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RMT upfront

Industrial and health & safety news for LUL drivers

# Four day week trial ends soon

- ***Permanent roll out could mean all spare duties extended to ten hour shifts***

The Four Day, 36 hour week trial taking place on the Jubilee line will end in September. The trial saw volunteer drivers working up to 10 hours a day, four days a week.

RMT reps and activists have been discussing how to proceed once the trial ends. There are two choices. Either the four day week rosters return and are rolled out across tube depots with ten hour shifts become common place. Or, it ends and we return to the working hours that many members have fought to defend in the past.

One concerning scenario that has been raised by management side is that if a four day week is allowed on a permanent basis in a depot, they would require all spare turns to be ten hours long, both on four day and five day week rotas.

## The trial reviewed

The experiences of the Jubilee Line trial will likely be reflected at other depots. The effects would likely be amplified as it would be a permanent roster, not a fixed time trial.

Some drivers have been happy with the trial and it has worked well for them. Others who took part have decided they don't want to work those hours again either because the extreme shifts aren't suitable, or the long hours are so tiring that the extra rest day is lost recovering.

At Stratford depot trial numbers had to be slashed as fewer drivers than expected wished to take part. Meanwhile at Wembley Park there were more volunteers initially, but an ongoing problem with people dropping out and uncovered duties having to be picked up by 'five day week' spares. The result? An increased workload for those not involved in the trial.

Middle turns were slashed on the line as the longer extreme shifts meant they also covered most the work that mid turns do as well. This had a big impact on five day week drivers who previously worked middle turns to fit around childcare needs.

## A risk too far?

'Fit for the Future: Trains,' or whatever prattle tube bosses want to call the next round of cuts, will be all about increasing productivity, which means more handle time. We could be aiding management in achieving that extra flexibility by allowing longer duty lengths and handle times to become normal. Would you trust management to give up your maximum working times?

## Why did trial take place?

The 2015 wage settlement included a number of clauses relating to work life balance for train operators; one of these was a trial of a 36 hour, four day week. This six month trial began on the Jubilee Line in March and runs until September. During this time managers have been compiling data about its efficiency, looking at issues such as fatigue, sickness levels and any operational incidents. It is the position of the RMT that at the end of the trial a referendum needs to take place to give members the final decision on if it should be made permanent.

**Parameters**

In order to accommodate the 4DW the driving times were changed as follows:

Max driving time - 4h 45m
Max either half of duty - 5h 45m
Max length of duty - 10h 00m

# RMT charter calls for a four day, 32 hour working week

The RMT drivers' charter contains our long-standing call for a four day working week of 32 hours. This demand has formed a part of our pay negotiations for years and would mean a major improvement to work life balance. We believe the surest route to achieving that is to push for a shorter working week, not to risk giving away existing agreements on maximum working hours.

There was a time when railway workers did shifts of near fifty hours a week. The idea we would get a 36 hour week was then unthinkable. But now we are just 4 hours from a four day, 32 hour week roster.

The RMT focus is on continuing to drive down hours, not risking a four day week by busting frameworks.

## Reduced hours working

London Underground bosses agreed as a part of the 2015 pay deal to look at reduced hours (less hours a week with less pay) working; but they now aren't taking that agreement seriously. They've said that to allow reduced hours working, the driver would have to go into the pool. That would mean only knowing our shifts with a few days' notice. How would that help a parent with childcare needs if they keep getting extreme shifts? What good would it do somebody who chooses to take a pay cut to get more quality time at home; only to find that time cut off at 5pm when they have to leave home for a late shift, or that nothing can be planned in advance as they are no longer on a roster?

The RMT is heading to the dispute arbitration service ACAS on this issue to push for London Underground to make a proper offer, which works for drivers on the issue of reduced hours working.

## Take the debate to your branch

This issue is one of the biggest to affect train driver's conditions in a long time and so it is important that members get involved and have there say. Try and get along to your next branch meeting to join the discussion or speak to your rep about your view on the trial.

What do you think of working longer hours for a shorter week? Let us know:

info@rmtlondoncalling.org.uk.

## Get in touch

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