# TfL offers exclusive full-line sponsorship for Waterloo and City line in commercial first



Transport for London (TfL) is embarking on an unprecedented commercial venture by offering the entire Waterloo and City line for exclusive sponsorship in a bold effort to generate millions of pounds in revenue. This initiative marks the first time that a full London Underground line—rather than just individual stations—has been made available for comprehensive branding rights. The Waterloo and City line, a short two-stop shuttle connecting Bank and Waterloo stations, is known colloquially as "The Drain" and caters mainly to professionals commuting to the financial district. Despite its short route, it carries around 15 million passengers annually.

TfL’s sponsorship package promises an extensive branding presence that includes everything from seat fabric and station signage to maps and “experiential spaces,” allowing a corporate partner to effectively "own the journey." However, the line’s name will remain unchanged, preserving a degree of familiarity and navigational clarity for commuters. The transport authority emphasises that this is a far-reaching commercial opportunity designed to attract high-profile brands looking to engage with the city’s millions of professionals and decision-makers who travel the route regularly.

This move follows a series of previous sponsorship experiments involving individual London Underground stations. For instance, Southgate station was temporarily renamed “Gareth Southgate” in 2018 to celebrate the England football manager’s success in the World Cup, and Bond Street station was rebranded as “Burberry Street” during London Fashion Week in October 2023. These station-level branding exercises, while generating revenue—such as £250,000 from Samsung renaming Old Street to “Fold Street”—have also drawn passenger complaints due to confusion caused by the temporary signage changes. TfL will hence need to balance creative commercial appeal with maintaining an intuitive and user-friendly transport environment.

The full-line sponsorship of the Waterloo and City line could far surpass previous revenue totals, as the line’s passenger numbers dwarf those of single stations or even other sponsored transport services. The only prior instance of an entire transport route sponsorship in London was a £2.1 million, five-year deal with IFS Cloud for the Thames cable car, which carries substantially fewer passengers.

TfL’s advertising operations are currently managed by Global and JCDecaux under a new contract commencing April 2025. These partnerships are set to advance digital and traditional advertising opportunities across London’s transport network with a focus on innovation and targeted engagement, further supporting the broader commercial strategy to fund the city’s infrastructure.

The offer to sponsor the Waterloo and City line sits against a backdrop of calls for TfL to explore more extensive commercial partnerships, including naming rights for entire stations or lines. Some estimates suggest these approaches could generate upwards of £136 million, potentially easing the financial pressures on public transport and investment in upgrades. Nonetheless, TfL has stressed the importance of commuter clarity and respect for station heritage, aiming to ensure that any sponsorships do not undermine the user experience.

TfL’s approach is guided by a joint sponsorship policy with the Greater London Authority, which sets out clear parameters to maintain transparency and allow potential sponsors to evaluate opportunities carefully. Past high-profile agreements with Barclays, Emirates, and Virgin Media have demonstrated the role sponsorship plays in funding key projects such as cycle hire schemes and Wi-Fi installation on the Underground.

