
Secretariat Memorandum

Date : 12.5.10

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Bus passenger priorities research briefing for members

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To consider and receive the research report prepared by Steer Davies Gleave for London TravelWatch on bus passenger priorities for improvement.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are recommended to :
 - 2.1.1 Note the research findings, and agree that these should be used to inform future London TravelWatch submissions to traffic and bus consultations and general policy in relation to bus services

3 Background

- 3.1 London TravelWatch made a conscious decision in 2009 that the promotion of the interests of bus passengers would be its major priority. Shortly after this decision Passenger Focus decided as part of its work prior to taking on responsibility for bus passengers outside of London to commission a piece of research on what bus passengers believed were priorities for improvement. London TravelWatch was approached as to whether we would be interested in doing a collaborating with this work so as to included London in the research. This was agreed to, as it met with London TravelWatch's objectives and also gave the opportunity for comparisons to be made between the needs of London bus passengers and those elsewhere.

4 Commentary

- 4.1 The research shows that the most important and pressing priority for bus passengers both in London and nationally is for an improvement in punctuality and reliability of services to give consistent journey times. This can only be achieved with measures from highway authorities to give buses greater priority over other traffic. In addition previous initiatives to give better operation control and reduce dwell times at stops need to be built upon.

- 4.2 Frequency of service is also a significant area where passengers would like to see improvements. In part this is a function of reliability, because poor reliability tends to mask planned frequencies especially where ‘bunching’ of buses occurs. However, it is clear that Londoners now expect the current levels of frequency of services to be maintained and improved. This was also a priority at national level.
- 4.3 Below these top 2 items the priorities for improvement in London and nationally then significantly diverge. This is a reflection of firstly the different nature of the network in London and secondly the substantial improvements that have been made to bus travel in London over the past decade (many of which were championed by London TravelWatch and its’ predecessor bodies).
- 4.3.1 In London the importance of the Countdown system of electronic information displayed at bus stops is shown by its third ranking for improvement compared to a twelfth place outside of London.
- 4.3.2 This was followed by ‘the correct route number being clearly displayed on the outside of all buses’; ‘drivers having helpful and positive attitude’ and ‘personal security on board the bus being improved through the use of CCTV’. Nationally these were fourteenth, seventh and thirteenth in priority. These ranking reflect previous concerns highlighted through our casework.
- 4.3.3 Of the remaining top ten priorities for improvement in London in seventh place were ‘passengers being able to get a seat for the duration of their journey’. Followed by ‘buses go to a wide range of destinations in your local area’; ‘bus fares, tickets and passes offer better value for money’ and ‘all buses drive at an appropriate speed and are free from jolting’. Nationally, these priorities ranked third, fifth, sixth and fifteenth. The latter requirement reflects the urban stop-start nature of bus journeys in London. Improvements in bus priority requiring less stop-start activity would reduce this issue.
- 4.4 Outside of London it is noticeable that passengers prioritised items such as ‘tickets and passes being available that entitle you to travel on all bus services/public transport in your local area’ which in London have been available for many years in the form of the Travelcard. These were ranked fourth and ninth outside of London, whilst in London they were twenty first and thirteenth.

5 Equalities and inclusion implications

- 5.1 Buses are used significantly more often by people with lower incomes, older people, people with disabilities and by minority ethnic and faith communities. Therefore any measures which would significantly benefit bus passengers are likely to benefit these disadvantaged groups of people.

6 Financial implications

- 6.1 The contents of this report have no specific financial implications for London TravelWatch.

7 Legal powers

- 7.1 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 it 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).