

## Every trip on London Underground is a noisy nightmare

Transport for London is rightly proud of the way it has transformed London Underground over the last couple of decades. New trains, a more reliable service, better information. But for me, a public transport user all my life, the actual experience of travelling on the tube is infinitely worse than it has ever been. I can just about live with the trains' new lighting which is too bright and the air conditioning systems which are often too cold. What drives me demented are the constant, loud announcements.

Most European countries simply don't have them. They were introduced, against the advice of some of his key advisers, by Tim O'Toole, the American who was appointed Managing Director of London Underground in 2002.

The vast majority are unnecessary. We can work out for ourselves to take a little more care when the surfaces may be slippery in wet weather. We have been doing it for decades! It's not beyond our ingenuity to carry a bottle of water in hot weather. We don't need to be told the train will be coming in one minute and then 30 seconds later that it is approaching. And we do know we need to let passengers off the train first before we can board.

***'The vast majority of announcements are unnecessary and go way beyond what is required for blind and partially-sited people. Rumours are that the new Crossrail trains are worse than anything we have seen so far.'***

The announcements go way beyond what is required for blind and partially-sited people. What the RNIB (Royal National Institute for Blind People) say is this: "Audible announcements on trains let people know which line they are using and the next station, along with the destination of the train."

Presumably, a similar announcement on the platform is needed.

<http://ageactionalliance.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/The-passenger-experience-guide-LP1.pdf>. Nothing about bottles of water, wet weather or holding on to the handrail when on the escalator. I think my mother told me the importance of doing that when I was a young boy!

When I put it to them, London Underground said the announcements were made to improve safety, to provide passengers with information and, when I pushed them, they admitted they were also intended to speed up the operation of the trains. They were coy about whether there was any proven link between the huge increase in the number of announcements and an improvement in safety. What we do know is that the number of accidents to passengers increased by about 20% between 2012 and 2017, at a time when the announcements have become more frequent: <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/sshrp-20171122-item10-reducing-injuries-across-tfl.pdf>

When I spoke to London Underground, they were also evasive about why the announcements were so loud. They seemed to imply they couldn't be turned down which is difficult to believe as the volume can vary on both trains and

platforms. And there was something about staff not using the equipment properly. I very much got the sense that I wasn't been told the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth!

Staff are under orders to make the announcements frequently and constantly. I understand it is a disciplinary offence if they don't. At present, the Underground is an audible hell for somebody like me. Rumours are that the new Crossrail trains are worse than anything we have seen so far. Tim O'Toole might have left London Underground and been sacked from his last job as MD of First Group but his noise legacy lives on.

**Posted by John Stewart**