
Secretariat memorandum

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TRS004

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London Councils report on 'Door-to-door transport strategy' for London

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To advise members of the outcome of the review of door-to-door transport provided by various authorities across London

2 Background

- 2.1 In 2009 London Councils commissioned a review of all door-to-door transport services provided by local authorities, Transport for London (TfL) and the health service (NHS). These included Taxicard, Dial-a-Ride, Community Transport, Plus Bus, Capital Call, Special Educational Needs transport (SEN), adult services transport and NHS patient transport services.

3 Commentary

- 3.1 The report to London Councils' Transport and Environment Committee of the 17 March 2011 attached as Appendix A sets out the results of this review.
- 3.2 The report advocates the establishment of regional 'Transport Bureaux' which would co-ordinate the scheduling of door to door services and provide 'a one stop shop' for users to call to gain access to the services.
- 3.3 In this respect the report recommends a change in the system of accessible transport provision which London TravelWatch has long recommended, given the complex nature of door-to-door transport in London at present, with its wide range of providers, types of services and eligibility for the service.
- 3.4 However, it should be recognised that the principle 'driver' for these proposals is the need to make significant cost savings by a wide range of organisations commissioning door-to-door services. This will be done by make services more efficient by reducing duplication and reducing unproductive mileage, but also by closer alignment of user eligibility and assessment criteria.
- 3.5 Separate to this report – but relevant to it, is the proposal to withdraw London Service Permit route 812 – which provides the PlusBus service in Islington, as funding from Islington Council has been withdrawn. This provided a service similar to Dial-a-Ride but on a regular scheduled basis and which was also available to other members of the public. Withdrawal of this service would mean that users would have

to be accommodated either on dial-a-ride or ordinary bus services or to use a Taxicard if they are eligible for one.

4 Discussion

4.1 This report is probably long overdue in many respects, and it is welcome that there is now some momentum to pursue a strategy that London TravelWatch has previously advocated.

4.2 However, the implementation of the changes advocated in this report will have a significant impact on the often vulnerable users of these services. It will need a clear communications strategy especially where services that are cherished by individual users, because of the social interaction that they have with staff and other users are proposed to be withdrawn or altered in some way.

4.3 Changes in eligibility criteria and assessment will also need to be clearly communicated. Attached as Appendix B is a consultation by TfL on the eligibility for use of Dial-a-ride, as an example of the sort of changes that might be expected in other services too. It should be noted that if changes in this process means that some people will no longer become eligible to use door to door services, and they then still need to travel, this then could have implications for mainstream transport modes such as buses, rail and taxis, because these modes will need to show that they are capable of meeting the needs of users displaced from door to door modes. This means that there must be a continuing emphasis on the need to ensure:-

- Continued improvements in the accessibility of bus stops
- Driver training for bus and taxi drivers on the needs of elderly or disabled users is enhanced
- Continued improvements in the accessibility of rail stations – such as step free access
- That service planners take account of the needs of people with reduced mobility, and importantly where those people might wish to travel to and from e.g. hospitals or day centres.

5 Equalities and inclusion implications

5.1 The proposal has significant implications for a substantial proportion of vulnerable and disabled people in London.

6 Financial implications

6.1 The contents of this report have no specific financial implications for London TravelWatch.

7 Legal powers

7.1 Section 248 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 places upon London TravelWatch (as the London Transport Users Committee) a duty to consider – and where it appears to it to be desirable, to make recommendations with respect to – any matter affecting the functions of the Greater London Authority or Transport for London which relate to transport (other than of freight).

8 Recommendations

8.1 Members are recommended to:-

- Note the report.
- Welcome the direction of travel proposed by London Councils' to simplify the provision of door to door transport.
- To note the requirement to ensure that on the mainstream transport network that there are :-
 - Continued improvements in the accessibility of bus stops
 - Continued Driver training for bus and taxi drivers on the needs of elderly or disabled users.
 - Continued improvements in the accessibility of rail stations – such as step free access
- That service planners take account of the needs of people with reduced mobility, and importantly where those people might wish to travel to and from e.g. Hospitals or day centres.
- To note the proposed changes to eligibility for Dial-a-ride proposed by TfL in Appendix A.