

# London Underground to run extended Tube services until 2am on Friday and Saturday evenings from 2015

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The London Underground will run extended Tube services until 2am on Friday and Saturday evenings from 2015, it has been revealed today.

TfL has reportedly fast-tracked proposals following the success of the Olympics timetable, when the Tube ran at least an hour later every night and coped with record passenger numbers.

The move is designed to allow Londoners to have more fun partying for longer at weekends, and boosting the economy at the same time.

Transport for London's Mike Brown said: "The Tube is the artery of London and we want to make the city's heart beat strongly and later on into the night.

"It will be a real benefit for London's night-time economy, either for people working late or enjoying themselves. If people want to buy that extra meal, cup of coffee or pint of beer, why wouldn't we want to encourage that?"

"Following the success of the Olympics and the historic records of reliability, there is a great opportunity to consider what more we could do with our hours — particularly late running on Fridays and Saturdays."

However Mr Brown ruled a New York-style round-the-clock operation, saying the world's oldest Underground system - marking its 150th anniversary this year - was simply not built for it.

TfL revealed its proposals after an extension of Tube hours was highlighted in a debate hosted by the Evening Standard on how to improve life in the capital.

There was a cautious reaction from powerful Tube unions. They made clear that while they are not against the scheme in principle, key negotiations concerning pay, shifts and other issues lie ahead.

Extended hours have been made possible thanks to improved reliability after modernisation of the Victoria, Jubilee and Northern lines and planned upgrades to the District, Circle, Metropolitan and Hammersmith & City lines.

A new timetable would be introduced at the start of 2015 at the earliest on a "core network" with routes from north-to-south and east-to-west and with links to the extensive night bus network.

Mr Brown said: "You could operate a core network to get you around large parts of the city but you need to get to this critical point to make it viable from a passenger

information perspective if nothing else.”

At present the last Victoria line train from Oxford Circus departs at 12.40am on Fridays and Saturdays. The last Northern line train from Leicester Square also leaves at 12.40am. Both would benefit from a later service to get revellers home.

Under the new plans, the first morning trains at the weekend would start at 6am on Saturday and 7am on Sunday as usual. But Mr Brown stressed that with a current £12 billion gap in funding to complete the Tube modernisation, passengers would be deprived of the extended service on the Piccadilly Line — the most neglected route, which relies on “ancient” trains and signals.

He said: “You need paramedic-style maintenance to keep the thing running. Every hour trains are not running you need to be in there picking up failures that might be about to happen.”

High demand is forecast for the later trains and the service would pay for itself through extra fare revenue, TfL forecasts. Transport bosses believe that unions would welcome the later services as a means of boosting wages and creating more jobs for drivers and station staff.

“Why would any union have any problems with extra jobs?” said Mr Brown. “We would negotiate pay for extra hours as a permanent fixture but I’m sure they would welcome the prospect of earning some more money.”

London First’s chief executive Baroness Valentine said: “This would be a powerful signal for the night-time economy and would recognise that London has a 24-hour economy.”

Manuel Cortes, leader of the TSSA union whose members include ticket office staff, said: “We are always willing to listen to any sensible proposal to improve service on the Tube and willing to negotiate on that basis.”

The train drivers’ union Aslef said: “We would also look at sensible proposals but there are some tough negotiations ahead.”

Changes would bring London into line with other world capitals.

On the Paris Metro the service at weekends and public holidays runs until 1.40am, and 12.40am during the working week.

On the New York subway there are typically three trains an hour from midnight until 6am.

The first trains on Berlin’s U-Bahn run shortly after 4am; the last between midnight and 1am, except on Fridays and Saturdays when trains run all night on seven lines.

The Metro in Rio de Janeiro, host of the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympics, only runs until midnight from Monday to Saturday, and to 11pm on Sundays and holidays