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**Secretariat memorandum**

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CAC012

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**Incomplete Oyster Pay As You Go journeys - qualitative research**

**1 Purpose of report**

- 1.1. To discuss the outcome of research commissioned by London TravelWatch to ascertain why a substantial proportion of journeys made on Oyster Pay As You Go (PAYG) are often left unresolved

**2 Recommendation**

- 2.1. Members are recommended to agree that:-

The full findings of the report should be shared only with outside bodies at the same time as London TravelWatch makes these publicly available. The timing of this publication and the format of this shall be done on the advice of the Communications Officer.

That the implications of the outcomes shall inform the London TravelWatch work plan for the remainder of 2011/12.

**3 Main findings of the research**

- 3.1 The key findings are:

Even when Oyster PAYG users are aware that an incomplete journey has occurred, many perceive that the effort required to resolve, it is not justifiable for the sums involved.

There is frequent evidence to indicate that incomplete journeys are often the result of knowledge gaps with Oyster PAYG, which is not as straightforward to use in reality as many initially assume. Many are unsure why or when incomplete journeys are made,

although confusion when interchanging between modes is the most critical issue.

Knowledge gaps among users typically extend to the options available and the systems in place that are intended to resolve incomplete journeys when these occur. This provides a partial explanation for why such a high proportion of incomplete journeys are left unresolved since users currently feel that the onus of this responsibility falls too heavily on them.

Importantly, poor perceptions or experiences of the resolution process represent a major additional barrier for users to challenge having the maximum fare applied for incomplete journeys. The time and cost of using the 0845 helpline number represents a significant disincentive as do National Rail and London Underground staff who are often perceived to be unable or unwilling to provide a resolution. Furthermore, users are uncertain about how liability for incomplete journeys will impact on the outcome of any attempt to resolve them.

## **4 Recommendations for improvement by Transport for London (TfL) and the rail industry**

4.1 This research indicates that the following should be considered by TfL and the rail industry:

- 1. An Oyster information / education campaign is required to plug the information gaps that are the root cause of many incomplete journeys**
  - To explain the usage protocol when interchanging
  - To inform users what to do beyond Zone 6
  - To create awareness of procedures to resolve incomplete journeys
  - To reinforce overall VFM perceptions of Oyster
- 2. The campaign will need heavy and targeted support at a more local level, at un gated and interchange stations especially**
  - To increase the presence and visibility of readers
  - To improve signposting / access to readers
  - To provide clear instructions about where / when to touch in / out
  - To provide clear information as to where card balance information can be obtained
- 3. Barriers that currently prevent users from resolving incomplete journeys need to be addressed and removed to maintain positive value for money perceptions**
- 4. Improved availability and access to card balance information is required**
  - Statements need to provide clear summaries of journeys and charges indicating when price caps have been applied or maximum fares have been charged
  - Replace and update all ticket vending machines to include the ability to view balances, top up and add Oyster products (especially on London Tramlink)
- 5. Access to resolution solutions needs to be improved and experiences of the process need to be enhanced**
  - Customer service contact needs to be more positive and consistent
  - Application and refund procedures need to be streamlined
  - Barriers to re-claiming small sums of money need to be removed
  - All stations where you can use Oyster should be able to resolve Oyster related problems

**6. Quantification will be required to provide a more accurate assessment of the nature and extent of some specific elements of the problems users experience with incomplete journeys**

- 4.2 An area of concern is the apparent 'invisibility' of the application of different fares at peak times amongst Oyster users. As noted in the report this has severe implications for public and commercial policies aimed at using the price mechanism to reduce overcrowding at peak times.

**5 Equalities and inclusion implications**

- 5.1. There are no specific equality or inclusion implications arising from this report.

**6 Legal powers**

- 6.1. Section 248 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 places upon London TravelWatch (as the London Transport Users Committee) a duty to consider - and where it appears to the Committee to be desirable, to make recommendations with respect to - any matter affecting the functions of the Greater London Authority or Transport for London which relate to transport (other than of freight). Section 252A of the same Act (as amended by Schedule 6 of the Railways Act 2005) places a similar duty upon the Committee to keep under review matters affecting the interests of the public in relation to railway passenger and station services provided wholly or partly within the London railway area, and to make representations about them to such persons as it thinks appropriate.

**7 Financial implications**

- 7.1. There are no financial implications for London TravelWatch arising from this report.