

London TravelWatch Performance Report to 31.3.16

1 Introduction

- 1.1. This report sets out London TravelWatch's performance over the past year and shows the financial position as at 31 March 2016 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 London TravelWatch handled during the period and includes a short overview of the main issues raised by the public. It also provides a high-level summary of performance against the GLA's own targets for corporate health.

2 Key areas of achievement

- 2.1. In 2015-16 London TravelWatch continued to make a real difference for the travelling public in and around London.
 - We stood up for rail passengers affected by persistent delays and disruption, challenging the industry to improve. We were successful in making the case for better compensation arrangements for commuters.
 - Four different operators consulted us on proposals to close or reduce the operating hours of their ticket offices. An unprecedented number of passengers, more than 16,000, contacted us about this. Their feedback helped us to negotiate a better deal for passengers.
 - Our casework team dealt with 7,631 enquires and complaints and took forward 856 appeals from people dissatisfied with how their transport operator had dealt with their original complaint. Although by definition many appeals cases are very complex, nevertheless, the team achieved successful outcomes for passengers in more than half of these cases.
 - We continued to make the case for prioritising the bus on London's streets and have raised awareness of the declining performance of bus services.
 - We helped give bus passengers a voice through our growing online bus users' community, encouraging them to respond to consultations affecting their bus routes by highlighting the worst performing bus routes for punctuality and pushed Transport for London (TfL) to address the underlying causes. TfL have now targeted funding to support measures which will give buses greater priority through congested streets.
 - Our research into how to improve public transport access to London's five main airports continued to generate debate with both the public and the industry and has directly led to improvements for passengers.

- We carried out new research, in partnership with London Councils and Trust for London, which drew attention to the impact that high transport costs can have on low paid workers living in outer London who have to commute into central London.
- Our 'Interchanges Matters' report drew attention to the needs of passengers at transport interchanges, which will be used to encourage good practice. Alongside this, we launched a blog to encourage debate and help bring about improvement. Already we are seeing small but positive changes being made.
- We published our 10 priorities for transport users ahead of the 2016 elections to help influence the new Mayor's transport strategy on behalf of the travelling public.

3 Progress against the business plan objectives for 2015-16

- 3.1. This section highlights progress against London TravelWatch's key business plan objectives for 2015-16 and demonstrates the impact our work has had.
- 3.2. During the year we had to take on unexpected but important work in response to proposals from several transport operators to change their ticket office arrangements and also in response to the persistent poor performance of Thameslink, Southern and Southeastern rail services. This meant that some other work such as our report on the needs of passengers at small stations has been delayed.

Rail services

- 3.3. Our quarterly performance monitoring reports provide independent scrutiny of operators' performance from the passenger perspective, highlighting areas of concern that we raise with operators. Our particular concern in this past year was the poor performance of Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern services as well as Southeastern.
- 3.4. We also continued to highlight, at every opportunity, the fact that London rail commuters (the majority of whom are a captive market) were regularly suffering delays of 15-20 minutes on journeys scheduled to take 20-25 minutes yet they were not entitled to any compensation. We urged operators to bring their compensation arrangements into line with those of London Underground by paying out for delays after 15 minutes, and crediting this directly to registered smartcard users, which we started calling for in December 2014.
- 3.5. The issue was picked up in the main party manifestos ahead of the General Election and it now has widespread support. In November's autumn statement, the Chancellor announced that the Government would take steps 'to ensure that rail passengers have access to compensation when trains are over 15 minutes late'. Having helped to shape the debate around compensation arrangements, we will be discussing further how this might work with the Department for Transport (DfT).
- 3.6. The current way of measuring train punctuality using the Public Performance Measure (PPM) does not provide passengers with the full picture about the performance of their rail services. This is because trains can arrive up to five minutes late and still be classed as arriving 'on time'. We wrote to the Rail Minister,

highlighting the significant gap in information available on punctuality and the fact that PPM is misleading as it understates the number of trains which do not arrive at the time they are supposed to. We called for a comprehensive published comparator of right time arrivals, broken down between peak and off peak services as it is for PPM.

