

Passenger issues in North West Surrey and the Thames Valley

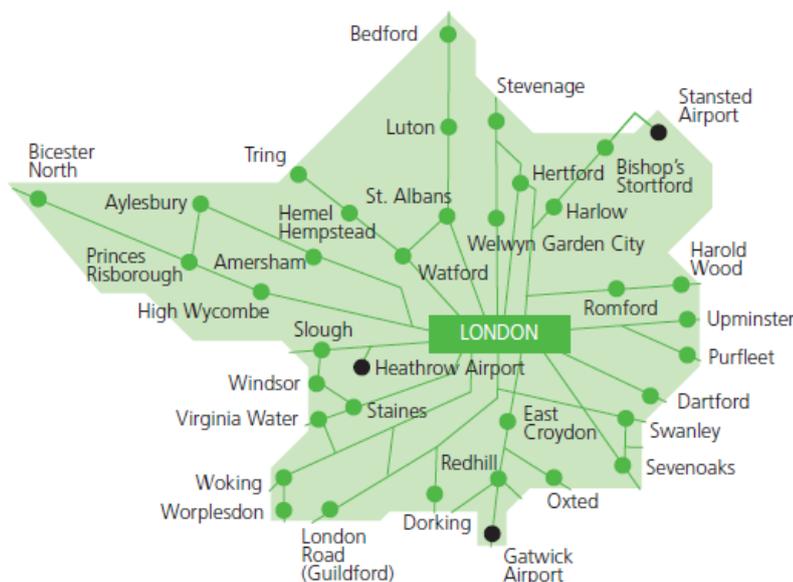
What is London TravelWatch?

London TravelWatch is the official watchdog for London’s travelling public. The current organisation, formally known as the London Transport Users Committee, was established alongside the London Assembly by the 1999 GLA Act.

We aim to secure a better journey experience for everyone travelling in and around London and are the only statutory transport user body to be completely multi-modal. We are an appeals body for passengers unhappy with how the industry has dealt with their complaint. We are also a statutory consultee and carry out research and investigation on behalf of passengers.

We press for a better deal for travellers in and around London, covering a wide range of issues, responding to formal and informal consultations, using primary and secondary data to support our evidence based case, acting as a critical friend to operators and working in partnership with other public interest bodies where appropriate. We regularly meet and seek to influence the relevant parts of the transport industry on all issues which affect the travelling public including timetables, routes, frequencies, fares, ticketing, station standards, access, vehicles, safety, personal security and the information provided both to passengers and to users of London’s principal roads. We also work with a wide range of public interest organisations, user groups and research bodies to ensure that we remain aware of the experiences and concerns of the travelling public.

We represent 13 million people who make 3.5 billion journeys a year in and around London on all TfL (Transport for London) modes and in the London Railway Area, which is shown in the map below.



(Crossrail only – Reading to Shenfield)

Rail services

1) The two major rail routes serving the North West Surrey and Thames Valley area have experienced massive growth in usage and crowding at peak times in recent years: what is being done to deal with these issues?

- South West Trains route into Waterloo

A programme of train lengthening to 10 or 12 cars is underway. This requires platform lengthening at many stations and also the redesign of Waterloo station. More services are also proposed especially at peak times, including providing for the growth in contra-peak travel from the London area to employment sites at locations such as Bedfont Lakes or businesses associated with Heathrow Airport or higher education such as the Royal Holloway College at Egham. The refranchising of the South West Trains franchise currently underway will also provide other opportunities to improve services.

- Great Western Main Line route into Paddington

There are two projects operating in parallel: the electrification of the route through to Bristol, South Wales and Oxford; and the replacement of Heathrow Connect and local Great Western Railway services with the Crossrail Elizabeth Line from 2019. These in combination will give a substantive increase in capacity.

2) How will services be affected by Crossrail and future franchises?

The contract to operate Crossrail was awarded to the MTR Corporation. It is already running as TfL Rail and will progressively take on responsibility for Heathrow Connect and some local Great Western Railway services from 2018 onwards. Great Western services will be refranchised from March 2019, with consultation on the specification from mid 2017 onwards, giving an opportunity to influence how these services are provided. The Great Western franchise will continue to include the Henley, Marlow and Windsor & Eton Central branch lines even though these will effectively be feeder services to the Elizabeth Line.

