

# London TravelWatch Performance Report to 30.9.18 **DRAFT**

## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1. This report sets out London TravelWatch's performance from April to September 2018 and shows the financial position as at 30 September 2018. Information on more recent developments is also included in the narrative where appropriate. It confirms how London TravelWatch has met its key business plan objectives and the outcomes it has achieved for transport users.
- 1.2. The report summarises the volume and type of casework activity London TravelWatch handled during the period and includes a short overview of the main issues raised by the public.

## **2 Key areas of achievement**

- 2.1. London TravelWatch continues to make a real difference for the travelling public in and around London. In the six months to September we:
  - persuaded Network Rail to remove the charge to use toilets at stations they manage
  - helped enable passengers to claim for consequential loss when rail services are delayed or cancelled
  - improved passenger information at times of service disruption
  - provided evidence to the Transport Committee which helped to inform their questions to train operators
  - secured the inclusion of a number of walkable interchanges on the London rail and tube services map
  - pushed for a consultation on simplifying the fares and ticketing system
  - got key priorities included in the amended Mayor's Transport Strategy
  - promoted best practice in managing interchanges and facilitating cross-industry networking at our June *'Interchange Matters'* seminar
  - warned about the possible effect of the Crossrail delays on bus users
  - made the case for steady, sustained investment in London's transport infrastructure
  - highlighted the potential negative impact of TfL's proposed bus changes on passengers
  - highlighted the unfairness of the ticketing system which will get worse with the January 2019 fares increases.

## **3 Progress against the business plan objectives for 2018-19**

- 3.1. This section highlights progress against London TravelWatch's key business plan objectives for the first six months in 2018-19 and demonstrates the impact our work has had for passengers in London.

### **Toilet charges at stations in London**

- 3.2. We know from our research into 'value for money' that passengers place great importance on the availability of free toilets and resent having to pay to use them having already paid for a ticket to travel. Having become aware that charges to use toilets at both Victoria and London Bridge had been removed, we wrote to Network Rail's CEO, Mark Carne in January 2018 to ask if Network Rail would consider removing charges to use the toilets at all the stations they manage in London. Mark Carne replied saying that Network Rail had decided to scrap toilet charges at the stations they manage from April 2019. This change will make a significant difference, particularly to older people and those travelling with children.

### **Ability to claim for consequential loss for rail delays**

- 3.3. Passengers have contacted us, frustrated that they have incurred additional costs because of delayed or cancelled rail services. In 2016/17 we received 90 contacts relating to this, 35 of which were appeals. Some passengers have had to spend a considerable amount more on air tickets and hotels without the right to claim for consequential loss from a rail operator. This has been a particular issue for us as all five of London's major airports are in our area. We have argued for some time that passengers should have the right to claim for consequential loss, particularly when making their way to airports and when operators badge their services as 'airport services'. An amendment to the National Rail conditions of carriage which came in in March 2018 forced train companies to amend their terms and conditions to give passengers the right to make a claim for consequential loss.

### **Bus route marketing**

- 3.4. There is potential to better market the capital's bus services overseen by TfL to make it easier for passengers to travel by bus by improving the information available about the different routes and places that they serve. We have often responded to consultations asking TfL to consider the branding that many successful commercial bus companies outside of London now undertake as part of their marketing strategy. This is more difficult in London because of the scale and density of the bus network, but nevertheless we have said it is worth trialling. We raised this with the previous Managing Director of Surface Transport two years ago and put them in contact with Barton's Buses in Nottingham who do this particularly well.
- 3.5. Following a meeting with Barton's Buses, TfL carried out an initial trial in Barkingside last summer with new colour-coded buses, which had the main destinations and interchanges listed on the side. They announced in February 2018 plans to extend the trial to cover 40 buses across 12 routes serving Hillingdon, Harrow, Ealing and Hounslow. The initial results from the trial are positive and we await TfL's detailed analysis of the first area trial and the commencement of the second area.

### **Improving passenger information at times of service disruption**

- 3.6. At times of service disruption, information for passengers is often not as prominently displayed as it should be at London's major terminal stations with advertising taking priority on electronic screens. We raised the issue in one of our monthly meetings with Network Rail's South East Stations Director, Ian Hanson. As

a result of our input, Network Rail agreed to change an invitation to tender on station advertising just before it was issued so passenger information would take precedence over commercial adverts at times of service disruption rather than just in emergencies.

### **20 May timetable changes**

- 3.7. There was a need to get to the bottom of the reasons behind the problems experienced by passengers following the major timetable changes which came in on 20 May. The Director, Policy and Investigation gave a comprehensive update to our Policy Committee in June on the problems arising for passengers from the 20 May timetable changes and the background to them. We also wrote to the Chair of the House of Commons Transport Committee ahead of their session on rail timetable changes on 18 June. The Transport Select Committee's questions to train operators were influenced by our letter. Our evidence was also provided to the London Assembly's Transport Committee at the scrutiny they held the following week. The Director was asked to give evidence to Croydon Council's scrutiny. Speakers from local user groups and the Council itself all asked that our evidence be presented before theirs as it was known to be so thorough.

