



“The only independent
London-wide body standing
up for the capital’s travelling
public, however they choose
to move around our city. ”

Our role

“We aim to be an independent, effective champion for everyone travelling in and around London.”



What we do

London TravelWatch was set up by Parliament as the official voice of London's travelling public. We speak up for all those who use buses, the Underground, the National Rail network, Docklands Light Railway, dial-a-ride, trams, taxis, river as well as cyclists, motorcyclists, pedestrians, river and other users of London's principal road network.

Our aims

We aim to be an independent, effective champion for everyone travelling in and around London: Londoners, commuters, visitors and tourists:

We:

- press for a better travel experience for those travelling in and around London
- ensure that the particular and specific needs of London and Londoners are taken account of in transport policy and planning decisions
- help the travelling public understand their rights and find good deals by sharing information and providing information and advice
- speak for all transport users in London however they travel. We are the only body to be completely multi-modal
- seek to ensure that transport operators deal with complaints appropriately and efficiently.

Our responsibilities

Representing Passengers

We speak for passengers and the travelling public in discussions with opinion formers and decision makers at all levels: local councils, the Mayor, the London Assembly and national and European level.

Discussion

We meet and liaise with all parts of the transport industry regularly: discussing services and plans which affect the travelling public including timetables, routes, frequencies, fares, ticketing, station standards, access, vehicles, safety, personal security and the information provided to passengers and road users.

Investigation

We examine all complaints bought to us by people unhappy with responses (or lack of responses) they have received from service providers, and try to rectify problems or seek compensation where appropriate.

Analysis

We monitor the quality of service delivered, including punctuality, reliability, crowding, congestion, cleanliness, accessibility, staff attitudes and behaviour and station and waiting facilities and try to ensure that they are not below the standard travellers expect and deserve. Our casework - complaints and observations bought to us by the public - helps us understand the day-to-day concerns facing transport users in London.



What we want for passengers

“transport users should feel represented and expect a fair, informed and London-wide perspective on their concerns.”

We think that:

- services should run frequently and reliably at all reasonable times of the day and week
- networks should provide good access, adequate capacity and offer easy and convenient interchange between different types of transport
- staff should be helpful, informed, alert and committed to offering high-quality customer service
- information should be available, understandable, relevant, up-to-date and accurate
- tickets should be easy to use, easy to understand, flexible and integrated between appropriate operators and modes of transport
- stations or stops should be well-designed, properly maintained, fully accessible and offer a good quality waiting environment
- journeys should be safe and free from crime and the fear of crime
- roads, streets and pavements should be clean, properly signed, uncongested and properly maintained so that they can be used confidently by motorists, pedestrians and cyclists
- vehicles should be accessible, comfortable, clean, safe, quiet, easy to identify, and suitable for passengers travelling with luggage, shopping or children
- transport providers should communicate clearly and properly with their users, be approachable, open to suggestions, take complaints seriously and have proper mechanisms for redress when things go wrong.



Chair's report

Sharon Grant, Chair



London TravelWatch has battled on behalf of the travelling public for many years. However, in 2010/11 we faced a battle for our very survival, as the London Assembly's review recommended an end to our 60 year old independent status and our absorption into its own structures.

We co-operated fully with the Assembly's review so were surprised and disappointed at this proposal particularly in view of the strong support for our work revealed by the Assembly's own consultation exercise.

The board has rigorously countered this proposal, and rightly so. We believe that transport users should feel represented and expect a fair, informed and London-wide perspective on their concerns. Objectivity is at risk where political priorities filter what issues see the light of day, and how they are judged. Much of what we achieve for passengers is because we are a trusted intermediary between them and transport providers. That too would be at risk if our independence was in question.

Also, in our discussions with the Assembly, parliamentarians and stakeholders, we have stressed the uniquely integrated nature of London's transport network, with its high level of interdependence between modes. That integration is something London TravelWatch is proud to have argued for over many years, with considerable success. The Assembly's suggestion that rail passenger's needs should be separately championed elsewhere is also a backward step.

