Customer Service and Operational Performance Panel

Date: **12 July 2023**

Item: **TfL Go Update**

This paper will be considered in public

1 Summary

1.1 The TfL Go app offers a modern digital experience that is inclusive, customer-centred and aligned with the Mayor's Transport Strategy. The developments proposed for the app will unify journey planning, payment and real-time travel support features across all TfL transport modes. It will deliver a direct, and personal, digital relationship with customers that can be used to nudge behaviour and encourage the shift towards sustainable travel choices.

1.2 The app launched in 2020 and has been downloaded over 3.9 million times across iOS and Android devices to date. It is used by over 700,000 customers each month who each return, on average, over 14 times within each month. The app has been recognised for the quality of its design with national Drum, Design Week, BIMA (British Interactive Media Association) and Creative Review awards.

1.3 This paper provides an update on TfL Go.

2 Recommendation

2.1 The Panel is asked to note the paper.

3 Delivery approach

3.1 TfL Go is built in-house by a team of product managers, experienced designers and app developers in the Technology and Data team. We take a strategic 'product' approach; prioritising the features and functionality that will drive customer and business outcomes. Those prioritisation decisions are grounded in user research, product analytics and customer feedback (via e-mail and app stores).

3.2 We release incremental updates to existing features every few weeks, with several significant app updates also planned. Given our ambitious roadmap for TfL Go, we are accelerating the pace of delivery by augmenting internal development capability with external resource.

4 Phase 1: Establish (complete)

4.1 The app launched in a crowded marketplace, borne out of our 'open data' policy. This necessitated a clearly differentiated customer proposition; one that focussed on accessibility, a clearer design aesthetic, the transparent use of customer data

and alignment with our mission. Our launch marketing focussed on informing customers about how the app would help them feel safe during the pandemic by flagging the quieter times to travel. This phase was completed at the end of 2021/22 financial year.

5   Phase 2: Consolidate (current focus)

5.1   To influence customer behaviour, and generate revenue, the app needs to serve a larger proportion of the travelling public on a regular basis. We aim to reach over a million monthly active users by the end of the current financial year (2023/24) by meeting core customer expectations and becoming part of everyday life. At present we have around 715,000 active users per month.

(a)   Supporting customers at times of disruption

We are improving real-time information by addressing both the quality of the data we use, and the features powered by that data. For example, the live Tube map will indicate the precise location of live disruption, line closures and station closures. We have also made it easier to update and publish information about the impact of severe disruption during strikes and major events.

(b)   Helping customers route in real-time

In early 2023, we launched a new version of our Journey Planner engine powered by real-time bus arrival times rather than static schedules. This follows similar work for rail modes in 2020 and lays the foundations for real-time Tube routing later this year. We are also developing an 'alternative routes' feature that makes informed suggestions guided by our priorities – for example, historically less-crowded routes.

(c)   Enhancing the bus customer experience

Comparator apps offer much more granular information about bus stops and bus routes than TfL Go. We are aligning with these well-established customer needs and building in live bus location data, and historic busyness data when available, too.
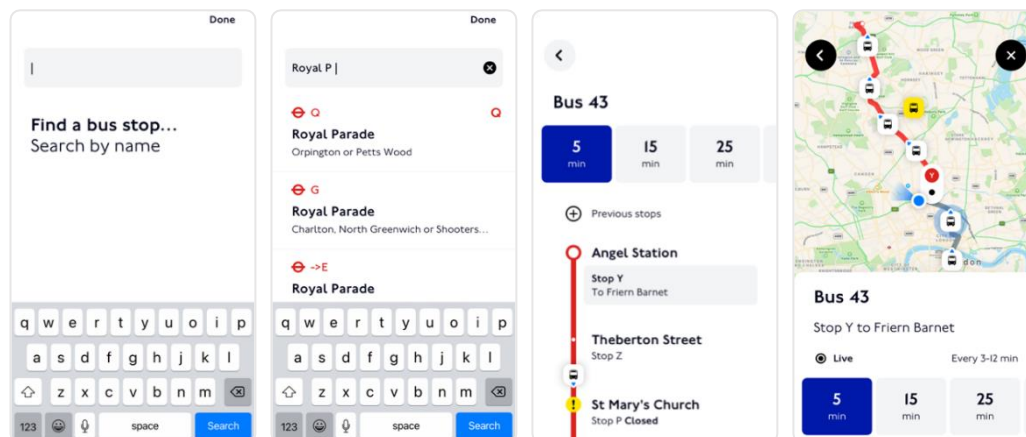

Figure 1 – screenshots showing new bus features in TfL Go

(d) **Providing an integrated account and payments experience**

Later this year, we plan to integrate account and payment functionality. Technical delivery is nearing completion, and we are now preparing for an extended testing phase. Customers will be able to top-up their Oyster card, purchase Travelcards and view their journey history. This experience will adopt the high accessibility standards set across the rest of the app and protect a significant revenue stream. The enhanced customer offer for contactless users should also drive registrations and grow our customer database.