This pioneering step to sell full-line sponsorship rights on the Underground exemplifies TfL’s innovative attempt to diversify income streams amid ongoing funding challenges. It remains to be seen which brand will take up the offer to become the first to fully brand an entire London Tube line, but it is clear that the Waterloo and City line presents a uniquely coveted platform for corporate marketing in the capital.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/tfl-waterloo-city-rebrand-b2784015.html), [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/tube-sponsorship-rights-tfl-london-underground-waterloo-and-city-b1236721.html), [[3]](https://www.cityam.com/transport-for-london-offers-up-first-chance-to-sponsor-tube-line/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/tfl-waterloo-city-rebrand-b2784015.html), [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/tube-sponsorship-rights-tfl-london-underground-waterloo-and-city-b1236721.html), [[3]](https://www.cityam.com/transport-for-london-offers-up-first-chance-to-sponsor-tube-line/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/tfl-waterloo-city-rebrand-b2784015.html), [[7]](https://nile.tfl.gov.uk/corporate/publications-and-reports/contracts)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/tfl-waterloo-city-rebrand-b2784015.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[4]](https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2024/september/tfl-selects-global-and-jcdecaux-to-manage-its-world-leading-advertising-contracts), [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/tfl-waterloo-city-rebrand-b2784015.html)
* Paragraph 6 – [[5]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/letting-sponsors-name-tube-stops-would-be-worth-millions-8642262.html), [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/tfl-waterloo-city-rebrand-b2784015.html)
* Paragraph 7 – [[6]](https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2013/november/transport-for-london-publishes-joint-sponsorship-policy-with-greater-london-authority), [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/tfl-waterloo-city-rebrand-b2784015.html)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/tfl-waterloo-city-rebrand-b2784015.html), [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/tube-sponsorship-rights-tfl-london-underground-waterloo-and-city-b1236721.html), [[3]](https://www.cityam.com/transport-for-london-offers-up-first-chance-to-sponsor-tube-line/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/tfl-waterloo-city-rebrand-b2784015.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/tube-sponsorship-rights-tfl-london-underground-waterloo-and-city-b1236721.html> - Transport for London (TfL) is offering businesses the chance to sponsor the entire Waterloo & City line, a two-stop, three-minute shuttle service connecting Waterloo and Bank stations. This initiative marks the first time TfL has provided full-line sponsorship, which includes comprehensive branding opportunities such as seat fabric, signage, maps, and experiential spaces. TfL emphasizes that the line's name will remain unchanged, and the sponsorship aims to generate significant revenue to support London's transport network. The Waterloo & City line, known as 'The Drain,' serves approximately 15 million passengers annually, primarily professionals commuting to the financial district.
3. <https://www.cityam.com/transport-for-london-offers-up-first-chance-to-sponsor-tube-line/> - Transport for London (TfL) has announced a pioneering opportunity for businesses to sponsor the entire Waterloo & City line, a two-stop, three-minute shuttle connecting Waterloo and Bank stations. This initiative offers 'full-line branding,' encompassing seat fabric, signage, maps, and experiential spaces, without renaming the line. TfL highlights that millions of professionals and decision-makers travel this route annually, presenting a unique branding opportunity. The sponsorship aims to generate substantial revenue to support London's transport network, with discussions still in the early stages.
4. <https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2024/september/tfl-selects-global-and-jcdecaux-to-manage-its-world-leading-advertising-contracts> - Transport for London (TfL) has selected Global and JCDecaux to manage its advertising estate, including digital and traditional advertising sites on the Tube, London Overground, DLR, Tram, and Elizabeth line. The contracts, starting on 1 April 2025, aim to further develop London's largest advertising estate and bring brands closer to commuters. TfL and its media partners plan to introduce innovative advertising to the millions who use London's transport network daily, with a focus on data, digitisation, and connecting brands with the right audiences.
5. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/letting-sponsors-name-tube-stops-would-be-worth-millions-8642262.html> - Transport for London (TfL) has been urged to explore private sponsorship of Tube stations and entire lines to generate significant revenue, potentially raising an estimated £136 million. This approach could subsidise travel costs and support infrastructure projects. The proposal suggests that major brands could help fund transport services by adding their names to busy stations, similar to practices in cities like Madrid, Dubai, New York, and Philadelphia. TfL responded by emphasising the value commuters place on station heritage and the importance of maintaining clarity in station names.
6. <https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2013/november/transport-for-london-publishes-joint-sponsorship-policy-with-greater-london-authority> - Transport for London (TfL) has published a joint sponsorship policy with the Greater London Authority (GLA) to provide clear guidelines for seeking and agreeing on sponsorship deals. The policy aims to enable potential sponsors to assess whether they want to approach TfL with sponsorship ideas. TfL has already secured high-value sponsorship deals with companies like Barclays, Emirates, and Virgin Media, contributing to the funding of major infrastructure projects such as the Barclays Cycle Hire and Wi-Fi on the Underground through Virgin Media.
7. <https://nile.tfl.gov.uk/corporate/publications-and-reports/contracts> - Transport for London (TfL) maintains a list of commercial and sponsorship agreements to ensure transparency in its arrangements with partners. Notable contracts include the sponsorship of the 'Baby on Board' badge by Not on the High Street, a partnership with BBC for 'Green Planet' advertising at Green Park station, and a promotion by Burberry Group PLC at Bond Street station. These agreements demonstrate TfL's approach to collaborating with various brands to enhance the passenger experience and generate revenue for the transport network.