

1. Introduction

This report outlines the impact we have made through our influencing activity: in the media, through social media and our website and at meetings we have attended. The statistics refer to June - August 2020.

We made an impact in a number of areas relating to the Coronavirus pandemic including persuading TfL to change its guidance to passengers ahead of the re-opening of pubs and restaurants at the start of June and to introduce a new trial of 24/7 bus lanes on the roads they manage.

Confidential website viewing or social media figures will be circulated separately to the Board at the end of the quarter.

2. Our communications work

This section is split between impacts and outputs and includes an attribution rating for the impacts which makes it clear how much influence we actually had in the achievement. This will use a scale of 1-5 (where 1 is 'contributed' and 5 is 'made it happen').

Impact this quarter

2.1 Warnings about crowding ahead of re-opening of pubs and restaurants force TfL to issue new guidance to passengers

What was the issue?

We were concerned that TfL was not as prepared as it could have been ahead of the re-opening of pubs and restaurants at the beginning of July.

What did we do?

We called on TfL to step up preparations for dealing with crowding at busy stations highlighting the findings of our travel during Covid-19 survey carried out with Transport Focus. This showed that 28 per cent of Londoners expected to make more journeys by public transport when pubs and restaurants re-opened – almost double the nationwide figure.

What was the outcome?

We were featured in articles in the Evening Standard (which has a daily print circulation of 860,000, a daily readership of 1.6m and 600,000 unique daily visitors to its website) and City Am (daily print circulation of over 90,000 and 1.2m unique daily visitors to its website). Our press release forced Transport for London to issue new guidance to passengers on their website and in their weekly travel update email which goes out to registered Oyster card holders.

Attribution rating: 5

2.2 TfL announces trial of 24/7 bus lanes

What was the issue?

There is a need for more reliable bus journey times throughout the day, particularly as London recovers from the current pandemic.

What did we do?

London TravelWatch has been calling for more priority for buses in London over a number of years, most recently in our Mayoral transport priorities. We continued to make the case for this in our regular meetings with TfL during the pandemic.

What was the outcome?

In July, TfL announced a trial of bus lanes operating 24 hours, seven days a week on the roads they are responsible for to reduce the impact of any congestion on buses. Our quote from TfL's press release featured in the Evening Standard and in other publications including the On London website (run by former Guardian journalist, Dave Hill, which receives around 25,000 unique monthly visitors). We were also invited to take part in two round table meetings convened by TfL who are involving us in their preparatory work.

Attribution rating: 4

2.3 Improvements to the TfL website

What was the issue?

The information available on TfL's website for those using and returning to public transport was poor quality and difficult to access.

What did we do?

We kept bringing this up in our regular meetings with TfL and at our June Board meeting, pointing out that it was more important than ever that passengers had access to up to date information on which stations and trains

would be busy at particular times. We asked TfL to make existing information more prominent on their website and in communications.

What was the outcome?

TfL have better publicised their walking maps and have made it possible for passengers to check how busy any Tube station is, at any time of day. They have also introduced a new app to help passengers plan their journeys and avoid particular stations at busy times. TfL wrote to us to tell us that because of the feedback London TravelWatch had given them over the last few months, they had improved the quality of information for people returning to public transport on their website and other channels and they plan to do more over the coming months.

Attribution rating: 4

Outputs this quarter

2.4 Making the case for part time season tickets and an end to unfair commuter fares

What was the issue?

The inflation figure which determines the January fare rise was due to be announced on 19 August.

What did we do?

We called for an overhaul of the out of date fares system to stop the current season ticket lottery and recognise the changing needs of commuters, many of whom no longer need to travel into London every day. We used figures from our joint omnibus survey with Transport Focus to back up our calls and secured a supportive quote in our press release from business group, London First.

What was the outcome?

We featured in an article in the Guardian (which has a print circulation of 170,000 and a daily average of 10.3m unique website views) and the Director appeared in an interview on ITV London News which is watched by up to 465,000 people. At the start of September we were quoted for first time in almost 10 years in the Times (which has a combined online and digital circulation of around 500,000) in a story about commuting habits. Our quote included a line on flexible season tickets.

