

Good Service

Debrief

July 2015



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Background, objectives and approach

Background

- London Underground (LU) would like to review their customer information standards.
- There are clear customer information guidelines on the messages that should be communicated*, however there is a question as to the helpfulness of the 'good service message' in particular.
- While it can provide on-going reassurance that 'everything is operating normally', there are situations when customers can hear this message and are experiencing the opposite. This 'dissonance' between what a customer is hearing and experiencing is one of the most frequently mentioned 'pain points'.
- TfL commissioned 2CV to understand more about customers' needs from the daily network service updates - what are the benefits of the good service message, how would they feel if they didn't hear this anymore and what do customers feel are the most important 'service updates' to hear across the PAs?



Business and research objectives

Business Question

How can London Underground's customer service information guidelines be best updated to reduce customer pain points?

Research objectives

- To explore how customers feel about the 'good service' message
 - What values it brings / how they would feel it was taken away
- To understand what 'service update' information is of most benefit to customers
 - On trains, as well as in stations
 - Visual, as well as audio
 - At a local station level as well as at network level
- To provide recommendations for how the customer information standards could be updated and monitored going forward

Research approach

- We used a three-pronged qualitative approach

LU immersions

To understand the practicalities of how different messages are communicated across the system

- 1 x 2 hour session at LUCC
- 1 x 2 hour session at King's Cross Control room

Auto-ethnography

To understand how customers engage with service update announcements on a day to day basis, as they travel the network

- 24 x auto-ethnography for 1 week, including weekend

Accompanied journeys

To understand and experience first-hand how customers engage with customer information on their journeys, probing announcements

- 8 x 1 hour accompanied journeys
- 3 x 1 hour accessibility journeys



Sample



Our sample included a representative mix of LU users

- **Use:** Use the London Underground 3+ times a week (frequent users)
- **Station type:** Mix of Major / Busy / Quiet
- **Age:** Pre-family, family, post-family
- **Mix** of genders, age and opinions towards LU
- All respondents ABC1(C2) to represent the core customer base

For the pre-task and accompanied journeys, we used the following sample structure

	Life stage	Station type	Inner/Outer	Journey purpose
1	Pre-family	Major	Inner	Commuter
2	Family	Major	Outer	Leisure
3	Post-family	Major	Inner	Commuter
4	Pre-family	Busy	Inner	Leisure
5	Family	Busy	Outer	Commuter
6	Pre-family	Quiet	Outer	Leisure
7	Family	Busy	Outer	Commuter
8	Post-family – including retiree	Quiet	Inner	Leisure

Accessibility

Additionally we conducted 3 accompanied journeys with customers who are visually impaired and mobility impaired

Specifically:

- 2 x customers who are blind/partially sighted
- 1 x customer who is mobility impaired (wheelchair user)



Headlines from the research

Key headlines

At present the current customer information standards do not take into account the situational context that influences the role of SUI

- **Location:** Non-urgent messages (Good service) help customers feel safe and connected to the network, particularly in quieter stations and on the train. However in busy and major stations they often compete with other more urgent information (delays/disruptions) and can leave customers feeling overwhelmed
- **Network Status:** When the network is working well, Good Service messages provide low conscious reassurance, however when the network is not working well, customers need frequent updates that alert them

Good Service messages play an important and complementary role to other SUI in certain circumstances

- Good Service messages are not as important as urgent messages (delays and disruptions) and therefore are expected to be delivered primarily through less demanding visual channels, with secondary support with audio channels
- Urgent messages are expected to be communicated through live, human announcements that demand attention and are supported through visual channels
- Customers with accessibility needs rely less on non-urgent messages such as Good Service, as they must pay more attention to a multitude of other factors during their journeys

LU customer information messages can be improved in the following ways:

- **Ensure non-urgent messages are context sensitive:** Non-urgent messages such as Good Service should be prioritised in quieter stations, on platforms and on the train, where visual info is less available and safety is a greater customer concern
- **Push messages intelligently:** Non-urgent messages such as Good service should not compete with other, more urgent information for customer attention. As such they do not need to be pushed as frequently in all stations as per the current standards suggest
- **Improve audibility:** Improvements to the audibility of all LU messages is required, particularly live, human announcements. This will help to maximise their impact and leave customers feeling cared for