### **Inclusion of walkable interchanges on the London Rail & Tube Services map**

- 3.8. Across London, there are many dispersed interchanges such as Hackney Downs/Hackney Central or Walthamstow Central/Walthamstow Queens Road, where a connection can be made easily by walking between two nearby but separate stations. However it is not always clear to passengers that this is possible. We raised this issue in our Interchange Matters report in 2015 and took up the matter in meetings with the RDG and Transport for London. The latest edition of the London's Rail & Tube map published in May 2018 now includes walkable interchanges, opening up and promoting additional travel options for passengers.

### **Consultation on simplification of fares and ticketing**

- 3.9. Rail fares vary considerably in price across the area covered by London TravelWatch, with passengers sometimes resorting to driving to stations further away to take advantage of cheaper tickets. We have highlighted this problem for many years but have increased our calls for reform over the past couple of years, highlighting some of the worst fares discrepancies and convening a fares and ticketing seminar earlier this year which was attended by representatives from the DfT, RDG, TfL and Transport Focus. The RDG announced in May that it would be holding a consultation on 'root and branch' reform of fare regulations that date back to the mid-1990s and do not now reflect changing working patterns and new technology. The RDG want us to support the consultation and have taken up our suggestion of holding separate consultation meetings with London MPs and with MPs representing passengers in the London commuter belt.

### **Final Mayor's Transport Strategy (MTS)**

- 3.10. The Mayor of London recently consulted on his 23-year transport strategy which sets out his plans to transform London's streets, improve public transport and create opportunities for new homes and jobs. We responded to the consultation in a number of ways, welcoming many of the proposed measures but highlighting a number of much needed improvements not included in the draft Strategy. A

number of changes were made to the Mayor's Transport Strategy before it was published on 13 March 2018. Several of the major changes were influenced by our consultation response including:

- support for closing streets to improve the cycling environment
- new ideas about responding to road collisions and road danger including addressing the locations with collision history
- a much stronger policy that specifically supports traffic reduction and prioritisation of space-efficient modes
- a policy supportive of promoting the improvement of rail outside of London
- the MTS now states that 'TfL will investigate proposals for ... road user charging' and 'TfL will develop the design, operation and technical elements of these proposals...'
- there is more emphasis on improving the accessibility of bus services including hail and ride services
- there is recognition of the step change needed to improve bus services – 'Trip times must be comparable to car journey times'.

### **The Crossrail delay and the impact on bus services**

- 3.11 There is a risk that transport users will lose out if TfL go ahead with planned bus changes before the core section of Crossrail is opened to the public. We voiced our concerns that passengers would be disadvantaged if bus changes originally proposed to coincide with the opening of Crossrail were made before the delayed service opens next autumn. We suggested some urgent questions for Assembly Members to ask at the Plenary meeting of the London Assembly on 6 September which focused on the implications for bus users and crowding issues on the Underground. Assembly members drew on our suggestions during the plenary session and also in the Transport Committee meeting a week later. TfL assured passengers that all service changes that directly depended on Crossrail opening on time would be delayed.

### **Making the case for steady, sustained investment in London's infrastructure**

- 3.12 With pressures on TfL's finances and the debate about whether funding for infrastructure in the north of England should be prioritised over funding for London, there is a risk that transport users in and around London may suffer from increased overcrowding. We wrote to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, making the case for steady, sustained investment in London's transport infrastructure and highlighting the risks of a reversion to 'stop start' funding and false economies which have previously hindered transport infrastructure projects. We received a reply to our letter from the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, the Minister responsible for infrastructure delivery in which he recognised the role of London's infrastructure in supporting its growth. It goes on to say that the Government is working with TfL to develop fair and affordable plans for Crossrail 2 which includes a review to examine ways in which the scheme might be paid for.

## **January 2019 fares increases**

- 3.13 On 15 August, the Government announced that rail fares will rise by 3.2% in line with inflation in January 2019, the second highest increase in the last five years. We pointed out that the gap between the cheapest and most expensive fares will widen still further following the increase and again highlighted the serious anomalies in the cost of travel from various different points around London's commuter belt, with some commuters paying up to £35 a week more than others for the same length of journey.'

