



'Hundreds of Tube ticket offices to shut' as machines replace staff



Sign of the future: ticket offices could disappear from most London stations



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Hundreds of Tube ticket offices will be scrapped next year as Mayor Boris Johnson seeks to cut thousands of London Underground jobs, it was claimed today.

Mobile units of supervisors will replace staff at stations outside zone one in an attempt to move to full automation of ticket sales to cut costs.

Rail unions revealed the proposals as they published a poll showing overwhelming opposition to ticket office closures, with 71 per cent of travellers against full automation.

London Underground managing director Mike Brown said he would make public next month plans to lay off staff as machines replace ticket office staff.

Cuts are expected to come into effect next March following a 90-day consultation with Tube unions. Transport for London faces a £225 million cut to its annual operational budget from 2016.

Asked whether he expected a wave of strike action, Mr Brown said: "I hope not, if we have to change job roles it will be voluntary where appropriate. Not every employer would be as enlightened as us and hope unions recognise this."

Mr Brown said he had "not firmed up" ticket office closures but insisted stations would all retain at least one member of staff.

But he added: "Ticket machines can perform every function of a ticket office." Addressing the London Assembly, Manuel Cortes

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of the TSSA said: "If you believe that you can make these staff cuts and keep stations staffed then you believe in Father Christmas."

He rejected TfL's claims that safety would be unaffected.

TSSA claimed that some of the teams of mobile safety supervisors would be shared between six stations.

John Leach, the RMTs London transport regional organiser: "Staff are deeply anxious about it and the travelling public will be too."

The Survation research showing huge opposition to the closures was based on a sample of more than a thousand commuters. It was feared that all 268 Tube ticket offices could be closed.

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