Rail fares and tickets

1) Why is there such a big disparity between rail fares and tickets inside the London Travelcard area and outside it? For example:

- **A monthly ticket to London terminals from Feltham or Hampton Court costs £174.40**
- **A monthly ticket from Staines to London terminals costs £238.50**
- **A monthly ticket from Slough to London terminals costs £239.40**

This is because inside the Travelcard area, fares are set London-wide by agreement of all the train operators collectively and TfL. Outside, fares and ticketing

arrangements are set in accordance with the commercial objectives of the relevant franchise operator such as South West Trains or Great Western Railway. Thus extension of Oyster/Contactless ticketing for example, would only be agreed if it were in the commercial interest of the operator or at the direction of the Department for Transport (DfT). In the past the DfT has been reluctant to sanction or encourage such extensions as they were keen to promote the introduction of their own specification ITSO smartcard. In areas such as Slough, Staines, Ashford and Sunbury, this is a cause for confusion and frustration amongst passengers as TfL operate most local bus services and so passengers are already in possession of a working smartcard.

2) Will Oyster/Contactless validity be extended when the Crossrail Elizabeth Line becomes operational?

Yes, it will be extended to all stations on the route to Reading. Fares will be set by TfL. However, TfL will not set the fares between Reading, Maidenhead and Slough to London, where agreements with the DfT require that these are set by Great Western, and must not undercut National Rail fares or create split ticketing opportunities. This means that fares from intermediate stations such as Twyford and Burnham, although set by TfL, will be influenced by the fares set by Great Western at other stations. In addition, Oyster/Contactless will not be extended to cover the branch lines from the Great Western line to Henley, Marlow and Windsor & Eton Central, which would feed into Elizabeth Line trains at Twyford, Maidenhead and Slough. These lines will continue to be part of the Great Western franchise.

Access to Heathrow and Gatwick Airports

1) Why is improved access to Heathrow and Gatwick Airports so important?

Aviation and its associated activities is a major employer in all of the districts in this area, both from Heathrow locally but also at Gatwick Airport so it is important that passengers travelling from the commuter belt to work can do so easily. In addition, figures from the Civil Aviation Authority, which were included in our report on improving public transport access to London's airports, showed that residents of this area use airports more frequently than other areas.

2) What is the current situation for people travelling to these airports by public transport?

- Surface access to Heathrow Airport directly by public transport from these localities is limited to buses, coaches, taxis and private hire vehicles.
- Rail access to Gatwick Airport is possible but requires an interchange en route at locations such as Clapham Junction, Wokingham or Guildford. The consequence of this is a very high dependence on private cars to access both airports, with resultant issues of traffic congestion, unreliable journey times and poor air quality.

3) What is being done to address this public transport deficit to Heathrow Airport?

London TravelWatch has been supportive of two infrastructure improvement schemes in the past because of the substantive benefits that they would bring to passengers:

- **Western Rail Access to Heathrow Airport**

This is planned by Network Rail. The proposed rail connection will speed up journeys, allowing passengers to travel to the airport from Reading, Twyford, Maidenhead and Slough without going into London Paddington.

- **Southern Rail Access to Heathrow Airport**

This has been the subject of a recent study by Network Rail on behalf of the Department for Transport and was discussed at our meeting in October 2015. The Southern Rail Access scheme has been the subject of several previous attempts to provide it – notably under the title Airtrack. However, this scheme was not pursued because of opposition to the increased use of level crossings by trains in the Egham, Virginia Water and Richmond areas, leading to delays for motorists.

4) Given the substantive connectivity benefits of a Southern Rail Access to Heathrow Airport could the level crossing issues be addressed?