- 3.7. The Minister in reply committed the industry to a greater level of transparency when it comes to delivery of the timetable and confirmed that Network Rail is reviewing the key performance indicators the industry will use to ensure performance measures better represent the passenger experience. She also acknowledged the amount of useful work we had done representing passengers on this issue.
- 3.8. We remained concerned that the High Speed Rail Bill did not take into account the interests of London passengers both in terms of the closures process and potential overcrowding, with substantial numbers of additional people forecast to use the Underground from Euston or Euston Square as a result of the HS2 project.
- 3.9. Having previously submitted a petition on the HS2 Hybrid Bill to Parliament, we gave evidence to the High Speed Rail Bill Public Bill Committee in December 2015. We continued to make the point that the effect on passengers of the extra numbers of people using the London Underground from Euston or Euston Square without additional public transport provision would be considerable. We also put in a plea that Euston station should be redeveloped as a whole rather than two separate projects for the existing station and the new HS2 section.
- 3.10. Most of our objections have been dealt with and changes have been agreed with TfL and Camden Council following the evidence we gave on behalf of passengers travelling in or out of London. Clauses on railway closures in the Bill were changed as a result of our intervention.

Protecting passengers' interests when ticket retailing changes

- 3.11. London Underground proposed to close ticket offices at the 11 former Silverlink railway stations. Passengers were consulted under the National Rail, Ticketing and Settlement Agreement (Schedule 17). We received 1,600 responses. Having analysed passenger feedback as well as statistics regarding ticket sales, we formally objected to the proposals as we did not think they were in passengers' interests.
- 3.12. In response, London Underground agreed to delay the closures until new and improved ticket machines are installed and working, which is likely to be in December 2016. Until then the ticket offices will remain staffed and open with the current hours of operation. It also agreed that the ticket offices at the busiest stations (Harrow & Wealdstone, Queens Park and Wembley Central) which still sell a lot of National Rail tickets will remain open for at least two further months to allow future ticket sales at these stations to be analysed. The Board will then reconsider its position in respect of these three stations.
- 3.13. Govia Thameslink Railway consulted us to close or change ticket office opening hours at 55 stations in our area. We received an unprecedented number of responses (9,000+) from passengers about this. We also received representations from local authority lead members, MPs and London Assembly Members. The vast majority of these responses disagreed with the proposals. We did not support the proposals because of concerns about ticket machines, cash transactions and how

'station hosts' would operate. We asked for a clearer proposal to be developed and piloted.

- 3.14. Following our response, Govia Thameslink Railway agreed to withdraw the proposals and trial the 'station host' concept with a programme of communications for passengers. They agreed to keep all the ticket office machines at all stations, retaining the ability to sell the whole range of tickets. They will also carry out a number of ticket machine upgrades.
- 3.15. Great Western Railway also submitted proposals to change ticket office opening hours at eight stations in our area. We voiced concern that the large number of transactions made at these stations meant that passengers would be more inconvenienced than the operator had assumed. As a result of this, they agreed to withdraw plans to change ticket office opening times at Langley and Slough.
- 3.16. After a particularly problematic consultation process, we were able to secure a major improvement for passengers at Roydon station. This included a new heated waiting room with customer information screens, a new London bound platform with a much reduced stepping gap between the train and the platform, new cycle storage facilities and seating and a replacement modern ticket machine for this platform. There will also be an additional ticket vending machine on the Cambridge bound platform. This reduces the need for passengers to use the level crossing unnecessarily, thus implementing a previous safety recommendation.
- 3.17. We are speaking to the DfT about putting in place additional Schedule 17 safeguards for passengers in the future to prevent operators who have closed ticket offices from reducing promised staffing levels at a later date without further consultation.

Surface transport access by public transport to London's airports

- 3.18. Our 2014 report into how to improve surface transport access to London's airports continues to provide evidence for ongoing work on this topic.
- 3.19. Following our response to the Airport Commission's report on the need for additional UK airport capacity we met with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and with the Aviation Minister, Robert Goodwill.
- 3.20. We also responded to Heathrow Airport's surface transport blueprint, pointing out that while we were pleased to see a number of things we had called for, the failure to address the issue of Crossrail serving Terminal 5 and extend Oyster and contactless payment options to Heathrow Express and Heathrow Connect represented a serious missed opportunity. We subsequently had a productive meeting with Heathrow Airport's Planning and Surface Access Director.
- 3.21. We continued to highlight the issues we raised in our access to airports report, with the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), Office of Rail and Road (ORR), CAA, mayoral candidate teams, ministers and the airports themselves. We also made a submission to the House of Commons Transport Select Committee report on the topic and highlighted the unfair marketing of premium rail services into central London from both Heathrow and Gatwick Airports.