2.5 Travel hacks help people find less busy alternatives to popular Tube stations

What was the issue?

With the need to socially distance and avoid busy stations and transport services during the current pandemic, it is important that people travelling in and around London have access to clear information to show all the possible ways they could travel to help them get around safely. This includes awareness of the Thameslink services which offer an alternative to the Tube but which TfL was unwilling to add to the Tube map.

What did we do?

We produced a series of travel hacks to highlight National Rail alternatives to the Tube, showed where you could use less busy stations to make the same journeys and where the bus might be a good alternative. A key part of this work was commissioning a designer to add Tube stations to GTR's Thameslink map to help people find accessible alternatives to busy Tube stations.

What was the outcome?

City Am ran a big story on our travel hacks and our tweet was retweeted by London Assembly Transport Committee Deputy Chair, Caroline Pidgeon and received a total of over 3,300 impressions on Twitter, 34 likes and 20 retweets. We have been putting out our individual travel hacks on social media over the last few weeks.

2.6 Making the case to retain free travel for under 18s with Oyster Zip cards

What was the issue?

Under 18s faced losing their free Oyster Zip card travel on public transport as one of the terms of the bailout agreement agreed between TfL and the Government in May.

What did we do?

We met on Zoom with groups of young Londoners and published a report on their concerns, which included fears about the financial cost, threats to independence and safety concerns.

What was the output?

We featured in two articles in the Evening Standard as well as on an interview with BBC London news (which tends to get between 20-30% of the audience share when it airs). And our work both behind the scenes and in public has helped to raise the profile of the issue so there remains a chance that the change might not be brought in.

3. Other media coverage

The Director took part in two interviews with LBC Radio; one as the Government changed the guidance on working from home and another on our omnibus survey results at the end of August. She also appeared on the BBC London news talking about possible cuts to transport services in the capital. The Director of Policy and Investigation took part in a BBC London interview on the two reviews into the financing of TfL.

4. Popular news and pages on our website between June and August 2020

The number of website views increased again in August having gradually increased since the lockdown was introduced towards the end of March although they are still nowhere near their pre-Covid levels. There were spikes on 4 June when the Transport Secretary announced that face coverings would be mandatory on public transport and 15 June when non-essential shops started re-opening.

The most popular webpages between June and August were:

1. /home/
2. /faqs/oyster/where_can_i_use_my_pay_as_you_go_oyster_card_
3. /faqs/general/freedom_pass
4. /faqs/oyster/where_can_i_top_up_my_oyster_card_
5. /faqs/buses/can_you_tell_me_about_the__freedom_pass_and_concessionary_travel_

The webpage on refunds for season tickets, which had been popular in previous months dropped out of the top 10.

The most popular news items included:

