

# London TravelWatch's Response to the Recommendations of the Eurostar Independent Review

**April 2010**



**London TravelWatch** is the official body set up by Parliament to provide a voice for London's travelling public.

Our role is to:

- Speak up for transport users in discussions with policy-makers and the media
- Consult with the transport industry, its regulators and funders on matters affecting users
- Investigate complaints users have been unable to resolve with service provider and
- Monitor trends in service quality.

Our aim is to press in all that we do for a better travel experience for all those living and working in or visiting London and its surrounding region.

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## 1 Introduction

London TravelWatch contributed evidence to the independent review led by Christopher Garnett and Claude Gresier into the events following 18 December 2009 when five Eurostar services broke down in the Channel Tunnel. Our original submission focused on the following key points arising from the impact on passengers:

- Risk assessments and emergency planning arrangements should be reviewed to ensure that they are sufficiently robust to cope with a wider range of eventualities
- Information should be provided more effectively to passengers both on trains and stations, and better arrangements made to communicate with ticket holders yet to travel
- Support and help should be given to passengers held in trains or awaiting travel at stations swiftly
- Sufficient basic supplies should be carried on board Eurostar services for use in the event of an incident at any location
- Greater awareness should be developed of techniques for managing crowds at stations, so that staff are able to react and to take charge of situations more quickly
- Compensation arrangements should be communicated to passengers on trains, and written material summarising the key information should be distributed to passengers at the time of disruption.

Following the publication of the Eurostar independent review on 12 February 2010, London TravelWatch has both analysed the report and met with Eurostar in a joint meeting with Passenger Focus. London TravelWatch has updated its original submission to the inquiry in light of the areas which we welcome from the inquiry report, and those which we suggest require further consideration.

## 2 London TravelWatch welcomes

The independent review of the events affecting Eurostar's services in the aftermath of the 18 December 2009 comprehensively assesses the key consequences and causes of the incident. London TravelWatch believes that the report sets out clearly the sequence of events and makes a coherent set of recommendations to address the majority of the issues that the incident revealed. On each area of the recommendations in Chapter 8 of the report London TravelWatch makes the following supportive comments:

### 2.1.1 Improvements in engineering arrangements

The root cause of the events was the technical failure of the Eurostar trains. Therefore we welcome the technical recommendations 1 to 5 to mitigate the risk of a recurrence of these circumstances in the future.

### 2.1.2 Handling of the crisis

Handling of the crisis within the tunnel was one of the key areas of concern that London TravelWatch raised in our evidence to the inquiry. The recommendations by the inquiry cut to the heart of the issues surrounding procedure, communications and multiagency working which led to many of the secondary issues that exacerbated the impact of the train failures on passengers in a non emergency situation. The recommendations for working procedures, staff training, and improved comfort onboard failed trains are vital from a passenger perspective.

London TravelWatch was particularly concerned about the apparent weaknesses in the evacuation procedures and sees resolution of these issues as central to the safe working of these services. We therefore welcome Recommendations 6 about, 'revise its procedures for the possible evacuation of a train when it loses power, and in particular, its air conditioning,' and believe that it must be implemented as soon as is possible.

### 2.1.3 Eurostar's management of failed trains

Recommendations have been made to revise the emergency planning arrangements and to strengthen multi-agency working. London TravelWatch hopes that these arrangements are quickly implemented by Eurostar and other parties, including Network Rail, British Transport Police and SNCF. Eurostar could consider examples of industry good practice in the area of multi-agency planning.

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#### 2.1.4 Management of passengers

The management of passengers following the suspended and reduced services which followed 18 December was an area about which London TravelWatch received a number of communications from Eurostar's passengers. Particular issues were encountered with messages advising ticket holders not to travel although, once trains resumed a limited service, they might actually have been able to undertake their journey. Correspondence received also related to the compensation for passengers who elected not to travel.

