

London TravelWatch Performance Report to 30.9.15

1 Introduction

- 1.1. This report sets out details of London TravelWatch's performance for the first six months of the year and shows the financial position as at 30 September 2015, with developments to date 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 as a result of its work.
- 1.2. The report summarises the volume and type of casework activity handled by London TravelWatch during the period and includes a short overview of the main issues raised by the public.

2 Key areas of achievement

- 2.1. Achievements during the period included the publication of our new report, *Interchange Matters*, which highlights the steps the industry needs to take to help improve the interchange experience for passengers.
- 2.2. We provided a consumer input to tender specifications for the second London Overground concession and are currently providing Transport for London (TfL) with commentary on the customer service elements of tenders received which will benefit passengers for years to come.
- 2.3. Having spent the past year campaigning for changes to the compensation arrangements for rail commuters, we were particularly pleased to see the recent announcement from the Department of Transport (DfT) that commuters will soon benefit from compensation for rail delays after 15 minutes. We will be discussing the implementation of this with the DfT.

3 Progress against the business plan objectives for 2014-15

- 3.1. This section highlights progress against our key business plan objectives for the first six months of the financial year, demonstrating the impact our work has had and the outcomes we have achieved for the travelling public.

New research

- 3.2. Our report *Interchange Matters* gives a passenger perspective on the importance of interchanges to London's transport network. It highlights good practice at

several interchange stations in London but also sets out the steps transport providers and operators need to take to improve the passenger experience at others which fall short of the standards which transport users expect.

Key points in the report include:

- Improving existing interchanges and facilitating new ones enables better and more efficient use of existing resources and capacity on London's public transport network at a time when it is under pressure from economic and population growth. Congestion can be a significant deterrent to travel by public transport.
- Improving the way interchanges are shown on London's Rail and Tube Services map would make it clearer where changing between different services or modes is very easy, where interchanges between two stations do not require an additional fare and where passengers actually have to leave one station and walk along the street to interchange.
- Continuing investment in accessibility measures benefits all passengers using interchanges.

The report has been well-received. The Mayor has written to express his support for this work and we have already had constructive discussions with several operators about how they might improve the service they provide at interchanges.

Surface access to London's airport

- 3.3. We complemented the work of the Transport Committee by responding to the publication of the Airport Commission's report on additional UK airport capacity emphasising the need to improve access by public transport to all London's airports regardless of the Government's final decision on expansion and reiterating the points we made in the report we published last year. We emphasised the benefits to passengers of improving interchange connections, providing direct rail links from South London, North West Surrey and the Thames Valley to Heathrow Airport and prioritising electrification of the North Downs rail route which serves Gatwick. We joined others in calling for the extension of Oyster Pay As You Go to Gatwick and for Crossrail to serve Heathrow Terminal 5.
- 3.4. Following our response to the report we had a useful meeting with the Civil Aviation Authority at the beginning of July. This was followed in October by another meeting with the Aviation Minister, Robert Goodwill MP, while we also brought up the issue of Oyster/contactless to Gatwick when we met the Rail Minister, Claire Perry MP in September. We now understand that agreement has finally been given to implement this change from January 2016.
- 3.5. As a direct result of our report, Heathrow Airport have commissioned a feasibility study which will look at whether Oyster/contactless can be extended to be used on Heathrow Express and fully on Heathrow Connect.

Rail services

- 3.6. TfL confirmed that they would implement the recommendations of our research on *Value for money on London Overground* published last year. The takeover of the routes from London Liverpool Street in particular means that passengers on these routes have seen significant improvements in key areas such as train cleanliness. Our intervention with TfL led to reduced fares on these routes through the retention of lower priced point to point season tickets that would otherwise have been abolished by TfL resulting in significantly additional costs to some passengers.
- 3.7. TfL are in the process of procuring a new London Overground concession. We provided them with our expectations of what passengers would want from this new contract. TfL has responded positively to our recommendations, many of which flow from our research to find out passenger views on value for money on London Overground. We are providing comments for TfL on the customer service part of bids received for the concession for them to use as part of their evaluation of these bids. This will help enshrine best practice in customer service throughout the life of this new contract. We have also agreed with the DfT a similar process for all rail franchises serving London from now on.
- 3.8. Like the Transport Committee, we have been extremely concerned about the poor service passengers travelling to London Bridge have received over the past year. The Office of Rail and Road's (ORR) decision to fine Network Rail £2m highlights the scale of the problem and the need for remedial action to improve the situation for passengers. We have closely monitored the performance of services operated by Southern and Govia Thameslink Railway over the last nine months. We provided evidence to the ORR's investigation into Network Rail's performance delivery to Southern and Govia Thameslink Railway which found that Network Rail had breached its licence. Most notably, we pointed out that Network Rail failed to effectively communicate with the train operators about the impact new timetables would have on passengers. We recognise that the problems passengers have faced over the past nine months are not all down to Network Rail's failures as passengers regularly hear about train failures, lack of drivers and other issues which are in the control of the operator and not the infrastructure provider. We will continue to scrutinise the performance of rail operators in South and Southeast London and are discussing with the DfT how they might do more on this from the passenger perspective.
- 3.9. We successfully negotiated with TfL to provide step-free access to the Central line platforms as part of the redevelopment of Bank Station, pointing out that it was unacceptable not to take this once in a hundred year opportunity which will give many more people the opportunity to use the Tube network.