3.22. So far we have achieved or helped to achieve the following outcomes:

- The extension of Oyster to Gatwick Airport Station was finally implemented in January 2016 and was an immediate success. In the first six weeks of operation, passengers made 150,000 journeys on the route to and from Gatwick Airport using Oyster PAYG and contactless payment cards; half of them were visitors to London.
- Heathrow Airport have commissioned a report which will look at whether and how Oyster/contactless can be extended to be used on Heathrow Express and fully on Heathrow Connect.
- Both the CMA and ORR have initiated consultations on issues resulting from our report and representations on surface access to airports and access charges for Crossrail to Heathrow.
- Discussions are now underway to allow Crossrail to serve Heathrow Terminal 5.

Buses

3.23. We have regularly highlighted the falling reliability and increased journey times of many bus services across the capital. We drew attention to the way in which rising traffic levels and congestion were affecting bus reliability and journey times and raised the issue with the new Transport Commissioner when he attended our September Board meeting. TfL has allocated up to £200 million for bus priority measures after our pressure.

3.24. We meet often with TfL's bus priority team to keep raising the passenger perspective and during the year supported an engagement event with local authority officers and members.

3.25. We host an online bus users' community of 300 members. We regularly communicate with them about changes to their services and major bus service developments.

Cycling

3.26. We have been supportive of the notable amount of work done during the course of this year, in particular the 'Cycle Superhighways'. We believe they will have a significant impact in persuading more people to cycle in London. We did raise, though, some concerns:

- We complained about a section of cycle lane at Whitechapel which was adjacent to parked vans. This was dangerous for cyclists as people were opening doors directly onto the cycle lane. We pointed out that it was against TfL's own guidance. TfL have put into operation a wide bus lane by combining bus and cycle lanes which is a reasonable and safer compromise.

- We raised the issue of high levels of cycle casualties after the introduction of the Cycle Superhighway scheme on Stratford High Street. TfL produced a report to their internal Surface Transport Board on cycle safety on Stratford High Street and will be keeping a watching brief in the coming months.
- We have asked TfL to carry out a proper assessment of bus stop bypasses in different locations. They are doing this as part of a trial on zebra crossings.
- We expressed concern to the City of London about the use of rubber blocks to separate cyclists from other traffic which have led to a number of pedestrian trips. The City of London has removed the blocks as a result of our concerns.
- Following our discussion with the Transport Committee, our Board will now scrutinise key road safety statistics every quarter.

Taxi journeys and taxi/private hire regulations review

- 3.27. Many taxis in London do not accept credit or debit card payments, so passengers need to check before they travel whether they could pay by this method. Taxis could also make a surcharge of £1 or 10 per cent of the fare. We have, with others, repeatedly made the case for passengers to be able to pay by these means when travelling by taxi without having to pay a large fee to do this. Most recently, we responded to TfL's consultation on proposals for paying by credit/debit card in taxis. After the representations we made, TfL announced that there would be no more surcharges for passengers paying by card in taxis and from October all drivers must accept cards including contactless payment cards.
- 3.28. We responded to TfL's Private Hire Regulations Review, expressing our support for many of the proposals but opposing the proposal to make private hire vehicles wait for five minutes before they pick up a fare. The proposals we agreed with included a requirement for private hire passengers to be sent a booking confirmation with driver and vehicle details and for operators to provide a real person for customers to speak to in the event of problems. TfL largely agreed with our responses and its Board approved a set of new regulations which included our recommendations.

New research

- 3.29. We worked with London Councils and Trust for London to produce a report on transport affordability, *Living on the Edge*, which makes a number of recommendations on how to help low income workers living in outer London struggling with the cost of travel into central London. Our casework has shown that this issue has been of widespread public concern for a long period. We shared the report with key stakeholders and helped to raise the issue on behalf of London passengers.
- 3.30. The introduction of the bus 'hopper' fare proposed for September 2016 by the Mayor starts to address some of the issues raised by this research and the concern of other stakeholders and bodies, including the Transport Committee.

