

Transport Delivery Committee

Date	14 September 2020
Report title	Follow-Up Question- National Railcard Pandemic Compensation
Accountable Chief Executive	Laura Shoaf, Managing Director, Transport for the West Midlands
Accountable Director	Malcolm Holmes, Director of Rail, Transport for the West Midlands
Report to be/has been considered by	none

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Transport Delivery Committee is recommended to:

1. That the question submitted by Councillor Worrall and the response from the Director of Rail be noted.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To consider a question submitted by Councillor Worrall on Wednesday, 2 September 2020.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The question was submitted by Councillor Worrall on 2 September :

‘At the meeting of TDC on 8 June, I asked whether TfWM would lobby the organisers of the national railcard scheme (the Rail Delivery Group), with a view to them compensating railcard holders for pandemic-related loss of discounted rail travel opportunities, by extending the validity of senior, disabled and young persons’ railcards beyond their current expiry dates by the amount of time lost to would-be users as a result of the Covid-19 restrictions on travel.

TfWM in its response stated its support for the extension of validity of Railcards to reflect non-use as a result of Covid-19 travel restrictions, and said that it had raised the matter directly with the DfT, who confirmed it was working directly with the Rail Delivery Group to consider options for customers, but that, as of late May 2020, no decision had been made. TfWM were seeking an appropriate contact at RDG and would then raise the matter directly with them.

On 6 July, Andrew Rosendell, MP for Romford, in a Parliamentary question, asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps his Department was taking to ensure that railcard users who had been unable to use their card during the Covid-19 outbreak receive appropriate compensation or an extension, and was advised in a written response that the Rail Delivery Group was working with train companies on a number of ways to assist railcard holders in light of the Covid-19 restrictions, and that Departmental officials had been engaging regularly with the RDG as they consider possible changes to the railcard conditions.

My understanding at the time of writing is that, well over two months on, there has still been no decision on extension of validity, whereas many other organisations, for example, the National Trust, and in our own region, the Black Country Museum, have extended the validity of one-year passes, so my question is: can TfWM confirm:

- That the RDG still has not come to a decision?*
- Assuming there still is no decision, whether TfWM did identify a contact at RDG, and if so, what came out of it?*
- That TfWM will encourage the RDG both directly, and by asking all West Midlands MPs to lobby RDG, for an early, fair (and arguably long-overdue) decision on compensation by way of an extension of, say, four months, to the validity of railcards that are to be, or already have been, renewed, since the start of the pandemic restrictions?'*

The Director of Rail has provided the following response:

'Transport for the West Midlands (TfWM) has contacted the DfT and has been informed that there has not been much change in the position since the question was originally raised.

DfT officials have been engaging with colleagues at RDG to explore what options may be possible regarding a potential redress offer to railcard holders.

TfWM has been informed by the DfT that they are close to reaching a decision on the preferred option, although they haven't been able to share any details at this stage. The DfT advised that they are expecting an announcement to be made this month, and that this will likely come from RDG.'