



Subway Opening Hours

Date of meeting 17 December 2021

Date of report 8 December 2021

Report by Director of Subway

1. Object of report

To advise the Partnership of the operational issues that require to be assessed and resolved prior to potential expansion of Subway Sunday Opening Hours.

2. Background

- 2.1 Currently, Sunday operating hours commence at 10.00am, closing at 6.30pm. This arrangement is long standing.
- 2.2 During the recent COP26 event the hours were extended on a Sunday for two consecutive weeks, from 08.00am to 10.00pm (31 October 2021 and 7 November 2021). This was at the direct request of the organisers of the event, and is in line with other temporary extensions to Sunday service to support large scale events in and around Glasgow, and also short periods such as extended Christmas shopping hours (exception to this in 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions). Subway do regularly extend Sunday hours to support local events or commerce.
- 2.3 Partnership members are aware that this change of hours for the COP 26 event resulted in an on-line petition to consider a more permanent extension of hours. Partnership members will also be aware that SPT Subway is not unique in offering a reduced service on a Sunday, as this is common across many public transport modes on a Sunday which allows for necessary maintenance of all transport networks.
- 2.4 As members have previously been advised, a review of Subway opening hours is included as part of the Subway Modernisation workstream programme, together with the operational staffing plans, and maintenance plans of the new system. Changes to Subway opening hours on a permanent basis is not only an issue for technical and maintenance considerations, but also for SPT's staff as it will require changes to existing and well embedded shift patterns, T&Cs and working practices. These 'people' changes are therefore currently planned be part of the Target Operating Model workstream, which has commenced, and which will be fully developed as we move closer to the new system (new trains, signalling, platform screen doors and ultimately Unattended Train Operation) being fully operational.

2.5 Operational context

2.5.1 Operational Maintenance & Safety

The Subway runs every day of the year, with the exception of Christmas Day and New Year's Day. As such, regular routine maintenance, exceptional maintenance, infrastructure replacements, standalone capital improvements, and all modernisation work is undertaken in the relatively short 'engineering hours' of c. 12.30am to 5.00am when trains do not operate. The exception to this is each Sunday into Monday, where a longer Engineering Hours window of c. 7.00pm to 5.00am is available.

Routine maintenance includes maintenance of all equipment and infrastructure including the tunnel walls, the technical and electrical line equipment, and the track and track bed. Third party contractors (and therefore contracts) are used extensively to maintain and improve the Subway, and the extended Sunday Engineering Hours give significant productivity gains and associated cost savings when mobilising and managing contractors.

An internal example of where SPT staff regularly utilise the extended Sunday Engineering Hours is the replacement of track baseplates, pads, and clips. This can be achieved in more limited possessions, but productivity would fall. Other aspects relating to replacement of 'check rail' (part of the track running rail) can require longer possessions, such as those on a Sunday.

To put into context, it is during these engineering hours that the safety and integrity of the 125 year old system and infrastructure is checked and maintained – rails and track bed are walked and inspected, physical works to ensure the integrity of tunnels are undertaken, cables for communications are inspected and maintained, etc. This work cannot be done while operating trains and activity is underway every night.

2.5.2 Subway Modernisation

In addition to the usual maintenance requirements outlined above, Subway Modernisation work has to be undertaken during these engineering hours, and, is about to enter an increased activity phase where extended access to tunnels will be hugely beneficial, indeed essential, giving ANSTA JV potential access on agreed Sundays for extended hours. This will extend their installation / testing window from c.4.5 hours to c.10 hours on these agreed days. The ANSTA JV have a contractual right to a number of extended Sundays, and any changes to this would not only impact Subway Modernisation delivery but would also come at a contractual cost in terms of variation to the main Subway Modernisation Contract (the 'MSA').

2.6 Service Supply and Customer Demand

2.6.1 Staff / Contractor support availability

Currently, SPT operate a single nine-hour staff shift on a Sunday, and any permanent change to this would likely require the full consideration of implications for Operational Staff Terms & Conditions. It must be stressed that whilst SPT covers temporary Sunday extensions via overtime, any permanent change could not be planned on this basis. This potential to have to renegotiate / change long standing shift arrangements and T&Cs, as well as recruiting additional Staff at additional cost could be significant.

By way of example, if SPT extended operating hours to 8.30pm every Sunday, this would require a change to work an 11.5-hour shift. Opening beyond that, to say 11.30pm, would likely mean that SPT would need to consider two shifts on a Sunday. This would require SPT to employ significantly more staff, to cover all required disciplines depending on the extent of the increased opening hours (e.g./ Drivers, Station Masters, Station Assistants).

In terms of approach, consideration of all staffing matters is included in the work to define the new Target Operating Model required for the new system, and it is this is the appropriate place and time to make changes that could have impacts on staffing arrangements

2.6.2 Direct and indirect costs / increased revenue

Depending on the hours decided to extend by, and on agreements that could be reached with Staff / Trade Unions, it is estimated the cost to SPT could be up to c.£600,000 to open and operate a full 'weekday service'. This level of additional service provision could involve recruiting up to twelve additional staff, and the estimate quoted also includes extending the Mitie security contract and extended BTP cover.