Once enabled, we can turn our attention to simplifying self-service, including incomplete journey resolution; reducing demand on our contact centre and delivering cost savings. We will also have a much larger user base and therefore more potential for revenue generation.
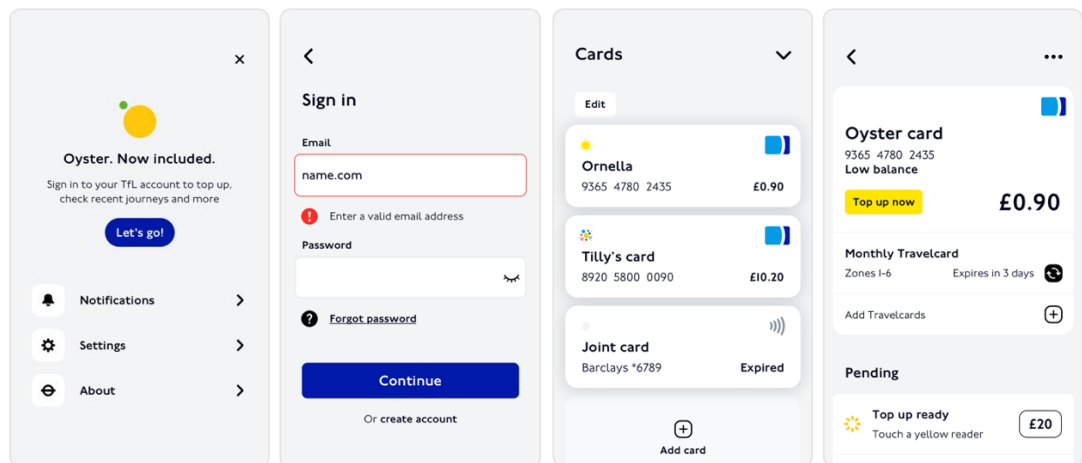

Figure 2 – screenshots showing integrated account and payment functionality in TfL Go

(e) Offering a more personal experience

We are investigating the use of customer data (enabled via accounts) to make intelligent suggestions about home locations, regular destinations and frequent journeys.

We are also working on major event notifications and line disruption notifications. These are considered a hygiene factor by customers who want timely, relevant information and offer the added benefit of driving customers back to the app more frequently.
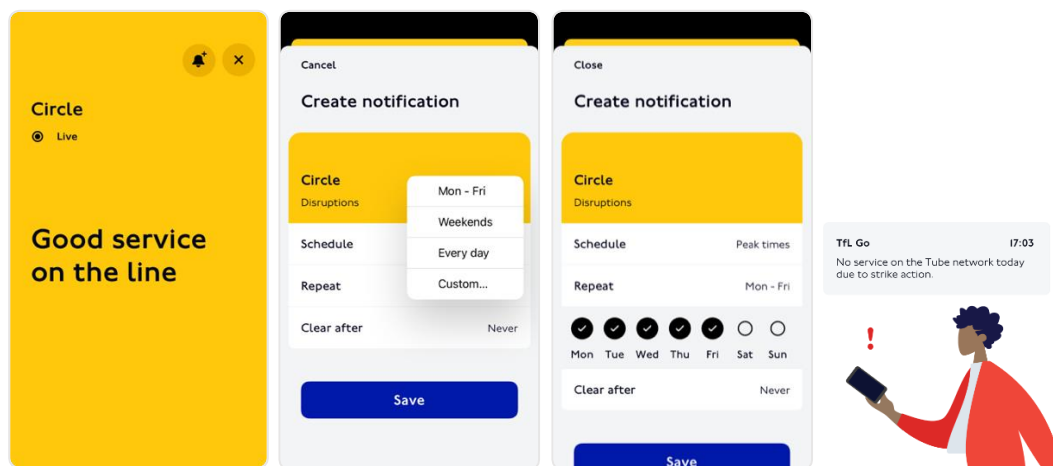
Figure 3 – screenshots showing notification functionality in TfL Go

(f) Supporting non-TfL modes

Customers have indicated that additional National Rail information is a pre-requisite for a comprehensive London-wide transport app. Our Journey Planner already offers routes including National Rail journey legs, but we are complementing this with live departure boards.