Replacement of level crossings is a priority for Network Rail in terms of accident and risk reduction. However, replacement of these particular crossings as opposed to closure is difficult due to the high volume of use and the cost and difficulty of providing replacement bridges or tunnels, especially as the local impact could potentially be quite substantial. It would need substantial agreement with the local authorities concerned and public acceptance. Alternatives to closure might include substitution of existing train services for ones serving Heathrow Airport, but the scope for this is fairly limited, and reductions in 'barrier down time' would be very difficult to achieve given issues such as train speed, signal sighting and section length, visibility of crossings, and road traffic volume.

It would be useful to explore with the local authorities concerned what the acceptable options for dealing with this issue might be.

5) How could public transport access to Gatwick Airport be improved?

Basic improvements to rail services would include improving interchange at Clapham Junction, Guildford and Wokingham to existing services to Gatwick Airport. However, full electrification of the Reading – Wokingham – Guildford – Redhill – Gatwick Airport route would allow improvements in journey time and service frequency on this route, and connecting services.

6) What general improvements could be made to help passengers travelling to airports in the London area?

- Signage at stations where passengers change from one mode of transport to another should be simple, clearly visible and located at every point where the user has to choose which direction to take
- Clear maps showing all available public transport routes should be provided at all stations and stops as well as at public information points within the airport building. Information should be provided about all the scheduled services available. Key information about onward travel options should be provided in major foreign languages
- Passengers should be given clear advice on what to expect at airports, bus and rail stations and at other interchanges en route, including how to avoid conflict with other users particularly at peak times
- All information should be made available in other formats or languages as required
- The option to use public transport to access London's major airports should be better marketed because infrequent travellers or visitors to the capital may be unaware that it is possible to do this, or of how convenient such a journey could be for them
- Staff should be highly visible well trained, proactive in dealing with the public (particularly those unfamiliar with the journey) and able to communicate easily with passengers with special needs. They should also be able to give advice on coping with planned and unplanned disruptions to journeys to and from the airport.

Bus services

TfL has a legal duty (GLA Act 1999) to meet the needs of passengers travelling to and from the capital as well as within it. As such, there are various cross-boundary bus services operated by TfL beyond the Greater London Authority boundary. TfL and non-TfL bus services in the area can be seen on the maps included in the appendices along with a link to London TravelWatch's previous research on cross-boundary bus services.

1) Which of these services comes within the remit of London TravelWatch?

All TfL contracted services are within the remit of London TravelWatch, plus we have a duty to consider cross-boundary movements and the connectivity by bus to railway stations within the London Railway Area.

2) Why is there is a disparity between TfL contracted services and others?

TfL bus services are operated according to a TfL contract following a tender process. TfL specify the service frequencies, fares, type of bus, route etc. TfL takes

the revenue risk on the services that it provides. Typically, the county council where the bus operates will make a financial contribution towards the operational costs.

Bus services outside of London which are not contracted by TfL are operated either on a commercial basis by the bus company or are financially supported by the local authority. In addition, in this particular area, there are a number of services that have been supported either financially and/or practically by bodies such as Heathrow Airport, Royal Holloway College or the managers of business parks such as Bedfont Lakes.

Subsidy, in various forms, to ensure services are provided where they are not commercially viable is often dependent on the resources available to local authorities. The social and economic geography of an area, including features such as car availability, car parking, traffic enforcement, and the dispersal of development may mean that sustaining a bus network can be very challenging.

All of these factors have led to frequent service changes and successive business failures of both large and small operators since bus deregulation in 1986 in this area. This in turn has led to a loss of passenger confidence and decline in usage. Further change is likely with the recent announcement by Abellio Surrey of its intention to withdraw a number of commercial bus services and surrender a number of local authority contracted services from 31 December 2016 that link to places such as Heathrow Airport Terminal 5 and Kingston.

3) Will the current Buses Bill going through Parliament at present make any difference to this situation?

The Buses Bill would allow local authorities to franchise bus operations if they satisfy a number of criteria. This could allow the local authority to improve services on a more 'TfL like' basis by setting standards for passenger information, fares and ticketing and service levels. However, this would be dependent on the local authority having the resources to do this and the agreement or acquiescence of local bus operators.

Devolution of rail services to TfL

1) What are the key problems for passengers using suburban rail services in and around London which need to be addressed?

