

Consultations@TfL.gov.uk

2 January 2018

Dear Sir or Madam,

Have your say on the transformation of Oxford Street

London TravelWatch is the statutory body representing transport users in London. Thank you for consulting with us on these proposals for Oxford Street.

The London TravelWatch Board met on 28 November 2017 to discuss these proposals. We were grateful for the assistance of two of TfL's officers, Sam Monck and Bob Blitz.

The proposal is to close Oxford Street to bus services between Orchard Street (the extension of Baker Street) and Oxford Circus by December 2018.

London TravelWatch has no in-principle objection to the improvement of the pedestrian environment of Oxford Street.

The Board agreed there would be considerable hardship to a large number of bus passengers and wants to see TfL bring forward actions to minimise that hardship.

The issues are set out below.

- i) London's bus service is the only public transport that is fully accessible to everyone and operates 24/7 geographically across the whole of London. As such, the bus service now provides access for all, to, from and through central London. By virtue of the curtailment and diversion of bus services, following the closure of Oxford Street to buses, passengers will no longer be able to reach their destinations as easily as they can now. They will have to walk, change buses and walk, or find another route or mode. Some bus passengers will no longer travel.
- ii) Many passengers will probably have to pay a substantially higher fare. This could be more than double what they are paying now. Passengers can presently travel for a variety of fares using the bus. This ranges from free bus travel for concessionary fare payers, £1.50 for a single bus journey or hopper fare, or as part of a daily-capped bus only fare of £4.50 or weekly-capped bus only fare of £21.20 using Pay-As-You-Go. In future passengers will be able to continue to travel at these fares although they will have to change buses and walk. Switching to the Underground directly will mean a much higher fare of between £2.40 (Z1), £2.40/£2.90 (Z2) or £2.80/£3.30 (Z3). If the journey includes bus and Underground then the best fare will be a daily capped £6.60 (Z1 or Z1-Z2) or £7:70 (Z1-Z3) or part of a weekly capped £33.00 (Z1 or Z1-Z2) or £38:70 (Z1-Z3) fare.

- iii) Many Underground stations, particularly along the Central line are not accessible, and as such passengers that are unable to switch to Underground will have to continue to use the bus service and change buses and walk further if they are to access Oxford Street or travel through central London.
- iv) These changes and those undertaken earlier this year have and will affect substantial numbers of passengers. TfL have estimated previously that 17,000 bus journeys a day would have been disrupted by changes earlier this year. These changes will mean 45,800 more bus journeys a day will be disrupted.
- v) **Bus route 7.** 6,500 passengers a day will have a difficult interchange to continue their journey. Either walking across the Marble Arch junction or using a second bus to cross the junction. There would then be a further walk or a bus journey followed by a walk.
- vi) **Bus route 10 & 23.** 7,600 passengers a day of a new route replacing bus routes 10 & 23 will have a difficult interchange to continue their journey. Either walking from Park Lane to Oxford Street or catching a second bus, followed by a walk from Wigmore Street or Henrietta Place to Oxford Street. 2,600 passengers a day will have to change buses at Park Lane and travel along Wigmore Street and Henrietta Place to destinations beyond Oxford Street. The latter service will take substantially longer than presently.
- vii) **Bus route 94.** 4,200 passengers a day will have a difficult interchange to continue their journey. Either walking across the Marble Arch junction or using a second bus to cross the junction. They will then have to walk to Oxford Street from the Orchard Street stop. 4,900 passengers a day travelling through the area towards Piccadilly will have to get a further bus.
- viii) **Bus route 98.** 12,200 passengers a day will have a difficult interchange to continue their journey. Either walking across the Marble Arch junction or using a second bus to cross the junction. There would then be a further walk or a bus journey followed by a walk. 3,400 passengers a day travelling through the area towards Holborn will have to get a further bus.
- ix) **Bus route 113.** 2,300 passengers a day will either have to walk to Oxford Street or get a further bus along Wigmore Street and Henrietta Place and then walk to Oxford Street.
- x) **Bus route 139.** All passengers will have to walk between 200 and 300 metres to Oxford Street.
- xi) **Bus route 159.** 2,600 passengers a day will either have to walk to Oxford Street from the stop on Regent Street or get a further bus along Wigmore Street and Henrietta Street and then walk back down to Oxford Street
- xii) **Bus route 390.** All passengers will have to walk between 200 and 300 metres to Oxford Street.

We understand there are some mitigations being looked at to lessen the impacts on passengers. London TravelWatch would support the extension of bus services 7 and 98 to Park Lane because this would remove one unpleasant walk. That said the stop at Park Lane is very busy at the moment and many buses don't presently serve the stop properly. More passengers interchanging at these stops will make this issue worse.

We were told at our Board meeting that the 94 could be extended beyond Bayswater Road. This would be welcome.

Running buses along Wigmore Street is vital for passengers. Members were concerned to hear that this was not certain. The scheme would be considerably more problematic for passengers if this routeing was not introduced. Indeed London TravelWatch would welcome more services along Wigmore Street and Henrietta Place.

Most importantly, members want assurance that if the scheme is to proceed as proposed then much more is done to prioritise the bus in central London so that the service to, from and through central London is as quick as it can be. This will mean innovative prioritisation such as roads pricing, bus only streets, access restrictions to through traffic, removing residential parking, and other traffic management measures.

Passengers have had the recent experience of a worsening bus service in central London. This has led to a substantial decline in patronage. It is of great concern that more bus passengers may abandon the bus service, or turn to using private hire vehicles. If this happens then bus services may be delayed further. TfL must ensure this does not happen and if it does have planned a response to manage this.

If, following the consultation, there are further changes that result in further detriment to bus passengers then TfL must consult us before making the final decision.

Yours sincerely

Vincent Stops
London TravelWatch