trade union and employers to work in co-operation.

Our top priority during this exceptional period will be to protect and safeguard our workers and their families. To achieve this, we all need to comply with UK Government guidance and advice from Public Health England (PHE).

Principles

We have committed to work together to maintain good and positive industrial relations – with regular discussions between Unite and employers, employers and TfL, and TfL and Unite.

We have committed to work together to address the challenges during the current Coronavirus crisis in a consistent manner to help the industry respond to the challenges we are faced with

We will continue to respond and adapt as the situation changes.

Cleaning Buses

With far fewer people travelling, the risk of infection being spread on the bus network has reduced substantially.

We introduced enhanced daily cleaning last month across the network – which ensures that ‘touch points’ on buses (including steering wheel, poles and handles) are treated with antiviral cleaner every night after the regular cleaning is completed. The same cleaning of touch points is applied to the driver’s cabs. Regional Organiser John Murphy visited the cleaners at work at Arriva last week and having seen the procedure in action, was reassured that this ensures that buses start the day clean.

We know that there have been issues with having sufficient cleaners at some garages across London on some nights, but the application of antiviral has been given priority over some other cleaning activity. However we will endeavor with the cleaning companies to maintain the normal good level of general cleanliness.

Social Distancing

We have asked customers not to sit in seats ahead of the front wheel arch and signs are being delivered into all garages. Soon the seats will be covered with sashes, so passengers don’t use these seats. In addition, and where possible, operators are installing film to cover the talking holes in assault screens. This we believe reduces the already low risk of infection whilst you are in the cab to an even lower level, as customers are only walking past drivers for a second or two as they touch in so we can count usage.

PPE – Face Masks and Gloves

Appropriate use of personal protection measures or equipment is an issue of concern for drivers. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is equipment that protects the user against

health or safety risks at work. It can include items such as face masks, gloves, and eye protection but also safety footwear and harnesses. It also includes respiratory protective equipment (RPE).

Public Health England (PHE) has developed guidance on the use of PPE based upon the context, type of activity or procedure being performed, and the risk of transmitting the virus. This ensures that PPE is available where it is needed, appropriately used, and that every effort is made to reinforce effective infection control and personal protection measures.

PHE guidance states that PPE should be reserved for those working directly with people experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.

It is not recommended as required for those working with individuals without symptoms (asymptomatic). This is in line with current World Health Organisation (WHO) guidance, which states that the best way to protect yourself against COVID-19 is by frequently cleaning your hands.

Inappropriate use of PPE can increase the risk of infection, and routine use of PPE is not currently recommended for transport workers. TfL has policy in place that covers staff health and safety and has based its approach to the deployment of PPE during this pandemic on national guidance. We will review the position should guidance change.

Sanitiser and Wipes

We know there have been delays in getting hand sanitiser and wipes, and that's been a concern for everyone especially those who don't have as easy access to running water. Quite rightly, the NHS got priority for initial orders, and promised delivery dates for us have been missed several times. TfL has managed to secure some large volumes of sanitizer which have been distributed alongside orders placed by individual operators and all parties have ordered more. We are proud to say every bus garage in London has a supply of hand sanitiser for bus drivers. However, we need to recognise that despite a very strong effort to ensure we don't run out, please use it carefully as deliveries are erratic.

So far, we have not been able to secure wipes on a reliable basis – but we will continue to try and source them as we know that they would provide a further level of hygiene.

Supporting Drivers who are Sick or Self-isolating

Following the announcements by the Prime Minister on 16th March, with effect from Tuesday, 17th March TfL is funding enhanced sick pay for anyone who is suffering from COVID-19 symptoms, or has to self-isolate for up to 14 days because someone in their household has symptoms. This includes bringing the entitlement for payments forward to Day 1 in most cases, and supporting an increase in rates for those who would otherwise only get Statutory Sick Pay. The bus operators are continuing to fund normal sick pay arrangements beyond that period.

Changes to Schedules and Rosters

We have had to react fast to reduce the level of service provided – partly as a result of the successful campaign to reduce travel so significantly – but also to try and balance availability of drivers so that we can run a reduced service in a controlled way. There are more reductions



and changes to come, and we want to thank you for being flexible with short notice changes to shifts.

We want to show that we are all working collaboratively, and each want to thank you for continuing to provide what is undoubtedly an essential service.

John Murphy

MD

Claire Mann