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Dear Matt,

We are writing to propose an alternative process to fulfil the Handover Protocol, with equivalent functionality and effectiveness to guidance set out in ATP Guidance Appendix C, for the purpose of a trial. This trial would take place at Preston, Wigan North Western and Lancaster.

As you know, the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) and TransReport, in collaboration with TOCs, have been improving the system over the last few years. This has coincided with the rollout of the Staff Mobile App (SMA) which is now embedded at Avanti with positive feedback.

One of the next planned improvements of the SMA and Staff Web Interface (SWI) will allow electronic handover of customers, directly through the app without the need of a telephone call between departure and arrival station. The functionality allows TOCs to enable the functionality on a station-by-station basis, with the functionality only being available if both stations on the journey have this enabled.

Passenger Assistance can sometimes fail. This can be a huge source of anxiety for customers and at worst, encourage customers to reject rail all together,

Passenger Assistance failure is often due to incompleteness of the Handover Protocol. Reasons for this include:

- Communication breakdown between the departure and arrival station, with either a call not being answered or not made at all. This is often due to staff carrying out other responsibilities at the station.
- Communication breakdown where a message is incorrectly communicated during the handover between departure and arrival station.
- Communication breakdown internally at a station, with messages not relayed between team members.

We believe this enhancement to the SMA and SWI will improve the robustness and reliability of the Handover Protocol, which is one of the main reasons we see for Passenger Assistance failures.

Electronic handover will improve the Handover Protocol with:

- Creating a more efficient process of handover where the arrival station receives a push notification of an incoming customer using the Passenger Assistance service. The notification will quickly give all relevant details of the assistance required. They can choose whether to accept the handover or, if needed, call the departure station with more information.
- All staff logged into the arrival station via the SMA and SWI will be notified of the handover. At busy stations, this will improve the single point of failure where the team member answering the phone may be busy with other responsibilities.
- The SMA and SWI will continue to show the handover details after the handover has taken place. This will allow all staff logged into the app at that station to see the relevant handover details. With a telephone call, this will be dependent on the team member answering the call relaying the relevant information.
- Staff members at the departure stations will be more efficient in their roles, being able to help customers while waiting for confirmation a handover has been accepted. The arrival station has two minutes to accept a handover before it times out. In this time, a staff member can continue to help customers. The current process sees the staff member unable to help customers while waiting for a call to be answered.
- The audit trail being improved if any failures do occur. In this situation, the SMA and SWI will clearly show if there has been an acknowledgement of the handover or not. This means any investigation will be easier to conduct, allowing us to find out reasons for failure.

We believe the reasons above ensure the new process exceeds the functionality and effectiveness of the existing Handover Protocol process (ATP Guidance A1.2e). All relevant details will still be communicated, but in a more robust manner. Within this process, if no response is received to the SMA handover after two minutes, the departure station will receive a push notification that this has not been acknowledged. They can try the electronic handover one more time. After this, the only option displayed on the SMA and SWI will be for a telephone handover.

SMA rollout

Over the past 24 months, we have conducted a continuous rollout of the SMA for our frontline staff. This has mainly been focused on our stations staff as they are the teams carrying out the handover protocol at AWC stations.

Whilst not a mandatory app, we have seen good adoption of the app across all our stations, with staff seeing the benefits of having a live list of Passenger Assistance requests on their mobile device instead of a printed daily list that constantly needs updating.

For the stations in-scope for this trial, all colleagues at this station have access to the app and have individual devices enabling usage of the app. Training has been provided through roadshows, videos and regular communications. All updates to the system are also communicated internally through our weekly briefing or locally at stations.

Usage of the app is strong across all three stations. This is shown by the number of assistance requests actioned on the SMA and SWI by staff. In Period 7 at the in-scope stations, 92% of assistance requests were actioned (i.e. not left as pending). As part of this, 994 unbooked assistance requests have also been actioned. As a breakdown of stations:

- Wigan North Western actioned 99.5% of assistance requests on the SMA
- Lancaster actioned 95% of assistance requests on the SMA
- Preston actioned 82% of assistance requests on the SMA.

After investigation, there is a minority of staff members at Preston who do not use the app meaning there are shifts where assistance requests are not actioned on the system. The usage of the apps like the Transport staff app is currently a subject of discussion with Trades Unions and therefore is not yet a mandatory requirement for each member of staff.

Unactioned assistance requests on the system are sometimes picked up and actioned retrospectively. In these instances, the handover protocol is still followed in the agreed process. If these staff members did not want to take part in the trial, telephone handover would still take place, similar to assistance at all stations not in scope.