5.2 During this financial year (2023/24) we will align feature development with changes to the physical network: from Superloop and the renaming of the London Overground lines, to the rollout of 4G/5G (a key enabler for increasingly localised experiences) on the underground networks.

5.3 Our marketing activity will now shift towards helping customers take better control of their spend (given the cost-of-living crisis) and making travel easier. It will be more closely aligned with our other public transport campaigns.

6 Phase 3: Expand and influence (now and future)

6.1 With an established and engaged user base we can use the app to influence behaviours and generate revenue. Some of that activity has already kicked off:

(a) Encouraging more leisure journeys

During the summer of 2022, we launched 'Promoted Places'. This feature appears in search and helps customers discover and visit places of interest, cultural hubs and events. We have used the format to celebrate the phased opening of the Elizabeth line and the King's Coronation, and to promote summer/winter/spring activities (including RideLondon and the London Transport Museum).

Figure 4 – screenshots of 'Promoted Places' in TfL Go

(b) Generating revenue

This financial year (2023/24) we will test the viability of Promoted Places for revenue generation. Previous trials have demonstrated a high level of engagement with between six and nine per cent of users interacting with the feature. If we scale the app to one million unique users overall, we might expect to generate around £360k per year.

This revenue is in addition to the hard-to-quantify value generated for TfL, and the wider London economy, by simply having an effective, accessible app experience.

(c) Encouraging active travel

The app already includes information for cyclists. However, we plan to enhance this by offering a 'starter' experience for novice cyclists so that we can encourage those who do not cycle, or rarely cycle, to try it.

The TfL Open Innovation team is running a proof of concept, testing new ways to improve the cycle route choice we offer to customers. This is a key priority for the Mayor and our Walking and Cycling Commissioner and part of Action 15 of the Cycling Action Plan 2 to improve digital journey planning. If successful, TfL Go's routing algorithm will be updated to prioritise our Cycleways network and other more attractive places to cycle. Papers on Cycling Action Plan 2 and Digital Wayfinding for Cycling appear elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting.

We are already upgrading our Journey Planner geographic mapping solution to OpenStreetMap. This offers much greater fidelity than our current mapping solution and will make it easier to align with TfL's cycling infrastructure. We also plan to link through to the Santander Cycles app and synchronise with the emergent micro-mobility strategy.
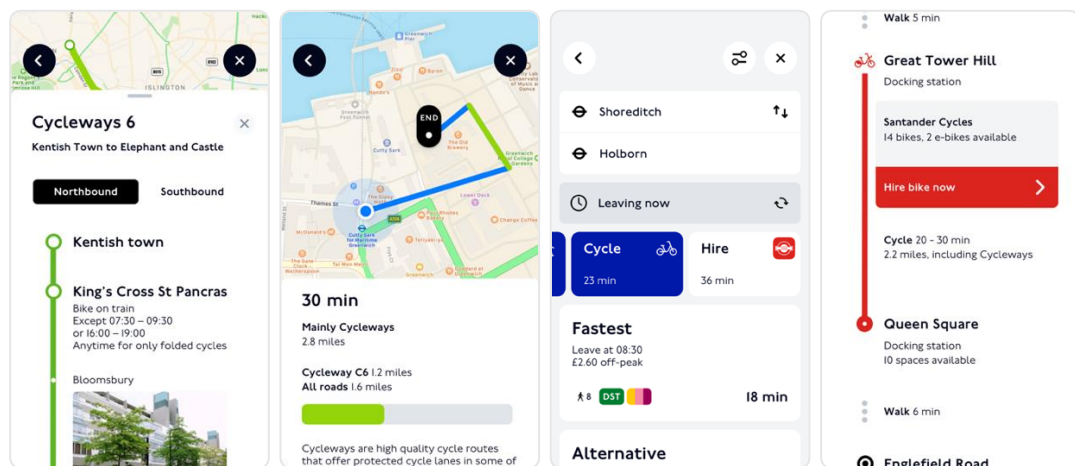
Figure 5 – screenshots showing improved cycle routing in TfL Go

(d)   Capturing location data

Finally, as part of our acceleration activity, we plan to engage a third-party to help capture and interpret location/accelerometer data from the app. With customers' consent, we could use this understanding of customer behaviour and transport mode choices to deliver business insight and tailor increasingly personal nudges.

List of Appendices to this report

None

List of Background Papers:

None

Contact Officer: Shashi Verma, Chief Technology Officer
Email: shashiverma@tfl.gov.uk

Contact Officer: Emma Strain, Customer Director
Email: emmastrain@tfl.gov.uk