Mayoral elections

- 3.31. We produced a set of 10 transport users' priorities which aimed to influence the transport manifestos of the mayoral candidates on behalf of transport users. Key issues we highlighted include:
- ensuring sustained investment to meet London's ever-growing transport needs
 - reliable bus services that keep up with the pace of change
 - further promoting the idea that as many of London's rail services as possible should be run or co-ordinated by the Mayor and
 - a road network that makes the best use of scarce capacity.
- 3.32. As we pointed out, many of the priorities such as providing a co-ordinated approach to transport interchanges and effectively managing disruption require only modest expenditure and could be implemented quickly. We had productive meetings with both Sadiq Khan and Zac Goldsmith's policy teams following which their manifestos drew on some of our ideas.
- 3.33. This document will also be used to support our campaigning work in the next couple of years.

Communications and public engagement

- 3.34. We highlight every year the impact our work has made to improve the consumer experience for the travelling public in and around London in our Annual Review which is sent out to key industry stakeholders and politicians. We were pleased last year to receive a letter from the Mayor of London acknowledging the contribution we have made to improve Londoners' travel experiences and the work that we have done to make the case for sufficient public transport funding against the backdrop of an ever-increasing population.
- 3.35. Our website and the use of social media continues to provide an effective and cost efficient way to help engage the public in our work and to disseminate best practice to the industry.
- 3.36. We continued to 'live tweet' from our public meetings – issues discussed included changes to night bus services, small stations and the redevelopment of Waterloo Station. The Transport Commissioner appeared at our Board meeting in September and we took questions for him via Twitter.
- 3.37. We held a Twitter hour with the public on 14 October 2015 where we took questions from them about buses. The session proved popular, stimulating debate amongst bus users. TfL's Director of Buses was on hand to answer more specific questions aimed at TfL.
- 3.38. We started an interchange matters blog in August 2015 which is beginning to generate debate.

- 3.39. There were 322,979 unique visits to our website last year which is a 13% increase from last year. This year's figures have been boosted by the consultations on proposed ticket office changes by London Underground, GTR and GWR, tube strikes and media coverage of reports published by London TravelWatch.
- 3.40. The most popular webpages continued to be: 'money saving tips'; the frequently asked question, 'where can I top up my Oyster card?' and our page on where to send complaints. A lot of the topics covered derive from enquiries we receive in casework. We aim to better help the public who visit our website and to help reduce the number of unnecessary enquiries that we receive.

4 Casework

- 4.1. During 2015-2016 our casework team dealt with 7,631 written and telephone enquiries and complaints. Most of these could be dealt with quickly or passed on to the operator for an initial reply, as we only investigate cases where the complainant has not already received an adequate response. The vast majority of our general casework concerned fares, tickets and refunds. In the later part of the year we also dealt with over 16,000 contacts from the public responding to consultations about proposed ticket office closures.
- 4.2. We investigated 856 appeals (compared to 1,107 in 2015-2016) from members of the public travelling in London and the surrounding areas.
- 4.3. The highest number of appeals we received concerned fares and complaint handling.
- 4.4. Of those complaints that required further detailed investigation, 76% related to National Rail (compared to 60% last year). Over the past year, there has been a significant reduction in the number of appeal cases we need to take forward in respect of TfL's services. Conversely, there has been a big rise in the number of initial enquires we now receive relating to TfL. However, a large number of journeys in and around London are multi-modal. The categories are not necessarily exclusive and some appeals need us to negotiate with more than one transport operator.
- 4.5. Over the years passengers have regularly appealed to us because having lost season tickets more than twice in any 12 month period they could not get another duplicate ticket. They were forced to pay the full price for a new one which for annual season ticket holders, could be considerable. To address this, we have long fought for a fairer system for passengers, arguing that tickets can easily be lost for reasons that are not a passenger's fault. We recognised the industry argument that duplicates can lead to fare evasion. However, 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 those who habitually fare evade.
- 4.6. As a result of our pressure, and that of others, the 'two duplicate tickets only' rule was removed from the new National Rail Conditions of Carriage, published in July 2015, which outlines the rights and responsibilities of passengers travelling on National Rail services.

