
Minutes

Agenda item 6
Drafted 19.5.10

Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 23 March 2010 at 6 Middle Street, London EC1

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Present

Members

David Barry; Terry Bennett; Kevin Davis, Gail Engert; Daniel Francis (minute 15); Sharon Grant (Chair); Sophia Lambert; Teena Lashmore (minutes 3-15); David Leibling; Sarah Pond, Onjali Rauf, Lorna Reith (Deputy Chair).

Guests

Ian Henderson	Director of Group Customer Services, Transport for London (TfL)
Annabelle Goymer	Contact Centre Transformation Programme Manager, TfL
Beverley Hall	Head of Surface Transport Communications, TfL
Kathryn Daniels	Information Development Manager, National Rail Enquiries Service (NRES)

Stakeholder Representatives

Matt Winfield Stakeholder Engagement Manager, Transport for London

Secretariat

Tim Bellenger	Director, Research and Development, London TravelWatch
Janet Cooke	Chief Executive, London TravelWatch
Bryan Davey	Director, Public Liaison, London TravelWatch (minutes 11 and 12)
Mark Donoghue	Committee Administrator, London TravelWatch
Christine Evans	Casework Manager, London TravelWatch (minute14)

1 Chair's Introduction and Pre-Meeting Announcements

The Chair welcomed members, officers and guests to the meeting.

2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Daniel Francis for the public section of the meeting.

3 Declarations of Interest

In respect of minute 11, Kevin Davies declared an interest as a member of South West Trains Passenger panel (a consultative body).

4 Chair's Activities and Passenger Focus update

4.1 Chair's activities

The Chair reported that she had had a number of stakeholder meetings recently, in particular with Transport for London (TfL). With staff she had met with their communication leads, with TfL's research director and with their marketing specialists. These meetings would both raise the profile of London TravelWatch with TfL and improve partnership working with TfL.

She had also met with Peter Hendy, the Transport Commissioner, and had a discussion on TfL funding challenges going forward. There was concern about the decision by the PPP Arbiter on the amount of funding Tubelines would need for their work on upgrading the Jubilee, Northern and Piccadilly lines. This had brought into question whether all the upgrade work would now take place.

The Chair reported that she would be chairing public meetings about the Northern line upgrade work in the coming weeks.

She confirmed that the Greater London Authority (GLA) would be carrying out a review of London TravelWatch's role and function, and that she had welcomed this in a letter sent to all Assembly members.

She also reminded members that during the election period starting on 29 March, London TravelWatch, like all public bodies, would maintain a position of strict neutrality

4.2 Passenger Focus

Mr Leibling reported that the Passenger Focus board meeting had taken place, and that it had received an update on the organisation's new responsibilities for bus user representation outside London. He highlighted the meetings with Train Operating Companies (TOCs) on the results from the National Passenger Survey (NPS). The Passenger Link managers discuss the result with the TOCs, who each attend a board meeting to discuss their action plans to improve their scores. He felt that this was something that could be done with the London Underground lines. The TOCs view this work positively.

The Deputy Chair asked about the Romford bus surgery. The Chair thanked members who attended and said it had been successful and highlighted issues of concern to local passengers. The Chief Executive confirmed that the report on both surgeries would be brought to the next Board meeting.

5 Minutes

The minutes of the Board Meeting held on 26 January 2010 were agreed, subject to the following amendments: page 3, minute 6, paragraph should read as "Mayor". Page 5 minute 9 paragraphs 2 should have one scheme not two. Page 5, minute 9, paragraph 3 should read as "access to the school" not "school run"

The minutes of the Executive Group were held on 19 October 2009, 12 November 2009 and 21 January 2010 were noted.

6 Matters Arising (LTW 342)

The Director, Research and Development would ensure the following matters were monitored : that Transport for London looks seriously at travel requirements for ethnic and religious groups; and also the actual cost of replacing bendy buses.

A member asked about the cost of replacing articulated buses. The Director, Research and Development replied that TfL had given London TravelWatch a number of figures on the cost of replacing articulated buses. He felt that the most likely figure was £250,000 to £300,000 per year per bus. The calculation by London TravelWatch showed that this is the extra cost in subsidy in operating a new bus. Operators would confirm that cost requirement with TfL at the renegotiating or retendering stage.

A member asked when the new Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs) reported under item 3.8 would be operational. The Director, Research and Development reported that the conventional booking offices at stations may be overtaken by breakthroughs in technology. It was important to recognise how these changes would impact on passengers. There needed to be a new mechanism for ensuring staff presence at stations. Members felt that back-up systems were required especially as these machines were unlikely to be taken up in the current economic climate. Concern was raised that the references to the machines being DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) compliant were incorrect.

