

London TravelWatch Performance Report to 31.3.15

1 Introduction

- 1.1. This report sets out details of London TravelWatch's performance over the past year and shows the financial position as at 31 March 2015. It confirms how London TravelWatch has met its key business plan objectives and the outcomes it has achieved for transport users as a result of its work.
- 1.2. The report summarises the volume and type of casework activity handled by London TravelWatch during the period and includes a short overview of the main issues raised by the public. It also provides a high-level summary of performance against the GLA's own targets for corporate health. This is shown in part 2 of the Annex.

2 Key areas of achievement

- 2.1. We had a very successful year and achieved some notable outcomes for passengers and transport users.
 - We stood up for rail passengers affected by persistent delays and disruption, challenging the industry to improve and making the case for better compensation arrangements for commuters using the National Rail network.
 - We consulted London Underground passengers to ensure their needs were properly taken into account when ticket offices were closed. We received responses from over 2,000 passengers which gave us a valuable insight into the problems some people have with using ticket machines and concerns about how the closures would affect their local stations. We will closely monitor the impact of the changes and are well-placed to articulate the views of passengers should problems arise.
 - We developed an online community to help give bus passengers a voice and continued to monitor the reliability of bus services, highlighting the worst performing routes and lobbying Transport for London (TfL) to address the underlying causes.
 - Our report on how to improve public transport access to London's five major airports was well-received by politicians (including the Mayor of London) and the industry and several of our recommendations are already being addressed.
 - We published our research into what passengers think of value for money on London Overground services. TfL used our findings to inform the specification for the new concession in 2016 and have invited us to provide commentary on the passenger-facing elements of the tender submissions when they are received.

- 2.2. We continued to work closely with the London Assembly, seeking input from a range of Assembly Members as we prepared our business plan, aligning our workplans with the Transport Committee and following up their scrutinies as appropriate.

3 Progress against the business plan objectives for 2014-15

- 3.1. This section highlights progress against London TravelWatch's key business plan objectives for 2014-15, demonstrating the impact our work has had and explaining areas of slippage.
- 3.2. During the year, we switched our business plan priorities to take on unexpected but important work in response to:
- TfL's proposal to close all their London Underground ticket offices,
 - comments about public transport access to Gatwick and Heathrow airports made in the Davies Commission interim report and
 - the persistent poor performance of Thameslink, Southern and Southeastern rail services.
- 3.3. We pressed for more involvement in DfT rail franchises than in previous years and have now been invited to comment on these at an earlier stage. This will provide an important opportunity to try and ensure that the interests of commuters travelling in and around London are properly represented.
- 3.4. This additional unplanned work meant our work on interchanges, transport affordability and small stations did not progress as much as we had planned. However, we will shortly be publishing our report on interchanges, which a number of transport providers are keen to incorporate in their work, and the other two projects are underway.

Rail services

- 3.5. We have been very active in challenging the industry on behalf of the passengers who continue to suffer as a result of the poor performance of rail services in the second half of the year, particularly on services in south and south east London. We have done this through our regular meetings with train operators, Network Rail, the Department for Transport (DfT) and the Office of Rail and Road (ORR). We have been invited to sit on the Brighton Main Line improvement Board of the Thameslink – Network Rail alliance and have participated in ministerial 'summits' with parliamentarians. We have also met with various south London MPs and some stakeholder liaison groups to discuss their concerns.
- 3.6. These problems have highlighted the fact that commuters are rarely entitled to compensation from the train companies as the current 'Delay Repay' arrangements only apply for delays of more than 30 minutes. In response to this we started a campaign to get the compensation arrangements changed to 15 minutes which would bring National Rail into line with London Underground. We have been successful in getting a consensus to the principle that change is needed and will continue to push for this to happen.
- 3.7. The issues for passengers arising from the rebuilding of London Bridge Station and the Thameslink works has also been a key area of work for us. We continue to

participate in the multi-agency Travel Demand Management Board established to coordinate communications to passengers who need to change their travel plans as a result of the rebuilding. Following our original suggestion, the remit of this has been extended to give a London-wide senior-level scrutiny of plans to deal with the impact of major station rebuild projects and other major events. Crucially it will also consider how incidents of unplanned service disruption have been dealt with and how lessons learnt should be applied.

- 3.8. We fed into the ORR's review of the impact of overrunning engineering works in the New Year at Kings Cross and Paddington, pointing out that it is essential that the industry learns lessons because such works will be a feature of the rail network in London for many years to come.
- 3.9. We provided input to the DfT's East Anglia franchise consultation to ensure that the needs of London passengers were not overlooked and hosted a consultation meeting with the DfT to enable engagement with London boroughs, user groups and politicians as part of the process.