Numbers around 'Customer demand' and 'Previous considerations / trials' are covered in sections 2.6.3 and 2.7 below. However, as an illustrative estimate, if around 250 additional passengers are assumed on average every hour on a Sunday extended to a full weekday service at a cost of c.£600,000, the revenue would be c.£185,000, leaving a subsidy of c.£415,000 to be found by SPT and the funding stakeholders.

There would also be significant indirect costs associated with sub-optimisation in maintenance activity due to reduced time windows, more expensive third party contracting due to an inability to gain an extended window, changes to the Subway Modernisation MSA contract, etc.

These figures and scenarios would need significant refinement prior to any decision making.

2.6.3 Customer Demand

The provision of extended Sunday Subway service cannot be simply constrained to issues of cost or technical difficulty, albeit that ensuring overall Subway system safety will always be top priority. It is recognised that SPT provide a valued service to Subways passengers, and their changing needs require to be considered as well.

However, it is difficult to accurately analyse the potential impact of extended opening, as the typical pre-Christmas Sundays and / or COP26 figures are not directly comparable to a 'standard' Sunday in terms of expected footfall. Many customers travelling after 6.30pm may already have made a first journey earlier in the day, so there are possibly journeys before 6.30pm which have been enabled by later opening, but it is even more difficult to quantify these.

It's likely that a long-term / permanent arrangement to extend hours would have some additional benefits compared to short term changes (Christmas Sundays / event coverage such as COP 26), as customers would become used to the new operating patterns and would have confidence in being able to travel later on a

Sunday. For those travelling to/from work, etc, they could establish new travel routines.

It may be of interest to Committee to note that of the suggestions to improve the Subway made during the most recent Customer Survey, only around 8% of passengers questioned suggested extended hours, however almost all of these specifically mentioned Sundays.

It is clear that accurate demand forecasting would require significant further work. However, a review of gate entries by station for festive opening Sundays in 2019 (2020 was not extended due to Covid-19) shows that most of the demand after 6.30pm is for travel from Buchanan Street and St Enoch, with some demand from west end stations including Hillhead and Kelvinhall, as shown below:

HOUR	Bridge Street	Buchanan Street	Cessnock	Cowcaddens	Govan	Hillhead	Ibrox	Kelvinbridge	Kelvinhall	Kinning Park	Partick	Shields Road	St Enoch	St Georges Cross	West Street
09	6	23	6	3	20	15	8	11	4	5	10	6	11	4	2
10	50	152	81	38	118	191	85	162	89	41	111	100	116	82	15
11	56	245	84	48	126	238	83	187	106	57	161	127	189	98	17
12	64	317	94	51	152	298	102	223	156	71	197	143	272	102	19
13	73	425	98	64	146	339	98	226	150	75	217	144	357	120	19
14	55	457	95	69	136	334	88	225	160	78	199	128	465	99	19
15	49	552	66	74	106	350	63	208	166	61	164	75	526	99	10
16	43	619	65	91	92	324	84	177	148	58	155	46	619	74	11
17	51	664	64	79	81	266	76	135	115	50	137	39	601	79	17
18	30	448	30	44	32	176	48	79	80	20	75	24	364	49	4
19	22	376	18	37	23	125	46	70	101	19	49	12	265	36	6
20	6	124	5	12	7	42	11	19	25	4	12	3	69	12	1
Grand Total	504	4,402	707	609	1,041	2,698	792	1,722	1,298	540	1,487	847	3,855	854	142

The hour between 7.00pm and 8.00pm is relatively healthy, with a significant ‘tail off’ between 8.00pm and 9.00pm clearly observable.

The demand figures observed above lead to very crude estimates at this stage and would need significant refinement prior to any future decision making.

2.7 Previous considerations / trials

The issue of early closing on a Sunday has previously been considered on a number of occasions.

In response to such requests in the past, alternatives have been considered and assessed including in 2007 the “Subway Nightrider” was launched; a 20-minute replacement bus service following the route of the Subway at a cost (then) of almost £300,000 across 15 months with a flat £2 fare to passengers being returned to SPT. As well as a full night service on Saturday/Sunday mornings, this also included a service from c. 6.00pm to 11.30pm on a Sunday evening.

This service was eventually withdrawn due to lack of patronage, averaging only 320 passengers across a full weekend (note this was not just a Sunday extension).

3. Conclusions

Extending Sunday Subway operation is a key aspiration for SPT, but the implications for the safe maintenance and integrity of a system 125 years old must be considered. There appears to be a demand for an extended Subway facility on a Sunday evening, although actual demand / patronage is extremely difficult to forecast or predict, but it is recognised that demand grows over time. Any changes to staffing and associated costs (direct and indirect), would be significant.

The requirements for significant levels of invasive tunnel installations and testing as part of Subway Modernisation are very significant at this stage in Subway Modernisation, and therefore any changes to Sunday service levels would likely directly increase time and cost associated with completion of Subway Modernisation.

4. Partnership action

The Partnership is asked to note the contents of this report, whilst also noting that SPT will continue to monitor passenger requirements at all times, and that as part of Subway modernisation, a review of changes and extensions to opening hours and frequency of service is already planned.

5. Consequences

Policy consequences	<i>None at this stage.</i>
Legal consequences	<i>None at this stage.</i>
Financial consequences	<i>None at this stage.</i>
Personnel consequences	<i>None at this stage.</i>
Equalities consequences	<i>None at this stage.</i>
Risk consequences	<i>None at this stage.</i>

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