
Secretariat memorandum

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Agenda item: 7

TRS017

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Review of the “Year of the Bus”

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1. To provide members with a summary of the activities associated with the year of the bus.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1. Members are recommended to note this report.

3 Background

- 3.1. The Underground, National Rail services and London’s bus services are the core of London’s public transport system.
- 3.2. With the disbandment of TfL’s bus priority unit, the devolving of previously ring-fenced bus priority budgets to the London boroughs and changing political priorities members determined that they should endeavour to champion London’s bus services.
- 3.3. For the last two years London TravelWatch has sought to raise the profile of bus services in London. There has been some success, but also some disappointment.

4 Successes

- 4.1. The volume of bus services (kilometres run) has been maintained across London, although there will be some adjustments (as there always are) to try and meet changing demand. That said demand generally continues to rise despite real fare level increases.
- 4.2. Accessible bus services. London TravelWatch can claim much credit for raising the profile of accessible bus stops. Many local highway authority LIPs have a commitment to increasing the proportion of accessible bus stops on their roads. Transport for All, the accessible transport campaigning organisation, is grateful for our work on this and has used the information in their campaigns. This is against a backdrop of TfL devolving funding to the boroughs who could choose not to spend grant on this issue.

- 4.3. Bus service reliability. There have been some exceptionally good bus reliability performance figures. Many factors will have led to this. The particularly good recent performance will be due, in part, to the reduction in general traffic volumes.
- 4.4. London TravelWatch recently objected to a Hammersmith and Fulham scheme to remove a bus lane on Scrubbs Lane. The council has responded to our and TfL's objections and is reconsidering the scheme.
- 4.5. London TravelWatch commissioned a major piece of research looking at bus passenger priorities. This has confirmed that our work and policies are aligned to passenger priorities.
- 4.6. The new bus for London will have a staircase that has a turn at the bottom and will have an additional horizontal handrail on the staircase. Both of these improvements have been promoted by London TravelWatch.
- 4.7. London TravelWatch highlighted in an early TfL performance report that route 30 was a long term poor performing route. Since then there has been a dramatic improvement in performance. The EWT (a measure of reliability) improved from over 2.5 minutes to 1.5 minutes. A substantial improvement. Similarly bus route 22 was highlighted for poor performance and is now performing at contract performance.
- 4.8. London TravelWatch made the case at the London Plan Enquiry in Public that accessibility should be a key priority, particularly emphasising the role of bus services. An additional strategic policy was added into the London Plan following the publication of enquiry inspectors report.
- 4.9. We opposed the reduction of bus services in Oxford Street. The pressure to continue to reduce the number of routes along Oxford Street has been successfully resisted.

5 Disappointments

- 5.1. TfL still has no dedicated bus priority unit to promote works either on its own or the London boroughs' roads. The 3G bus priority programme, designed to mitigate the forecast impact of traffic congestion on bus journey times has been shelved.
- 5.2. 80% of London's bus routes operate on borough controlled roads, but there is no ring fenced bus priority or accessible bus stops budget in the London borough's grant settlement.
- 5.3. TfL's Business Plan no longer features a target for bus stop accessibility, but we understand TfL are working to the previous target.
- 5.4. Some boroughs have done nothing to increase the number of accessible bus stops on their roads.
- 5.5. We have asked TfL to develop an equivalent performance indicator for bus services as the Journey Time Reliability indicator for general traffic. This request is acknowledged by TfL, but not yet developed.
- 5.6. Bus fares are rising in real terms.

- 5.7. Despite fare rises demand is rising as other factors are encouraging modal shift towards the bus network. But there are no plans to expand the number of bus kilometres run. This is likely to lead to further crowding. The additional income generated has been used to reduce net overall subsidy rather than being reinvested in the network
- 5.8. Bus Countdown signs will only be erected at one in seven bus stops. It had been planned to prioritise these at high footfall locations which we had supported. Recently we have been told this will not now happen and priority will be given to existing sites. This change in selection criteria is for non-transport reasons.
- 5.9. The network, although relatively stable, has not been as able to react to changes in demand, as well or as quickly as in previous years. For example there have been significant changes in the DLR and the East London Line networks that should have led to service pattern changes on the bus network. These have not happened.

6 Discussion conclusion and recommendations

- 6.1. London TravelWatch's year of the bus has helped maintain bus services in London, albeit at higher fare levels. Bus stop accessibility is much higher on many of the London borough's agendas. However there continues to be less emphasis on planning for medium to long term improvements to the bus network.

7 Equalities and inclusion implications

- 7.1. London's bus service is the only passenger transport network that has the potential to be accessible to all 24/7 and covers the whole of London. It is disproportionately used by target equality groups.

8 Legal powers

- 8.1. 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 the Committee 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).

9 Financial implications

- 9.1. There are no financial implications arising from this report.