
Minutes

Agenda item 5
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**Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 24 May 2011
at London TravelWatch**

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Present

Members

David Barry, Terry Bennett, Gail Engert, Sharon Grant (Chair), Sophia Lambert, David Leibling (Deputy Chair)
(Items 1-9)

Guests

Peter Hendy	Commissioner, Transport for London (Item 8)
Vernon Everett	Managing Director, Marketing and Communications, Transport for London (Item 8)
Chris Drabble	Senior Sponsor, Network Rail (Item 9)
Andrew Hutton	Development Manager, Network Rail (Item 9)
Simon Brooks	Communications Manager, Network Rail (Item 9)

Stakeholder Representatives

Matt Winfield	Stakeholder Engagement Manager, TfL
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Local transport users

Secretariat

Tim Bellenger	Director, Research and Development
Gytha Chinweze	Executive Assistant
Janet Cooke	Chief Executive
Mags Croucher	Casework Officer (Item 8)

Jo deBank	Communications Officer (Items 1-8)
Bryan Davey	Director, Public Liaison (Item 8)
Sharon Malley	Senior Committee Administrator
Vincent Stops	Streets and Surface Transport Policy Officer (Item 8)

1 Chair's introduction and pre-meeting announcements

The Chair welcomed members, officers and guests to the meeting and made the standard housekeeping announcements.

2 Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

3 Declarations of interest

David Barry declared that he was a trustee of a regeneration charity based in the Finsbury Park area.

4 Chair's activities and Passenger Focus update

The Chair reported that she had continued her work on the internal restructure of the organisation. She had also attended a number of meetings including the TfL (Transport for London) closures panel in relation to potential Underground closures, the TfL roads summit, and together with Terry Bennett an exhibition at London Bridge station about redevelopment proposals.

The Chair noted that the Board was still carrying a vacancy and that she hoped the London Assembly would fill the vacant post as soon as possible.

David Leibling said Passenger Focus was also undergoing its own change programme. The organisation would be reducing its staffing levels from 55 posts to 40 posts from June 2011. The staff consultation had resulted in changes to the proposals, including the retention of additional posts at the expense of the research budget. In future, more of the passenger link work would be undertaken centrally and some departments would be merged.

Passenger Focus had also been looking at various issues including the West Coast Main Line franchise invitation to tender, the McNulty report on rail value for money and research on coach users.

5 Minutes

It was noted that a website address needed to be added to the final paragraph of page 5. Subject to this amendment, the minutes of the meetings of 22 March 2011 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

Further to the observation on page 13 that Caroline Pidgeon AM had expressed her concern about the cost of calling TfL on its non-geographic phone line, it was agreed

that the Director, Research & Development, would try to find out whether she had received any reply from TfL.

Action: Director, Research & Development

Further to item 11 on page 7, relating to the introduction of card-only ticket vending machines, it was noted that the Director, Research & Development, had held discussions with several interested parties including London Midland, the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC), the Department for Transport (DfT) and Passenger Focus. Passenger Focus fully supported London TravelWatch's concerns about this issue, especially in relation to enforceability of penalty fares.

David Leibling reported that American visitors had tried to use their credit cards to purchase tickets in TfL machines but their cards were not chip-and-pin and the machine would not accept them, meaning they had to pay by cash. This would have been more problematic if the cash payment option had not been available. It was noted that this issue would be discussed in more detail at the next meeting of London TravelWatch's Consumer Affairs committee.

6 Matters arising (LTW379)

6.1 Bus surgeries

The report on the bus surgery in Newham was in production and would be available shortly. It was agreed that the next bus surgery would not take place in Kingston but at a south-west London venue affected by the Northern line closure proposals, for example Morden or Tooting. A date would need to be agreed quickly.

Action: Communications Officer

6.2 TfL complaints data

It was noted that this was still not available to London TravelWatch. Matt Winfield reported that the data required verification from department heads at TfL and that he hoped this would happen soon.

Action: Committee services

6.3 Access to healthcare

It was noted that the Policy Officer, Streets and Surface Transport, had been invited to meet TfL to discuss their work in respect of access to healthcare and that further actions, if any, would be agreed following that meeting.

Action: Policy Officer, Streets & Surface Transport

6.4 Concessionary fares scheme for those on Job Seekers Allowance

Members noted that the responses to the Parliamentary questions showed a variance in take-up of the scheme across boroughs in London, including variances between boroughs with a similar demographic profile. Take-up appeared particularly low in parts of east London. It was agreed that London TravelWatch would write to Darra Singh, the Chief Executive of Jobcentre Plus, on this matter. In addition,

London TravelWatch would continue to lobby TfL to work closely with the Department for Work and Pensions to improve take-up and identify local media opportunities where appropriate.

Action: Director, Research & Development/Communications Officer

6.5 Proposed changes to the Metropolitan line timetable

The Director, Research & Development, was still awaiting a general discussion with London Underground (LUL) in relation to its sub-surface lines and had not yet had details from them about the Metropolitan line proposals.