Customer needs and expectations

The role of SUI is influenced by three situational factors

Location



Whether the customer is in a quiet, busy or major station, or on the train

Network status



Whether there is good service or disruptions/delays or closures

Journey type



Whether the customer is doing a familiar or unfamiliar journey

Customers are affected by SUI depending on where they are on the network

Quiet stations



- Helps customers feel informed
- Displaces feelings of isolation as customers feel safer and more connected to the network

I want to know TfL are here, I want it to feel alive, it's eerily dead here!

Busy stations



- Helps customers feel informed
- Maintains feelings of calm, control and flow through the station
- However **customers can feel overwhelmed when it competes with other info**

Major stations



You're less connected to the outside world on the train, there's no wifi etc. so you really rely on those driver announcements

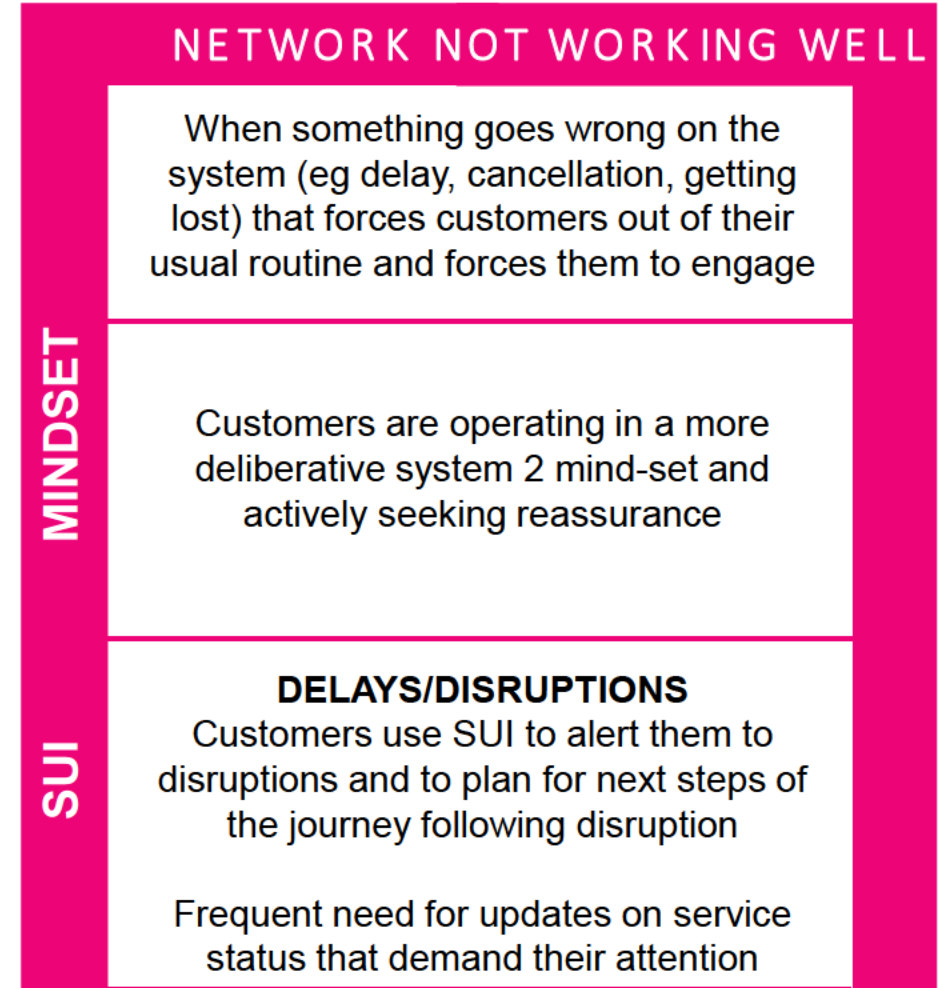
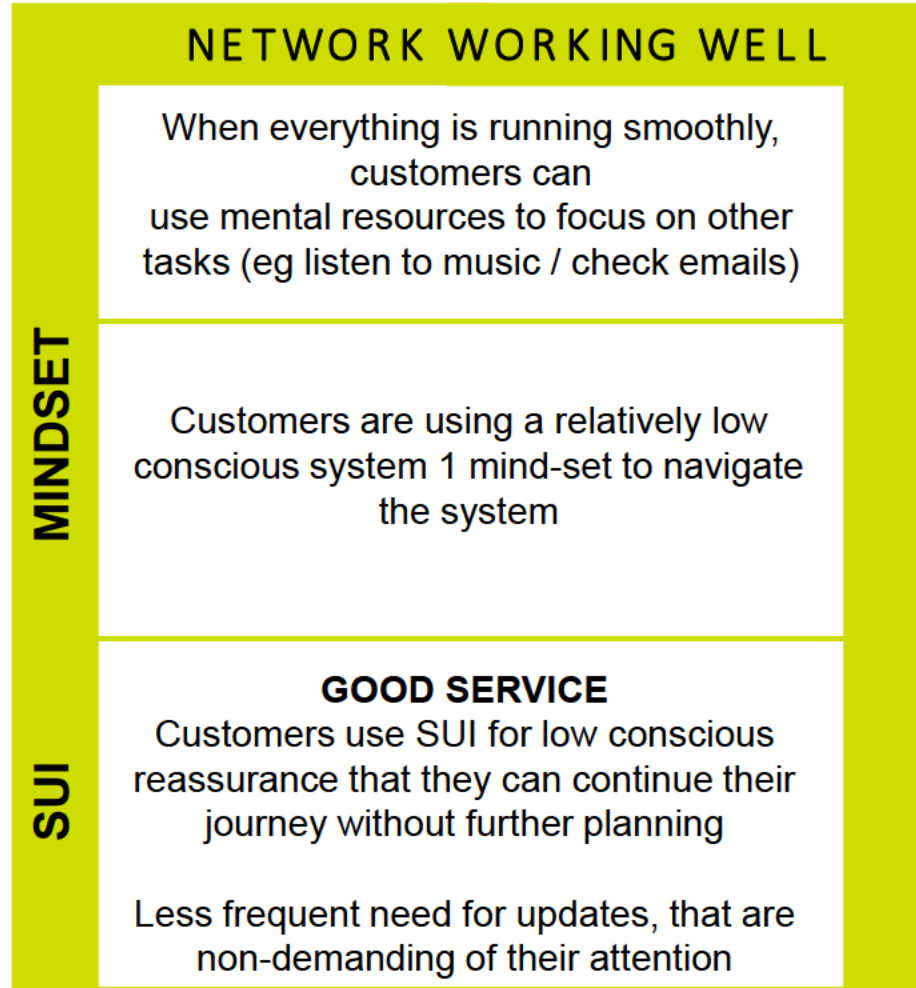
On the train



