
Minutes

Agenda item: 5
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Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 7 October at City Hall, Queens Walk, London SE1 2AA

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Present

Members

Chris Brown, Richard Dilks, Glyn Kyle, Stephen Locke (Chair), Abdikafi Rage, John Stewart, Ruth Thompson

Guests

Mark Threapleton	Managing Director, Stagecoach London (Item 7)
Siwan Hayward	Deputy Director of Enforcement and On-Street Operations, Transport for London (Item 7)
Superintendent Rob Revill	Metropolitan Police (Item 7)
Sir Peter Hendy	Transport Commissioner (Item 8)

Matt Winfield Transport for London

Members of the public

Secretariat

Tim Bellenger	Director, Policy and Investigation
Janet Cooke	Chief Executive
Richard Freeston-Clough	Communications Officer
Robert Nicholls	Policy Officer
Sharon Malley	Executive Assistant (minutes)
Vincent Stops	Policy Officer

1 Chair's introduction and pre-meeting announcements

The Chair welcomed members and visitors to the meeting and made the standard safety announcements.

2 Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence. John Stewart apologised that he would need to leave the meeting early in order to give evidence to a Parliamentary Select Committee.

3 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest beyond those already expressed on the standing register of interests.

4 Chair's activities and Passenger Focus update

The Chair said that in his role as Passenger Focus board member he had visited a call-handling centre in Southend that handled Passenger Focus enquiries. The centre was operated by Ventrica, a private company for mainly commercial clients but with two staff who focused on Passenger Focus and capacity for others to step in if required. It appeared to be working well for Passenger Focus and the staff valued the opportunity to handle their calls.

The Chair said that as part of the Department for Transport's triennial review of Passenger Focus he had met the independent reviewer and had discussed issues including performance management. Ruth Thompson of London TravelWatch would also be giving evidence to the review.

The Chair said that he had attended a Passenger Focus meeting which discussed its changing remit to include monitoring the work of the Highways Agency, as well as the triennial review, bus planning and the appointment process for a new chair.

The Chair said that he had now taken on the role of chair of the Passenger Focus Statistics Governance Group, a Board Sub-Committee which oversees the organisation's research work and use of data.

In his role as London TravelWatch chair, he said he and the Chief Executive had continued to meet London Assembly members to discuss London TravelWatch's next business plan. The meetings had been productive, with eight having taken place to date and one more due soon. The meetings enabled the business plan process to be conducted smoothly and had allowed a broader range of input than the seminar held for Assembly members the previous year.

The Chair reported that a meeting of the Chairs' Group had taken place in September to discuss Board and Policy committee agenda planning and that meetings had also been held with Leon Daniels, Managing Director of Surface Transport at Transport for London, and Sadiq Khan MP, the Shadow Transport Secretary.

5 Minutes

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 15 July 2014 were agreed and signed as a correct record. The Governance committee minutes of 20 May 2014 were noted.

6 Matters arising (LTW478)

The Policy Officer said that he had been seeking information from TfL on bus performance and should be able to report in more detail on bus speeds in the future. After this he would review the targets for other modes. He was considering whether to incorporate the new bus information into the TfL performance report and dispense with reporting on some of the business plan targets.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that London TravelWatch had received over 2,000 responses to date to its consultation on changes to London Underground ticket office arrangements, which was above the expected response rate. The responses were spread across a wide range of stations and did not appear to be unduly influenced by any organised campaigns or lobby groups.

It was noted that the Infrastructure Advisory Group's consultation on future London growth was on the agenda for the forthcoming London Assembly Transport Committee meeting.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that he had attended a meeting with the Office of Rail Regulation to discuss its forthcoming consultation on ticket sales and would follow up on this in writing next week. He said it was important that the ORR understood the importance of Oyster, contactless payments and ticket volumes in the London market. The ORR seemed very focused on paper ticketing outside London, but 70% of all surface rail journeys included stations in London.

The Chair said he had been invited to serve on the ORR's consumer panel and he would make these points through that channel as well as elsewhere.

It was noted that the London TravelWatch interchanges report continued to be honed as it was important to get the final document correct and ensure that it added real value to a very important topic. The work already carried out on access to airports made it necessary to reassess some of the elements of the interchange report.