As this report shows, London TravelWatch has continued pursue a wide range of issues affecting Londoners and those who pass through the capital. Despite our limited resources, we have faced up to budget reductions, but we shall continue to make the case for our independence is one to which we shall be returning to in the coming year, wherever it is challenged.

My thanks are due to the board. It is now much smaller than previously as part of the stringency we have faced, and this has been an eventful year. For the Chief Executive and her staff, the year has been exceptionally challenging and our appreciation goes to all of them for maintaining effectiveness in a period of huge uncertainty.

“The unique integration of London's transport network is something London TravelWatch is proud to have argued for over many years.”



Chief Executive's report

Janet Cooke, Chief Executive



Certainly, the past year has been a challenging one for London TravelWatch, with uncertainties arising from the London Assembly's review, and the need, along with other public sector organisations, to reduce operating costs significantly.

A comprehensive internal review of London TravelWatch's work was undertaken, which concentrated on restructuring the organisation, cutting down on administration costs and reducing staff numbers while still protecting our core services of casework, research and investigation. During the year we have seen both a reduction of staff and a freeze on recruitment, reducing operational costs.

Despite this upheaval and cost-cutting, the staff remained focussed and engaged, succeeding in hitting or exceeding all our performance targets.

We continue to speak up for passengers on subjects ranging from timetable changes, bus stops, bus lanes, station re-design and closures and potential new routes. It is vital that the travelling public's experiences are central to the decision-making process.

We received over 10,000 calls, e-mails or letters from the public raising concerns about transport in London, with nearly 1300 needing detailed investigation. Penalty fares and problems with Oyster were two of the biggest concerns for Londoners, and we commissioned an important piece of research to look at how Oyster Pay As You Go could be improved for passengers and continued to work with transport companies to ensure penalty fares are fair and consistent.

I am proud of the staff, who, as you will see in this review, have continued to make a real difference for everyone travelling in and around London.



What we've achieved

Every year, we are kept busy by examining consumer concerns and performance on transport systems. Our work ranges from high-level scrutiny to helping individuals with specific problems, covering a wide variety of concerns relating to all forms of transport in London. Our close contact and dealings with users informs the independent, expert advice we give to policy-makers and supports our strategic priorities and campaigns.

Examining Performance

We are consulted about potential routes, timetables and regulations such as bus lanes. This means we can speak up for the travelling public early in the planning process and try to prevent poor decisions for travellers being made. We listen to the public and their experiences so that transport services are the best they can be, so journeys are as smooth and trouble-free as possible. We monitor the services that have not been performing as well as they should for passengers, investigate causes and ask for any explanations and solutions. We particularly focus on routes, lines or places that continue to perform badly. When services are not good enough, we explore the reasons and demand solutions, as well as seeking recompense and explanations for individual passengers.

London TravelWatch published performance reports covering all modes of transport in London: buses, tubes, roads, rail, river, trams, DLR and dial-a-ride. This provides a single place for London's transport users to check how well their services have performed.

We received a number of complaints about problems which arose after a new train timetable planning system was introduced. We heard from people who had booked journeys in advance only to turn up at stations to find trains not running, even though customer information websites had said they were. We thought a more extensive testing period was needed before the new system was launched to avoid huge inconvenience for passengers. The regulator agreed and decided that Network Rail had breached its licence.

After a period of poor performance on several tube lines, London TravelWatch raised passengers' concerns, particularly about continued delays on the Jubilee, Central and Victoria Lines. Reliability is hugely important to passengers and delays are very disruptive to everyday work and life in London. We said Transport for London (TfL) had to deliver a better experience for passengers and reminded passengers to claim refunds whenever they could.

“We advised people on best fares, available discounts and concessions and encouraged people to share their own advice.”



Our achievements



Paying for Travel

The level of fares and being able to buy tickets easily are fundamental issues for passengers. We hear constantly from people concerned about how and where to buy tickets, how to obtain refunds when necessary, how to appeal penalty fares as well as those unhappy with the cost of travel. As well as campaigning for passengers to pay a reasonable amount to travel, we give advice on best fares and encourage transport providers to simplify and clarify their systems.



