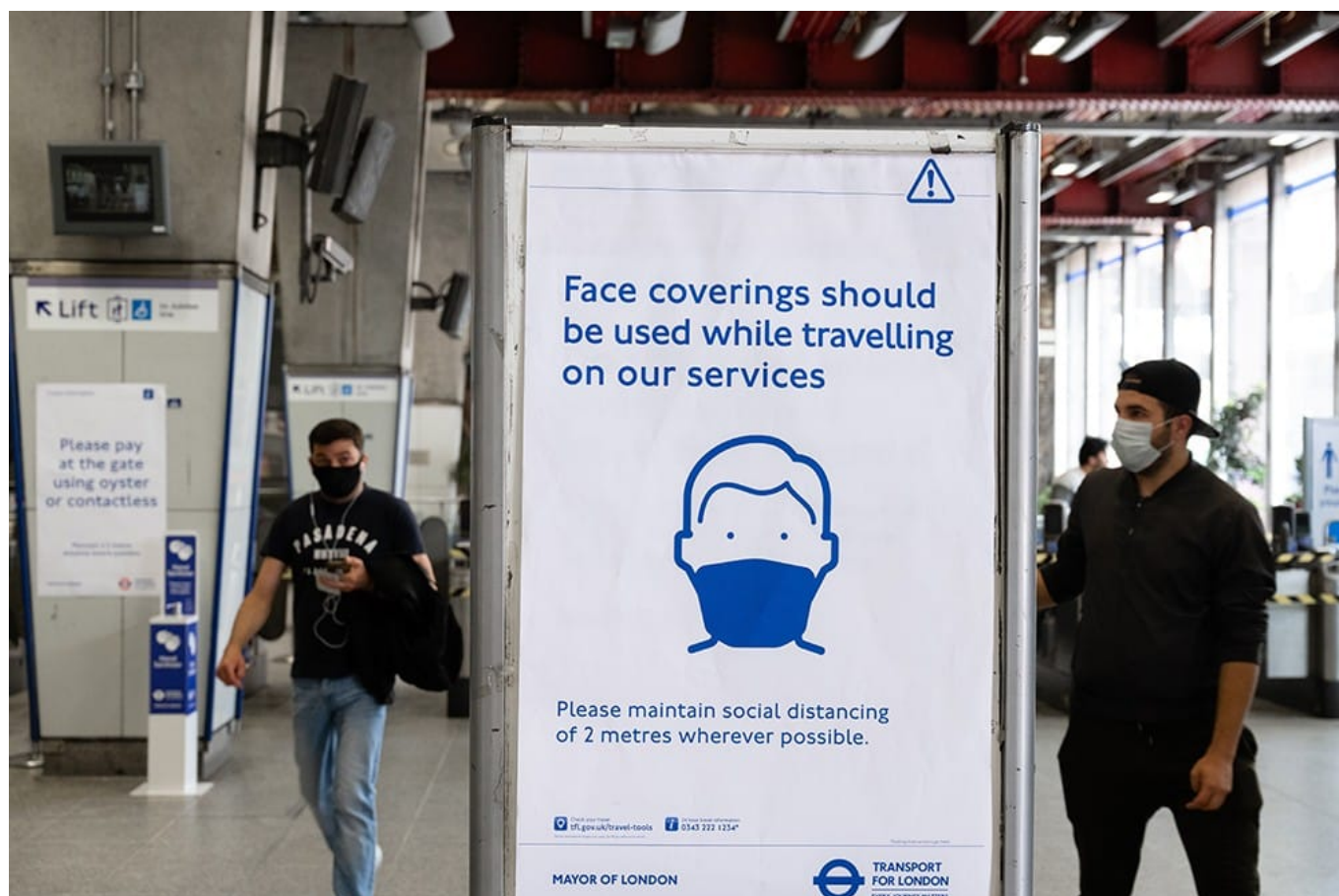


Tube, rail and bus services stepped up for people who have to use public transport

May 18, 2020



Transport for London (TfL), as previously agreed with the Government before the announcement of the lockdown restrictions being lifted, has stepped up public transport service levels to make journeys as safe as possible for people who have no alternative other than to use public transport as national restrictions on movement are carefully and gradually lifted.

The clear advice from the Government and the Mayor is that Londoners should continue to work from home if they can do so.

People who cannot work from home are asked to walk or cycle using the existing and extensive new cycling lanes and widened pavements. Londoners should avoid public transport wherever possible.

People who have no choice but to use public transport should wear face coverings and avoid the busiest times and locations. The busiest times on the network are between 05:45-08:15 and 16:00-17:30. Passengers are urged to take the most direct route and avoid busy interchanges. TfL has also published the 20 busiest stations at <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/busiest-stations-restart.pdf> to help people avoid known hotspots. This will be updated regularly, and Londoners are encouraged to avoid using those stations

wherever possible at busy times to help maintain social distancing and to avoid potentially having to wait to enter those stations.

As the Government has set out, the number of people able to safely travel on public transport networks will be significantly constrained given the requirement to maintain a two-metre distance between people wherever possible.

TfL has been operating service levels in line with National Rail and is working hard to return services to as close to 100 per cent as soon as possible given the number of staff off sick, shielding or self-isolating. TfL is from Monday operating:

- 85 per cent of bus services;
- 75 per cent of Tube services. The Circle line has been re-instated and 7 of the 37 stations that were closed for several weeks are now open;
- 80 per cent of London Overground and Docklands Light Railway (DLR) services;
- 100 per cent of TfL Rail services;
- 95 per cent of London Trams services;
- 95 per cent of Cycle Hire services, with all three cycle hire hubs staffed and open and a further two cycle hire hubs added for additional demand.
- 100 per cent of the Emirates Airline
- A one boat service on the Woolwich Ferry

TfL has continued with its major customer communication campaign. Radio and newspaper advertising has offered the latest travel advice, including promoting walking and cycling, and in the last week alone 10 million customer emails with this advice have been sent.