It was agreed that this action should be marked as ongoing.

Action: Director, Research & Development

7 Actions taken (LTW380)

The report on actions taken by officers was noted.

8 Presentation by Peter Hendy, Commissioner of Transport for London

The Chair welcomed Peter Hendy to the meeting and thanked him for providing this opportunity for members of the public to engage with TfL at a senior level.

Mr Hendy noted that TfL had fared reasonably well out of the Comprehensive Spending Review and the Mayor had been able to safeguard his priority areas, namely Crossrail, the tube upgrades, and maintaining fares as low as possible. He added that there had been a significant increase in ridership that impacted on TfL's ability to carry out upgrade works.

Mr Hendy then responded to questions from members and from the public and others who had submitted questions earlier via email and Twitter. Details of unanswered questions would be published subsequently on the website.

Action: Committee services

8.1 Winter conditions

Mr Hendy said that he believed TfL had coped well with this year's difficult winter conditions. He had implemented a policy of continuing to run services through the night during snowfall in order to be able to operate during the morning peak. He had wanted to run the East London Line through to West Croydon but had not found Southern and Network Rail to be helpful in this regard. He noted that the problem with running a reduced-hours service on railways during snowfall, finishing at 9.00 pm, meant that it was very difficult to open the lines the next day in time for the morning peak and compared LUL's practice of running additional trains on surface lines for this purpose rather than reducing the service.

8.2 Olympic preparations

Mr Hendy said that all the capital works in preparation for the Olympics were now complete and that the DLR extension to Stratford International station would open in

summer. It was late because of a failure by the contractor, which had resulted in the contractor's fee being reduced.

Work on the tube lines should be completed in time for them to bed in over Autumn and Winter and there would be no works on the strategic road network in the run-up to the games. He was confident that he would be able to reach agreement with the transport unions to ensure there was no industrial action during the games.

His main concern at present was the problem with freight delivery during the games. Businesses located on the Olympic Road Network would not be able to accept daytime deliveries while the games were taking place and would need to make alternative arrangements. TfL was focusing on ensuring that those affected were aware of the restrictions.

8.3 Cable car

Mr Hendy said that the cable car would have a capacity of 3,000 people and would attract both Londoners seeking to cross the Thames and tourists travelling for pleasure. He noted that the creation of the cable car meant that, should a new tunnel be built at Silvertown, it would not need to make provision for pedestrians and cyclists as these could be catered for by the cable car. This would allow the new tunnel to be vehicular only.

Procurement for building the cable car structure had now taken place and TfL was now procuring for sponsorship opportunities. The total cost of the scheme was £54 million and it was not currently the plan to fund this from other existing budgets. It was hoped that fares would cover most of the operating costs but it was not easy to predict real levels of usage.

The project was not scheduled for completion prior to the Olympics although it was possible that it might be.

8.4 Underground

On the Underground upgrades, Mr Hendy said that the Jubilee line had been difficult, as a result of the original contract with Tube Lines that permitted far too many closures, but was now nearing completion. The Victoria line upgrade should be finished ahead of time.

On the Northern line, Mr Hendy said that the original timetable had been overambitious and that he was developing a new plan with fewer line closures. The replacement of the Piccadilly line trains would be deferred for a period to rethink the design of the deep level rolling stock.

The Bakerloo line upgrade was not programmed until post 2019 and the current service was considered reliable.

The sub-surface work was progressing and a signalling contract had now been let. Mr Hendy said that the contract required the signals to be installed without closing tracks.

8.5 Finsbury Park

A member noted that proposals to redesign Finsbury Park station, which would have allowed the installation of ticket gates, had been dropped through lack of funding. This resulted in passengers failing to touch their Oysters properly in and out then being charged maximum fares.

Mr Hendy said there was no budget for rebuilding stations beyond the main ones in central London. In respect of incomplete journeys using Oyster pay as you go, one possible solution was the work currently being carried out on 'auto-complete', which would allow regular journeys to be completed automatically if it appeared that a passenger had forgotten to touch in or out at one end.

8.6 Accessibility including symbols on maps and access during Paralympics

A member of the public questioned how the decision was made to use accessibility symbols on transport maps when the stations in question were not necessarily fully accessible to those with mobility impairments. He also outlined difficulties he had experienced in travelling on the Underground, including an occasion when tube workers had removed him from a train, claiming he was not permitted to travel on the Underground.

Mr Hendy apologised for the difficulties the passenger had faced on the Underground. He acknowledged the different degrees of 'accessible' and said that the symbol on the map was designed to show that these stations had a level of accessibility that other stations did not. He was not seeking to misrepresent the system and hoped the advice given on accessibility was both realistic and accurate.

The Chair noted that London TravelWatch may need to raise with TfL the issue of more sophisticated levels of signage, to indicate degrees of accessibility, especially in the run-up to the Paralympic games.

