

Rail Delivery Group



Timetable Comparator Service Code of Practice

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Review Information

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Release Control

The following personnel must formally approve the document prior to assigning a non-draft version number.

Organisation	Role	Name
RDG	Head of Customer Information	Adam Blower

Distribution

Organisation	Role	Name
RDG	N/A	N/A
TOCs	N/A	N/A
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Table of contents

1.	Introduction	4
1.1	Overview	4
1.2	Compliance	4
1.3	Document Ownership	4
1.4	Background	4
1.5	Purpose	4
1.6	Scope	5
1.7	Related Subjects and references	5
2.	Principles	6
2.1	Mandatory principle	6
2.1.1	The customer must be allowed to travel on earlier or later services.	6
2.2	Best practices	6
2.2.1	Customers with connecting journeys.	6
2.2.2	Use of existing ticket.	6
2.2.3	Considerations around specific scenarios that might arise.	6
2.2.4	Notes	6
3.	Responsibilities for sharing the Code of Practice.....	7
4.	Governance review	7

Terms and Definitions

Term	Definition
NRCoT	National Rail Conditions of Travel
ORR	The Office of Rail and Road
SISJ	Smarter Information, Smarter Journey
TCS	Timetable Comparator Service
TIS	Ticket Issuing System
TOC	Train Operating Company
TPR	Third-Party Retailer

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

1.1.1 This documentation contains the commercial policies for customers who are booked on trains which have subsequently been cancelled or altered via the Timetable Comparator Service (TCS) process.

1.2 Compliance

1.2.1 This approved Code of Practice is intended to reflect good practice and outlines minimum expectations of the Train Operating Companies (TOCs) and Third-Party Retailers (TPRs) sending customer notifications via the Timetable Comparator Service.

1.2.2 TOCs and retailers can go beyond the guidelines set out in this Code of Practice if they wish to and are expected not to discontinue or reduce existing practices where these exceed those of the Code of Practice.

1.3 Document Ownership

1.3.1 TOCs and TPRs are responsible for implementing the principles set out in this Code of Practice and should ensure that copies are made available as required to those within their own organisations.

1.3.2 This document has been agreed in partnership with the following organisations:

- The TOCs which currently operate in Great Britain
- TIS Accredited TPRs
- Rail Delivery Group
- The Office of Rail and Road (ORR)
- Transport Focus

1.4 Background

1.4.1 The Smarter Information, Smarter Journey (SISJ) programme is the industry catalyst for delivering better and simpler customer information to customers on Great Britain's Railway. As part of the SISJ programme's objective of letting customers know if their booking has been retimed or cancelled, TCS was developed in 2021. TCS automatically identifies timetable changes that may affect a customer's booked journey, giving retailers the opportunity to send out notifications to registered customers when their journey has been retimed or cancelled up to 48 hours before the day of travel.

1.5 Purpose

1.5.1 This Code of Practice sets out the principles to be applied by TOCs and Third-Party Retailers for customers receiving TCS notifications.

1.5.2 Three main objectives are to be fulfilled by the policies set out in this document:

- Ensure that customers are notified that they have options to travel at an alternative time, at no extra cost, when their train is cancelled or retimed.
- Provide clear guidance to retailers on the options available to customers when their train is cancelled or retimed and notified via the TCS process, so that retailers can communicate these options to customers.
- Ensure that Third-Party Retailers and other TOCs are aware of and provide sufficient details on the TOCs' Commercial Policies that they sell tickets for.

- 1.5.3 TOCs and TPRs should liaise with each other to ensure that consistent policies are communicated across retailing websites. However, the specification of alternative services, outside of the Mandatory Principle, must be undertaken by the relevant TOCs providing the train services and not by retailers (TOCs or TPRs). TOCs are responsible for publishing customer advice consistent with, as a minimum the Mandatory Principle outlined in this Code of Practice on their own websites and providing information so that other retailers are able to provide information through their websites.