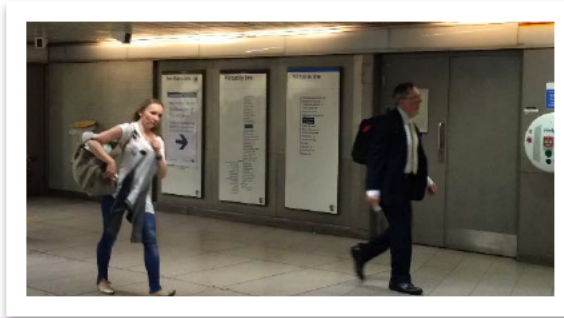
- Helps customers feel informed
- Reassures, particularly in tunnels/when stopped, supporting feelings of calm, control, safety and connection to the network

Good Service messages are an important element of SUI across station types, however in busy and major stations, currently competition with other information can lead customers to feel overwhelmed

Customers rely on SUI differently depending on the status of the network



Customers rely on SUI differently depending on their journey type



Familiar journeys

Unfamiliar journeys

Mindset

Autopilot: confident, relaxed and at ease traversing the route

Considered: alert, less confident and more prone to being overwhelmed during journey

Behaviour

Minimal interaction with surroundings and preference to be left alone

More direct interaction with environment and preference for support and reassurance from LU

SUI

Low conscious reassurance. Do not want SUI to demand attention unless there are disruptions/delays

Some conscious use and greater reliance on SUI to provide reassurance and support journey. But can feel overwhelmed by too much info

Overall customers appreciate SUI for supporting an empowered journey experience, when it is sensitive to the situation

- Feeling in control
- Feeling relaxed
- Feeling knowledgeable with easy to find information

Slight delay but at least I feel informed why train was waiting!

EASE OF JOURNEY

Good service. Useful to know so I don't worry about the rest of the journey. Happy I'm going home, it's been a long day

- Getting from A to B with ease
- Clear and timely information / way finding

RELIABILITY

STRESS LEVELS

- Feeling in control / empowered
- Sense of order
- Feeling confident knowing where to go / how to find places

Good to know all is running smooth, I feel informed and comfortable to know all is well under ground

- Feeling cared for
- Feeling looked after

HUMAN

Good service PA - makes me feel like they are there, like they are thinking about us

PERSONAL COMFORT

- Feeling relaxed / comfortable / at ease
- Feeling safe and secure
- Feeling looked after / thought about

Source: Momento and Accompanied Journeys

Good Service information is an essential part of SUI, and supports all CSS to provide an empowered journey experience

SUI is less valuable to customers with accessibility needs as they have less available attention to give to it

- Customers with accessibility needs **must pay attention to a multitude of factors during their journey**, particularly focusing on:
 - Navigation/wayfinding
 - Accessibility information – number of steps, size of gap etc
- These customers therefore have **less available attention for SUI messages**
- However **SUI can still provide some support for CSS**, as long as it does not compete for attention with info that is more urgent



I've got so much to focus on just to get to where I'm going... I don't have the capacity for other information as well
Mobility impaired

I just need to know that I'm on the right train, that's all that matters to me in the moment, that I'm heading in the right direction
Visually impaired



Role of Service Update messages and announcements

SUI messages play different, yet complementary roles in supporting an empowered journey experience



Urgent:

Customers expect these to alert and provide 'actionable' information when there are delays*



Non-urgent:

Provide background reassurance on service status and general safety, when there are not delays/disruptions



Urgency dependant on journey impact:

Current closure messages to be communicated similarly to delays, future closures communicated similarly to Good Service

***Actionable info** means more than just alerting customers to a disruption. It's about providing enough information for them to make their own journey decisions

Customers expect LU messages to work together, providing accurate and current detail that reflects the service

The channel through which the message is delivered also plays a role for customers



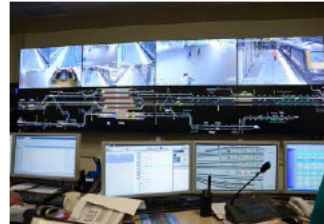
Audio channels

Customers expect urgent SUI to be communicated primarily through audio channels and to be reflected in visual channels



Station staff announcements eg. on platform

When I enter the station, I expect good service but I'm listening for any live announcements saying there are delays



Station-wide announcements



Train driver announcements



Help point



TfL phonenumber

Customers with accessibility needs engage more with additional sources for SUI

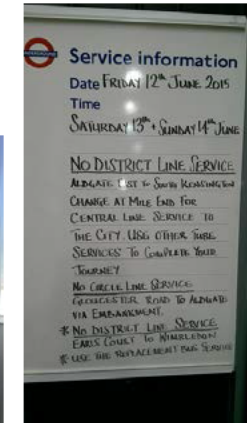


Visual channels

Customers expect non-urgent SUI to be communicated primarily through visual channels and to be reflected in audio channels



I probably glance at these screens to confirm there's good service on my lines, and give me a network wide view



I expect to see weekend closures on a board somewhere in the station



Announcements have an important role in communicating urgent information and supporting safety on the system

1. Urgent information

Most important role;

- Info that requires immediate attention and is likely to impact the customer and their journey
- **Messages about delays/disruptions/station or train problems**

Announcement telling me a delays, alerting me as I go about my journey, helps me so I can re-plan my route as quickly as possible

2. Safety and security

Secondary role;

- Info that supports safety and makes the system feel joined up
- Security message particularly valuable ('keep your belongings with you...')
- Other messages including 'good service' indirectly support
- Some also support by regulating behaviour eg. 'don't run...'

