

TCO REVIEW

1 MARCH – 31 AUGUST 2008

**Michael Arnold
Tolling Customer Ombudsman**

TOLLING CUSTOMER OMBUDSMAN REVIEW

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Introduction

This is my first report as the Tolling Customer Ombudsman following the opening of the EastLink tollway. ConnectEast, as the toll operator Breeze[®], has joined with CityLink[®], EastLink[®], Hills M2[™], Roam[®] and Roam Express[®] to fall under the jurisdiction of the Tolling Customer Ombudsman.

I was pleased to be afforded the opportunity to visit the EastLink complexes and inspect the facilities and technology available for the effective management of their toll road and tolling system. I could not other than be impressed with the sophistication of their systems and the enthusiasm of management and staff.

There will inevitably be teething problems. I, however, had discussions with the Customer Relations Team and am confident that they will provide efficient and speedy attention to issues raised by their customers.

In my last Review I made a number of suggestions about:

- Information about metallic windscreens
- Account information
- Liaison between CityLink and Civic Compliance
- Repeat offenders
- Hard copy information

I must commend Transurban for some positive contributions received in relation to those issues. I understand that Transurban will provide this information on its website. I believe that as this is an initiative I should include the responses in my report.

Metallic Windscreens

Currently, if a vehicle has a metallic windscreen, a box is ticked on the system. Work instructions prompt the Operators to ask customers whether their vehicle has a metallic windscreen at account opening, or when they are adding or replacing a vehicle.

Transurban provides information about metallic windscreens to customers in writing when customers receive their Welcome Pack (in the eTAG installation guide). In addition, the Roam website contains information about metallic windscreens in the eTAG & ePASS Account Guide. The CityLink website contains information in Account Guides and also in the Frequently Asked Questions section. It appears the Roam Express website does not contain information about metallic windscreens.

Options / Recommendations

1. Information about metallic windscreens will be added to the websites of all Transurban businesses, including Roam Express (preferably in the Installation Guides).
2. A review of the customer base and the respective metallic windscreen vehicles will occur. Consideration will be given to sending letters and information leaflets to people with vehicles fitted with a metallic windscreen, reconfirming the correct installation approach and any fees and charges which would apply if not correctly fitted. Transurban is also evaluating the potential application of video tolling for this segment.
3. To ensure customers are aware of information relating to metallic windscreens, in theory, Transurban could include information in a Q&A brochure to include in Welcome Packs. However, due to costing and environmental impact, this option may not be practical.
4. Transurban will be releasing a new customer management system at the start of 2009, across the CityLink and Roam Express businesses. This system will be linked with a separate vehicle database. When a vehicle is added to an Account, the metallic windscreen box will automatically populate if the particular make of vehicle has a metallic windscreen fitted. If the windscreen is optional, it will not populate the windscreen field. If the box is not automatically populated, there will be a question asked about whether a metallic windscreen exists. Obtaining the correct information about metallic windscreens will then enable Transurban to educate the customer as to how to fit the eTAG correctly.

Account information / Customer Service Agreement

Account information is included in customer Welcome Packs and available via all payment channels when purchasing products. Information regarding terms and conditions is also available on Transurban websites, invoices and statements, specific mail-outs and VMS boards. Currently, dissatisfied customers are provided with either verbal or written communication about terms and conditions (depending on the complaint).

Options / Recommendations

Where appropriate, the Customer Care and Customer Resolutions departments of Transurban will respond to complaints in writing if reinforcement of the Customer Service Agreement is required. If possible, Transurban will respond to the customer by email to improve efficiency. If relevant, communication will include a copy of the Customer Service Agreement, with specific reference in the letter to which parts of the Agreement the customer should consider.

Infringement Notices – liaison between CityLink and Civic Compliance Victoria (CCV)

When CityLink issues a Late Toll Invoice (LTI), the invoice includes information about how to make payment, along with advice that the matter may result in a fine

issued by the Victoria Police if payment is not received. Information about the process also appears on the Infringement Notices issued by the Victoria Police.

