



The voice of transport users

London TravelWatch response to the Southeastern franchise extension consultation

September 2013



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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;
- Liaise with the transport industry, regulators and funders on matters affecting users and respond to their consultations;
- Investigate complaints users have been unable to resolve with service providers, and;
- Monitor trends in service quality.

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

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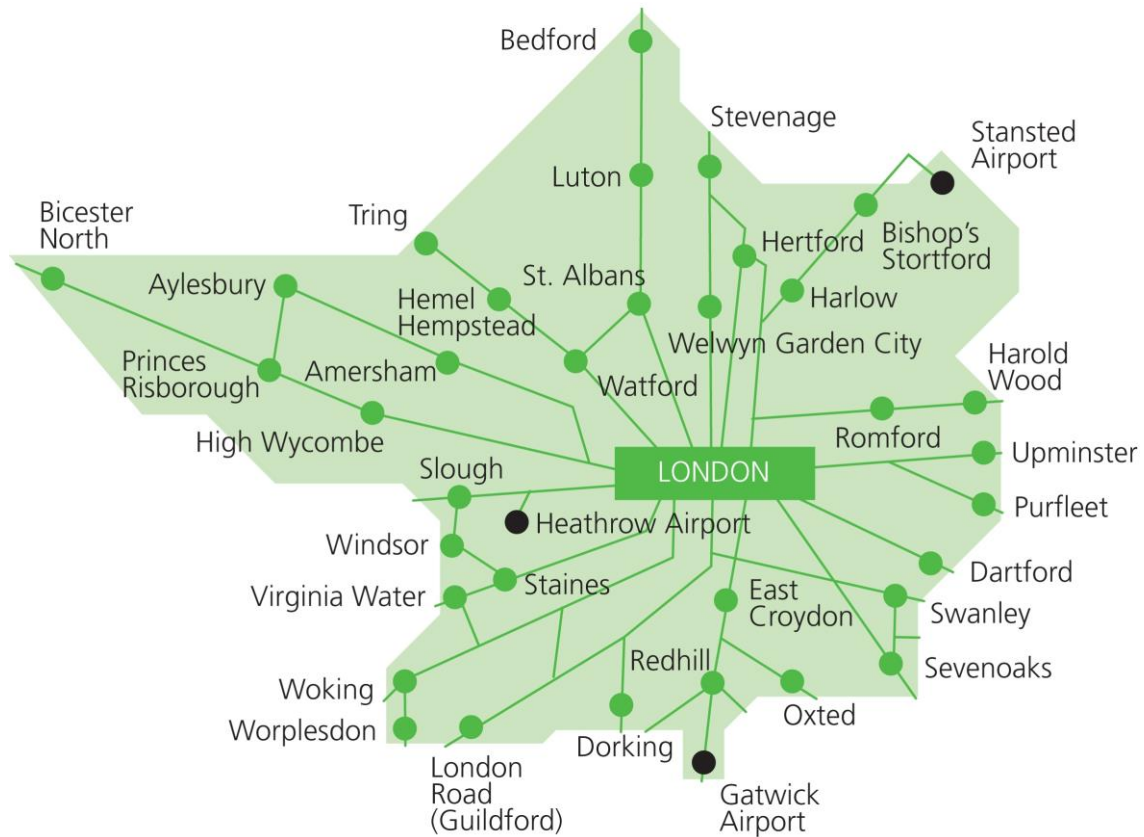
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Introduction

The area that London TravelWatch is responsible for is shown below:

Figure 1 - London TravelWatch remit area



For the South Eastern franchise, the London TravelWatch boundary covers all services within the London area, as far as Dartford, Swanley and Sevenoaks.

In compiling this response, London TravelWatch has taken into account its current and past research, along with the opinion of local authorities and user groups across the network.