Recorded announcement saying keep to the left, station is very busy at this time. Good to know – makes me Confident in TFL

Live human announcements are preferred, particularly for urgent information

Live/human

For urgent information ie. unplanned closures, disruptions or delays



- Demands attention for urgent messages
- Feels 'live' and immediate
- Adds character/humanity to the system and indicates care for customers
- Human tone can be calming

Particularly valuable for situations with higher stress levels and anxiety eg. on trains, in tunnels, when train has stopped (unplanned)

When it's a human voice I know to listen as it might be something important

It gives them a human face when I can hear a member of staff

Automated/computerised

For non-urgent information eg. future planned closures, good service, safety messages

- Clarity of message
- Calm automated tone can minimise stress
- More human than visual channels

Valuable for situations which already have lower stress levels, to complement the information eco-system and wider environment eg. quiet, outer zone stations

Good Service announcements can be automated because automated is loud and clear, and it's not important information

Delay messages are urgent so live human announcements are important for this information

1st Audio



- Important for delay messages and is what people expect because it:
- **Announcements demand attention**, so can alert and inform customers wherever they are on the system
- **Human voice particularly demands attention** and gives human face to TfL
- **Provides more detailed and 'actionable' info** that customers require for an empowered journey experience
- Demonstrably live and feels 'proactive'
- Quickly digestible

When it's human you know to listen more

The announcement let me know there were delays on Overground, which I was trying to travel on so it was very useful! And helpful to plan my journey

2nd Visual



- Complements announcements as a passive/less demanding channel, and customers expect it to provide accurate and timely information:
- Confirmation of delays
- Indication to listen out for delay/disruption info
- Support when audio is less available

If I haven't heard the announcement properly I check the screen and that gives me a network wide view as well

These both need to work together to be inclusive of all customers

Good Service messages are non-urgent, but important to signify the service is running as expected

1st Visual



Important for 'good service' messages and is what customers expect because:

- Customers can get reassurance of 'good service' at any point in their journey through apps and ESUBs
- Doesn't demand attention or compete with more urgent information
- Can provide broad overview of the system

Being able to see all the lines on the display is useful, gives me instant knowledge when I wanted it and good to know as I am travelling later on different lines

2nd Audio



- Complements visual to provide confirmation of service status and reassurance, particularly:
- When visual info is less available eg. on platforms
- Where customers feel less connected to the system or more unsafe eg. on train, in tunnel, underground, outer zone, quiet stations

It's good to hear at a station like this [Watford], especially at night. I'd feel pretty unsafe then, but it shows TfL are here

These both need to work together to be inclusive of all customers

Customers expect closures to be communicated on the system according to their potential impact on the current journey

Unplanned closures*

Similar urgency as delays



- Demand attention, primarily via live announcements

Train announcement about not stopping at Russell Square, helpful telling us as we come up to the station



- Supported through visual channels eg. ESUBs

I like the announcement about line closures mid week – I'll be travelling at the weekend so I'm pleased they're letting me know in preparation – shows they care

Planned closures*

Urgency dependent on when in the future



- If current then similar urgency as delays therefore needs to demand attention, primarily through live announcements
- If in the next 3 days then some urgency and therefore some announcements supported by visual channels



- If greater than 3 days then less urgency and therefore primarily visual channels that are less demanding of attention eg. website

- Localised where possible eg. posters/whiteboards in stations and on lines affected

Information about line closures with a map. Very useful. This gave me a visual representation so I could quickly see whether my station was impacted

*'Closures' refers to all types of closure including lines, stations, lifts, steps, toilets, areas of the station etc