- 4.7. The fact that over the years we have received so much casework from rail passengers who have not been able to use Oyster Pay As You Go or contactless payments for journeys to Gatwick Airport station, with many incurring penalty fares, was why we have lobbied so hard for improvements. Hence, we were delighted when Oyster Pay As You Go and Contactless bank payments were accepted on journeys to Gatwick and five Surrey stations along the route in January 2016.

5 Corporate health

- 5.1. As at 31 March 2016, the organisation employed 19 staff, half of whom are part-time, which equated to 15.49 full-time equivalent posts.
- 5.2. We undertook a range of work relating to equality and diversity during 2015/16, setting and publishing an objective relating to service delivery as well as conducting a retrospective audit to look at the historical representation of women from black and minority ethnic backgrounds in the organisation. We also completed and published an equal pay audit and held a successful diversity and inclusion workshop for staff and members.
- 5.3. Unfortunately, there was a very high level of staff sickness during the year. This equated to an average of 15.1 days per person, more than three times the average in 2014-15 which was 4.7 days. The figures were skewed by the long term and continuing absence of one person and by two other staff who had serious medical conditions which necessitated several months off work. Removing these three people reduces the average to 7.2 days. London TravelWatch has a very strict policy on managing sickness absence to ensure the number of days lost is kept to a minimum. This includes meetings with line managers after any absence and referral to an occupational health specialist for cases of intermittent but persistent absence or before return to work from long term sickness.
- 5.4. Despite the pressure on resources we invested time in learning and development to ensure staff have the skills they need to do their jobs. We will continue to strive to create a learning environment where staff succeed and deliver the business plan, where people's contribution is recognised and valued and where managers are effective in leading, managing and developing their teams.

6 Financial outturn

- 6.1. Part 1 of the Annex gives details of expenditure against budget as at the end of March 2016. There is an overspend against budget of £32k for the financial year 2015/16. However, £11k was held back in reserves in 2014/15 to be used to complete unfinished research in 2015/16 so the overspend is in effect £21k.
- 6.2. There was an overspend of £42k on staff and member costs. Approximately £20k of this was due to an underestimate of the cost of living increase that the GLA agreed. We also spent £19k on additional temporary staff to cope with exceptional levels of incoming work. The balance related to various non - pay staff costs.
- 6.3. A range of small savings on communications and office supplies helped to offset this overspend.

- 6.4. The other income of £20,913 was predominantly recovery of two thirds of the cost of the external research project which we carried out in partnership with London Councils and Trust for London.

Risk areas

- 6.5. With a smaller staff complement, the principal risk for the future is that we will not have 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. During last year we needed to use our reserves to fund the extra statutory work we carried out on ticket office consultations.

**Janet Cooke
Chief Executive,
London TravelWatch
29 June 2016**

Annex: Performance information

1. Financial performance

The financial position as at the end of March 2016 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	800,300	800,300	842,553	(42,253)
Accommodation costs	133,600	133,600	134,520	(920)
Supplies & Services	112,400	112,400	121,994	(9,594)
Depreciation	10,100	10,100	14,297	(4,197)
Total Revenue Expenditure	1,056,400	1,056,400	1,113,364	(56,964)
Total Capital & Revenue Expenditure	1,056,400	1,056,400	1,113,364	(56,964)
INCOME				
Greater London Authority Funding	1,056,000	1,056,000	1,056,000	0
Passenger Focus	400	400	4,680	4,280
Bank Interest Receivable	0	0	35	35
Other income	0	0	20,913	20,913
Total Income	1,056,400	1,056,400	1,081,628	25,228
Revenue surplus transfer to general reserve	0	0	(31,736)	(31,736)

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

2. Corporate health

The following relates to London TravelWatch's performance against the GLA's own corporate health performance indicators.

PI no.	Indicator	Performance 2013/14	Performance 2014/15	Performance 2015/16	GLA Target	Variance
1	The number of working days /shifts lost to sickness absence per staff member	7.1	4.7	15.1	6	9.1
2	% of employees that are women	45%	45%	50%	52%	-2
3	% of employees from ethnic minority backgrounds	25%	25%	28%	29%	-1
4	% of employees declaring that they meet the Equality Act definition of disability and /or have declared themselves disabled.	10%	10%	6%	13%	-7