## **Communications and public engagement**

- 3.14 Our website and use of social media provide an effective and cost-efficient way to help engage the public in our work and to disseminate best practice to the industry. We continued to 'live tweet' from our public meetings. Key issues discussed included the investigation into the stranded trains in Lewisham during bad weather earlier in the year, the fallout from the 20 May timetable changes and rail fare discrepancies in and around London.
- 3.15 There were 69,254 unique visits to our website in the first half of the year, fewer than during the same period during the previous year when there were 93,633. This was due to a broken link to a popular webpage generated during the revamp of our consumer advice section which meant that people visiting a large number of websites which linked to this page were not transferred to the London TravelWatch website.
- 3.16 The most popular webpages were frequently asked questions about paying by Oyster or contactless payment cards and using Freedom Passes. A lot of the topics covered derive from enquiries we receive in casework. We continue to analyse our website to see what sort of information people are viewing and tailor this information to help reduce the number of unnecessary enquiries we receive.
- 3.17 Each year our Annual Review highlights the impact our work has made to improve the consumer experience for the travelling public in and around London. This was sent out to key industry stakeholders and politicians in July and generated positive feedback.
- 3.18 We attended the London Pensions Partnership's annual member forum in September as we have done over the past few years, taking advantage of the opportunity to have a stand and engage with pensioners about transport issues affecting them. With backgrounds in the public sector, the attendees are very engaged and can provide us with useful feedback on the services they use. Attendees were concerned about TfL's proposed bus cuts but they were extremely positive about the Freedom Pass.
- 3.19 In June we held our fifth Interchange Matters seminar which focused on improving interchanges at London's major stations with contributions from Darren Williams, London Victoria Station Manager at Network Rail and Paul Parsons, Customer Experience Director at MTR Crossrail. The seminar was well attended and gave attendees from a wide range of organisations the opportunity to share best practice.
- 3.20 Our bus users community on Twitter grew by a third in the first six months of 2018/19 to 163 members. We held a successful #askLTW Twitter session for bus users in June as well as an engagement event with bus users in Uxbridge to coincide with 'Catch the Bus Week'. We plan to hold several more events over the rest of the year.

## **4 Casework**

- 4.1 From April to September 2018 our casework team dealt 3,518 written and telephone enquiries and complaints. Most of these could be dealt with quickly or passed on to the operator for an initial reply. The vast majority of cases concerned poor service performance and repeated poor service performance on both trains and buses. Complaint handling was the most complained about subject for railway passengers.
- 4.2 We investigated 1,237 appeals from members of the public travelling in London and the surrounding areas. The highest number of appeals we received concerned delays and compensation.
- 4.3 Of those complaints that required further detailed investigation, 76% related to National Rail (up from 68% during 2016/17). Over the past year, there has been a 32% increase in the number of appeal cases we needed to take forward in respect of TfL's services. This totals a 36% increase in cases that require further investigation. A large number of journeys of rail journeys into and out of London include TfL's modes. Therefore the categories are not necessarily exclusive and some appeals need us to negotiate with more than one transport operator.
- 4.4 Since taking the franchise in August 2017, South Western Rail (SWR) has introduced 'delay repay' after 15 minute delay. This has significantly increased the number of contacts that they have received from passengers and the number of appeals received by London TravelWatch. In spring and summer 2018 SWR experienced poor performance and strike action. This has further increased the volume of contacts regarding delay repay for SWR and subsequently, London TravelWatch. The restrictions on claiming delay compensation prior to August 2017, meant that contacts regarding delay compensation were previously much lower than we are currently seeing.
- 4.5 We continue to liaise closely with TfL with a view to reducing their response times to London TravelWatch appeals. Analysis of the July to September statistics show very promising improvements.
- 4.6 London TravelWatch experienced poor responses and response times from Eurostar and an increase in appeals from passengers advising of the same issue. Following liaison and meetings with London TravelWatch, Eurostar amended their processes resulting in noticeable improvements to responses and response times to both passenger contacts and London TravelWatch appeals.
- 4.7 We have continued to use feedback from our casework to inform the independent expert advice we give to policy-makers as well as informing our research and campaigns.

## **5 Financial outturn**

- 5.1 Part 1 of the Annex gives details of expenditure against budget as at the end of September 2018. At the end of the half year there was an underspend against budget of £25k for the financial year 2018/19.

- 5.2 At month six there is an underspend on accommodation of £23.5k which contains provisions for the costs of the move to new office premises which will be incurred in the second half of the financial year. There is an underspend on supplies and services of £24.9k mainly due to income received for research work which will be paid in October. There is also a favourable income £13.5k variance due to recovered staff costs from the Rail Delivery Group.
- 5.3 The underspends are partially offset by increased staffing costs resulting in an overspend of £36.6k due to a back dated pay increase, maternity cost cover and recruitment to vacant posts.

### **Risk areas**

- 5.4 With a smaller staff complement, the principal risk for the future is that we will not have the capacity for an unexpected and unavoidable rise in workload, which might be required to fulfil our statutory objectives, without extra expenditure and without draining our reserves to an unacceptable level.

**Janet Cooke**  
**Chief Executive,**  
**London TravelWatch**

**31 October 2018**

## **Annex: Performance information**

### **1. Financial performance (Awaiting information)**

The financial position as at the end of September 2018 is summarised below:

*Note: Commentary relating to London TravelWatch's financial performance is set out in section 5 of the preceding report. Costs recovered from Transport Focus towards the cost of employing a part time Safety Adviser to act for all passengers have been offset against staff costs.*