

London Councils' Transport and Environment Committee

Strategy for Door-to-Door Transport in London Item No: 6

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Summary

London Councils commissioned consultants (eo consulting and peopletoo) to devise a collaborative strategy to improve co-operation between Door to Door transport options across the Capital. It is hoped that this would improve transport services for people who find it too difficult to use mainstream public transport.

The aim of the strategy is to improve service delivery and cost efficiencies in transport services between agencies and across London. It is intended that this will build upon the current services provided by statutory authorities and other transport providers. This report summarises the key points of the full consultants report, and follows on from the Door to Door transport – Future Strategy report agreed by TEC on 15 October 2009.

Recommendations

The committee is recommended to:

- Note that the work carried out, so far, has confirmed an opportunity and potential to create efficiencies and cost reductions in relation to door to door services, although it has not been possible to progress as far as making a convincing business case.
- Agree that the Project Board continues and seeks to provide specific proposals to take forward, reporting to TEC regularly
- Agree in particular that the Project Board explore the recommendations in the report relating to reforming the eligibility and assessment criteria, to create a multi service single assessment model
- Note the Department for Transport have indicated that Blue Badge funding will be re-directed to the boroughs in 2011. This supports the potential to align the eligibility and assessment criteria for Door to Door services and concessionary fares
- Note that boroughs have already begun to work collaboratively in

this area, and recognise more work is needed to ensure any measures taken are viable and inclusive to TfL, NHS and other service providers to ensure participation.

Background

1. There are a range of door-to-door services in London providing essential transport for those with special needs and/or mobility impairments. These services are both statutory and non-statutory but are essentially similar, with considerable overlapping of their customer base. Service providers are: Boroughs, Transport for London (TfL), Community Transport and the London National Health Service (NHS). The services reviewed include: Dial a Ride, Taxicard, Capital Call, Community Transport/Plusbus, Special Educational Needs (SEN), Adult Services Transport and NHS patient transport services. Each organisation currently has different eligibility criteria, entitlements, budgets and administration.
2. Boroughs' annual spend is estimated to be over £200 million, with a large proportion being spent on SEN transport. TfL spends in the region of £40 million on Dial-a-Ride, Capital Call, and also makes a financial contribution to Taxicard. The NHS spend is currently unknown, but it is accepted that they also have significant costs.
3. Members previously agreed that there is a lack of co-ordination between these services in London, leading to a potential duplication and waste in resources and a lack of efficiency in service for service users. In October 2009 TEC agreed that London Councils officers should set up a Door to Door project board and appoint a consultant to produce a Door to Door strategy for London.
4. A Project Board was established with representatives from London Councils, TfL, NHS, Borough Adult Services, Community Transport and Transport for All. The main aim of the project board is to explore the possibility of greater co-operation between various services and to establish a project to test suggested changes.
5. On 30 July 2010 consultants were appointed to develop and specify a practical pan-London strategy for the introduction of an Integrated Transport Unit (ITU). They were asked to:
 - Outline an operational framework, governance structure, financial impacts, responsibility and accountability, procurement, efficiencies of staff and vehicular provision and contractual obligations
 - Identify how organisations could provide better services using similar or reduced resources, (considering the current budgetary constraints), denote savings by reducing duplication, without having a negative impact on service users, and carry out a risk assessment to identify political/financial pitfalls
 - examine the differing methods used by member organisations for eligibility, assessment and entitlement and develop a unilateral approach to benefit users
 - Produce a methodology to allow portability between existing schemes to avoid members re-applying when they change boroughs
 - Recommend best practice guidelines for an appeals process alongside safeguards for data and records management.
 - Approach Boroughs to ascertain interest levels in participating in a pilot scheme
 - To produce a business case and a risk analysis.
6. London Councils is now in receipt of the full report and recommendations from the consultants, setting out the methodology for a Door to Door strategy. The full report is

produced as Appendix A and Appendix B. The consultants report highlights the potential benefits of a pan-London scheme but recommends starting with a small pilot organised between neighbouring boroughs and authorities.

The report

Development of the Door to Door strategy

7. Members are asked to note the recommendations of the report summarised below:

- There should be a Transport Bureau (TB) which would be a commissioning body acting as a centralised call and scheduling facility. Member organisations would remain independent and sub-contract the services from the TB. Initially the TB would be run as a pilot
- The TB would act as a 'clearing house' assigning trips appropriately. Transport would be commissioned through a framework of existing stakeholder contracts until expiry, then cross-sector contracts could be defined
- The TB should work on a sub-regional basis, allowing for local variations, knowledge and need
- Stakeholders should discuss the potential of moving to a TB model using an Administrative Approach or a Formal Agreement, governed by a Board
- A demand responsive system will need to be procured
- A stakeholder IT system interfacing would need to be scoped out; NHSmail is recommended for secure data transfer
- Dial-a-Ride, Community Transport, Plusbus and Capital Call should be reviewed including aligning eligibility
- Eligibility criteria should be established as a first step, with portability pan-London. The initial focus for establishing eligibility should begin with Taxicard/Capital Call
- Assessments should be multi-service and holistic. Existing assessment staff could be seconded into the TB
- It is recommended that a formal appeals process and Case Review process is put in place
- There should be no temporary membership until the Government decides to implement new proposals as part of the Blue Badge scheme
- Pump Prime funding will need to be obtained for the set-up costs. It is suggested this could be obtained from the Department of Transport, London European Partnerships for Transport (LEPT), TfL or an 'Invest to Save' model
- Individual travel budgets and 'virtual' travel budgets are not recommended until the service delivery improvements are in place
- A Communication Strategy with its own ring-fenced budget is suggested
- Distribution of the TfL Taxicard budget should be reviewed
- The consultants identified that Taxicard should remain a premium stand alone service.
- Several boroughs in London have already taken positive steps to procure services collectively. The consultants identified two joint borough initiatives; the West London Alliance and East London Solutions.