London TravelWatch is pleased that the report recommends comprehensive planning for alternative travel arrangements with other transport operators. This includes agreeing the acceptance of Eurostar's tickets by other train companies, as well as reviewing the possibility of organising an emergency coach service that could be put in place in both England and France to make it possible to transport passengers by ferry.

London TravelWatch welcomes recommendations 20.1 – 20.7 to improve communications with passengers using a wider range of communications technology as well as making better use of existing methods. This includes offering a 24-hour service in emergency situations and ensuring Eurostar staff are clearly visible and seen to be taking charge at all points in the journey. These recommendations should be implemented as a priority.

#### 2.1.5 Strengthening of Eurostar as an organisation

London TravelWatch supports the recommendation that Eurostar undertakes a full review of its organisational structure to ensure that a high standard of customer service can be continued even during periods of disruption.

### 3 London TravelWatch recommends

London TravelWatch suggests that there are some areas where the report has either not fully investigated or where the recommendations do not fully meet the needs of the passenger. We recommend that these areas are addressed by Eurostar in order to learn all of the lessons from the events in December 2009.

#### 3.1 Timescales to implement recommendations

Eurostar has committed itself to implementing the recommendations of the independent report 'as quickly as possible'. However, London TravelWatch would have hoped to have seen a more specific timescale by which Eurostar should address the areas identified in the report. London TravelWatch urges Eurostar to publish a comprehensive plan setting out when and how it will address and implement all of the recommendations.

#### 3.2 St Pancras Station and crowd management

London TravelWatch believes that report did not investigate in sufficient detail the issue of crowd management. From London TravelWatch's observations at the time, and from subsequent reports, crowd management at St Pancras International was not handled well. It was only once other operators and the British Transport Police became involved in working with Eurostar and Network Rail that the situation was addressed. We are also concerned about how this would be dealt with in the case of any future disruption on this scale.

Eurostar, like any other operator, must take wider responsibility for its passengers. *"It is not enough for operators to concentrate on the delivery of 'their' part of a multi-modal journey. They must think beyond the confines of that box, so that by working with their counterparts in other modes they deliver a journey chain out of the individual links. A bad experience at the interchange will reflect badly on them all"* (extract from 'London on the Move' (2004), Annex B – London TravelWatch's position on transport interchanges – see Appendix B). In the case of St Pancras International this means Eurostar also has responsibility to make sure that it understands and is satisfied with arrangements for crowd control on the main station concourse and not just within its own departure area.

The second issue in relation to crowd management is the ability to estimate properly the number of people in a crowd. London TravelWatch understands that part of the reason why Eurostar was so pessimistic about the numbers it could get on trains was because it overestimated how many people were actually in the queue. This may have been compounded by people not intending to travel being able to wait with passengers whilst they were still on the main station concourse.

There are a number of issues about the interchange facilities at St Pancras International where improvement could assist in the event of any future large scale disruption. In particular improved signage, staff training, and closer integration with other operators should be the subject of comprehensive review to learn from the event. Annex B (op cit) sets out good practice in respect of transport interchanges.

### 3.3 Multi-agency co-ordination

Throughout the report a wide range of other problems which relate to Eurostar's workings with other agencies is revealed. The report covers many of the major issues but it does not address them all. For example London TravelWatch understands that Kent Police may have been unfamiliar with immigration and customs requirements which led to further aggravation for passengers who were taken to Folkestone. Steps should be taken to ensure that police in regions through which international train services pass, on both sides of the channel, understand these requirements and they should be encouraged to exercise discretion when dealing with passengers obviously affected by significant disruption to their intended journeys.

### 3.4 Lessons from other transport operators

The report draws a number of lessons from other transport sectors and their means of dealing with disruption. While the response of the airline industry is very pertinent, London TravelWatch suggests that the procedures of London Underground also have considerable relevance. This is because their procedures address the specific issues of passengers stranded in tunnels. In particular, understanding the impact of the underground environment on passengers means they have clear guidelines for frequent communications to reassure passengers. This understanding as well as experience in managing crowding in different circumstance is something from which Eurostar is likely to benefit.