7 Key activities (LTW479)

In response to a question from a member, the Director, Policy and Investigation, said that the meeting of the Rail Delivery Group had considered changes to the wording on paper tickets to make the information clearer to passengers.

Members requested further detail about the activities of the Travel Demand Management board. The Chief Executive said that the board undertook high level transport planning across all modes and also worked on joint communications programmes. It focused on issues such as the works at London Bridge station and also one-off events such as the Tour of Britain and the Rugby Union world cup.

The Chief Executive explained that the European Rail Policy Forum represented all branches of UK government along with the Association of Train Operating Companies, freight operators and London TravelWatch and discussed issues on European directives affecting rail operation in the UK.

8 Enforcing the rules: anti-social behaviour on buses (LTW480)

The Chair welcomed Mark Threapleton, Managing Director of Stagecoach London, Siwan Hayward, Deputy Director of Enforcement and On Street Operations at Transport for London, and Superintendent Rob Revill of the Metropolitan Police to the meeting.

Siwan Hayward gave an interactive presentation on enforcement action against anti-social behaviour on the TfL bus network. She said that there was a very low level of crime on buses and a great deal of work was focused on making passengers feel secure. This included keeping buses clean and free of graffiti and enabling bus drivers to contact the central office in the event of difficulties. The biggest category of crime on buses was pickpocketing. Some communications targeted at passengers was carried out on this, as well as police activity on organised crime behind the pickpocket gangs.

Ms Hayward said it was important for passengers to feel safe and agreed with London TravelWatch that anti-social behaviour on buses undermined this. TfL had conducted surveys of people who did not use buses to find out why not and 18% said crime and fear of crime was a factor. Further analysis enabled passengers to be grouped according to whether their fear of crime was based on having witnessed an incident that made them feel unsafe and those who were by nature anxious and who had not witnessed anything problematic but remained fearful that something might occur. This latter group was unlikely to be reassured about safety regardless of how much visible security was in place.

The types of behaviours feared by passengers included aggressive behaviour by others such as swearing, loud music and taking up too much space, drunkenness of other passengers and groups of young people travelling together.

Ms Hayward said TfL took a data-driven approach to its work and encouraged local safer travel teams to gather evidence of local problems and to make use of driver incident reports. She said that as groups, women, ethnic minorities and young people were disproportionately fearful of crime and noted that young people were also over-represented as victims of crime. The over-55s were least likely to be victims of crime on the bus network.

Ms Hayward said that the police were bringing together a new transport command across surface transport and one of its six objectives was to improve passenger confidence. She said that although passengers complained about anti-social behaviour they often did not report it officially. The resulting shortage of data made it difficult for TfL to deal with it. There were named inspectors in every transport team, which was available online, but there remained a big mismatch between anecdote and reporting levels.

Ms Hayward stressed that TfL did want to hear from passengers on anti-social behaviour. A member said this did not align with his experience and that people had informed him that they were not able to report anti-social behaviour on buses at police stations. Supt Rob Revill said that the police did targeted work on bus routes that it discovered were subject to anti-social behaviour. He said that anti-social behaviour on buses could be reported on the 101 phone number and added that the police may need to be clearer about how to report anti-social behaviour.

Supt Revill said the police did a lot of work with schools and focused on visible security at stops so that drivers were able to point out the police presence.

Ms Hayward said that there were 270 bus revenue inspectors in place and very low levels of fare evasion on buses. TfL was looking at how revenue inspectors could make use of legislation to deal with anti-social behaviour on buses.

The Chief Executive said that it might be helpful to have positive posters on buses about how to report anti-social behaviour, what happened to the reports and why it was important to report it. Ms Hayward said TfL was planning to refresh its 'better behaviour' campaign and would welcome London TravelWatch's feedback on how to develop the communications.

Mark Threapleton said that a lot of effort had been made to gather passenger feedback on bus journeys. There was a need to ensure that passengers were aware of the rights of others and there was increasing concern that the space for wheelchairs and pushchairs was bringing passengers into conflict. He wanted to focus on helping passengers to understand why the wheelchair space was important as this had better outcomes than simply telling people not to use it.

