
Secretariat memorandum

Author : Bryan Davey

Agenda item 6
LTW 331
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TfL complaints

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To provide members with information relating to issues relating to complaint handling at Transport for London.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the report is received for information.

3 Introduction

- 3.1 Over the last two to three years, Transport for London have been engaged in a Customer Service Improvement Programme (CSIP) intended to improve the performance, efficiency and cross-modal alignment of TfL's customer service. The aim of the programme was to provide a single view of TfL's Customer Service Centres by implementing common technology with the aim of enabling customer queries and complaints to be handled more efficiently and to a higher quality.
- 3.2 In January this year, Vernon Everitt, Managing Director of Marketing and Communications at Transport for London attended the meeting of the Casework Committee where concerns about the length of response times to appeal cases; the lack of reference numbers on complaints logged on the TfL website and the proposed programme of casework audits were raised.
- 3.3 Subsequent to that meeting, Beverley Hall, Head of Communications for Surface Transport at TfL attended the meeting of Consumer Affairs in July. Several points were raised, covering TfL website's handling of bus complaints; the speed of responses (with particular reference to appeals lodged by London TravelWatch); CCTV evidence; the early termination of bus services; bus stop stopping rules; the use of an 0845-number, the demographic of complainants and the possibility of London TravelWatch carrying out a complaints handling audit of London Buses.
- 3.4 At that meeting, she expressed concern that a casework audit of London Buses by London TravelWatch would duplicate a number of other audits carried out and that there could be practical difficulties with moving from an 0845 number to a local 020 number.
- 3.5 Ms Hall offered to report back to members on these issues in due course. A further meeting has been arranged to discuss some of these issues on 6th November and an update on progress will be given at the Board meeting.

4 Response Times

- 4.1 As can be seen from the graph below, London TravelWatch’s historic data shows that taken as a whole Transport for London’s response times have consistently been poorer than the National Rail operators. The basis for this data is the time it takes from sending a referral to the operator to receiving a response. It excludes further referrals to the operator on the same issue if we consider that our concerns have not been fully addressed.
- 4.2 We recognise that the delay in responding will not always be due to Transport for London itself and may in part be due to delays in responses by contractors or bus operators. For instance, in investigating a case, London Buses may have to involve a bus garage or await a staff interview for instance. Nevertheless, we are keen to examine ways in which timescales for responses can be reduced.

Figure 1: A comparison between National Rail and Transport for London response times