### 3.5 EU regulation on passengers' rights and obligations

London TravelWatch is concerned that the European Regulation (1371/2007) on Rail Passengers' Rights and Obligations does not appear to have been fully implemented by Eurostar, even though it came into effect for international trains to and from Britain at the beginning of December 2009. The rights given to passengers by the Regulation are quite extensive and Article 18 covers the following points on assistance to passengers in the case of delay:

*"In the case of any delay as referred to in paragraph 1 of more than 60 minutes, passengers shall also be offered free of charge [...] hotel or other accommodation, and transport between the railway station and place of accommodation, in cases where a stay of one or more nights becomes necessary or an additional stay becomes necessary, where and when physically possible"*



This is a very much more substantial obligation than had previously been in place, but it is no more onerous the provision which airlines must make for their passengers, and is intended to help create a level playing field between the various carriers. London TravelWatch believes that Eurostar needs to review its procedures in this area, in order to be able fully to implement the provisions of the Regulation.

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### 3 Conclusion

London TravelWatch welcomes the independent inquiry's findings into the Eurostar service disruption in December 2009. The inquiry report comprehensively addresses the majority of the causes of the event and sets out clear recommendations.

In response to the findings of the inquiry London TravelWatch recommends particularly that:

- Risk assessments and emergency planning arrangements should be reviewed to ensure that they are sufficiently robust to cope with a wider range of eventualities. The emergency planning arrangements also need to co-ordinate and take account of multi-agency working with such parties as the various police forces, Network Rail and Eurotunnel
- Information should be provided more effectively to passengers both on trains and stations, staff should be clearly visible at all stages of the journey, and the customer contact centre should be open 24 hours during emergencies.
- Communication with passengers yet to travel should be greatly improved. This is a challenging area, but Eurostar needs to consider ways in which it can better target communications to those yet to travel. In addition improvement is needed to the quality of the communication to ensure that passengers have the information needed to allow them to make the choice whether to travel or not.
- Support and help should be given to passengers held in trains or awaiting travel at stations swiftly. Once issues of passenger safety have been satisfied the next priority must be passenger comfort, covering issues such as lighting, air conditioning and seating.
- Sufficient basic refreshment supplies should be carried on board Eurostar services for use in the event of an incident at any location. Clear guidelines should be given to staff about when these should be distributed to passengers.
- Greater awareness should be developed of techniques for managing crowds at stations, so that staff are able to react and to take charge of situations more quickly. London TravelWatch recommends that staff training is reviewed and refreshed as appropriate.

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- Compensation arrangements should be communicated to passengers on trains, and written material summarising the key information should be distributed to passengers at the time of disruption.
  - The purchase of through tickets should be promoted. Through tickets (and domestic tickets sold to and from St Pancras International C/V) ensure that passengers' rights are extended across the entirety of their journey and not just the portion with Eurostar. This means that the passenger has their rights extended across the whole of their journey and not just the portion with Eurostar, entitling them to compensation for missed connections.
  - Better arrangements for onward travel from Ashford International would have allowed a more flexible response to the events of December 2009. This would have the advantage of ensuring passengers were not taken to locations not designed for their needs.
  - As well as learning from the airline industry, Eurostar should see what lessons can be learnt from London Underground, particularly in terms of communicating with passengers during delays underground, as well as managing crowding on both platforms and station concourses.

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## **Annex A – London TravelWatch’s role and remit in respect of Eurostar**

London TravelWatch's function is to represent the interests of the users of transport services provided by or on behalf of Transport for London, and of the National Rail network in and around London, including Eurostar. It fulfils this responsibility by:

- Acting as the appeals body for complaints from or on behalf of transport users that have not been dealt with to the complainants' satisfaction
- Responding to consultation exercises initiated by service providers, regulatory bodies, central and local government and others on matters relating to services within its remit and to transport policy in general
- Undertaking pro-active research into transport needs in its area

The general duties of London TravelWatch (except in relation to fares and to closure proposals) were extended by the Channel Tunnel Act 1987 to international rail services such as Eurostar. The 2005 Railways Act re-defined London TravelWatch’s remit in relation to rail services generally, and confirmed the boundary of the “London railway area” within which this applies. St Pancras and Stratford are within the London railway area, and users of international services to and from these stations therefore fall within London TravelWatch’s constituency.