London TravelWatch response

London TravelWatch is appreciative of the opportunity to comment on the extension to Southeastern's franchise. We have structured this response by answering each of Southeastern's key areas in turn, followed by a summary of our comments that do not fit in to any of these sections. The sections Southeastern wanted specific responses on were:

- Customer service -- how can we improve the journey experience with us?
- Ticketing including fares, promotions and the use of 'smart cards'
- Community and passenger engagement
- How best to manage crowding on peak services
- Transport integration – how might we work better with bus companies and cyclists?
- Station car parking
- Accessibility – how can we make it easier for the elderly and mobility impaired to use our services?
- Managing disruption, during both weather-related infrastructure problems in autumn and winter and Network Rail major projects such as Thameslink, the London Bridge re-build and Crossrail. How should we manage this disruption and keep passengers informed?

We have answered these in turn below:

Customer service -- how can we improve the journey experience with us?

London TravelWatch has recently published two key pieces of research that should be read to give our position: 'Passengers' ticket purchasing and journey experiences' was published in July 2013¹, and follows on from our 2011 research on Oyster incomplete journeys. This research gives key insights in to how passengers value different options for purchasing tickets, along with the challenges they face in understanding the system including Oyster and paper tickets, along with more modern technology.

In August 2013, we published our 'Value for money on London's transport services: what consumers think' research². This timely piece of research details passenger perceptions of value for money, and how operators can improve this. This research should inform any operator on how to improve the journey experience.

Additionally, in 2011 we undertook a research project to identify best practice at interchanges in the London area³. We found that there were serious shortcomings in wayfinding, signage and information provision, including imperfect information showing access to bus and London Underground interchanges. There are lessons that should be applied from the report, which when introduced will lead to a considerable improvement in onward travel from the London Terminal stations for many passengers.

¹ <http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/document/14360/get>

² <http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/document/14387/get>

³ <http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/document/14197/get>

In London, there is a widely adopted 'Continuing your journey' mapping system, based on TfL mapping and Legible London signage. The design of this system meets the needs of pedestrians, instead of the adaption of existing maps for motorists. The maps are at all London Underground stations, bus stations and stops, as well as at an increasing number of National Rail stations.

We would wish to see Southeastern work with TfL to introduce 'Continuing your journey' and Legible London mapping in and around their London stations. Outside London, we wish to see bespoke pedestrian mapping systems introduced, designed specifically for onward pedestrian journeys, including journeys to interchange points such as bus stations.

Ticketing including fares, promotions and the use of 'smart cards'

London TravelWatch published extensive research into ticketing, including smart cards, in the July 2013 research 'Passengers' ticket purchasing and journey experiences'. This research document should provide the basis for our response to this question.

Our key recommendations from the research are:

1. Broaden the role and utility of ticket office staff for passengers.

- Having highly visible staff who are able to answer passengers' queries and resolve problems
- Roaming staff to offer help with Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs) and sell tickets from portable devices as well as from behind the counter

2. Address current usage barriers and functionality concerns with TVMs.

- Promote consistency of design and interface where possible
- All machines to allow Oyster PAYG top-up and provide journey history information

3. Improved access to Oyster PAYG usage details and journey costs is required.

- Clearer information relating to peak and off-peak fares
- Explanation of how the daily cap works
- Reassurance that Oyster PAYG is the cheapest way to travel in London (and the explanation of the exceptions and caveats)
- Information about extensions and what to do beyond Zone 6

4. Further communication to fill knowledge gaps in relation to Oyster PAYG incomplete journeys is needed.

- What these are and why they occur

- Clearer instructions about when to touch in and out, especially at interchanges
- When to use route validators rather than yellow readers
- Promotion of the facility to obtain card balances, including at TVMs
- Clearer indication that an incomplete journey has occurred
- Promotion of the facilities available to resolve incomplete journeys, including online
- Allow incomplete journeys to be resolved at all stations where Oyster cards can be used

5. Further research and development of ticketing technologies with more obvious and compelling passenger benefits to replace Oyster cards will be required.

- Contactless and mobile payment technology is too recent and untested to be appealing to consumers
- Satisfaction with Oyster is generally high so passengers are reluctant to consider an alternative that raises overt practical and security concerns

6. Continue to make improvements to the quality and quantity of information available to passengers, especially at times of unplanned disruption.