Buses

- 3.10. We are increasingly concerned about the falling performance of many bus services across London and the way in which rising traffic levels and extensive roadworks are affecting bus reliability. The latest figures show a far higher number of poorly performing services than we have previously seen and seem to mark a step change for the worse. We believe that these performance shortfalls could affect almost 1 billion passenger journeys a year and the figures suggest that this poor performance is beginning to be reflected in declining bus ridership figures, for the first time in many years.
- 3.11. Our Board recently heard that 191 of the 378 high frequency bus services, more than half, were operating below the contractual performance level in Q3 2014/15. This situation shows no signs of improving. We wrote to the Managing Director of Surface Transport at TfL to express our concerns and took the opportunity to raise the issue with the Acting Transport Commissioner, Mike Brown, when he attended our meeting in September. He agreed that a lot more needs to be done to prioritise buses and improve performance and said that TfL is developing various responses to deal with the forecast rise in traffic in London. He also said that he will be meeting with the London boroughs to talk about the importance of bus priority and implementation.
- 3.12. The number of members of our online community for London bus users has continued to grow since it was launched at the end of last year. Members receive updates about general issues relating to London's bus system as a whole along with targeted quarterly updates on bus services in London. Topics have included information on proposed changes to Night Bus services to complement the proposed Night Tube, and an update on the consultation on various local bus services.

Streets

- 3.13. With the endorsement of Baroness Grey-Thompson DBE, we held a successful event in June with local highway authority enforcement officers and lead cabinet members to promote best practice in dealing with pavement obstructions. TfL have commenced their operation 'Clearway' which will roll out enforcement on the streets they control and we understand that Camden have recently initiated more work to help ensure their pavements are properly accessible for all pedestrians.

Fares and ticketing

- 3.14. We wrote to the Competition and Markets Authority to complain about unfair marketing of premium rail services at Heathrow Express and Gatwick Express and are in communication with both the Civil Aviation Authority and the ORR about this, seeking a fairer deal for passengers.
- 3.15. We continue to push for fair compensation for London commuters affected by delays on Thameslink, Southern and Southeastern services to try and secure

compensation for affected passengers after delays of 15 minutes. We have asked for credit to be paid directly to Oyster Pay As You Go and Contactless payment card users in the same way as on London Underground to make it easier for passengers to claim compensation. We raised this issue with the Rail Minister, Claire Perry, in a recent meeting and are now doing further work to develop a detailed proposal for how customer service and recompense for delay could be improved for commuters on National Rail.

- 3.16. From our casework we were aware of situations where passengers who had lost season tickets more than twice in any 12 month period would not get another duplicate ticket and would be forced to pay the full price for a new one. For annual season ticket holders, this cost could be considerable. London TravelWatch has long campaigned for a fairer system for passengers, arguing that tickets can easily be lost for reasons that are not a passenger's fault. While we recognised the industry argument that duplicates can lead to fare evasion, we argued that it is the responsibility of the industry to manage this through robust revenue protection procedures rather than make all passengers responsible for the actions of the small minority who habitually fare evade. As a result of our pressure (and that of other organisations) the 'two duplicate tickets only' rule did not feature in the new National Rail Conditions of Carriage, which outline the rights and responsibilities of passengers travelling on National Rail services, following their publication in July.

Franchising

- 3.17. We made a submission to the London Assembly Transport Committee's investigation into the case for further rail devolution in London, supporting the principle of devolution of rail franchising to the Mayor and highlighting the improvements it has delivered for passengers on the commuter rail services out of Liverpool Street station.
- 3.18. We continue to take all opportunities to influence the rail and TfL franchising process to achieve the best possible passenger benefit from new franchises.

Campaigning

- 3.19. We responded to HM Treasury's consultation on the Comprehensive Spending Review and highlighted the fact that users of London's transport services are already suffering the impact of capacity shortages through congestion, delays and overcrowding and called for sustained investment to ensure services and infrastructure can keep up with future demand.
- 3.20. As part of our statutory duties, we formally objected to Abellio Greater Anglia's proposal to close the ticket office at Roydon station, because of the likely adverse impact on passengers.

