
Minutes

Agenda item : 3
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Minutes of a meeting of the Transport Service Committee held on 14 July 2009 at 6 Middle Street, London EC1

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Present

Members: Gail Engert, Teena Lashmore, David Leibling (Vice Chair), Andrew Probert, Lorna Reith (Chair), Sharon Grant (Chair, London TravelWatch)

Guests

Matt Winfield Manager, Stakeholder Relations, Transport for London (TfL)

Staff

Chief Executive; Committee Administrator; Rail and Underground Policy Officer; Research and Development Policy Assistant (minute 8); Streets and Surface Transport Policy Officer (items 1 to 3 and items 8 to 11)

Minutes

1 Chair's introduction, pre-meeting announcements and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed visitors, members and staff to the second meeting of the committee, and made standard housekeeping announcements. Apologies were received from Terry Bennett and apologies for lateness from Teena Lashmore.

2 Declarations of interest

No additional declarations of interest were made. A public record of members' interests may be found on the London TravelWatch website.

3 Transport for London Cycle hire scheme update

The Streets and Surface Transport Policy Officer updated members on the London cycle hire scheme. There will be 6,000 cycles. The scheme will operate within the broad area covered by the congestion charge zone.

There will be 400 locations for docking stations. The stations will have signage on them. The Streets and Surface Transport Policy Officer had visited a sample of potential docking stations and satisfied himself that the locations were reasonable and the pavement locations would not be too problematical to pedestrians. A design competition will be taking place to design the bike. The docking stations will not be located to complement rail journeys. They will be put in locations that non-rail commuters will use. Users will need to register for the scheme, but the scale of charges has not been finalised.

Cycle helmets are not compulsory for cyclists. Cyclists would have to sign a disclaimer to say there were proficient in using a bicycle. It was unclear on how the scheme would be financed, however it would be paid for out of the Mayor's budget and some contribution from hirers.

The Chief Executive noted that the Managing Director for Surface Transport at Transport for London (TfL) wanted to get a major cycle hire facility at Waterloo station.

The Chair of London TravelWatch raised concerns that the start date for the scheme, May 2010, was not far away and that there was uncertainty on how it would operate. She raised concerns about where the money to fund the scheme will come from, training and safety aspects.

The Streets and Surface Transport Policy Officer reported that the Mayor's budget had an allocation of £110 million over the next 4 years. The costs of the scheme were still unknown, but would be met from that. The tender document had been issued and 6 companies had expressed an interest in the scheme.

The Chair summarised that London TravelWatch supported the scheme in principle, but would be concerned if it was expensive and discouraged users.

4 Minutes

The minutes were agreed.

5 Matters arising (TS006)

The Rail Underground Policy Officer reported to members about the first weekend trial of the extended Circle line service, which he had observed for a total of about 3 hours. There were prolonged spells where the service pattern was intermittent, but also spells of excellent punctuality. He had discussed this with London Underground, who said that, as staff became more familiar with the operation, it was likely that services would improve. For example, there had been a major reduction in operational errors on the Sunday compared to Saturday. There were no posters informing passengers at Paddington national rail station. As agreed, he would be arranging a meeting with London Underground on signage, etc in August.

The Chair summarised that London TravelWatch supported the scheme, but there needs to be clear information to passengers.

Members worked through the matters arising report.

On item 2.8 (0845 customer service numbers provided by TfL) members felt that this should be pursued further and comparisons on the various types of numbers, etc.

Action : Communications Officer

(Post meeting note : this item comes under the remit of the Consumer Affairs committee and therefore will be discussed there)

On item 2.10, members discussed the draft Southeastern timetable December 2009. The Rail and Underground Policy Officer reported that the Woolwich to Blackheath/Lewisham peak service was to be withdrawn. Instead there would be a train from Woolwich to Greenwich every 7/8 minutes; passengers for Lewisham will then be able to change at Greenwich on to the Docklands Light Railway. He proposed that Southeastern should identify passengers who alight at Blackheath and give them suggestions on alternative routes. In both cases passengers should not have to pay a higher fare.