Feedback from staff who use the SMA has been positive, with the regular comment of how much easier the information is to follow compared to paper print outs. Staff have engaged with the programme with requests for new features such as being able to edit a booking which was released in July. The main feedback has always been the desire for true electronic handover, ensuring information is more reliable and the process quicker.

Stakeholder Engagement

We have regularly engaged with RDG and the Passenger Assistance programme to ensure that AWC have fed into the proposed roadmap. Outside of this, we have engaged individually with other TOCs and Network Rail to discuss their Passenger Assistance improvement plans, including for adoption of electronic handover. We have also engaged and will continue to learn from LNER in their SMA trial (and now agreed process) for handover.

Passenger Assistance, and in particular the Handover Protocol, is a regular topic of conversation at our Accessibility Panels. The desire is to have a more reliable process and the consensus is that electronic handover should help to support this. There has been frustration from panel members that the SMA has not been rolled out quicker across the industry, with the opinion that consistent, robust processes are needed across all TOCs. They are supportive of this trial and want to be kept up to date with process, with some panel members offering to help test the functionality.

Electronic Handover Trial – Phase 1

Our proposed trial would see the electronic handover functionality enabled at three stations including Preston, Wigan North Western and Lancaster. These stations have been chosen due to the busy flow of passengers between the stations, ensuring we can receive enough data on the functionality. The trial would initially last for three months. We would launch the trial when practical, as soon as we feel the teams have had appropriate training on the new processes. We will continue to liaise with ORR to update on the trial launch date.

For Passenger Assistance between these stations, electronic handover would be used on either the SMA or SWI for both booked and unbooked assistance requests. For all other assists between stations out of scope, the app and telephone handover would still be used. There is no risk of electronic handover being used for other routes due the functionality only enabled for the three stations within the trial.

The trial will still adhere to the technical guidance of Appendix C of the ATP guidance including but not limited to:

- A dedicated phone number for each station still being available
- Responsible Person for assistance-related communications for every station. This person will use the SMA and SWI.

- Handover protocol for the communication of assistance information between stations. Where electronic handover is enabled between the two stations, this will be the primary method of handover. Where this is not enabled at both stations, or where the electronic handover is not answered, staff will revert to telephone handover.
- The information to be communicated during the handover protocol will still be the same and include (where applicable) passenger name, assistance needed, train headcode, location on train and any other relevant information.

We will gather staff feedback throughout the trial as well as analyse the completion rate, app data and customer feedback to give an insight into improvements. The success criteria of the trial will be:

- Decreased Passenger Assist failures between the stations included in the electronic handover trial.
- Positive staff feedback on the efficiency and robustness of the new processes.

Both ORR, DfT and RDG will regularly be updated on progress of the trial. If desired, local visits to the stations can also be arranged to see the trial in action. If the trial results in adverse impacts, we will be able to switch the electronic handover functionality off, returning to existing processes. This can be done at a moment's notice.

Risk	Mitigation
Staff usage of the app isn't mandatory meaning inconsistent processes	Telephone handover is the agreed process and will still be in place
During disruption, electronic handover could be time consuming	Electronic handover should be quicker than a call, giving staff more time to support other customers.
During disruption, handover may not be responded to due to staff fulfilling other duties	If electronic handover is not responded to, telephone handover will be used as a backup.
The app could have an outage	The daily report emails and flash reports will still be available as a backup. In this case,

	telephone handover would be used.
Other TOC trials could confuse staff as to which stations are available for electronic handover	Only AWC in-scope stations will be enabled. Other TOC stations will not have the option for electronic handover, even if they are part of a separate trial. Any changes to the in-scope stations will involve a request to ORR and then additional communications to staff.

Electronic Handover Trial – Phase 2

Once Phase 1 has been completed, a meeting with ORR and other relevant stakeholders will be arranged to present our trial results and next steps. Options will include:

- Extending the electronic handover functionality to more AWC stations (explained below)
- Extending Phase 1 of the trial if more information is needed.
- Reverting back to telephone handover if the trial is deemed unsuccessful.

If the trial is successful, we would look to extend the electronic handover functionality to the other 13 AWC stations. This would be a phased rollout on a station-by-station basis once the teams at the station are aware and confident of the new processes. We will continue to work with ORR to update on the go-live dates.

After 3 months of all stations rolled out, we will present our findings to ORR, similar to the end of phase 1. The options will be to make the functionality permanent of AWC stations or to revert back to the telephone handover.

Kind Regards,

Brandon Peat

Accessibility Manager – Avanti West Coast.