Many suburban services suffer from poor performance and customer service, poor value for money for passengers and sub standard station facilities. The fares and ticketing structure is also extremely complex.

2) How do devolved rail services differ from the predominant system of franchising used for most UK rail services? If rail services were devolved, would it mean that TfL would be running services?

The model used for existing devolved rail services differs as services are run as a TfL concession rather a conventional franchise. This means that TfL awards the concession and deals with fares policy and forward planning, taking the commercial

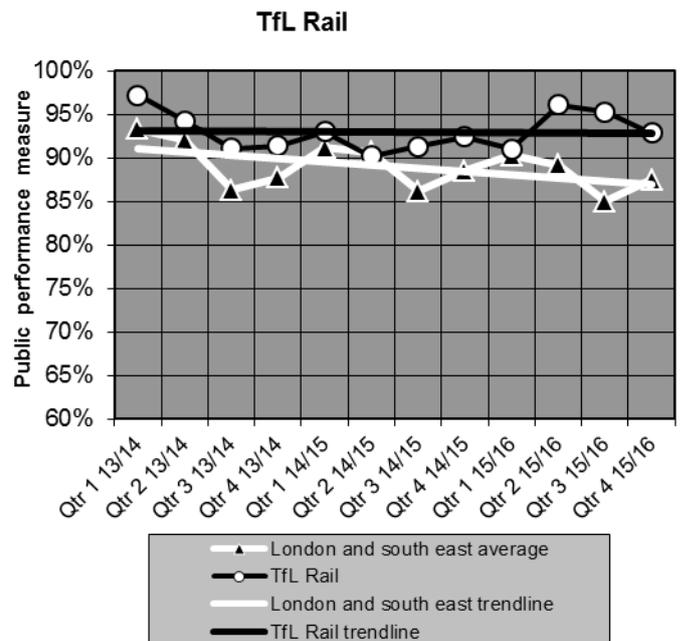
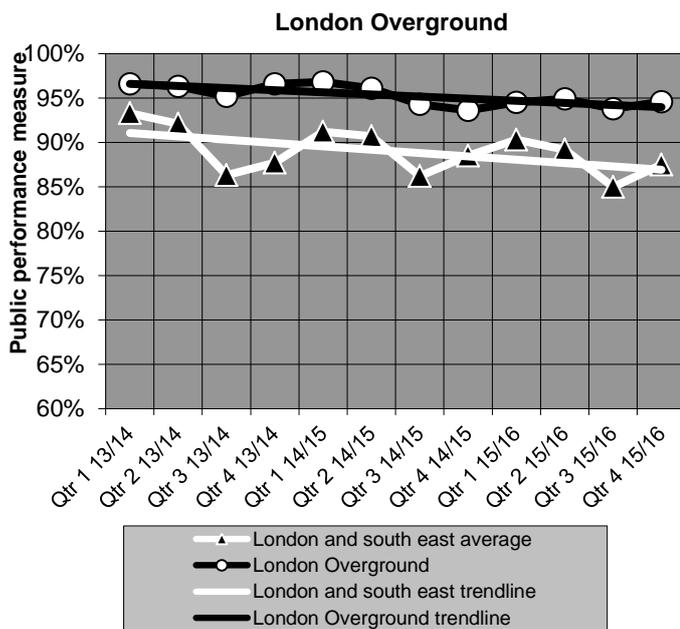
risks associated with ticketing and other revenue and incentivising the concessionaire to concentrate on the delivery and development of services.

3) How would this improve things for passengers?

The performance of London Overground as a TfL-procured service, has vastly improved since the start of the concession in 2007. It has gone from being one of the worst performing franchises (under the previous Silverlink franchise) to one of the best with very high passenger satisfaction as a result.

More recently, some commuter services out of London Liverpool Street operated by Greater Anglia have been transferred to TfL and the early signs are that service improvements have been made as a result. Passengers have benefited from more frequent services, improved customer service, decent standards for stations, enhanced ticketing facilities, additional staffing and improved information.

Those passengers needing assistance have also benefited from a turn up and go service. The graphs below show the performance of London Overground and TfL Rail services over the last two years, relative to other services in London and the south east.