## Annex B – London TravelWatch’s position on transport interchanges

London TravelWatch’s view of transport interchanges in the following extract from London TravelWatch’s report ‘London on the Move’ (2004) (<http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/document/391/get>):

### “The importance of interchange in the journey chain

Unless a journey is made entirely on foot, it will involve some sort of interchange. Most journeys are made out of individual links, and the key to making transport of any type a safe and attractive option is to ensure that the individual links mesh together into a well-formed chain.

Too often, interchange is thought of as the interface between the same or different modes of public transport (such as bus/bus, bus/rail, or rail/plane). A journey from home to office may involve a walk to the bus stop (including crossing a number of busy roads), a bus journey and then a further walk to the final destination – but it will often be classified as travel by bus, with the other elements totally ignored. Yet people will take all aspects of their journey into account when making their travel choices, and even in this simple example there are many opportunities for problems to arise through interchange. The walk from home to the bus stop needs to be pedestrian-friendly, with safe, conveniently located crossings to enable the bus stop to be reached without undue delay or deviation from the most direct route. When the bus arrives at the stop, it should pull up to the kerb, kneel if such a facility is provided, and allow adequate time for passengers to board and alight safely before it departs. When the destination is reached, the bus should again pull up close to the kerb and give passengers adequate time to alight safely. The final route to the office, like the walk from home to the bus stop, should have conveniently-located, pedestrian-friendly crossings.

Seen in this way, it is not surprising that a user’s choice of mode can be affected by elements beyond the major leg of the journey. Thus, in the example above, a series of pedestrian-unfriendly crossings (with long waits for the ‘green man’) on the walk to/from the bus stop could tip the balance in favour of using a car instead (especially if convenient free parking is available close to the user’s office).

If the links between the different elements of that simple journey will affect modal choice, how much more is this true for journeys that involve interchange between more than one mode of public transport? For most people, more interchanges equal greater uncertainty. The greater the

uncertainty, the greater the likelihood that other travel options (which provide greater reassurance) will be considered.

For users, the important issue is whether transport meets their needs – not who plans, owns or runs it. When cracks appear at the interface between modes, the alternatives become attractive options. For public transport to compete effectively with the car, planners must ensure that the interface is incident-free, and that journeys are looked at from beginning to end. It is not enough for operators to concentrate on the delivery of ‘their’ part of a multi-modal journey. They must think beyond the confines of that box, so that by working with their counterparts in other modes they deliver a journey chain out of the individual links. A bad experience at the interchange will reflect badly on them all.

### Making interchanges work

Thankfully, the vital importance of making interchange work properly is now well recognised by transport operators. Nevertheless, many major transport projects win prestigious design awards and are built to the most modern engineering standards, but fail the acid test of meeting the needs of the users for whom they are provided. There is still a reluctance to involve users in the development of truly integrated transport until after the designers and engineers have put together their ideas. That is too late, and the wrong way round; users must be involved in the planning process. The designers must listen to users’ expressed needs, and then design to meet them.

TfL’s work on interchanges shows the way ahead, at least within the TfL area. There are numerous locations – large and small – where interchange arrangements need to be improved. Many will need major infrastructure work, which only takes place once in a generation, if that, and a missed opportunity to get things right can adversely affect transport users for decades. It is no small challenge for the operators and planners – as well as for London TravelWatch, in devoting the necessary resources to supplying the user’s voice in each case.