Members were keen to build Christmas services into the work plans for committees for the remainder of the year, now was the time to deal with it. Members also noted the number of completed items in the matters arising report and passed on their thanks to the secretariat

7 Actions Taken (LTW 343)

A member asked for the responses to Local Authorities on proposed traffic orders and planning issues to be sorted by borough. They queried the application on page 5 of the report (Westminster: relocation of pelican crossing with guard railing) and asked why this had been done.

Action : Secretariat

A member asked whether the application from Brent (new bus stop and removal of bus stand) was related to Northwick Park Hospital.

Action : Secretariat

8 London Assembly Review of London TravelWatch (LTW 344)

Members discussed the review and its implications for the organisation and staff. They felt the review should be seen positively. It was an opportunity to develop better understanding of the work of London TravelWatch and resolve any misunderstandings. However, it was important that the independence of the organisation was underlined in all discussions surrounding the review.

A member queried whether the Executive had discussed the review. On receiving confirmation that they had, he replied that it would be prudent to set up a sub group on the review to respond. The Chair replied that she wanted all members' to be involved. She noted that the review would involve additional work and add to pressures on staff time.

The Chief Executive reported that a first meeting would take place with the Assembly Secretariat shortly. The Safety and Policy Advisor would be involved in the first part of the review to help explain London TravelWatch's constitutional background.

9 Transport for London (TfL) Communication to Passengers

The Chair welcomed Mr Henderson, Director of Customer Services, TfL, Ms Hall, Head of Surface Transport Communications, TfL and Ms Goymer, Contact Centre Transformation Programme Manager, TfL to the meeting. Their presentation may be viewed in full at <http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/document/4105/get>.

Mr Henderson outlined the customer services that are provided by TfL to help passengers. TfL receives annually 10.5 million calls and there are 2.5 million face-to-face transactions. Oyster sales on the internet generate £120 million a year. Journey Planner offers 900 million solutions and does the work of 30,000 telephone agents. He then went on to provide information on what developments were in place to improve information.

A member noted that the last slide had enforcement and surveillance on it and queried what this meant. Mr Henderson replied that TfL was in receipt of European Union (EU) funding. The funding was used for a specific project which would allow them to count the number of people on a platform. The technology will be used to plan for events and to track where people go after an event.

In answer to a query about people who did not use the internet, Mr Henderson replied that TfL were using different platforms to manage growth. If a customer did not want to use the automated service they could transfer to a customer service agent. The cost of calling the 084 numbers for those with low incomes was pointed out. Mr Henderson agreed that this was complicated by different tariffs, particularly when calling from mobile phones.

Ms Goymer explained that the new technology released capacity (via the automated system). The queues were now smaller and calls were answered quicker; caller wait time had been reduced to the benefit of all (calls were shorter making the cost of the call lower). She noted that

TfL did not profit from their 084 telephone numbers. Members asked about progress on the countdown system. Ms Hall reported that passengers would be able to send a message via their mobile phone to find out when a bus was due to arrive. The price would be 12p per text. TfL were also looking at installing screens at public locations for example, surgeries, shopping centres, etc to enable countdown information to be displayed. She would share the results of the countdown consultation with London TravelWatch.

Action : TfL

A member said that he resented having to pay for calling to be reimbursed money owing on his Oyster card. The Director, Research and Development observed that one of the slides stated that TfL had a single view of the customer and vice-versa and queried what this meant. Mr Henderson replied that in practice this would mean all information about a passenger would be held together. He explained how improvements were being made to the lost property system to free up London Underground (LUL) staff. Station staff will now enter lost property into a database making it easier to identify and to reunite with passengers. This change will be launched in September and it is expected to be rolled out on London Buses in due course.

More information was requested about how diversity would feed through into the vision of interacting with customers, for example, with foreign nationals.

Action : TfL

The two members who had attended a meeting with TfL on the 084 numbers reported the outcomes from it. They ran through possible solutions, but felt that further discussion should take place in the Consumer Affairs committee before deciding on the preferred option.

10 The Performance of National Rail Enquires during the recent adverse weather (LTW 345)

The Chair welcomed Ms Daniels, Information Development Manager, NRES to the meeting. Her presentation may be viewed in full at <http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/document/4106/get>.

Ms Daniels began by explaining some of the problems experienced during the adverse weather conditions. The main problem was one of supply and demand. Normally NRES receives 37,000 calls a day. On 6 January, it received 250,000 calls. A change had been made to the NRES website on 5 January which caused problems causing the site to run very slowly. On 6 January the servers struggled to cope with demand from users. On 7 January a cable was cut by workmen in Leeds which further affected the website. Other problems included emergency timetables not being entered into the system. Some TOCs used 'Minutes past the hour' timetables, but did not show where the train was calling and the volume of cancellations had caused confusion.