4) Why would TfL give a better service?

- TfL provides incentives for the operator based on performance and customer service - TfL take the revenue risk. This ensures that the operator focuses on performance as the main variable to their income, and also has a knock-on benefit to other operators' performance

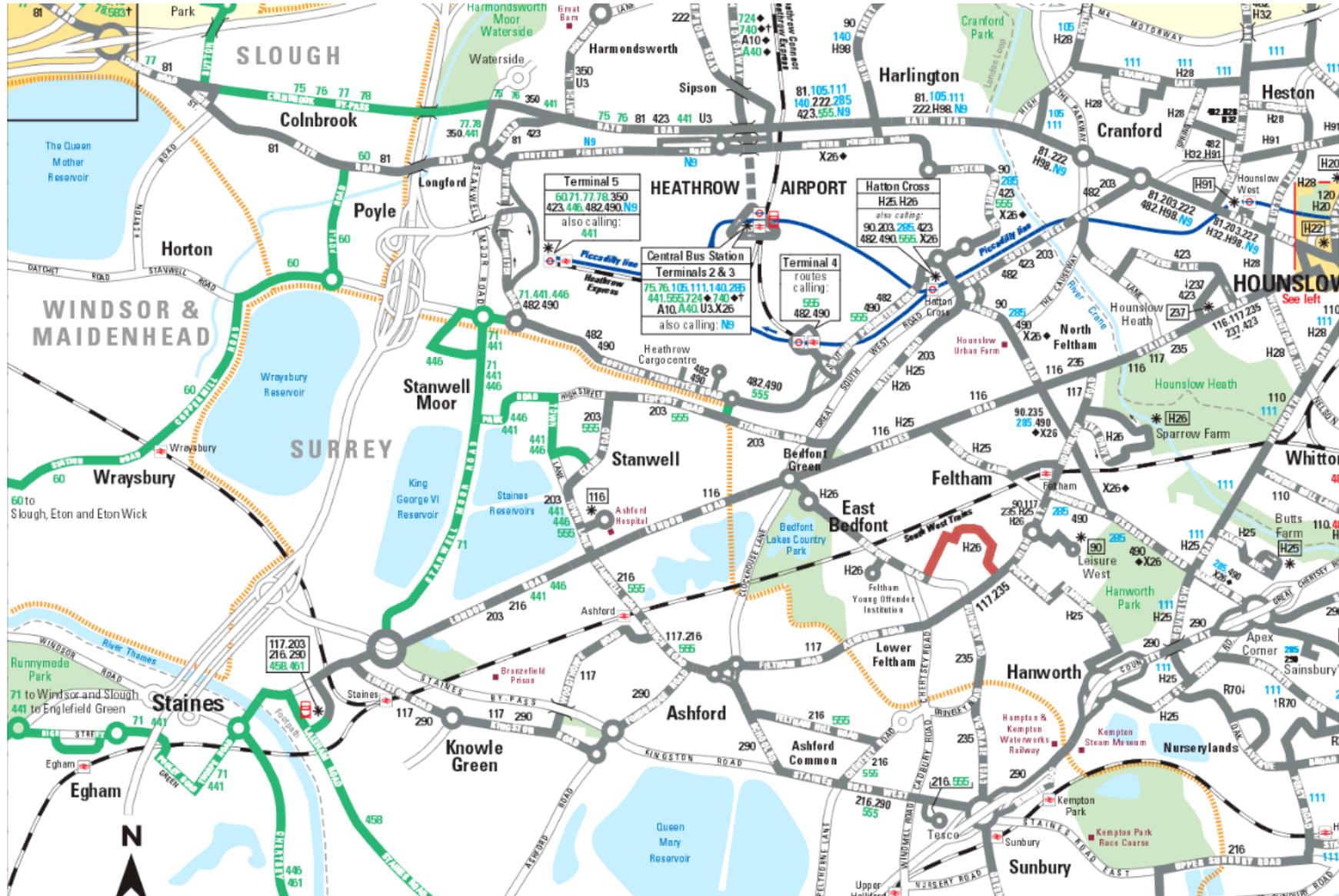
- There is closer alignment with other modes – London (and the surrounding area) is a network so TfL have a vested interest in improving the network as a whole not just a narrow part
- Concessions have stronger incentives to work with Network Rail as they, for example share some of the costs of delays to services
- TfL's concession model includes a commitment to staffing levels and minimum station standards for every station
- TfL aims for a commitment to four trains per hour – but only where Network Rail deem capacity as being available, not at the cost of other operators
- People can make Oyster/Contactless payments at all stations served
- TfL take a lead in station management where there are multiple operators, and have proven success with this at Liverpool Street and Stratford.