Customers with accessibility needs have a more limited network already and closures can create even greater barriers

Unplanned closures*

eg. lift broken at Covent Garden

- Expect to be alerted similarly to other customers – through announcements and visual information to support
- However often **need ‘actionable’ info to be personalised** for next steps in the journey
- Therefore **greater engagement with additional human resources; primarily staff**, help point on platform and telephone line

If anything happens I try to find a member of staff as soon as possible to help me
Visually impaired

Planned closures*

eg. no access to Tufnell Park station until September

- Expect to get info on future closures through pre-planning resources eg. website
- Future closures/changes, particularly around static info (eg number of steps) & ‘live’ info (eg status of lifts & accessible toilets) may be therefore **best placed in pre-planning resources**

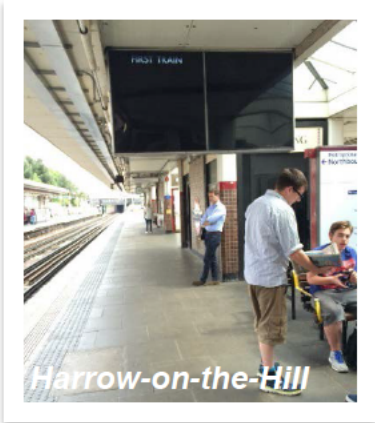
I always know about planned closures in advance because I always check online before I travel, it's too difficult otherwise
Mobility impaired

*‘Closures’ refers to all types of closure including lines, stations, lifts, steps, toilets, areas of the station etc



Delivery of Service Update messages and announcements

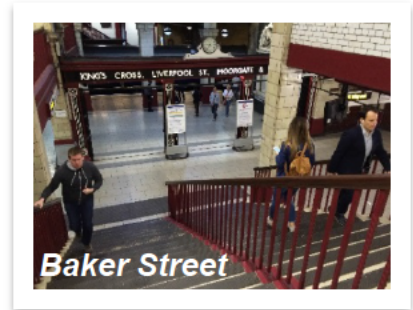
The frequency of announcements doesn't always feel sensitive to the context or 'pushed intelligently'



Current service status update standards

Station Category*	Station Type	Frequency
Major Stations	Large interchange stations with SCRs or information rooms.	4-6mins
Busy Stations	Sub Surface stations	6-10mins
Quiet Stations	Most Open Stations zones 3-D	10mins

*see Station PA Category listing for your station



Lower frequency PAs

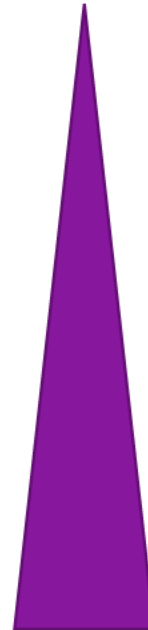
- **Quiet stations in outer zones** can feel disconnected from system, lacking human touch eg. Watford, Brent Cross, Hainault
- **Stations with poor visual SUI** where customers consequently rely more on the SUI announcements eg. Harrow-on-the-Hill
- **Platforms and on trains** where visual SUI is less visible, leading customers to rely more on SUI announcements

Unsupported

Higher frequency PAs

- **Busy and major stations with a lot of stimulus** can be difficult to prioritise info including SUI announcements particularly at peak times eg. at Baker St, Earl's Court
- **Locations with overlapping audio** eg. Baker St, Earl's Court and Stratford – LU PA competes with louder, clearer TfL Rail announcements
- **Dissonance between info sources and reality** can increase info overload as customers try to clarify situation

Overwhelmed



Good Service announcements can play into these issues



Could really do with a service announcement even if Good Service, on this platform, there's no display to tell me anything

Good Service announcement is just adding to everything else and I can't make sense of any of it!