He went on to report that the draft timetable would break the off-peak link between Bromley and Lewisham. He proposed re-phasing the Bromley North branch trains to connect with trains to Lewisham.

Members agreed the proposals and the Rail and Underground Policy Officer would feed these and other issues back to Southeastern. He would also seek a meeting, to which the member who lived within the area covered by Southeastern would be invited.

Action : Rail and Underground Policy Officer

6 National Rail : Route Utilisation Strategy (Kent) consultation draft (TS007)

Although largely concerned with areas outside the London TravelWatch area, the Rail and Underground Policy Officer explained that a response to this consultation was needed because 90 per cent of rail traffic from Kent goes to London and most of the traffic is in the peaks. The industry could have been tempted to propose reductions in metro area services to release capacity for longer distance and higher revenue services, but fortunately this had been resisted.

The main RUS recommendation for handling increased demand from Kent up to 2019 was to increase services on High Speed 1 to St. Pancras. Passengers on this service would pay up to a third more for fares, and the Rail and Underground Policy Officer wondered if this policy would have to be moderated to induce sufficient people to use the line.

The RUS also referred to the potential for varying fares to spread demand onto "shoulder-peak services". However, research by Passenger Focus suggested that passengers need substantial discounts to be induced to change their travel times.

Beyond 2019 there would be no more scope for squeezing spare capacity out of the existing infrastructure. The RUS therefore suggests that new lines be considered, specifically extending the Bakerloo line to Lewisham. Such a scheme would be well received locally, but would need to be prioritised against other major national and London rail proposals.

It was agreed that the recommendations set out in the Rail and Underground Policy Officer's paper would form the basis for London TravelWatch's response.

Action : Rail and Underground Policy Officer

7 National Rail : Route Utilisation Strategy (Sussex) consultation draft

The Rail and Underground Policy Officer reported that the same issues highlighted in the Kent RUS were also applicable here. Most trains and passengers travel to London Bridge and London Victoria from the Sussex area. By 2015 there would be more trains going through to Thameslink stations and from 2017 passengers would be able to interchange at Farringdon for Crossrail for both the City and the West End.

Despite the benefits of Thameslink, by 2020 there will be no capacity left. The RUS suggested consideration of a tunnel from Croydon to London to provide additional capacity.

The Rail and Underground Policy Officer highlighted services in the Redhill corridor, which had been a victim of decisions made in the past about costal services, etc, and as a result peak services on this section are not good.

At present 4 trains per hour run fast from Gatwick Airport to London Victoria, all day including in the peaks. He noted that since timetable changes in December 2008 there are about 50 carriages, worth £1.5 million each, in sidings at Gatwick Airport during the peaks yet the RUS recommends lengthening trains, which implies buying more carriages. He felt that the 50 carriages should be used along with a better pattern of service to deal with the current poor frequency experienced on the Redhill corridor and elsewhere.

It was agreed to write a joint letter (drafted by the Rail and Underground Policy Officer) from the Chairs of London TravelWatch and Passenger Focus to Lord Adonis, Secretary of State for Transport, drawing attention to the wasted resources arising from the current Gatwick Airport service pattern.

Action : Rail and Underground Policy Officer

The Rail & Underground Policy Officer would prepare a response to the RUS and circulate the draft for comments by members.

Action : Rail and Underground Policy Officer

8 National Rail performance Quarter 4 report 2008/09

The Policy Assistant noted that the report was currently in draft pending receipt of further information. The finalised report would be published at the start of August. She also asked for clarification on the future structure of the report : whether members wanted it to focus on London specifics. There would be a new tool for measuring crowding on trains on the DfT website; data from this would be included in the new report.

The Chair felt that there should be no overlap with Passenger Focus. It was important to focus on the London lines, particularly commuter lines. Overcrowding was a concern as well as other performance indicators.

Decisions on future content as per the previous meeting were confirmed, with the emphasis on exception reporting of TOCs with deteriorating performance. However it was agreed to continue to fully report London Overground's performance.