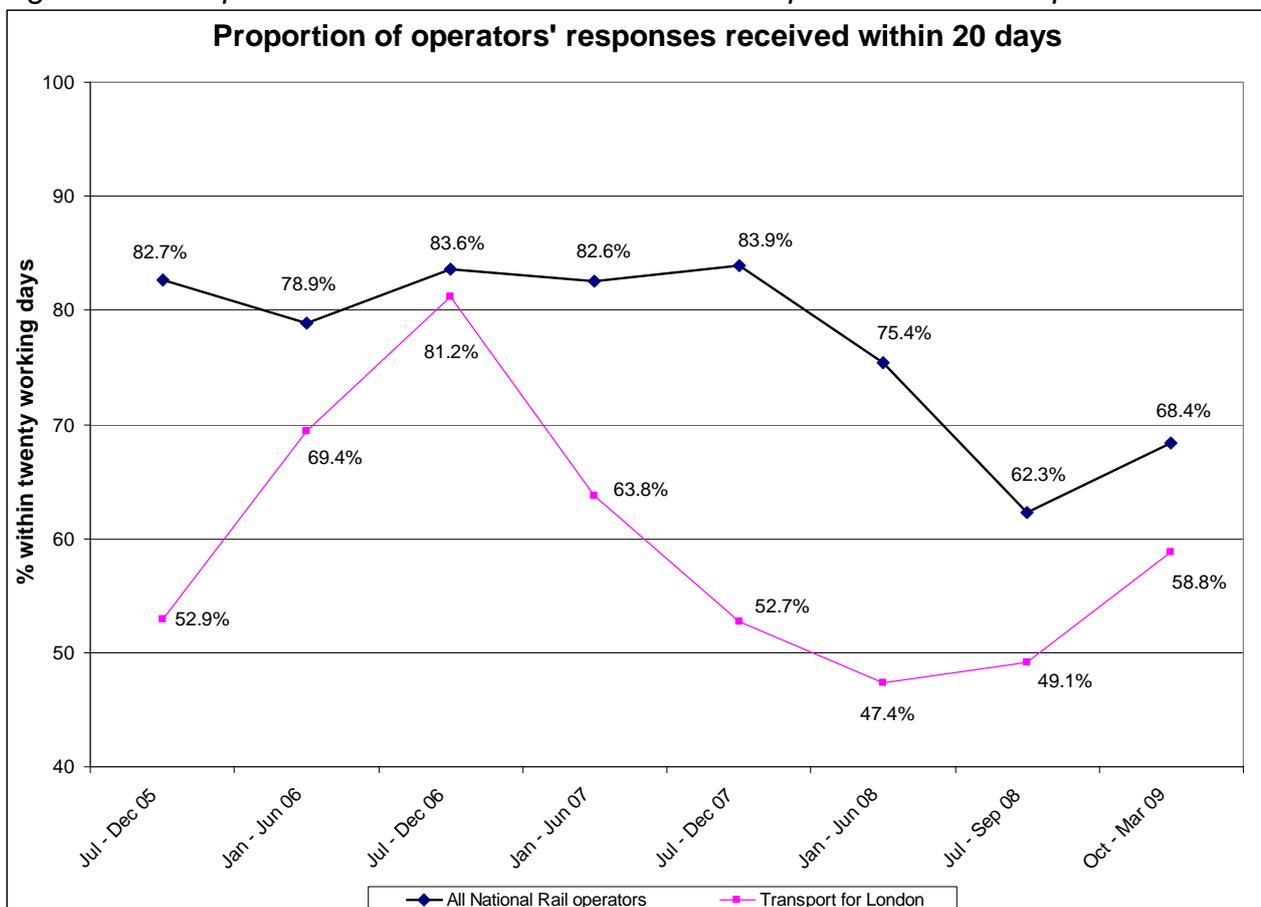


Figure 2: Operators' Response times (October 2008 to March 2009)

Operator	Number of appeal cases	Average response time in number of working days
TfL London Buses	60	25.3
TfL London Underground	34	26.5
TfL Roads & Streets	18	27.4
TfL Dial-a-Ride	5	29.8
TfL Oyster	46	18.4
TfL Other (inc DLR, Taxicard)	12	12.1

5 Web Complaints

- 5.1 Concerns have been expressed by members that when they logged complaints on line they had at times received no response or acknowledgement.

Although a reference number was received, the complainant was not provided with a copy of the complaint or subject line in their response, this meant that it was difficult for them to follow-up their complaints. Due to the size of the text boxes, it is also not possible to print out the web form.

- 5.2 When we raised this issue with London Buses, they informed us that to provide this information would require a change to their software and that there are currently insufficient funds to do this. As Transport for London is encouraging members of the public to log their complaints by web form rather than email, we consider that this is a facility which should be provided. It is noted that such a facility is increasingly provided by Customer Relationship Management systems and that many councils currently provide this for their complaints.

6 Equalities and inclusion implications

- 6.1 The report includes a request to London Buses for more information on the types of passengers who complain to them about bus services, which we hope will assist us in our own analysis of the representativeness of complainants as this is one of our business plan targets.

7 Legal powers and financial implications

- 7.1 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 it to be desirable, to make representations with respect to – any matter affecting the services and facilities provided by Transport for London which relate to transport (other than freight) and which have been the subject of representations made to it by or on behalf of users of those services and facilities. Section 252A of the same Act (as amended by Schedule 6 of the Railways Act 2005) places a similar duty upon it in respect of representations received from users or potential users of railway passenger services provided wholly or partly within the London railway area.

8 Financial implications

- 8.1 This report does not give rise to any financial implications for London TravelWatch.