Towards Transport Excellence:

A users' strategy

August 2006

What is Excellence in transport in the London context?

London TravelWatch is the statutory consumer body responsible for representing the interests of the users of London's various transport modes. This document sets out the needs and aspirations of users as to what constitutes 'excellence' in transport provision.

We believe that London's transport system must be safe, accessible, customer focused, and provide value for money for both users and taxpayers if it is to realise its full potential. High levels of investment in the system are a necessity. However London TravelWatch recognises that there will always be competing demands for available funding which will require prioritisation. London's transport must be designed to the highest possible standards of safety compatible with systems that have to cope with moving millions of people every day.

It must also be accessible to the widest possible community and range of abilities, giving appropriate priority to people who have degrees of disability. In terms of customer focus the system must be easily understood, with well-trained, courteous, identifiable staff who have all had training to meet the needs of mobility impaired people. Integration of the modes must be a priority, with easy interchange and comprehensive information to allow users to make informed choices on how they travel. This means that there needs to be a very clear linkage between land use planning and transport provision to maximise the efficiency and usability of the transport network. We recognise that releasing suppressed demand for any mode of transport (including that for road space and parking) will have different impacts depending on the mode.

Those modes of transport that require a degree of enforcement to make them effective should be administered fairly, be well regulated, transparent, adequate to the task, proportionate and have in place a proper means of redress when things go wrong.

Public Transport - general

Services should in principle reflect the **24/7** nature of London society. This will mean better early morning/late evening and weekend services than currently exist. However, we accept that in respect of trains (including the Underground) and trams this may need to be balanced against the requirements for maintenance and upgrades. A system that is not adequately maintained will inevitably be at best unreliable and at worst unsafe.

Nothing reassures passengers more than the visible presence of uniformed staff. At stations they should be multi-functional; issuing and checking tickets, providing information and security, and protecting the system from those people who would subject it to damage. Staff need to be backed up by robust security measures such as CCTV and 'help points', as well as police officers with the powers of enforcement.

Information needs to be **clear, understandable and accessible**. It should cover fares, and both real-time and pre-travel time service information, and be available via a range of media. At times of **service disruption** information needs to be **concise, timely and unambiguous**.

The **waiting and travelling environments** are important parts of the journey experience. They must be **clean and free from graffiti**. The waiting facilities must be **well-lit and protected from adverse weather conditions**.

Vehicles must be **safe, fit for purpose** and provide appropriate seat comfort and pitch for the journey. On high-capacity vehicles where some passengers are expected to stand, appropriate handrails must be provided that are suitable for people of different heights.

Interchanges must be accessible with clear and consistent signage to enable journeys to be made easily. Passengers must not be allowed to fall in the gaps between the areas of responsibility of different service providers. Consideration should be given to appointing an Interchange 'Manager' or 'Champion' at particularly large and/or complex locations.

At least 99% of planned services should run with severe penalties imposed when this target is not achieved.

In London frequency is important to the success of public transport. The principle of 'turn-up-and-go' requires **frequencies of no less than 4 services and preferably 6 services an hour.**

Redesigning timetables may increase reliability at the expense of additional journey time and/or a reduction in frequencies, if no extra resources can be justified. Although we acknowledge that reliability is one of passengers' top priorities we believe that a balance has to be struck between speed, frequency, capacity and reliability.

We support the provision of specialist transport services where conventional public transport services are inaccessible to mobility impaired people.

All transport operators and providers must have well-publicised, easy-to-use and effective complaints handling procedures and transport users must be made aware of their right to escalate unresolved complaints to London TravelWatch for our consideration.

Buses

The bus network must provide comprehensive coverage in a simple and easy to use way. Vehicles must be fit for purpose, accessible, clean and comfortable with clear signage and information, both inside and out.

We recognise the limitations of providing universal 'everywhere to everywhere' services, and believe the emphasis must be to provide easy and reliable interchange between routes.

Reliability is the key to encouraging greater use of buses. In order to achieve this, and to reflect their greater carrying capacity, we believe that buses must be allocated priority in the use of road space. We accept that there may be a loss of capacity for other road users in some cases as a result.

The bus network (including the waiting, boarding and alighting environment) must offer safety and personal security for all. This will include improving the training and capabilities of staff and the waiting and on-bus environments. Good design and the use

of appropriate technology will minimise the risk of crime against the person and/or criminal damage to vehicles and stops.

Buses must be accessible. We recognise that it will be difficult to address some of the conflicting needs of different categories of users, for example between the ambulant disabled and wheelchair users within the vehicle, however good design should aim to accommodate the widest range of user needs.