Paying for travel

- 3.10. London TravelWatch has long been encouraging the industry to better publicise Gold Cards and their benefits, something which has arisen in our research. In January, TfL launched a webpage which is dedicated to letting customers know about the discounts (altered from this date in scope and validity) that they can take advantage of and how to access them. In addition, in December they sent two emails out to those on their Oyster database. The first was to 39,000 people who have Annual Travelcards with the discount activated on their Oyster card to tell them of the changes to the scheme in the coming calendar year. The second was to 50,000 customers that had not activated the discount but were entitled to. Posters went up on the National Rail network at the end of 2014.
- 3.11. We continued to make the case for extending the Oyster pay as you go/contactless payment scheme, particularly for passengers travelling to Gatwick Airport station, more than 6,000 a year of whom receive penalty fare notices because they have not realised that their Oyster card was not valid at Gatwick.
- 3.12. We welcomed the DfT's recent consultation on changes to penalty fare regimes which incorporated many of the features that have been of concern to us and the passengers who approach us on the subject.

Bus, cycling and surface transport in London

- 3.13. We continue to raise concerns about the impact of road works on the reliability of bus services, particularly in inner and central London.
- 3.14. In order to give bus passengers more of a voice we launched our online bus users' community. London's buses make more than 2.4 billion passenger journeys a year, twice as many every day than on the London Underground. This initiative seeks to ensure that, in light of the amount of redevelopment projects affecting the road network, bus users are informed about the issues affecting their particular bus services and, especially, that they are given the opportunity to participate in consultation about how the service evolves. Over 200 people have already joined and the numbers are gradually building up.

- 3.15. We remain concerned about the complexity of some of the cycle scheme proposals and their impact on other users. However, we are engaging positively with the plans for cycle superhighways and particularly contribute to TfL's junction design review group.
- 3.16. Pedestrians, particularly those who are partially-sighted or with mobility difficulties, find it hard to navigate streets which are cluttered up by illegal advertising boards. Following the publication of our 'Inclusive Streets' report last year, we have been calling for highways authorities to follow the example of the few London boroughs who take seriously their legal duty to keep their pavements clear. In January and February respectively, the City of London and TfL set out how they intended to step up their enforcement against illegal pavement obstructions, particularly advertising boards, on London's streets.
- 3.17. We organised a seminar on highways obstructions in June 2015 which was attended by several local authorities to share best practice on highways obstructions. The seminar was introduced by Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson who supports the work we are doing in this area.

Accessibility

- 3.18. TfL's original plans to upgrade Bank Underground station did not include step-free access to the Central line. We formally objected to the plans submitted to the Public Inquiry, making it clear that we would only withdraw our objection if the plans were amended to include step-free access to the Central Line. We received written confirmation in February that TfL will provide step-free access to the Central Line at Bank station, subject to agreement with London Fire Brigade regarding emergency escape routes, and subject to a study on the costs and benefits being positive.
- 3.19. Throughout the year, we continued to highlight particular concerns about the need for full accessibility at stations and have welcomed a further commitment by the DfT for 'Access for All' improvements at a number of stations. This included Alexandra Palace about which we had previously written to the Minister responsible.

Safety

- 3.20. Having worked steadily behind the scenes to highlight the problems posed to passengers by the very large stepping gaps between the train and the platform interface at many of London's stations, we were pleased that a cross-industry group has now been established to take forward this and a number of related issues. Our Safety Adviser, who works jointly for us and Transport Focus, has joined the Platform Train Interface Strategy Implementation Group set up by the Rail Safety and Standards Board to represent the interests of passengers.

Communications and public engagement

- 3.21. Over the last year, London TravelWatch has targeted its communications activity to achieve a balance between aiming to increase its profile and extending its influence. This has allowed the organisation to concentrate its efforts on areas where it can make a difference by maximising its impact and influence on behalf of transport users. We have used evidence from our research and casework to influence debate and our targeted work with the media has also ensured that our research continues to be the subject of discussion in both print and broadcast media.

- 3.22. We continued to open our Board and committee meetings to the public. We discussed current issues in transport, explored problems and looked at future services at our meetings. Topics this year included bus performance, TfL's future tube programme and cycling highways schemes, while the public were also able to put their questions to London's Transport Commissioner, Peter Hendy, via traditional and social media when he attended October's Board meeting.
- 3.23. To help make our work accessible we continued to 'live tweet' from our public meetings. Issues discussed included London Underground's proposed changes to ticket offices, issues facing passengers within the London rail area but outside the TfL boundaries, social needs transport and the performance of the Thameslink, Southern and Southeastern services.
- 3.24. We use opportunities provided by meeting senior civil servants and politicians to raise concerns, promote successes and highlight the particular ways in which the experience of using public transport in London differs from the rest of the UK.
- 3.25. We recently completed the second phase of our project to upgrade the London TravelWatch website. This means that the site now has a responsive design which allows it to be viewed in a suitable format on virtually any device or web browser, including tablets and smartphones. This will make it much easier for those accessing the website 'on the go' to find what they want and makes people more likely to spend longer on the site. The most popular webpages throughout the last quarter were our money saving tips, frequently asked questions about using Oyster and 'where to send your complaint'.