We published money saving tips for those travelling around London. We became aware that there was lots of advice on how to save money on long-distance journeys, but very little on everyday local travel around the city. We advised people on best fares, discounts and concessions available and encouraged people to share their own advice. We also reminded them to claim any refunds, as the number of people who are entitled to refunds but never claim remains high.

Ahead of a summit between the Mayor and the capital's train companies, we called for an end to Oyster Extension Permits, which were confusing, poorly advertised and led to many passengers being unfairly fined. London TravelWatch's persistence on this issue paid off, and these were abolished. We called for Oyster card validity to be extended beyond current stations to important commuter towns like Dartford, Waltham Cross, Cheshunt, Slough and Windsor, where passengers can already use them on some local buses.

After receiving many protests from users about being charged after making 'incomplete' journeys with their Oyster cards, we commissioned research into why this happened, how widespread the problem was and what could be done to reduce the number of 'maximum fares' being paid.

We conducted an online survey of rail users in London and the south east to find out what they felt about First Class travel, as we

believed it could be freed up to increase capacity on busy trains. We found out that the majority of users - including those in First Class - believed First Class carriages or seats were unnecessary on local journeys of an hour or less, and we are discussing the findings with train companies.

The closure of ticket offices or reduction in opening hours remains a central concern for passengers. During the year, we heard from passengers worried about changes at London Midland and South West Trains stations. London Underground also announced proposals to change ticket office opening hours at many of its stations or, in some cases, close them completely. We asked passengers their opinions of the changes and discussed them at one of our public meetings. We raised concerns with London Underground about the reduction in ticket offices which were still relatively busy. We were also worried about problems for passengers with disabilities or those unfamiliar with London and Oyster cards.

When fares rose in January, we advised passengers to make sure they were getting the best ticket available. As well as fare rises above inflation, several tickets, such as zone 2-6, 1-3 and 1-5 Travelcards were abolished, leaving some passengers experiencing exceptionally large rises on particular journeys.

Our achievements

Speaking out

London TravelWatch responds to consultations by the Mayor, London Assembly, the government, regulators and transport providers to ensure that the London travellers' perspective is at the heart of decision and policy-making.

After a much delayed and troubled upgrade on the Jubilee line, we suggested that the plan for the upgrade of the busy and vital Northern line was looked at again. The original plan, with a huge number of early evening and weekend closures would have been highly disruptive for passengers.

We studied TfL's business plan for the next four years. We were pleased to see sustained investment in the much-needed Underground upgrades and improvements to stations, but were concerned about buses: passenger demand is rising, but capacity is not, and people will be waiting longer for their buses in the future.

After another bout of severe snowfall in November and December and many complaints from passengers, we called for

information and communication to passengers to improve and for better co-ordination between relevant agencies to ensure disruption was better planned for and dealt with. We contributed to the government's wide-ranging Winter Resilience Review, in which we also called for better and more consistent compensation payments for passengers in times of extreme disruption.

We contributed to the government's Rail Value for Money study, which looked at ways to make the industry more efficient. This is essential for passengers, as it impacts directly fares and service quality. London's passengers are unique: they have the greatest dependence on railways of any part of Britain, rail being often the only practical means of transport for many commuters. We argued it was essential to avoid a return to short-term, stop-start funding of the railways, which could risk the railways being unable to cope with future demand.

The inquest into the derailment of a train at Potters Bar in 2002 in which seven people were killed finally took place. London TravelWatch received recognition as an 'interested person' and played an active part throughout the nine weeks of hearings, during which the causes of the accident and the circumstances surrounding it were explored in depth. Evidence was taken from more than 180 witnesses. The jury reached a verdict of accidental death and identified a list of contributory factors, several of which were the subject of recommendations made by Network Rail (as Railtrack's successor) was later convicted of having failed to comply with its duties under health and safety law and was fined £3 million.



“Making London’s transport accessible in the widest sense of the term.”