Buses must be given priority for kerb space over other users, with bus boarders and/or raised kerb heights as appropriate to ensure easy access/egress for all passengers, particularly those in wheelchairs for whom near-level access is necessary for them to be able to use buses at all. We recognise the conflicting demands for kerb space in some locations, particularly residential roads with limited or no off-street car parking, and believe that the judicious provision of bus boarders will meet the needs of bus users whilst minimising the reduction in car parking spaces.

In areas where passenger demand is low, demand responsive services should be considered. Where physical access is constrained the use of 'Hail and Ride' stopping arrangements may be necessary.

Tickets should be easily available. Fares should be easily understood and be seen to be equitable. Where roadside ticket machines would not represent value for money in terms of the cost of their purchase, installation and maintenance then the option of paying fares by cash on the bus must remain.

Information about routes and frequencies must be provided at all bus stops. Audible and visual announcements should be made on buses as to the next stop to be served, reflecting the concerns of many occasional users that they find it difficult to know where to get off.

Appropriate route information must be displayed on the front, near-side and rear of buses.

Streets – general

Streets and public spaces must be effectively managed to provide a safe, easy-to-use and pleasant environment for all.

All surfaces need to be well-maintained, free from litter, unnecessary clutter and other hazards, and be clearly defined for the benefit of all users.

Streets need to be clearly named and signed consistently, to assist users to find their way more easily in unfamiliar surroundings.

Real time information must be provided about delays, congestion and street works. Information should be provided about planned disruptions thus enabling road users to consider alternative routes.

Well maintained lighting is essential for safe and secure road and pavement usage. Its positioning should minimise shadow and, where possible, should not unnecessarily take away space from pavements or introduce unnecessary obstacles into the highway.

Traffic calming schemes must take account of the needs of all users in their design. Cyclists, for example, need designs which minimise damage to their bikes and do not encourage intimidation by motorists. There must be proper provision to meet the legitimate access requirements within traffic calmed areas of cars and other road vehicles. Traffic calming measures should be designed to meet the specific needs of buses and their passengers and of emergency vehicles.

Roads for vehicles

Safety should be the number one priority when considering highway policy. It will impact decisions relating to maximum allowable speeds and concerns about journey times. Accident reduction should feature highly as a desirable aim.

We believe that it is the responsibility of all vehicle owners to ensure that their vehicles are taxed, insured and certified as roadworthy and of all drivers to have a valid driving license, and to drive responsibly.

Parking and access strategies should seek to maximise the benefit to people with disabilities whilst not unnecessarily disadvantaging other vehicle users. The 'Blue Badge' system must be regularly monitored, updated and enforced. 'Freedom to park' should be tempered to reduce the impact of parked cars on other road and pavement users. Parking restraint should be primarily to prevent obstruction and safe operation of the roads and where necessary to allocate scarce parking space. Notices relating to parking and waiting restrictions must be unambiguous and clearly displayed.

We support car sharing and car club schemes.

The capacity of the road network needs to be managed effectively so that everyone can use the network safely and securely (recognising that for pedestrians and cyclists direct and level routes need to be provided across major roads).

We acknowledge the importance of providing adequate space on streets for loading and unloading, where this is not available off-street, but believe that properly enforced restrictions as to its use is appropriate in many locations.

Congestion must be effectively managed to maximise the numbers of people who can travel on the limited available road space and to minimise delays, especially to buses. We acknowledge that this can be done by a variety of means including road pricing, physical measures, information, education and signage provision and speed control.

Speed limits must be clearly signed and consistent (especially at points where limits change), and enforced by appropriate means.

Streets for Cyclists

Safer cycling requires a variety of disciplines to produce an environment in which cycling can thrive. These include training for cyclists, educating other road users of the needs of cyclists and, providing and maintaining physical infrastructure on the highway (such as repairing potholes).

Dedicated cycle routes and, where practical, segregated cycle lanes should not be interrupted by or encumbered with unnecessary barriers.

We believe that the needs of cyclists must be fully catered for when planning transport schemes. This should include the provision of secure cycle storage at rail and bus stations and/or the provision of priority for cyclists in road schemes.

Streets for Pedestrians (including wheelchair users)

Pedestrians and wheelchair users need pavements that are free from trip hazards and unnecessary 'clutter' to enable them to move freely and safely – this will mean that where possible signs are grouped on common poles, and, where feasible, bus shelters should be placed in positions that do not obscure clear sight lines.

