

Debate

Ticketmaster Candlesticks It to Paul McCartney Concert Goers

ISSUE: Should companies reimburse consumers stuck in traffic for missed events?

Sometimes fans who purchase tickets to an event miss the event due to circumstances unforeseen by either the fans or the event promoters. Sometimes it is the fault of the fans themselves. And sometimes the event promoters are held to be responsible. Often when the mistake is the fault of the event promoter, the company involved will provide refunds or other types of compensation. However, it is the responsibility of the fans to get themselves to the event. Although event promoters and city officials might provide advice, traditionally they are not held to be responsible if something should happen on the way to the event.

But what happens when a person leaves for an event 4 hours in advance and spends the next 5 hours stuck in traffic? This was the case of some fans who tried to attend Paul McCartney's farewell Candlestick concert in San Francisco on August 14, 2014. Thousands of fans were stuck in traffic outside Candlestick Park trying to get to the concert. In addition to a traffic jam, five crashes and some stalled vehicles on Highway 101 likely exacerbated the problem. Many of these fans had paid hundreds of dollars for the tickets.

Event promoter Another Planet Entertainment claimed it would examine the requests for refunds on a case-by-case basis, but a week later it announced it was not its policy to issue refunds for these types of things. Fans who spent the evening stuck in traffic were outraged. They launched a Change.org petition that they addressed to Another Planet Entertainment, San Francisco mayor Ed Lee, and others. They blame Another Planet Entertainment and the city for poor planning.

Another Planet Entertainment and the City, however, point out that they warned fans to come early and that the parking lots often experience gridlock. In fact, the parking lots at Candlestick were not full. It was claimed that 30 minutes after the main parking lot opened, 534 vehicles had parked in a lot that holds 6,000. They also claim that concert-goers familiar with the area generally arrived on time to see the concert, but that it was those who were unfamiliar with Candlestick or who overestimated Candlestick's transportation system (called "feeble") that caused a massive traffic jam. They maintain that people were still trying to get into the main lot after it was closed; this caused a massive backup in traffic. The San Francisco Police Chief blamed the fiasco on fans who did not research the parking ahead of time.

Angry fans have a different view. Some fans had flown from across the nation to see McCartney perform, only to miss out. Many claim they had left hours early, which should have been plenty of time to get to the concert. One fan who was familiar with the route and knew the location of shortcuts and backup lots stated that many of the backup lots were closed and he was rerouted more than once. Although he arrived only an hour before the concert ended, he was angry that the attendants still wanted \$40 for parking. Fans also dispute claims from City officials that there were many officers around trying to direct traffic. Additionally, even fans who made it to the show experienced problems. It was recommended to take public transportation (which was reportedly slow). After the

concert, long lines caused delays for shuttle buses, and hundreds of people were unable to get to BART in time to catch the final trains for the night.

There are two sides to every issue:

1. The event promoter should not refund tickets because the mishap was out of its control.
2. The event promoter should refund tickets because adequate parking is a reasonable expectation.

Sources:

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