Action: Committee services

Mr Hendy said that accessibility issues were under consideration already in planning transportation during the Paralympics.

8.7 Roads projects

Mr Hendy said there were no current plans for new road building as there was neither budget nor political will for this. However, work was underway on making the best out of existing road capacity, including new levels of data analysis. One new initiative was the appointment of officers to be in charge of stretches of the strategic road network, in the same way as there were officers responsible for individual Underground lines. Officers monitored traffic flow at their control room and were able to make real-time interventions in order to improve flow. Members were invited to attend the control room to view how this took place.

Action: Streets & Surface Transport Policy Officer

8.8 Accessible bus stops and bus ramps

A member of the public who used a wheelchair had told London TravelWatch that their experience of using ramps on buses had been poor, with ramps not working for one in every four journeys.

Mr Hendy was surprised by that figure and said that the mechanical availability of ramps was regularly tested in bus garages, although deployment depended on the aptitude and willingness of drivers to use them. He would need to speak to the passenger to ascertain the reason for the failures. He added that there were problems with accepting some mechanical wheelchairs that were too heavy for the ramps and too large to fit in the spaces on the buses, despite the spaces meeting or exceeding minimum specifications.

A member of the public disputed the figures provided by TfL for working ramps. Mr Hendy said that the figures were accurate at the time the buses left the garage but that TfL did take seriously the complaints that were put to it.

A London TravelWatch officer said that the TfL business plan did not include a target for increasing the number of accessible bus stops. Mr Hendy said that most bus stops were, for practical purposes, accessible but in some cases did not meet the strict criteria for definition as accessible, for example there was no marked bus cage or a litter bin was in the wrong place. The stops were, however, used by wheelchair users without difficulty.

8.9 Bus driver behaviour

Age Concern UK had contacted London TravelWatch with concern about research that showed that nationwide 800 over-65s fell on a bus every day. Mr Hendy said that newer, faster buses did have the potential to accelerate quickly, which could be difficult for older passengers. TfL had taken steps to improve the standard of driving and the quality of individual drivers could now be measured using programmes such as Drive Green.

8.10 Consumer satisfaction and priorities

The Chair suggested that London TravelWatch and TfL could collaborate more on commissioning research about consumer satisfaction and Mr Hendy agreed to consider this.

The business plan had a target for increasing customer satisfaction by 1% across each mode and the Chair questioned whether this was ambitious enough. Mr Hendy said that people's expectations rose over time and that this meant a 1% improvement would represent a good achievement.

The Chair thanked Mr Hendy for attending and for responding so thoroughly to the questions put by passengers and members.

9 Development works at London Bridge station

Chris Drabble, Senior Sponsor, and Andrew Hutton, Development Manager, both of Network Rail, gave a presentation on proposals for development works at London Bridge station.

Redeveloping London Bridge was a major part of the Thameslink scheme. The project should increase frequencies of service and offer improved connections. The volume of passengers using the station meant it would become essential to increase capacity before 2018.

The design for the concourse for the terminating platforms aimed to improve connectivity with the surrounding urban area as well as improving passengers' ability to navigate around the station.

It was expected that the new station would have capacity for two-thirds more passengers than the current level of 50 million per year. Train frequencies were such on the through platforms that the service would resemble a metro turn-up-and-go service, which would require a culture change for regular users of the station.

The concourse for the through platforms would be located beneath the tracks and would be the biggest beneath-track concourse in the UK.

The proposals included provision for 32 new toilets.

There would be considerable disruption during the construction works with capacity at the station being reduced to two-thirds of existing while works took place. Network Rail was looking at ways to minimise this disruption.

In response to a question, Mr Drabble confirmed that the modelling that had been carried during the creation of the proposals had taken account of new developments in the area, including the Shard.

Mr Drabble hoped to be able to submit a planning application for the proposals at the end of June with determination likely in Autumn. He would welcome comments on the draft proposals prior to submission.

Action: Director, Research & Development

A member of the public questioned whether passengers would have to walk further from the concourse to the Underground and asked whether there would be a travellator. Mr Drabble said there would be no travellator but that distances were not longer than currently, they just appeared that way as the routes were clearer.

A member asked whether photovoltaic cells would be installed on the roof of the station. Mr Drabble said the plans did not currently include this but it may be included in the future. He noted that the new Blackfriars station did have photovoltaic cells.

The Chair thanked Mr Drabble and Mr Hutton for their engaging presentation and for responding to questions.

10 London TravelWatch workplan (LTW 381)

Members noted that the workplan was currently in draft form and agreed to review it in more detail at the Governance Committee on 24 May.

11 Any other business

There was no other business.

12 Resolution to move into confidential session

It was resolved, under section 15(2)(b) of schedule 18 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999, that by reason of the confidential nature of the item(s) to be discussed, it was desirable in the public interest that the public should be excluded for a section of the meeting.

During the confidential session, members reviewed the meeting.

The next meeting of the full Board will be held on 12 July 2011.