Information about the enforcement system is available to customers when they contact CityLink's Call Centre. In addition, an outline of the system is contained on both the CityLink and the Department of Justice websites.

Options / Recommendations

CityLink recognise that improved liaison between CityLink and CCV will lead to a closer understanding of systems and responsibilities. CityLink will meet regularly with CCV to discuss opportunities to improve the process. CityLink aims to align scripts and work instructions at CityLink and CCV to clarify roles and information that is provided to customers.

Repeat offenders

CityLink is currently proactively calling some customers with LTIs that are about to escalate to the Victoria Police, to request payment before the matter escalates.

Options / Recommendations

Repeat offenders are difficult to identify due to the driver onus and the ability to nominate LTIs. An analysis is currently being conducted to determine the extent of CityLink customers who receive LTIs because their accounts are in suspension. Once this data has been collated, CityLink will consider some form of proactive communication.

Hardcopy information to customers

The Welcome Pack for Access and Everyday product is issued to all customers when they set up their account. This Pack includes a welcome letter, Customer Service Agreement (terms and conditions), guide to product, Customer Charter, eTAG installation guide (if appropriate), eTAG and holder. Hardcopy information about policies is also available on request through Transurban's 24-hour national Call Centre.

Options / Recommendations

Issuing hardcopy information to existing customers to remind them of Transurban policies may not be desirable, given the cost and the environmental impact. All Transurban policies and practices are available on the websites, and in the first instance, customers will be referred to the appropriate site. If a customer requests further hardcopy information, this will be provided upon request.

Tolling

Some final comments were made in the Review about CityLink's eTAGs covering travel Australia wide, a 10% service fee and the need for a shorter term Transurban wide pass without a tag.

Tag accounts managed by all toll road providers in Australia are interoperable and can be used on all toll roads in Australia. This feature is not exclusive to CityLink. CityLink ceased charging the 10% service fee for interstate travel in March 2008.

Transurban recognises the need for a shorter term non-tag based pass, suitable for motorists using different motorways. Such a product is currently being discussed with other toll road operators and it is hoped to be introduced in the future.

This was constructive feedback with the aim of improving business processes and customer service to customers.

Conclusion

I note that there continues to be timely responses from tollway operators to complaints from their customers, which is to be commended. Where there has not been as prompt a response as a customer expects, it is also encouraging that there has been some positive feedback from customers following the intervention of the TCO, as follows:

"The interest and followup taken by the Office of the Ombudsman in my case has been sincerely appreciated - in particular your letter dated 8 October when progress had seemingly stalled and the essence of the complaint had seemingly not been fully appreciated. Without your independent interest I doubt my complaint - a process which took 8 months and many letters - would have been resolved equitably..."

Below is a table of complaints and outcomes for the reporting period.



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CityLink
EastLink
Roam
Roam Express

Category	Mar 08	April 08	May 08	June 08	July 08	Aug 08
Account Management	2	1	1	3	3	2
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2
	3	3	1		2	
					4	
Billing/Tolling		1		1	1	1
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1
		1	1			1
	1	2			1	1
Damage to Vehicle					1	
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		
				1		
Infringement / Late toll invoice		3	2			
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		
	2		1			
		1				
Infrastructure/ Traffic Management	1		1	1		
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	
	1		1			
Service				1		2
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		1
					1	
Vehicle Classification				1		
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	1
Website						
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4	3
Enquiry/Copy to TCO only	1				1	
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		
	2		1	1	1	
						2
TOTAL	4	5	4	7	6	7
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	11	8
	7	4	3	1	4	1
	2	3	1	1	5	3
Resolved/Closed by Customer Resolutions	4	4	3	7	4	4
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	11	8
	7	4	3	1	3	
	2	3	1	1	5	3
Pending		1	1		2	3
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		
					1	1