

Marcus Clements
Head of Consumer Policy
Directorate of Economics, Markets & Strategy
Office of Rail and Road



Julie Allan
Head of Customer Relations
Govia Thameslink Railway

23 February 2021

Dear Julie,

Compliance with Condition 5 (Accessible Travel Policy) of your Station Licence and GB Statement of National Regulatory Provisions: Passenger

Thank you for your response to our letter dated 18 August 2020, regarding Govia Thameslink Railway's (GTR) activities in relation to its obligations under section A8 (**Redress**) of the Accessible Travel Policy (ATP) Guidance. It was helpful to understand the positive measures GTR takes to provide appropriate redress to passengers when assistance has been booked but has not been provided due to a failure of the assistance service.

We note that GTR's Assisted Travel Team advisors have now been re-briefed on its commitments to provide redress. We are pleased to see that these measures also extend to instances where passengers experience an assistance failure and where assistance has not been pre-booked.

You have highlighted that the introduction of a new IT system, allowing you to accurately link payments made outside of a reporting period to an earlier case, will improve the accuracy of GTR's Core Data report submissions, in the future. Nonetheless, GTR has highlighted that in its 2019-20 Core Data report submissions- Section I, there may have been occurrences of under reporting when cases made outside the reporting periods were not associated with earlier cases; when alternative forms of redress were made; or when complaints were escalated and dealt with by VIP HQ team or Accessibility Management team. As set out in our

Reference guide for Core Data reporting¹ all instances where an operator has provided redress should be recorded as appropriate. Therefore, I shall be grateful if you would re-submit your 2019-20 Core Data report Section I to accurately reflect the number of times redress was provided for a booked assistance failure.

We welcome GTR undertaking an audit of its cases where a claim for redress following a booked assistance failure has been received to ensure that it has been meeting its commitments as set out in its ATP and Passenger Charter. However, a review of only ten random cases does not appear to be sufficient to provide a clear understanding of whether there are any issues with GTR's processes. Therefore, as discussed in our recent meeting, we ask that you undertake a more rigorous review, covering a minimum of a third of the claims received for redress following a booked assistance failure. I shall be grateful if you will provide an update on the outcome of this at the next ATP Quarterly meeting with my team.

Next steps

I shall be grateful if you will provide a revised copy of your 2019-20 Core Data - Section I report which accurately reflects the number of claims received for redress. Please send this to: Rail.Stats@orr.gov.uk

Please note that this letter and your previous reply will be published on our website.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marcus Clements', with a stylized, cursive flourish.

Marcus Clements

CC. Antony Merlyn

¹ <https://www.orr.gov.uk/sites/default/files/om/reference-guide-orr-core-data-compliance-monitoring.pdf>



8th September 2020

Dear Colleague

Thank you for making contact in relation to the process GTR follows when we receive a customer complaint relating to failed prebooked assistance. I note in particular the ORR concern that the reported number of customers with failed booked assistance in comparison to those who have received the redress they are entitled to because of a service failure, differs.

GTR has always had within its Passenger Charter a clearly defined promise to refund the cost of a customer's ticket should their prebooked assistance fail at any point on their journey. We recognise the Assisted Travel Policy reaffirms this promise.

When reporting the number of incoming complaints and the number of customers who have received redress, there are a variety of reasons why the two may not be aligned in any reporting period. They include:

- Customers failing to respond to a request for sight of their journey ticket
- Cases rolling from one period to the next
- Depending on the form redress is given, internal systems may not always pick up the payment award e.g. cheque payment or cashable rail travel vouchers are not always identifiable in the CRM
- Customer declines redress
- Complaint escalated and dealt with by VIP HQ team or Accessibility Management team

Progress and change

The data sent to ORR does not always capture the entire picture in regards to redress and in particular, our aged CRM was occasionally unable to link a payment made outside of one reporting period to an earlier case. In June this year GTR introduced into its operational delivery a bespoke new CRM which allows more accurate linking of cases and activity to ensure that actions carried out including providing redress are represented more clearly in the ORR report.

Govia Thameslink Railway

Monument Place, 24 Monument Street, London, EC3R 8AJ

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Above and beyond

We are fully committed to ensuring that any customer with prebooked assistance whose experience is unsatisfactory is compensated, to that extent we often provide our customers in excess of the cost of their ticket. In those instances where a failure has been particularly distressing or impactful we will refund the cost of the rail tickets or more and send the customer a token of our regret. This may be in the form of a hamper or flowers or similar – evidence of these additional gestures and extra monetary compensation can be supplied on request.

Furthermore customers can also expect to receive a personal phone call from either the Head of Accessibility or one of the customer relations team in most instances of service failure – we recognise the importance of providing reassurance and the confidence to travel again. In many instances we also provide redress and a token of regret if a customer has **not** booked assistance and this would certainly be standard practice for the most impactful cases we receive.

Monitor and review

To ensure a ‘belt and braces’ approach and provide assurance that we are adhering to our promise (unless an individual advisor error has taken place) – GTR has arranged a dip test of ten random cases where a complaint had been received following failed booked assistance. All of those specific case reviews confirmed redress had been offered or arranged.

Again, as part of a full review into the concerns raised by ORR, all advisors working in the GTR Assisted Travel Team have been rebriefed on the need to offer redress under the circumstances detailed in the ATP and Passengers Charter and to continue to offer redress even for unbooked assistance if circumstances warrant such a response.

GTR takes its responsibility in awarding its customers with the compensation they are entitled to seriously and recognises that a disparity in the statistics may give the impression that redress is not always offered. Please be assured that while reported data in comparison to the actual interaction with the customer may not be aligned for the reasons stated above, we understand our commitment and aim to meet this at every single opportunity.

Yours sincerely



Julie Allan
Head of Customer Relations

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Christiane Link
Head of Accessibility
Govia Thameslink Railway

18 August 2020

Dear Christiane,

Compliance with Condition 5 (Accessible Travel Policy) of your Station Licence and GB Statement of National Regulatory Provisions: Passenger

I refer to Condition 5 of Govia Thameslink Railway's (GTR) licence and its activities in relation to its obligations under section A8 (**Redress**) of the Accessible Travel Policy (ATP) Guidance.

As you will be aware, one of the principal ways the Office of Rail and Road monitors licence holders' compliance with their ATP obligations is via their routine core data submissions. Our review of GTR's activities in relation to the provision of redress to passengers following a booked assistance failure, shows that between rail periods 1-13 in 2019/20, GTR received 230 claims for redress; of these, 132 were approved and redress was provided. This indicates that only around 57% of all claims from passengers for redress due to booked assistance failure have been approved by GTR, an approval rate which is lower than many other operators.

This is a new performance measure and, in anticipation of your commitment to providing redress in your final approved ATP, we are keen to ensure that it is operating as envisaged. It is our expectation that passengers should be able to receive appropriate redress when they do not receive the assistance they have booked. Where they do not, it is important that we understand why this is the case.

Next steps

I shall be grateful if you will provide a detailed response setting out the reasons for the high proportion of rejected claims for redress following booked assistance failure. Please include any supporting material, where relevant, together with any action you



have taken or propose to take to ensure that passengers who have not received the assistance they booked can receive the redress to which they are entitled.

I look forward to receiving your reply by **Friday 11 September 2020**.

Please send your response to: Denise.Brown@orr.gov.uk

This letter and your reply will be published on our website.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Clements', is positioned below the text 'Yours sincerely'.

Marcus Clements