5) How can the Mayor and TfL ensure that the interests of passengers outside London would not be adversely affected in any new rail devolution settlement?

In 2013, London TravelWatch developed a protocol with Transport Focus (then Passenger Focus) to address this issue (see appendix 2). This recognises that London's railway network is used by people making a wide range of journeys, both locally and longer distance and TfL signed up to them. All passengers must be treated fairly, regardless of where they are travelling. Fair treatment needs to cover all the relevant areas, from how the timetable is planned and fares set, through to operational decisions about things like information dissemination during disruption.

Interestingly, the improvements London Rail achieved also had a positive effect on longer distance services using adjacent lines into Liverpool Street.

Appendix 1: TfL bus services



Appendix 2: Essential passenger safeguards to ensure successful and fair devolution of rail services

London TravelWatch is seeking these to make sure that the interests of all passengers, regardless of where they are travelling to or from, are taken account of in any agreement to devolve more responsibility for train services to the Mayor of London through TfL.

1. **Guaranteed even handedness in track access** between continuing Department for Transport franchises and any devolved concession operations so as to ensure that the needs of all passengers are catered for equitably.
2. **Guaranteed interavailability of ordinary tickets over common routes within the London travel area** irrespective of operator.
3. **A commitment to work together with other operators in providing seamless information to passengers**, especially during times of disruption and at interchanges between services provided by franchisees and the concessionaire.
4. **A commitment to an operational agreement to work together in the best interests of all passengers**, sharing resources at times of disruption, and where separate provision is not justified, to maximise efficiency.
5. **Separation of the formulae for setting fares** between franchises and concessions, to ensure that political or commercial decisions in either do not have unintended negative or anomalous consequences for the other.
6. **A commitment to regular and meaningful consultation** by all parties with London TravelWatch and Passenger Focus on all issues affecting passengers. This should be inclusive from the tender design stage by TfL through to day to day operation by the concessionaire, and should at a minimum be comparable to that currently required of train operating companies under the existing franchise arrangements and licensing regime.
7. **A commitment to regular and meaningful dialogue with passengers and user groups on issues affecting them.**
8. **A commitment to work with local authorities**, both inside and outside London, to ensure a better whole journey experience, by means of improved interchanges and through ticketing schemes with local public transport operators.
9. **A commitment to transparency of data**, on items such as delay attribution and service performance.

Appendix 3: useful links

London TravelWatch report on improving public transport access to London's airports

http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/documents/get_lob?id=3894&field=file

Network Rail schemes to improve Western Rail Access to Heathrow Airport

<http://www.networkrail.co.uk/westernraillinktoheathrow/>

Network Rail schemes to improve Southern Rail access to Heathrow Airport

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/southern-rail-access-to-heathrow-terms-of-reference-for-study>

London TravelWatch Policy Committee paper on Southern Access to Heathrow Airport

http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/documents/get_lob?id=4067&age=&field=file

TfL bus services in the area

<http://content.tfl.gov.uk/bus-route-maps/south-west-london-bus-map.pdf>

Non-TfL bus services in the area

http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/10843/Surrey_Map_Side_Web_2016.pdf

<http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/buses-and-trains/bus-timetables/staines-chertsey-and-walton-bus-timetables>

London TravelWatch research on cross-boundary bus services

http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/documents/get_lob?id=1898&field=file

Planned changes to bus services by Abellio Surrey

<http://www.abellio.co.uk/news/abellio-surrey-service-change-release/>

Buses Bill

http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/lbill/2016-2017/0058/lbill_2016-20170058_en_1.htm