In response to a question, Mr Threapleton said that bus operators were responsible for training bus drivers but TfL had a large input. Mr Threapleton said it may be possible to issue some dos and don'ts to help drivers when the anti-social behaviour of a passenger may be due to mental health factors.

A member said that it was important to gain as much behavioural insight as possible and TfL should work on its message about welcoming feedback. Another member said that the problems relating to anti-social behaviour may extend to the underground when 24-hour operation begins. Ms Hayward said that a considerable amount of work was underway at TfL to ensure smooth introduction of 24-hour tube services. She acknowledged that there might be challenges if passengers were refused access to the tube due to intoxication and were directed towards night buses instead.

Mr Threapleton said that the night bus network was currently effective and that although there were some examples of anti-social behaviour this was accepted by the travelling public and serious incidents were rare. He thought the night tube might allow some conflicts caused by overcrowded night buses to be avoided.

A member suggested putting posters inviting feedback on anti-social behaviour at bus stops or on iBus screens inside buses. There may need to be closer enforcement of restrictions on alcohol on buses. The member asked whether any young person's travel pass had been removed following incidents of anti-social behaviour. Ms Hayward said TfL found that parental intervention could be effective in these circumstances, as could the threat of withdrawal of the Zip Card and the parent having to pay for the young person's travel.

The Chair said it was encouraging to hear that the substantive problem was not as extensive as feared and that passengers should report anti-social behaviour they experienced, even relatively minor cases, as this would help to improve the proportion of passengers who felt safe. He thanked Mr Threapleton, Ms Hayward and Supt Revill for attending and contributing to an interesting and useful debate.

9 Transport Commissioner

The Chair welcomed Sir Peter Hendy, the Transport Commissioner, to the meeting. Sir Peter apologised for the slight delay in his arrival, which had been caused by responding to news that the RMT planned a 48-hour strike in the following week. He was disappointed that the strike seemed more connected to the national day of action than the dispute about ticket office closures and noted that the strike mandate was nine months old. He said that the TSSA was not taking part in this strike and he hoped that an agreement with them was imminent.

The Chair invited members to put questions to Sir Peter. A member asked what Sir Peter saw as TfL's strengths when building an evidence base to support proposed changes such as contactless payments, cashless buses and cycling proposals. Sir Peter said he hoped that TfL consulted effectively and noted that in the case of cashless buses levels of concern had been very small following implementation.

In relation to contactless payments, a good deal of preparatory work was undertaken and over 2 million contactless transactions had already been made. The problem of 'card clash', where the Oyster reader took payment from the wrong card, did not appear to be as widespread as feared.

Sir Peter said that the recent travel demand figures showed that there had been a reduction in passenger levels through London Bridge station in August, which suggested that the messaging about disruption at the station was reaching passengers.

Sir Peter agreed that information in relation to the impact of proposed cycle superhighways had been delayed but said that the deadline for responding to the consultation had been extended as a result. He said that if the new deadline was not considered adequate he would consider extending it further. Traffic modelling on such complex schemes was difficult and took a long time to complete. Sir Peter said that some boroughs were opposed to the plans because of the impact on local roads and that some uninformed commentators had made unrealistic comparisons with other cities. The Mayor was pushing for the scheme to be implemented quickly and the timetable was tight so TfL was working hard to bring the proposals together as soon as possible.

A member highlighted the need to ration roadspace according to an evidence base and not based on who shouted loudest. Sir Peter said that the Roads Task Force had given TfL good evidence on the stakeholders who use the highway and that he was aware that a balance needed to be found. He agreed that it was important to respond to issues raised in consultations, such as the concerns that were highlighted in the consultation on cashless buses.

A member said that there was some concern that the cycling proposals would have an overall negative impact on buses. Sir Peter said that all road users had been considered in drawing up the cycle proposals. Removing vehicle capacity at junctions in favour of cyclists would almost certainly have a detrimental impact on buses. In response to this, the proposals included options for improving bus reliability elsewhere and it was possible to use the Bus Priority budget to extract best value from the roads for buses.