Every interchange is also an access point, and achieving the standards for access points will make a tremendous difference to the users’ experience. Signage is particularly vital, but often inadequate. Users require clear, complete and consistent signage, and see this as far more important than the precise layout of the various facilities. It must be planned with the infrequent user in mind, not from the operator’s ‘regular traveller’ eye. Even committed users (let alone new users) of public transport need reassurance that they will be able to complete their journey, especially when things go wrong or when travelling to unfamiliar places, so real-time information is needed. Passengers welcome the presence of uniformed

staff who can provide assistance, but get frustrated if the staff are unwilling or unable to give advice on (or find out about) services provided by another company serving that location. The waiting environment must be attractive, warm and clean. Every effort should be made to ‘design out’ hidden corners where miscreants can lurk. The continuous presence of large numbers of people adds to users’ sense of personal security, so interchanges should be made attractive for public use throughout the operating day.

Similarly, improved through-ticketing arrangements will avoid an extra hassle at an interchange. Ultimately, the user should be able to buy a single ticket covering any point-to-point journey in London by any mode or combination of modes.

Where interchanges can be made within the confines of a single high-quality location, the interchange burden may be relatively light. But the quality is vital. Boundaries of ownership must not be allowed to impede the provision of cross-modal information or facilities. Organisational ‘tidemarks’ make a journey feel complex and disjointed. For larger locations, consideration should be given to appointing an ‘interchange champion’, with a co-ordination role involving all service providers and the interfaces between them.

Traditionally, it has been much easier to find one’s way into and around the rail systems than out of them, and much remains to be done to improve signage to important passenger objectives in the locality, including connecting bus services.

Station forecourts must be properly planned, to separate incompatible movements (e.g. between cars and pedestrians). Where there are conflicts for space, the more sustainable modes should normally be given priority. Interchange between trains and buses is usually poor. Even where stops/stations are adjacent, movement between the two can be circuitous, while on-street bus stops are often sited with little apparent reference to station entrances. Information about either network on the premises of the other (especially real-time information) tends to be sparse. Bus-bus interchange can be poorer still, particularly at major road junctions where connecting stops can be some way apart. Bus stop locations have traditionally been governed more by easing road traffic flow than by passengers’ convenience. Whatever the modes, users prefer short transfers from one vehicle to another – long circuitous routes are an obstacle to interchange.

Proper consideration must be given to the pedestrian links between interchanges and the communities they serve. A safe, convenient street environment is required. Transport operators should not regard it as

someone else's problem; it is the access to their service, and they should be pro-active in local planning and civic amenity circles in pushing for improvements where necessary. Key town-centre interchanges are particularly important – it is not acceptable for busy gyratories to isolate bus and rail stations from the centres of communities.

### The final link

The final link in the chain is to get the user to his/her doorstep. For rail journeys in particular, where stations can be some way from users' destinations, it should be easy for passengers to access a final mode. When walking (as discussed above) is not practicable, other forms of onwards travel are needed.

Cycle storage should be available at all rail stations, all tram stops and key bus stops. Bikes are valuable, so the storage must be secure (e.g. in lockers). Traditional 'hoops' are insufficient, although supervised storage (e.g. using CCTV) may be an acceptable compromise if necessary. It would be reasonable to pay a small charge for the use of secure facilities, especially lockers, although such facilities are always likely to be a net cost to the operator. Already existing smartcard technology avoids having cash in machines. Motorcycle parking simply requires a designated area. 'Ground hoops', to which the motorcycle can be locked, are fairly secure. As with bicycles, the parking area must be well-sited and well-lit.

The presence of station car parking, concentrated in the outer parts of the rail system, is largely a matter of historical chance. LTUC has no objection in principle to operators obtaining a revenue stream from this source on a commercial basis. At some remoter stations which are poorly served by buses or taxi schemes, reasonably-priced car parking can be a way of attracting people onto trains. However, we have reservations about new car park developments which may encourage diversion of trips from other public transport services and add to pressure on the local road network, particularly in town centres.

There seems little scope for further encouraging car hire from stations in the London area; it is out-of-fashion. Minicabs, train-taxi schemes or bus zone add-on tickets could cover many of the hire-car's functions."