- Information that is reliable, transparent, accurate and real time is required
- Challenges still remain at an intermodal level in this respect and across the rail network
- Cater more fully for passengers using apps and social media for information purposes in addition to retaining communication methods for those without access to social media

Community and passenger engagement

London TravelWatch would like to see the 'Community Ambassador' scheme that the Docklands Light Railway operates adopted by Southeastern. The scheme employs ambassadors from local groups, especially minority groups who may not be familiar with the rail network, and opens a two-way dialogue between the operator and the local communities. This allows the local community to become more mobile as new journey opportunities and increased confidence in the system are instilled, and allows the operator to receive valuable intelligence that they would not otherwise have access to.

We would also like to see closer links developed between Southeastern and wider community groups, including 'transition town' and other new social groups. Whilst traditional user groups provide excellent knowledge and expertise, inclusion of groups with wider societal interests would add more value to the community and passenger engagement process.

How best to manage crowding on peak services

London TravelWatch has a number of suggestions relating to off-peak and weekend services, but acknowledges the difficulty in providing extra peak services. We would like to see additional calls in some services that pass through Denmark Hill and Peckham Rye, which would provide access to Kings College Hospital, as well as the interchange with the East London Line. Modelling work has shown this to be commercially profitable, societally beneficial and that it can be provided without extending journey times.

In terms of rolling stock design, the newer generation of rolling stock such as the class 378's, or the new 'S' stock on the London Underground are proving enormously popular, with both short and longer distance passengers. In our value for money research, passengers shown different layouts for train interiors universally agreed that the open aspect of new rolling stock, combined with greater standing room, was a much better layout and better value for money, with many stating they would consider more standing room a positive over more seats. '3 x 2' seating was especially disliked.

We would expect Southeastern to be fully participating in the Travel Demand Management projects associated with the rebuild of London Bridge and various other developments such as the expansion of the London Underground station at Victoria.

We also recommend the use of information posters at each station that show the travelling public the crowding levels of each train, and where on the train overcrowding is less prevalent.

Transport integration – how might we work better with bus companies and cyclists?

Southeastern needs to work closely with Transport for London, and other operators as appropriate, in order to provide a seamless journey experience for passengers with easy and convenient interchange. Station Travel Plans should be in place to examine the interchange and facilities required for both bus and cycle passengers.

Station car parking

This franchise should specify the adoption of secure car and cycle parking standards at stations.

We support improved car parking at stations where this can reduce overall car trip length. In particular, smaller stations on the edge of, and outside of Greater London have the potential for the installation of additional car and cycle parking.

Secure cycle storage could also be improved at stations, particularly in the inner London area and at larger towns outside London.

Charging periods for car parks should also be consistent with the train service operational day and validity of train tickets.

Accessibility – how can we make it easier for the elderly and mobility impaired to use our services?

All bidders should be required to adopt, as a minimum, the standards proposed in the 'Better Rail Stations' report. London TravelWatch believes that it is essential that monitoring of station quality be by a minimum standards regime and not solely a passenger perception approach. This is because perceptions can vary substantially over time and by area for reasons that are unconnected with the standard of service. There are also absolute requirements in terms of facilities, which passenger perception does not always reflect. London TravelWatch therefore strongly favours the minimum standards approach taken by TfL in the London Rail Concession such as on the London Overground network.

We would wish to see a pragmatic approach taken to accessibility, with step free access possible at stations that can have simple and easy to maintain ramps at a small cost. The alteration of funding streams to allow 'easy to do' and 'small cost' schemes to be brought forward should happen, even if current passenger numbers make the case for improvement marginal. This is especially relevant with the under-reporting of passenger numbers making business cases harder to achieve. Example stations in this franchise would include Bellingham, Clock House, Maze Hill and Ravensbourne.

We would like consideration of the use of 'Harrington Humps', which allow level access onto trains from the platforms and would provide a cost-effective method to improve accessibility, which have been shown to be effective on the London Underground network.