Posters and PA announcements around the network and social media channels are reminding people to wear face coverings while using public transport. More than 20,000 social distancing stickers are now in place at the busiest and largest stations on the London Underground, London Overground, DLR and Tram networks with the remaining stations following soon. More social distancing markers at bus stops and shelters are also being installed across London.

Dozens of stations have had new one-way and queuing systems to help control the flow of customers through the station, helping passengers to socially distance. Passengers may be asked to wait to enter a station. Signage has also been installed on escalators asking customers to stand six steps apart and in station lifts asking that just four people use them at a time.

Bus passengers are asked to observe social distancing at stops and bus stations wherever possible, to board buses through the middle doors and to allow other passengers to get on and off while maintaining social distancing. Bus passengers are also asked to make use of all available space, including the upper deck. If buses are very busy, customers are asked to wait for the next bus.

TfL has deployed additional staff, including Compliance Policing and On-Street Officers, across the network and at bus stations to help with social distancing. Hundreds of officers from the British Transport Police are

also out across the transport network where they are most needed, keeping customers and staff safe.

TfL has now installed more than 500 hand sanitisers in Tube station ticket halls, with additional points being installed across the network this week. Hand sanitiser points will be introduced to the platform areas on the Tube network in the coming weeks. They are also being installed in all bus stations in London and at selected TfL Rail, London Overground, Tram stops and DLR stations, as well as at Victoria Coach Station, the Woolwich Ferry and Emirates Air Line.

As has been the case throughout the pandemic, even with travel levels on the Tube as low as 5 per cent, there will be occasions when it will not be possible to maintain social distancing. In addition to wearing a facial covering, TfL is asking everyone using public transport to help maintain social distancing wherever possible by respecting the space of fellow passengers and following signage and the advice of TfL staff.

TfL has been engaging with businesses across the capital to make sure their employees are encouraged to work from home where possible and to walk and cycle if they do have to come to the workplace. Businesses are also being asked to stagger start and finish times, so that employees can avoid the busiest times if possible.

To prevent London's roads from instantly becoming unusably blocked with congestion, the Congestion Charge and Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) have been reintroduced from today. These schemes reduce congestion and pollution and help tackle the climate and air quality emergencies. The Low Emission Zone, which discourages the use of the dirtiest lorries and large vans, will also be reintroduced at the same time.

The Congestion Charge reimbursement scheme has been temporarily extended to continue to support NHS, care home employees and London Ambulance Service staff, who are at the heart of the national effort to combat the virus. NHS, care home employees and London Ambulance Service staff who work in the Congestion Charge zone will be reimbursed for journeys relating to coronavirus, including for their journeys to and from work.

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, said: "Coronavirus poses monumental challenges to our city's complex public transport network. TfL is working hard to increase services to pre-Covid levels despite staff being ill, shielding or self-isolating. But even when services are running at the highest possible frequency, the need to maintain safe social distancing will dramatically reduce capacity on the Tube to just 13-15 per cent.

"We are making it safer for people who have no alternative but to use public transport by reopening stations, installing hand sanitiser points, introducing one-way systems and reminding people of the need to stay two metres apart. We are also making sure Londoners know which stations to avoid at what times.

"However, I must urge all Londoners to only use public transport as a last resort and to walk or cycle for any essential journeys if you possibly can. You should continue to work from home if you are able to do so.

"It is crucial that we keep demand for services as low as possible to avoid a second peak that could overwhelm the NHS. I am grateful that the vast majority of Londoners are staying at home – please continue to do so to protect our NHS and save lives."

Mike Brown MVO, London's Transport Commissioner, said: "We are working hard to restore all services to normal levels as quickly as possible. Today we have stepped up our services on the way to that to help make the journeys of those who must use public transport as safe as possible.

"But, given the national requirement to maintain 2 metre social distancing, the capacity of the network is hugely constrained. On the Tube for example, we can only carry 13-15 per cent of normal passenger numbers even once services are back to full strength. As the Government and Mayor have advised, we need people to continue working from home and avoiding public transport if they can. People who must travel are strongly urged to walk or cycle wherever possible.

"If you need to use public transport, make sure you wear a face covering and avoid the busiest times. We've provided detailed information so that customers can plan and retime their journeys.

"Customers may need to queue to get into stations so that we can control the number of people and ensure everyone can maintain a safe distance wherever possible. Please be patient with our staff, who are making a heroic effort to support London and those who rely on our services. Everyone is doing the best they can in very difficult circumstances."

British Transport Police Assistant Chief Constable, Sean O'Callaghan said: "Our officers are out and about across the rail network, focusing their time at stations where they are most needed. At some of the busier stations you may see more officers than usual. They're there to help keep passengers and rail staff safe - helping get people to where they need to be safely.

"If you don't need to travel by rail or Tube, then don't - and if you do need to, give yourself plenty of time. Perhaps speak to your employer and stagger the times you would normally go to and from work and avoid rush hours where possible. We all have a role to play in keeping the rail network safe.

"Our policing approach remains the same. Our officers will be engaging with passengers and staff and will only use enforcement if absolutely necessary.

"No-one should underestimate the immense logistical challenge facing the rail industry and its staff as it works to keep people who need to use the network moving. They're taking extra steps to ensure people stay safe including aiding social distancing and keeping overcrowding to a minimum. These steps mean everyone is going to have to get used to a new way of travelling."

Photo credit: Transport for London