A member said that bus stop bypasses were being proposed to reduce conflicts between cyclists and motor vehicles but they introduced new conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists. The member asked what evidence had been considered before proposing their introduction as part of the cycle superhighway proposals. Sir Peter said he would respond separately on this question but that the bypasses were not entirely novel and he was not aware of any reason for not introducing them. He said that it was incumbent on all road users to behave properly, including pedestrians and cyclists.

A member raised a concern that London was perceived to be in receipt of more than its fair share of national investment and that this moved the discussion about funding away from the question of need and the balance of cost/benefit. The member noted that transport capacity was being outstripped by population growth. Sir Peter said he was working on a report making the case for funding transport in cities that was due to be published soon and may be launched in Manchester. London was not arguing against investment in other cities and it seemed that the argument about investment in British cities had been accepted. He said that London's per-head subsidy was much lower than, for example, Scotland's.

Sir Peter said that there would be an autumn spending review following the 2015 general election that may well cover the whole of the next Mayoral term. He would need to make public arguments about the capital and revenue settlement for London and noted that keeping fare levels at RPI would make it difficult for TfL to continue to expand services such as the bus network.

A member questioned how much investment was public funding and how much was government underwriting of private funding. Sir Peter said that borrowing that was underwritten by the government was included as part of the national debt and that TfL sought as much leverage as possible otherwise it would not be able to fund its projects. He said that London seemed to be expected to fund half of the costs of Crossrail 2 whereas High Speed 2 seemed to be funded wholly from taxation. Crossrail 2 would cause conflict as communities might welcome better trains and commercial growth but not necessarily additional housing.

A member asked what Sir Peter's aspirations were for the Year of the Bus. Sir Peter said he hoped to achieve a greater understanding of the importance of buses as an essential ingredient in London's transport infrastructure. He thought there had been some traction on this. He was pleased with the success of the bus parade in Regent Street, which had been attended by around 400,000 visitors and which gave the shops in the street a 15% trading uplift. The Year of the Bus had seen increased interest in both nostalgia vehicles and new technologies, with hybrid buses now moving into the mainstream.

The Chief Executive stressed London TravelWatch's support for the bus network and said that London TravelWatch would be able to make use of any Year of the Bus funding that TfL had been unable to spend during the project.

A member said that a member of the public had asked whether TfL would consider introducing a Christmas Day service on buses. Sir Peter said he did look at it from time to time but it was difficult to make the financial case. He said it would be more worthwhile to concentrate on persuading National Rail services to operate on Boxing Day.

A member asked Sir Peter to outline the benefits of increased devolution of National Rail services to TfL. Sir Peter said that parts of the rail network were significantly underused and the barriers to their use could be addressed by TfL. There were plans in place to improve the stations and provide more information on tickets at the newly adopted West Anglia route to increase passenger levels. He said that National Rail had now agreed that TfL could run 10 trains per hour on the Overground, when previously there had been three trains in peak hours and two trains in the off-peak. He noted that once all the currently agreed devolution had been implemented TfL would be operating nearly half of London's suburban railway. He thought it was disgraceful that South West Trains still would not sell Oyster products at their Richmond and Wimbledon stations.

A member referred to a recent newspaper article in which Sir Peter discussed the social difficulties of lower-paid workers in outer London trying to access employment opportunities in the centre. Sir Peter said that until recently it has been possible to live modestly in London and travel a modest journey to work but this was no longer the case and people were living further away and making longer, more expensive journeys to reach employment opportunities. Future Mayors would need to consider how to enable lower-paid employees to bear the cost of travelling to jobs in central London.

The Chair briefed Sir Peter on activities London TravelWatch was currently pursuing, including a report on surface transport access to airports that was due to be published shortly. He said that London TravelWatch was also working on its consultation over proposed changes to London Underground ticket offices and a report on transport interchanges. On a practical level, the organisation would shortly be moving to new offices and he hoped that TfL would be able to commit to updating the London TravelWatch contact details on its posters. Sir Peter was sure this would be possible.

The Chair thanked Sir Peter for attending the meeting and responding to members' questions.

10 London TravelWatch's 2015-16 business plan (LTW481)

The Chief Executive presented London TravelWatch's 2015-16 business plan, which would be considered by the Transport Committee of the London Assembly on 14 October.

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.