NRES managed to increase the productivity of its call centre by swapping leave days and changing working patterns to answer more calls. The contact centre worked the equivalent of 6321 extra hours that week and the recorded information line, which was widely publicised by the media, received 225,000.

Ms Daniels went on to outline what work was being carried out to resolve the problems. Since last February a steering group had been working to improve passenger information during disruption. All TOCs were involved; the aim being to ensure a consistent focus throughout the industry.

A National Task Force Review is also taking place with 20 multiple work streams. There are three stages of delivery: what has been done; what can be done before next winter and what can be done in the longer term. Before next winter there will be service level agreements between TOCs and NRES. Improvements have been made to the quality of the website along with the removal of 'Minutes past the hour' timetables. Capacity has been increased along with third party stress testing.

In the longer term work is taking place to ensure that all websites were consistent across all their companies and that there is standard information between the NRES and TOC websites. Plans are in place to merge the 66 Customer Information Systems (CIS) across the national rail network to one. Ms Daniels highlighted that up to 70 per cent of train information was wrong when trains travelled between franchises, for example, a train travelling between two different geographic franchise areas would go through two separate CIS and train delays might not be notified. The new DARWIN system (real-time information) will mean that all train running information is taken from one database. It was noted that Virgin currently had 19 separate CIS in operation across its franchise.

The Chair asked how NRES worked in London and the level of integration with TfL. Ms Daniels replied that they were not fully integrated with TfL, but include travel via zone one. She confirmed that there were no proposals to change the 0845 number at the moment.

11 South West Train Schedule 17 Consultation (LTW 346)

The Board considered the proposals being made by South West Trains to reduce ticket office opening hours. The Director, Research and Development started the item by noting that the primary focus of London TravelWatch was to consider the ability of passengers to access rail products and whether passengers be inconvenienced if stations were not open at a particular time. The Secretary of State had developed an approach whereby if the number of transactions at a ticket office was under 12 per hour, he would not object to applications to reduce opening hours. A number of objections had been received from passengers and public bodies and the Director, Public Liaison tabled a paper showing the number of objections by station.

South West Trains had highlighted the reduction of tickets purchased via booking offices in January/February 2010 since the introduction of Oyster PAYG (Pay As You Go) (South West Trains do not retail Oyster), but this was also a period of adverse weather and disruption to the rail network and might not be regarded as typical. The Director, Research and Development highlighted the recurring themes from those passengers who had objected to the application, for example, the unreliability of TVMs.

The Director, Research and Development felt that the evidence presented by South West Trains was based on unrepresentative information. Until London TravelWatch has got conclusive data from South West Trains that ticket sales are below the levels required by the Secretary of State, London TravelWatch should object.

Members discussed their views on the application and highlighted a number of issues that they felt should be highlighted; for example, number of TVMs at a station, the reductions would not mean major savings. Members felt that the lessons from the First Capital Connect Schedule 17 application should also be drawn on.

The recommendations of the report were agreed by members.

Action : Director, Research and Development

12 Chiltern Railways Schedule 17 Consultation (LTW 347)

The Director, Research and Development reported that the change to booking office opening hours by Chiltern was the first change since privatisation. There were a number of changes, with some booking offices increasing their opening hours and some being reduced. Chiltern had noted that when there were major events in Wembley the number of tickets sold at booking offices rose substantially. Chiltern has confirmed that when major events took place, they would increase the opening hours of their booking offices. He did not feel that the changes merited an objection.

A member asked for checks to be made on the changes at Stoke Mandeville station and the implications for the hospital. The increase in hours at some stations was welcomed.

Members agreed not to object to the changes proposed by Chiltern Railways provided that they adhered to the assurances given.

Action : Director, Research and Development

13 Changes to Passenger Focus' remit (LTW 348)

The reported was noted.

14 Any Other Business

The Chair noted that changes in staff were taking place. She thanked Christine Evans, Casework Manager, for her 25 years of service and recorded the thanks of the current board and previous boards. She was also thanked for all she had achieved on behalf of passengers, and presented with a small gift to mark her retirement.

Other new staff were also introduced to the board and welcomed to the organisation.

15 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 the remainder of the meeting.

In confidential session, members approved the minutes for the confidential session of the Board meeting held on 26 January 2010 and reviewed the meeting. They also discussed the draft work plan, bus research and the London Assembly review of London TravelWatch.

The next meeting of the full Board will be held on 25 May 2010 at City Hall.

16 Glossary

CIS	Customer Information Systems
DfT	Department for Transport

GLA	Greater London Authority
LUL	London Underground Limited
NRES	National Rail Enquiries Service
Oyster PAYG	Oyster PAYG
PPP	Public-Private Partnership (a way in which some major infrastructure projects are funded in the UK)
TfL	Transport for London
TOC	Train Operating Company
TVMs	Ticket Vending Machines