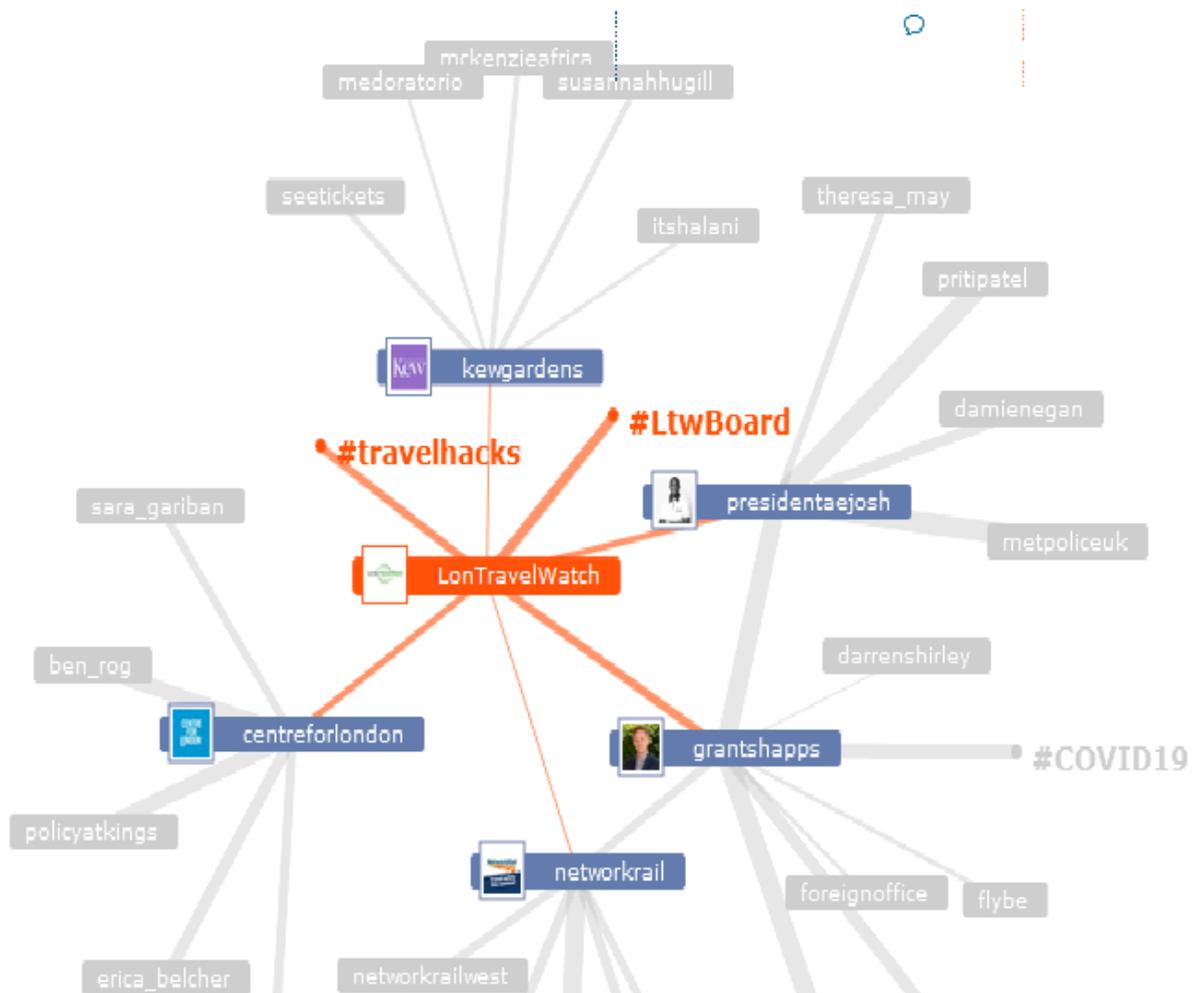
- 1) Transport matters: highlighting the risks for B.A.M.E transport users during the pandemic
- 2) Surveys show Tube passengers are the least satisfied in the country with Covid transport services
- 3) London TravelWatch Coronavirus update
- 4) Watchdog calls for part time season tickets to help commuters back to work
- 5) Proposed closure of Watford (Metropolitan) Underground station (March 2012)

More detailed website statistics covering the whole of the second quarter of 2020/21 will be circulated to members separately.

5. Social media

On 20 August we launched our active travel campaign which aims to encourage and empower transport users to feedback and engage in consultation with their local streets authorities and help us build a digital community of transport users we can keep engaged and updated on changes across London. At the time of writing we had 1,109 email signups and were well on the way to reaching our target of 5,000 by the end of the campaign in October. Our launch tweet had the highest number of retweets we've ever had and a really large amount of engagement.

The 'mention map' below shows the people who have connected with us on Twitter during the past three months, their connections and popular associated hashtags. It shows the diverse connections you can make on Twitter and the potential to reach a wider audience through prolific tweeters with a broad range of followers.



Detailed social media statistics covering the whole of the second quarter of 2020/21 will be circulated to members separately.

6. Recommendation

Members are recommended to note this report.

Richard Freeston-Clough, September 2020