The Business Case

8. The consultants were also asked to produce a business case in relation to the TB proposal. Their report suggests the core function of the TB will deliver financial and non-financial benefits. This is because there would be a reduction in running costs; less dead mileage; increased efficiency; increased revenue; better use of drivers and vehicles; more efficient response for customers by calling one centralised telephone number; joint commissioning; combined back office and data functionality; pooled resources; trained seconded staff, single assessments; consistent, transparent and fairer application criteria

The report notes that the benefits will be different for each stakeholder. Estimated savings are denoted on page 23 of the report. However there are a number of optimistic assumptions in this report as to the level of potential savings whilst at the same time the report does not full address the capital and other costs which would needed to set up and run such a TB. It also excludes:

- Fleet maintenance
- The potential reconfiguration of operational transport services across London
- Consideration of emergency transport
- Mainstream school transport

9. It is suggested that as it currently stands there is insufficient evidence to recommend moving to a TB model even on a pilot basis.

The constraints

10. Members are asked to note the constraints summarised below:

- A project involving critical stakeholders faces the challenge of achieving common ground and decision making to keep the project on track. The most likely way to achieve some success would be for like-minded stakeholders establish a sub-regional TB
- The governance structures across the organisations with differing Boards and Cabinets to report to
- The Government's October 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review resulting in significant cuts to Local Government funding
- Individual borough political control
- The proposal to move away from the PCT model giving more responsibility for patient care to the GP
- Obtaining funding for set up and running costs

Conclusion

11. The consultants report identified a disparate system of service provision with local variations and the overlapping of utility from a user/service provider perspective. This includes back office support services and systems. To start organising the resources it is recommended that consideration should be given to establishing sub-regional Integrated Transport Units. These might be based on borough groupings although other organisations may work in geographic boundaries, which must be factored into any proposed structure.
12. Boroughs and member authorities have expressed an interest in working collaboratively to introduce cost efficiencies and to deliver an improved service for users. There is scope to undertake a pilot built on these proposals. These could involve borough groups or an alignment of services on a smaller scale (two boroughs). Other boroughs or providers could then join when their existing procurement contracts allow. The consultants believe this gradual development should initially be adopted because it would be less disruptive to services, allowing organic growth. However, it is recognised that this may not provide the major evolutionary change to the provision of services that all the participating bodies had hoped for.
13. For this to be a success it is essential that there is ongoing buy-in from all the organisations delivering these services.. The consultants reported that it proved too difficult and it had been disappointingly frustrating when trying to obtain key data from member organisations. For this reason and given the potential large scale of the project, further in-depth work will require a strong endorsement from member organisations to ensure the indicative efficiencies and benefits set out in the report can be met. Alongside

this commitment from boroughs, TfL and the NHS, key stakeholders engagement in this project is vital to the provision of a truly effective Door to Door strategy for London.

14. At the centre of any changes, is the impact this will have on the customers who are the users of the services. Among their concerns, those scheme users consulted expressed confusion when dealing with the current system namely the required level of eligibility, application and assessment processes. These issues could be remedied by using an agreed initial 'passport' method which is explained in the report. This is one of a number of benefits that could have wider implications for not just those using these services but for those supporting the customers.
15. There are clearly opportunities to make costs savings by more effective procurement of door to door services and to have a more effective consistent approach to assessment. However whilst there may be significant savings in following the Transport Hub model, the cost and scale of change needed mean there are considerable risks and the promised savings may be difficult to deliver. There is also the danger that a further layer of bureaucracy may be created which could eat up some of the savings and make it less user friendly. The major changes in NHS organisation also mean it will be challenging to integrate with local authority services in the immediate future. It is therefore suggested that the focus should be on those services which local authorities control themselves as this will deliver some benefits immediately and then built out from this to see if it is possible to have some integration with Dial a Ride or Community Transport services.. In view of this it is recommended that further work focuses on two areas:
 - Encouraging more effective procurement of door to door services both across departments within authorities and with sub regional groupings of authorities
 - Developing a more consistent approach to assessment for access to door to door transport
16. It is suggested that this is done by continuing with the project board

Financial Implications for London Councils

There are no financial implications for London Councils

Legal Implications for London Councils

There are no legal implications for London Councils

Equalities Implications for London Councils

The Door to Door scheme covered in this report provides services to a significant section of vulnerable and disabled people in London. It is important that any proposals for change are considered with their needs in mind and that they are fully consulted at every stage.

Appendices

Appendix A: eo consulting report: Developing the Door to Door strategy for London
Appendix B: eo consulting report: Developing the Door to Door strategy for London; Business Case

Background Papers

The previous TEC papers can be found by following this link: [Door to Door transport - Future strategy](#)