Managing disruption, during both weather-related infrastructure problems in autumn and winter and Network Rail major projects such as Thameslink, the London Bridge re-build and Crossrail. How should we manage this disruption and keep passengers informed?

For planned disruption, co-ordination with other operators to ensure that parallel routes in to London are available, along with inter-availability of ticketing, are crucial. Travel Demand Management, similar to that used during the Olympics, should be enhanced for the Thameslink Programme period, with alternative routes to access London Bridge when direct services are unavailable not costing passengers extra. Timely and clear information at all times should be provided, with the 'rainbow' advertising of the early Thameslink Programme retained.

For unplanned disruption, the important thing for passengers is the information given to them regarding their delay. The new franchisee must embrace both 'old and new' media to communicate with the range of passengers that use the franchise. We also suggest the adoption of the good practice from London Overground, who shows alternative routes/means of travelling from each station to other stations.

We have experienced an excessive amount of incidents where the service between Orpington and Sevenoaks has been disrupted severely, in order to recover train service levels elsewhere on the network, without information being provided at the intermediate stations. On one occasion this involved the suspension of all services at

Chelsfield from approximately 0930-1600, but at no time during this period was the Southeastern website showing this information. This is not acceptable for a station with high demand, and the Southeastern service recovery plan should not include this element. On occasions where there is a demonstrable one-off reason to cut significant services from London stations in order to recover long-distance services, clearer information must be provided for passengers than has been the case in all recent incidents.

Other issues

London TravelWatch wishes to impress upon Southeastern the importance of off-peak and weekend services to passengers. We are of the opinion that the measures below are the most crucial changes that could take place over the next four years, and believe that it is essential that they are included in the extension rather than having to wait until after the Thameslink Programme. The current South Eastern timetable does not fully reflect the needs of passengers, particularly in Greater London and the growth in off-peak and weekend travel since the beginning of the franchise has been huge, and wherever operators around London have improved these services, ridership has rocketed.

London TravelWatch would like to see improvements to late evening and Sunday services so that they operate at the same frequency and stopping pattern as the off-peak Monday to Saturday timetable. Research shows that passengers who travel at off-peak times place greater value on regular interval services with consistent stopping patterns and journey times. In the London area over the past 10-15 years, late evenings and Sundays have seen large increases in activity, so these times are often as busy if not busier than Monday to Saturday daytimes. London Underground traffic volumes and bus usage at these times have also increased dramatically, showing the demand within London for this service level. This is relevant throughout the London area, but especially the Bromley North branch, which currently has no Sunday service at all.

We wish to see the Sunday timetable for the network enhanced to the level operating off-peak on Saturdays, and believe that the weekday evening service between 2100 and 2400 should be the same pattern as that operating between 1900 and 2100, with four trains per hour on all routes as the minimum, in line with the changes above.

London TravelWatch would also like mandated in all franchises that public holidays, including Boxing Day, operate an understandable service pattern, rather than the current situation where one operator has a Monday-Friday service without peak trains, one a Saturday service and yet another a Sunday service. There should be more combined working between operators to ensure that a single timetable is in operation that passengers can instinctively understand, and that connections between operators work as they are using the same timetable.

Similarly, for the period between Christmas and New Year when reduced services for commuters might operate, we would like more co-operation on adjacent routes, and for operators to cease using the description of Saturday services as this creates a significant expectation amongst passengers that ticket restrictions, prices and

cycle policies should also conform to Saturday practice. Each year, London TravelWatch receives a regular series of complaints from passengers on this subject – and in most cases, these are not resolved, as the passenger does not understand how a Saturday service can have Monday-Friday restrictions.

We would like the enhancement of all aspects of the train service in accordance with the London TravelWatch paper 'Requirements for Trains Services', which is available from <http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/document/10314/get>.