4 Casework

- 4.1. During 2014-2015 our casework team dealt with almost 6,000 written and telephone 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 not already received an adequate response. The vast majority of our casework concerned service performance including delays and early departure, penalty fares, lack of available information at point of travel and complaint handling by rail operators.
- 4.2. We investigated 1,107 appeals (compared to 1,100 in 2013-2014) from members of the public travelling in London and the surrounding areas. We keep detailed management records which confirm that our performance continues to meet targets. This is despite the fact that the nature of complaints has changed and a sizeable and growing percentage of cases involve more than one interaction with the complainant so are more difficult to resolve.
- 4.3. The highest number of appeals we received was regarding issues surrounding fares such as penalty fares and cost. The second highest number were from passengers who were unhappy about the way their original complaint had been dealt with by the operator.
- 4.4. Of those complaints which required further investigation, 66% related to National Rail, 11% related to buses, 6% related to London Underground, 7% to Oyster and 10% to other issues. However a large proportion of journeys in and around London

are multi-modal and the categories are not necessarily exclusive and some appeals need us to negotiate with more than one transport operator.

5 Corporate health

- 5.1. The organisation currently has a full-time equivalent staffing establishment of 15.7 and a headcount of 20. During the year we took on our first apprentice who is studying for an NVQ in business administration.
- 5.2. Supporting and investing in the development of our staff remains a priority. We continue to use the Investors in People framework to guide organisational development. At the beginning of the year we became accredited as a London Living Wage Employer and also joined the Government's cycle to work scheme.
- 5.3. Alongside several other agencies with a London-wide remit, in November 2014, we completed a move to new offices in the London Fire Brigade's headquarter building. This allowed us to enter into a shared services agreement with the London Pensions Fund Authority to provide us with accountancy services.
- 5.4. The average number of working days lost to sickness absence during 2014/15 was 4.7 which is an improvement on the previous year and below the GLA target of 6 days. The figures included the impact of a long term sickness case as well as of the flu-related virus which affected several staff in the winter.
- 5.5. During the year we agreed and implemented a transparency policy.

6 Financial outturn

- 6.1. Part 1 of the Annex gives details of expenditure against budget as at the end of March 2015. There is an overspend of £2k against the budget for the 2014/15 year.
- 6.2. Accommodation costs are showing an overspend of £26k. This is due to the costs associated with our move from the Dexter House premises to Union Street.
- 6.3. There was a £29k underspend against the supplies and services staff budget which offsets the above as many of the professional fees that were budgeted for were actually incurred as a result of the accommodation move. In addition, limited research costs were incurred in the year due to the slippage of our work programme. The Board has earmarked £11,000 to complete research work which is underway.
- 6.4. Last year the Board agreed to earmark £40,000 of the reserves to fund improvements to IT infrastructure and professional fees in respect of the office move in 2014-15. These costs have now been incurred with the upgraded casework IT system having been capitalised.

Risk areas

- 6.5. With a smaller staff complement, the principal risk for the future is that an unexpected and unavoidable rise in workload, which might be required to fulfil our statutory objectives, could not be accommodated without extra expenditure and without draining the reserves to an unacceptable level.

- 6.6. Whilst current reserves remain similar to the previous year the cash-backed element of these has been severely reduced as a result of the capital expenditure associated with the accommodation move and the new casework IT system.

Janet Cooke
Chief Executive,
London TravelWatch
30 June 2015

Annex: Performance information

1. Financial performance

The financial position as at the end of March 2015 is summarised below:

	Original Budget (Year to date)	Revised Budget (Year to date)	Actual Spend/ Income to date	Variance against revised budget (Year to date)
	£	£	£	£
REVENUE EXPENDITURE				
Chair, Members & Staff Costs	799,000	799,000	803,051	(4,051)
Accommodation costs	113,900	113,900	139,865	(25,965)
Supplies & Services	122,100	122,100	92,260	29,840
Depreciation	21,400	21,400	27,530	(6,130)
Total Revenue Expenditure	1,056,400	1,056,400	1,062,706	(6,306)
Total Capital & Revenue Expenditure	1,056,400	1,056,400	1,062,706	(6,306)
INCOME				
Greater London Authority Funding	1,056,000	1,056,000	1,056,000	0
Passenger Focus	400	400	4,707	4,307
Bank Interest Receivable	0	0	70	70
Other income	0	0	5	5
Total Income	1,056,400	1,056,400	1,060,782	4,382
Revenue surplus transfer to general reserve			(1,924)	(1,924)

Note: Commentary relating to London TravelWatch's financial performance is set out in section 6 of the preceding report.

2. Corporate health

The following relates to London TravelWatch's performance against the GLA's own corporate health performance indicators.

PI no.	Indicator	Performance 2012/13	Performance 2013/14	Performance 2014/15	GLA Target	Variance
1	The number of working days /shifts lost to sickness absence per staff member	3.6	7.1	4.7	6	1.3
2	% of employees that are women	50%	45%	45%	52%	-7
3	% of employees from ethnic minority backgrounds	30%	25%	25%	29%	-4
4	% of employees declaring that they meet the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 definition and /or have declared themselves disabled.	5%	10%	10%	13%	-3