Pavements that are wide improve the perception of personal security and enable a pleasant environment to be created. Seating is essential for people unable to stand or walk for a long period. We believe that these features are fundamental to encouraging walking as a mode of transport and people with mobility impairments to use the space.

Pedestrian crossings should, where it can be achieved safely, offer people direct routes, even if this may reduce overall road capacity for other users. Good design will encourage eye-contact between pedestrians and other road users, especially in areas of slow moving traffic, thereby encouraging a natural safety mechanism. This will mean that crossings need to be designed so as to maximise visibility of all users.

Pavements should be for pedestrians. On-pavement parking should not be allowed unless the pavement is wide enough to allow separate, adequate, unimpeded pedestrian movement in addition to clearly designated space for vehicle parking. Enforcement of parking restrictions must ensure that space on pavements clearly allocated to pedestrians alone is not abused, that dropped kerbs are kept free and that at all locations sufficient width is reserved for pedestrians, wheelchair users and people with prams and buggies.

Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles

We recognise that taxis and private hire vehicles are an important part of the mix of London's public transport provision.

Taxis and private hire vehicles also play an important role in transport integration in providing connections to and from rail and bus stations, and airports. Proper provision must be made for taxis and private hire vehicles at rail and bus stations and airports.

Taxis and private hire vehicles need to be driven by people who are well trained, courteous, identifiable and safety conscious. The vehicles need to be clean, comfortable, safe, secure (with regulatory inspection regimes as appropriate) and clearly identified as taxis/private hire vehicles, both internally and externally.

We support the subsidised Taxicard scheme which meets the needs of people who would otherwise not be able to get out and about, by virtue of being mobility impaired, and for whom ordinary Taxi/minicab fares may be beyond their means.

Trains and Trams

Heavy rail services need to be frequent enough for travellers to have a reasonable choice of travelling times. We accept that limited track capacity may present conflicting demands between suburban, outer suburban, inter-city and freight services which may

mean that our aspirations as to service frequency are not fully achievable in practice, but each case needs to be considered on its merits.

London Underground has largely achieved 'turn up and go' frequent services with the exception of a small number of stations outside the Greater London area. These frequencies need to be retained and where justified enhanced.

On all forms of rail travel sufficient capacity to cater for those wishing to travel is a prerequisite, but we accept that at peak times it may not be possible to provide every traveller with a seat. We believe that, where demand warrants it, additional track capacity should be considered – it is not reasonable to forecast growth in demand without adequate plans to meet that demand; similarly it is not reasonable to expect passengers to choose to travel on overcrowded services.

Fares must be easily understood and be perceived by passengers to give good value for money. For long distance services a range of fares and tickets should be available from low-cost, pre-booked with a requirement to travel on a specific train through to premium-price fully flexible tickets. A ticket similar to, or the same as, the existing turn-up-and-go Saver ticket must continue to be available for longer distance journeys.

Within Greater London there should be an integrated, simplified and zonalised fare structure on all rail networks, allowing the introduction of full Oyster/Smartcard products to National Rail services.

All railway rolling stock should ideally allow carriage of cycles. However, we acknowledge that at peak times the use of this space to convey cycles may not be achievable or even desirable. Secure storage facilities for cycles must be provided at all stations.

The accessibility of trains and stations for mobility impaired people is important. However, we accept that design will have to make reasonable compromises because of the limitations of rolling stock and station infrastructure; the numbers of passengers travelling; and the historic and restricted environment in which much of the railway operates. We believe the 24hour advance booking requirement for people with disabilities who require assistance to travel by train should be abolished.

Stations are the gateway to the rail network. An access plan for each station, covering pedestrian and wheelchair access, cycle and motorcycle storage, bus and taxi interchange and car parking is therefore essential. We recognise that at some locations there will be limited land available to satisfy all requirements and so a prioritisation process for access must be developed. We support an hierarchy in which in the urban area priority is given to pedestrian and wheelchair access, followed by cycle and motorcycle access and storage, then bus and taxi interchange, alternative land use and finally car parking. In more rural areas greater priority might need to be given to access by car.

Crowding is a problem encountered by many passengers at stations which are underground. Good design of ticket halls and circulating areas can mitigate and even overcome this problem. Passenger requirements must always take precedence over competing commercial uses.

Waterways

Rivers and canals are an important resource to London which can and should be used where appropriate. Passenger boats should operate a fares system compatible with other modes (including the ability to use Oyster smartcards). Piers should be located close to potential destinations and integrated with other modes.