4 Communications and public engagement

- 4.1. London TravelWatch continues to concentrate its efforts on areas where it can make a difference by maximising its impact and influence on behalf of transport users. We have used evidence from our research, casework and public engagement to influence debate and our targeted work with the media has also ensured that our research continues to be the subject of discussion in both print and broadcast media, reflecting the concerns of users of the transport system.
- 4.2. We continued to open our Board and committee meetings to the public and to 'live tweet' from our meetings. Issues discussed included the poor performance of Thameslink, Southern and Southeastern rail services, changes to the night bus services, rising traffic levels, small stations, Crossrail and the redevelopment of Waterloo station. The public were able to put their questions to London's then Acting Transport Commissioner, Mike Brown, via traditional and social media when he attended our Board meeting in September.
- 4.3. We use opportunities provided by meeting senior civil servants and politicians to raise issues brought to us by passengers, promote good practice and highlight the particular ways in which the experience of using public transport in London differs from the rest of the UK. Over the last six months we have met with several Assembly Members and MPs whose constituents have been affected by the poor performance of rail services in south London. We met the Rail Minister Claire Perry MP and contributed to various stakeholder meetings arranged by the DfT to discuss rail performance. We also met the Aviation and Cycle Minister Robert Goodwill MP to discuss airport access and cycling issues, and the London Minister Lord Ahmad MP to discuss issues relating to passengers travelling in London.
- 4.4. Following the completion of our London TravelWatch website upgrade, traffic to our website has increased rapidly, with a record number of visitors recorded in August. The most popular webpages over the past six months were our money saving tips, frequently asked questions about using Oyster and our complaints pages. We continue to use our website to help passengers by giving them information they need and answers to questions they commonly seek which saves their time and reduces the need for them to contact us unnecessarily. The visitor statistics to our website confirm how useful this resource is for passengers.
- 4.5. After our Annual Review for 2015 was circulated to key industry stakeholders and politicians, we received a very positive letter from the Mayor of London. He praised the contribution we have made to improve the travel experiences of transport users in London and acknowledged that our research report gave the industry much to think about.
- 4.6. We are now co-located with the Old Oak Common and Park Royal Development Corporation which has provided the opportunity for very early dialogue about the passenger implications of the regeneration project as well as the design of the HS2 station. We have had one useful meeting with them and will be meeting regularly from now.

5 Casework

- 5.1. During the period, we carried out further work to upgrade the casework CRM computer software to ensure that our staff can continue to work effectively.
- 5.2. During the first six months of 2015 the casework team dealt with almost 3,000 written and telephone enquiries and complaints. The majority of casework received in this period were about fares including refunds, refund policy and penalty fares. How operators handle complaints has historically dominated a large part of casework and appeals in this area are increasing. Fewer appeals were investigated than the same period in 2014. However, the nature of complaints is more complex as most cases now involve more than one mode of transport and require us to negotiate with more than one operator to resolve a problem.
- 5.3. Of the complaints which required further investigation 73% related to National Rail and the rest to TfL.
- 5.4. Bus complaints account for over 33% of all TfL cases and more recently, we have seen a rise in contacts due to delays on London Buses and late bus arrival times. 23% of all TfL cases relate to London Underground and 17% to Oyster. The remaining cases are spread across the DLR, LOROL, Congestion charge, Streets, Thames Clipper, Dial a ride, Emirates Airline, the Tram and TfL rail.

6 Financial outturn

- 6.1. Part 1 of the Annex gives details of expenditure against budget as at the end of September 2015. There is an overspend of £31k against the budget to date for the 2015/16 year.
- 6.2. The overspend on staff costs is due to a number of factors. Additional staff hours were contracted to handle an increase in workload, the pay award was larger than budgeted, and staff assumed to move to part-time hours were not able to do so. However, it is expected that savings will be made over the remainder of the year so this overspend will not continue.
- 6.3. There was a £11k overspend against the supplies and services budget however we are not expecting this to be over budget for the full year.
- 6.4. Depreciation has been over budget by £2k due to capital purchases at the end of 2014/15 but this has been offset by a slight underspend on accommodation.

Risk areas

- 6.5. With a smaller staff complement, the principal risk for the future is that an unexpected and unavoidable rise in workload, which might be required to fulfil our statutory objectives, could not be accommodated without extra expenditure. Whilst current reserves remain similar to the previous year the cash-backed element of these has been reduced as a result of the capital expenditure associated with last year's office move and the new casework IT system. We monitor our cash flow regularly to ensure this risk is properly managed.

**Janet Cooke
Chief Executive,
London TravelWatch
26 November 2015**

Annex: Performance information

1. Financial performance

The financial position as at the end of September 2015 is summarised below:

	Original Budget (Year to date)	Revised Budget (Year to date)	Actual Spend/ Income to date	Variance against revised budget (Year to date)
	£	£	£	£
REVENUE EXPENDITURE				
Chair, Members & Staff Costs	400,150	400,150	419,910	(19,760)
Accommodation costs	66,800	66,800	65,000	1,800
Supplies & Services	56,200	56,200	67,206	(11,006)
Depreciation	5,050	5,050	7,149	(2,099)
Total Revenue Expenditure	528,200	528,200	559,265	(31,065)
Total Capital & Revenue Expenditure	528,200	528,200	559,265	(31,065)
INCOME				
Greater London Authority Funding	528,200	528,000	528,000	(200)
Bank Interest Receivable	0	0	17	17
Other income	0	0	0	0
Total Income	528,200	528,000	528,017	(183)
Revenue surplus transfer to general reserve			(31,248)	(31,248)

Note: Commentary relating to London Travel Watch's financial performance is set out in section 6 of the preceding report.