

Our Ref:
Your Ref:

30 September 2008

Peter Bradley
Head of Stakeholder Engagement
Surface Transport Communications
Transport for London
11th Floor, Zone B2, Palaestra
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Dear Peter,

Routes 38, 507 and 521

Thank you for your invitation to comment on the various options you put forward for changes to the above services.

Because of the major policy implications of the proposed changes these were considered by our Board on the 23rd September 2008.

The Board has asked me to convey to you that, on the basis of the information we have been given:-

1. London TravelWatch believes that there are overwhelming advantages in terms of accessibility, manoeuvrability in limited roadspace, loading and dwell times at stops, and economies of operation to the use of articulated buses on routes with high volumes of passengers. In particular these are very suitable for use on routes which serve main line railway termini where large volumes of passengers often arrive at stops in very short spaces of time from arriving rail services. (This is the case for all routes except for route 207). In addition the layout of the vehicles currently used is much more favourable to those passengers encumbered with luggage, shopping trolleys, pushchairs or who have mobility impairments, than conventional single or double deck vehicles.
2. London TravelWatch is concerned that the costs incurred by using conventional buses on service 38, 507 and 521 may be significantly higher, than using articulated vehicles, compared to the potential generation of additional revenue, and that this would deplete the funds available to Transport for London (TfL) for other purposes (particularly investment), and would not represent good value for money. London TravelWatch has estimated (using a figure previously not disputed by TfL) that the additional costs on these routes alone may be in the region of £12-£13million pounds per annum.
3. London TravelWatch believes that, when considering tenders for routes currently operated by articulated vehicles, TfL should choose the option offering best value for money that is consistent with providing full accessibility, fitness for purpose and minimised environmental impact.

4. London TravelWatch would welcome the introduction of weekend journeys on route 507 as this serves residential areas of Westminster otherwise not served by bus on these days.
5. London TravelWatch welcomes the proposal to increase the frequency of night route N38.
6. London TravelWatch would ask TfL to undertake (and publish) attitudinal research into the preferences of users (and other stakeholders) of routes 38, 507 and 521 regarding vehicle type and design before committing itself to any change in the type of vehicle used.
7. London TravelWatch is also concerned about the potential impact of increased frequencies using conventional (12 metre) single deck vehicles on highly trafficked routes on other road users through reduced road capacity, and congestion at bus stops.
8. Members also noted that route 38 serves an area of Hackney and Islington unserved by the tube network where there is high reliance on buses to get to central London, and where when route 38 was previously operated by double deck vehicles at peak times it was often the case that passengers could not board the first vehicle arriving at a stop. Since the introduction of articulated buses in most cases it is believed that this situation no longer occurs. In addition the fact that articulated buses are single deck has addressed issues such as the elderly being unable to use the upper deck and some perceived personal security issues relating to the use of the upper deck.
9. Members noted that of the feedback from individual passengers from various sources the majority seemed to favour the use of articulated vehicles, and that when previously patronage data had been made available on the use of individual services this showed that following the introduction of articulated vehicles usage had increased substantially, which would indicate the attractiveness of this type of vehicle. It would be helpful if Transport for London could reconsider its position regarding the publishing of patronage data for individual routes in the interests of open government and transparency.

I attach a copy of the paper which went to our Board meeting on this subject for your information.

If you have any queries on this response please do not hesitate to contact me at the address overleaf.

Yours sincerely

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