1.6 Scope

- 1.6.1 This Code of Practice applies to TOCs and TPRs sending customer notifications prompted by the TCS. It specifically covers notifications in relation to customers holding train-specific (Advance) tickets and time restricted (Off-Peak or Super Off Peak) tickets where the alternative services offered include travel that would not normally be allowed within the restrictions of the Advance / Off-Peak ticket held. Anytime tickets are also included in scope of this document where the existing rights of the ticket are inferior to the principles outlined in this document, specifically the 'Best Practice' principles.
- 1.6.2 The guidance in this Code of Practice is tailored to inform customers for whom contact information (e.g., email address) is available and can therefore be informed directly of their options via the TCS notification process. However, for customers who cannot be proactively informed of changes because contact details are not available, the policies outlined in this document will also apply to ensure consistency. This Code of Practice supports the obligations set out in the National Rail Conditions of Travel (NRCoT) and provides additional guidance to TOCs and TPRs where the TCS process allows customers to be advised of additional options available to them in advance of the date of travel. If a customer no longer wishes to travel, they remain entitled to a full, fee free refund of the fare paid as set out in the NRCoT.

1.7 Related Subjects and references

- 1.7.1 This Code of Practice supports the relevant requirements in the NRCoT, TOC Passenger's Charters, Customer Information Pledges, and applicable consumer law.

2. Principles

2.1 Mandatory principle

This section highlights the principle that must be fulfilled by the TOCs and Third-Party Retailers. Retailers.

2.1.1 The customer must be allowed to travel on earlier or later services.

When a customer's originally booked service is cancelled, an Operator must give the customer the option to travel on either of the following: one of the two services immediately after their original cancelled service, or one of the two services prior to their original cancelled service.

2.2 Best practices

This section lists the best practices or guidelines, which to the extent possible, should be followed by the retailers. However, their implementation is at the discretion of the retailers, depending on their own business situation and constraints.

2.2.1 Customers with connecting journeys.

Where multiple services or train operators are involved, operators should provide sufficient flexibility to ensure customers can choose from appropriate alternative train service options, beyond the two train services before/after limits outlined in the Mandatory Principle, such that they can complete their journey.

2.2.2 Use of existing ticket.

The customer should be able to make use of their existing ticket when using the alternative train services that have been advised. Customers should be encouraged to have their TCS notification available on their journey in case of query by station or on-train staff.

2.2.3 Considerations around specific scenarios that might arise.

2.2.3.1 Where the original journey was booked for a quieter service but the alternative services available fall at busier times, the Mandatory Principle still applies, however, train operators may encourage use of alternative quieter services to ensure the most appropriate solution for the customer.

2.2.3.2 Where travel on the same day under the Mandatory Principle is not reasonably practicable, for example because it is the first, last or only service of the day, or it is one of a few infrequent service options, customers should be offered the opportunity to travel on the previous or following day, or the same day the previous or following week, depending on what is most suitable to their needs.

2.2.3.3 Where there are train cancellations across multiple days, the flexibility should be extended to allow, wherever possible, travel one day before the period of disruption commences or up to 2 days after the disruption has ended, or the same day the previous or following week.

2.2.4 Notes

2.2.4.1 Where a customer is required to use an alternative service, it is assumed the alternative will be run by the same operator. Where the timetable has changed so that no suitable service is provided by the same operator, agreement should be reached on an alternative carrier that the customer may use and this will be communicated to them.

2.2.4.2 Some ticket types will offer greater flexibility than two trains before/two after (mandatory principle 2.1.1) and care must be taken not to inaccurately constrain the customer’s choice where that is the case.

3. Responsibilities for sharing the Code of Practice

- TOCs are responsible for publishing customer advice consistent with this Code of Practice on their own websites.
- TOCs are responsible for ensuring that the Code of Practice is shared with customer facing staff so that they are aware of the updated policies when liaising with customers.
- RDG are responsible for ensuring TPRs are aware of the Code of Practice and the Mandatory Policy to enable them to publish customer advice in line with this Code of Practice on their websites and notifications.
- TPRs should follow TOC policies in relation to the alternative services which may be offered for train-specific (Advance) and relevant Off-Peak tickets.

4. Governance review

The initial Code of Practice was reviewed and endorsed / approved by the following stakeholders and governance groups:

Governance group	Date	Status
SISJ WP1.1. TOCs Working Group	February 2024	Endorsed
Office of Rail and Road (ORR)	March 2024	Endorsed
Department for Transport (DfT)	April 2024	Approved
Transport Focus	May 2024	Endorsed
SISJ WP1.1. Executive Sponsoring Group	May 2024	Endorsed
RDG Fares and Retail Discovery Group (FRDG)	May 2024	Endorsed
Independent Rail Retailers and other Third-Party Retailers	June 2024	Reviewed with comments addressed
Retail and Commercial Forum (RCC)	June 2024	Approved

End.