Our achievements

We responded to Network Rail’s paper looking at future capacity shortfalls on rail in London and the south east plans to address the problem. We set out what London’s passengers want and expect from their train service, and demonstrated the potential for increasing capacity, including ideas for new lines and stations. We also reinforced the importance of ensuring that passengers’ experiences are at the heart of decision-making.

We shared with the government and potential bidders for new rail franchises what passengers told us they wanted from those running their train services, including station standards, train frequencies, access, cycle and car parking, signage, refund schemes and the cost of travel. These included routes covering North and East London, Essex and Hertfordshire as well as important interchange stations such as Liverpool Street, Kings Cross and Euston.

Widening Access

We want to see more Londoners and visitors to the city walking, cycling and using public transport. There has been great progress and many good initiatives, but more needs to be done to make London’s transport networks accessible in the widest sense of the word. We have tried to raise awareness of all transport users’ needs and promoted improvements to transport infrastructure and information available. In all our work,

we consider the needs of disabled travellers and recognise that any improvements for vulnerable groups usually offer benefits to all.

We investigated bus stop accessibility across the capital. All buses in London area are accessible, but only around half of bus stops in London are. There is no point in having accessible buses, if the stops are not accessible. This means buses should be able to get directly to the kerb to allow easy boarding and alighting, ensuring bus doors are not obstructed and enforcing parking restrictions around stops properly. We wrote to TfL and every London borough to ensure that the progress made on making bus stops accessible was continued. We published figures analysing the number of accessible bus stops borough by borough, which vary enormously and continued to monitor the progress - or lack of it - throughout the year.

After seeing the advance plans for works at Victoria underground station meant closing the very busy escalators to the Victoria Line, we suggested many improvements to passenger communication and information, including looking at ways of keeping ticket offices open. Many of these suggestions were adopted leading to a much better experience for passengers using the station.

Our achievements

We published our research into standards at London's rail stations, looking at facilities and passengers' priorities. Stations are a significant part of any rail journey and they should be high-quality, safe and accessible. As well as auditing stations across London, we looked at passengers' priorities at Barking, Clapham Junction and Luton stations in greater depth. We identified that passengers wanted to see better waiting facilities, more toilets and much better accessibility.

The Surface Transport Design Forum, chaired by London TravelWatch, reviewed the design for the New Bus for London. The Forum, made up of representatives from elderly, accessibility and disability groups was set up to promote best practice in bus design. The Forum had previously made suggestions to improve accessibility and was pleased that several of its suggestions - an extra handrail on the stairs and a 'turned' staircase - were adopted. This will make using the stairs easier to use and prevent injury.

We continue to look at the future of bus routes and services and to suggest improvements for passengers. We were pleased that the 607 bus between White City and Acton, Southall and Hayes finally got a Sunday service. London TravelWatch had pressed for Sunday buses on this busy route for a long time.



Keeping In Touch

To represent passengers in London, it is important that we keep in close touch with

them and continue to hear both their concerns and their praise. As well as doing this via our casework, we also make sure we give passengers a chance to tell us - and the transport companies directly - what they think via meetings, events, our website and social media.

All our board and committee meetings where we discuss current issues in transport, explore problems and examine future services are open to the public. Some of the issues we discussed during the year included Olympic transport (visiting Greenwich to discuss how the Olympics would affect people locally), how the 'new' Circle line was running, plans

for the cycle hire scheme in central London, and door-to-door transport schemes.

We also held two public question and answer events with the Transport Commissioner, Peter Hendy and with Howard Collins from London Underground. Via traditional and social media and our website, we gave members of the public an opportunity to ask questions directly to those running transport in London. Those unable to make the event sent us questions in advance and both events were covered 'live' via Twitter, the micro-blogging site.



Our performance



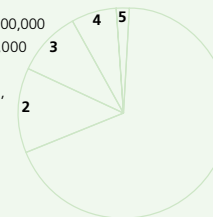
We undertook research into what bus passengers in London want. This showed that punctuality and reliability are still the main concerns, together with an effective Countdown (electronic real-time information) system at stops.