London TravelWatch wishes to see specific improvements for the following routes:

- A new service from Victoria to Bromley South (via the Catford Loop), calling at all stations including Wandsworth Road and Clapham High Street, to operate through both peak and off-peak times on all days of the week. This would both restore the service from Wandsworth Road and Clapham High Street to Victoria, but also provide a service level of four trains per hour from stations such as Catford and Crofton Park that currently do not receive this level of service;
- An increase in off-peak frequency of train services to four trains per hour, including Saturday and Sunday on all routes where this is not the case, such as the service to Sevenoaks via Grove Park;
- An increase in service at Chelsfield station, which currently only receives two trains per hour (one train per hour on Sunday);
- The Dartford to Victoria service should run at all times, including later in the evening and at weekends;
- Operation of services to and from London Cannon Street, which operate until close of service on Monday to Friday evenings, and all day on Saturdays and Sundays.
- Additional calls of existing services at Denmark Hill and Peckham Rye, to provide direct links between parts of Kent and Outer London to Kings College Hospital. These areas are part of the hospital catchment area but have very long journey times because of the need to interchange at Bromley South or Central London. Later evening and Sunday Victoria – Dartford via Lewisham services would satisfy part of this need. However, providing additional calls in services that currently run fast between Bromley South and Victoria would provide significant benefit and as TfL's studies have concluded, would be financially positive for the franchise; and
- Later train services to stations, to be in line with the last journey times of the London Underground of around 00:30, including at weekends, as these services are frequently very full.

London TravelWatch suggests that the introduction of a performance regime mechanism that can provide incentives for improving the service to passengers is beneficial. For example, financial penalties for delays used specifically for railway

network investment would ensure that poor performance leads to investment. On this basis, the Office of Rail Regulation can oversee both Network Rail and train operators, with any compensation from delay minutes invested in schemes that benefit passengers.

As well as the National Passenger Survey, a minimum standards regime must be in place to back up the passenger perception based targets. This ensures the achievement of an absolute level of service and facilities. The independent auditing for such a scheme also needs to be external to the train operator, to ensure that it is impartially enforced. London TravelWatch suggests the application of a Service Quality Incentive Regime (SQUIRE) to this contract. SQUIRE monitors and measures the quality of customer services provided by the franchise operator. To do this, independent inspectors regularly check the service quality of the franchise's train and station facilities.

SQUIRE inspectors audit the majority of stations and many trains every four weeks. Service areas inspected range from graffiti, toilets and timetables to train cleanliness, staff service and the public address system. There are 36 service quality areas inspected under this regime.

The publication of SQUIRE performance results should be at a minimum of quarterly, and shown by station, train or line of route.

The franchise should be financially incentivised to exceed the targets set and receive financial penalties for areas which fail to reach these targets.

There are a number of stations on the South Eastern network that we consider should have ticket gates installed, given the volumes of passengers using them, and the need to reduce ticketless travel and associated crime and disorder. These were detailed in our previous submission to the franchise consultation and remain valid. Additionally, many stations that currently have ticket gates rarely have them staffed and operational. Staffing of gatelines, at all but the quietest times, should be in place.

Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs) at those stations without them (Brixton and Dunton Green) should be provided during this extension. All TVMs should be able to issue tickets from other locations, such as Boundary Zones, as has been successfully trialled by Southern.

Oyster acceptance at stations such as Dartford, Sevenoaks, Otford and Swanley should be introduced at the earliest possibility, as should Oyster acceptance on the HS1 route between St Pancras and Stratford. In the interim before Oyster can be accepted at these stations, regular on-train announcements should be made, as with most other TOCs, to inform passengers that their Oyster ticket is not valid to Dartford.

London TravelWatch would also like to see Southeastern work with Lewisham Council, the Docklands Light Railway and Tesco to provide a new entrance at Lewisham to the north of the station. Since the closure of the exit from platform 4, passengers alighting at Lewisham who wish to walk to any of the destinations to the north of the station, including Tesco, have an additional walk of approximately 7

minutes. A new entrance towards the Tesco car park via the existing lifts/stairs from platform 4 to the DLR would be invaluable to passengers.

The separation of IPFAS from Southeastern ownership would go a long way to satisfying passenger concerns about the independence of the penalty fare appeals process. Whilst we are satisfied that IPFAS is independent in practice, the image provided by the two bodies being under one ownership is damaging.