- Low frequency of Good Service announcement when visual SUI is less available/accessible
- Low frequency of Good Service announcement when safety a concern eg. outer zone stations, night time, train in tunnel
- Poor audibility of announcement

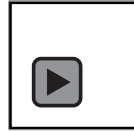
Unsupported

- Dissonance between Good Service message and reality
- Dissonance between SUI sources eg. visual and audio
- Competition with other info eg. other announcements at Stratford, Baker Street, Earl's Court
- Poor audibility of announcement

Overwhelmed

Although live human announcements are preferred, poor audibility is an issue across the network

Live/human



For urgent information ie. unplanned closures, disruptions or delays

Automated/computerised

For non-urgent information eg. future planned closures, good service, safety messages



- Demands attention for urgent messages
- Feels 'live' and immediate
- Adds character/humanity to the system and indicates care for customers
- Human tone can be calming

- Clarity of message
- Calm automated tone can minimise stress
- More human than visual channels



- Difficult to hear or understand
 - Inconsistent volume
 - Inconsistent quality of message
- Anxious human tone can increase anxiety

- Lacks humanity/character
- Feels less 'live'
- Less demanding of attention than live/human announcements

Announcement was difficult to understand – not useful as I could not understand what was said

Couldn't hear it; it wasn't clear at all, muffled voice with strong accent, and very quiet. Not useful at all

Computerised voice isn't as warm as human voice but at least I can understand it



Moving forwards

Moving forwards



Ensure messages are context sensitive

'Push' messages intelligently

Improve audibility of announcements

Ensure non-urgent info does not lead to information overload, particularly in busy/major stations

Minimise frequency of non-urgent PAs in busy/major stations with lots of stimuli to take in, to avoid competition with other info

Improve quality, particularly for live PAs
eg. clearer speech

Where visual SUI is less accessible, ensure audio SUI can provide additional support

Increase frequency of non-urgent PAs in quiet stations, to support safety, care for customers and joined up network

Increase volume of live PAs

Where safety is a customer concern, ensure audio SUI and other non-urgent info can support eg. at quiet stations, night time

Space out non-urgent PAs to support safety consistently and avoid overwhelming

Minimise overlap and integrate with other PAs: LU PAs from other platforms, trains, automated and live, and non-LU PAs



APPENDIX

Detailed breakdown of accompanied journeys

- Our journeys covered a range of pinch point moments across the network, so we could understand the usefulness of customer information

Journey	Type	Day	Line/area	Station	Time of day
1	Standard	Week	Central - north east	Leytonstone → Stratford → Hainault	10.30am
2	Standard	Week	District - south west	Parsons Green → Earl's Court → Kew Gardens	8.45am
3	Standard	Week	Jubilee - north west	Dollis Hill → Baker St → Harrow-on-the-hill	8.45am
4	Standard	Week	Metropolitan - north west	Harrow-on-the-hill → Watford	2pm
5	Standard	Week	Northern - north west	Brent Cross → Edgware → Camden Town	1pm
6	Standard	Week	Piccadilly/Victoria - north east	Holloway Road → Finsbury Park → Seven Sisters → King's Cross	5pm
7	Standard	Week	Hammersmith/Circle - Central	King's Cross → Baker St → Edgware Road	8am
8	Standard	Weekend	Circle/district - central	Embankment → West Kensington	10.00am
9	Accessibility	Week	District - south west	Gunnersbury → Earl's Court → Edgware Road	11am
10	Accessibility	Week	Jubilee/Met - north west	Westminster → Green Park → Tottenham Hale	Daytime
11	Accessibility	Weekend	Circle/district - central	Monument → Westminster	10.30am

Current guidelines for frequency of PAs on LU*

Service status updates

Station Category*	Station Type	Frequency
Major Stations	Large interchange stations with SCRs or information rooms.	4-6mins
Busy Stations	Sub Surface stations	6-10mins
Quiet Stations	Most Open Stations zones 3-D	10mins

*see Station PA Category listing for your station

Weekend engineering (advanced notice only)

Station Category	Frequency
Major stations	Every 30 mins
All other stations	Every 60 mins

Safety and security

Station Category	Frequency
A	Every 30 mins*
B	Every 60 mins*
C and D	Every 60 mins

* Frequency shown at current 'Security Response' level 2. If the level should change please refer to your station security programme.



Thank you