We were disappointed with Network Rail's consultation on the future of routes in North West London and Buckinghamshire, so launched our own consultation on the future and published suggestions to improve the service at Ruislip, Northolt Park, Sudbury and Wembley. We thought the original consultation marginalised passengers in London in an area which already suffers from poor rail services. We asked passengers to send us their thoughts and expectations for their journeys.

We held a successful transport users 'surgery' in Newham, outside Stratford bus, rail and Underground stations. We hired a bus and, along with the local council and representatives from local transport companies, spoke to local passengers and residents about their concerns and views on their local transport.

Expenditure

- 1 Staff pay and costs: 70% £1,100,000
- 2 Accommodation: 14% £212,000
- 3 Supplies: 11% £168,000
- 4 Members' pay and costs: 3%, £46,000
- 5 Depreciation: 2% £39,000



Casework: Looking at complaints

During 2010-2011, our casework team received over 10,000 telephone and written enquiries and complaints. Most of these could be dealt with quickly or passed on to the operator for an initial reply, as we only investigate cases where the complainant has received an inadequate response from the relevant transport provider. We investigated 1287 such complaints from the travelling public. The vast majority of all our complaints concerned fares, tickets or refunds but performance (punctuality and reliability) and the behaviour and availability of staff were also common complaints.

We issued a leaflet, also put on our website, explaining to passengers how to complain effectively and giving useful contact details.

We were pleased that all of our casework performance targets were achieved and exceeded by the end of 2010/2011.

Our funding

London TravelWatch is funded by the London Assembly in accordance with Schedule 19 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999. In 2010-2011, our total income amounted to £1,629,000 and our total expenditure was £1,565,000. Our full audited accounts are available on our website.

About us

Our people

Members of London TravelWatch are appointed by the London Assembly,

Board

(as at 31 March 2011)

David Barry
Terry Bennett
Gail Engert
Sharon Grant (Chair)
Sophia Lambert
David Leibling (Deputy Chair)

Staff

(as at 31 March 2011)

We employ 14 full-time staff and seven part-time staff:

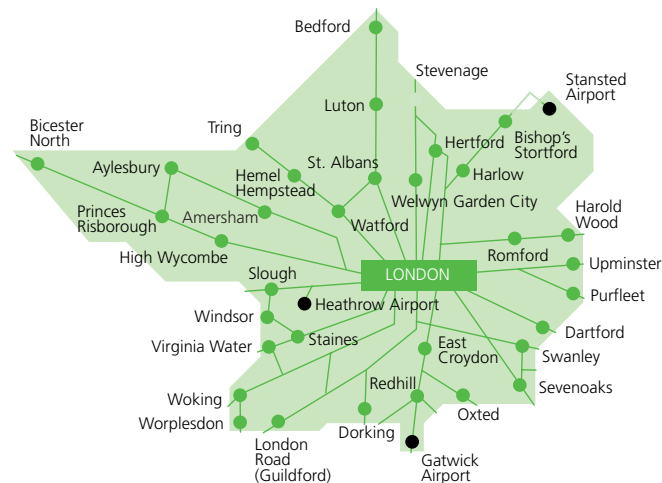
Sandra Ambo
Margaret Amu
Simon Barnabas
Keletha Barrett
Tim Bellenger (Director, Research & Development)
John Cartledge
Gytha Chinweze
Janet Cooke (Chief Executive)
Margaret Croucher
Bryan Davey (Director, Public Liaison)
Jo deBank
Jaskiren Deol
Peter Ellis
Greg Hargest
Sharon Malley*
Angela Okello*
Susan Parham-McCance
David Rose

Mike Spittles
Vincent Stops
Poonam Tamana
Patti Tobin (Director, Finance and Human Resources)
Paula Williams

*joined this year

Thank you to Kevin Davis, Daniel Francis, Teena Lashmore, Lorna Reith and Onjali Qatari Rauf who served during this year.

Thank you to Carmel Cannon, Mark Donoghue, Julie Falano, Rufus Impey and Jane Sugarman who left us during the year.



The voice of London transport users

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