It was agreed that the Policy Assistant would prepare a sample of the new format using the Quarter 4 data, and circulate it to members for comments.

Action : Policy Assistant

9 Transport for London performance indicators (TS008)

Annex 1 of the report was reviewed and agreed with minor amendments. It had been agreed by the Executive Group and would be submitted to TfL immediately, with a request that initial reports be available for the next meeting.

Action : Rail and Underground Policy Officer

Annex 2 of the report was discussed, and noted that a meeting is being arranged with TfL to further understand what data is available.

Taxi and private hire would be added to the list, with requests that reports should include data on the number of taxis available, how many cabs fail the annual checks and the number and type of complaints.

The Chair, Vice Chair and the Streets and Surface Transport Policy Officer would attend the meeting with TfL.

Action : Streets and Surface Transport Policy Officer

10 Any other business

a) Piccadilly line upgrade review

The Rail and Underground Policy Officer reported that he had been asked to prepare a paper on possible ways of organising the upgrade of the Piccadilly line without relying on the heavy programme of weekend closures used for the Victoria and Jubilee lines. The issue had been highlighted by the former Managing Director of London Underground, Tim O'Toole, who had said that the nature of the places served by the line meant there needed to be alternative ways of doing the upgrade. In addition, there were likely to be serious cost issues, which might be addressed by allowing full time blockades to maximise the engineering efficiency of the work.

The paper would include examining what alternative routes could be made available for passengers if some or all of the Piccadilly line upgrade was done by total blockades of certain sections of the line. It would also offer views on what might be acceptable to passengers, and suggest quality of service measures e.g. more tailored bus replacement services, in order to minimise the adverse impact on daily commuters. The paper would be submitted to the London Assembly Transport Committee's enquiry into engineering blockades and overcrowding, in time for its session with LUL in September.

b) LUL weekday closures

The Rail and Underground Policy Officer outlined major works and closures to stations or lines occurring on London Underground over the next year.

The Chair asked for more information on passenger communication closer to these closures taking place.

c) London Overground (LOROL) : reduction and withdrawal of East London Line replacement buses

The Rail and Underground Policy Officer reported an urgent LOROL proposal to meet budget cuts by reducing the frequency of rail replacement bus ELW (Wapping – Whitechapel / Shoreditch) from every 10 minutes to every 20 minutes (and withdrawing evening services) and totally withdraw bus ELC (New Cross Gate – Canada Water / Rotherhithe). These routes costs £2.9m per annum, and usage is low and declining.

Members noted the position with regret. If LOROL felt obliged to proceed, members considered the following safeguards should be implemented:

ELW

As 20 minutes is below the turn-up-and-go standard, timetables should be displayed at each station and bus stop showing the departure times. These should also be produced in leaflet form and handed out to passengers prior to the introduction of the reduced service.

ELC

TfL should run a pro-active programme to identify existing users, find out the full length of the journeys they are making and offer them bespoke advice on the best alternative routes.

The principle must be that no existing passengers should be out of pocket as a result of the withdrawal of this bus route. Therefore, where this would entail them paying a higher fare, arrangements should be made on a personal basis either to provide them with a ticket at their present fare or to recompense them for the difference.

LOROL to be informed accordingly.

Action : Rail and Underground Policy Officer

11 Resolution to move into confidential session

The Committee resolved, under section 15(b) of schedule 18 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999, that by reason of the confidential nature of the next following item/s, it is desirable in the public interest that the public should be excluded from the meeting.

In confidential session the Committee discussed future work on buses, reviewed the meeting, and discussed the Committee's forthcoming work plan.

The next Transport Services Committee meeting will be held on 14 October 2009.

12 Glossary

LOROL	London Overground Rail Operations Limited
TfL	Transport for London
LUL	London Underground Limited
DLR	Docklands Light Railway
RUS	Route Utilisation Strategy
Shoulder-peak services	A period between the peak and the off-peak when demand levels are in transition between the two
TOC	Train Operating Company
tpH	Trains per hour