

## LONDON TRAVELWATCH

### Business Plan and Budget Bid 2018-19

London TravelWatch is the independent consumer body responsible under a series of statutes for representing the interests of all who use public transport in London. It is accountable to, and funded by, the London Assembly. It covers all modes of transport, and its work is underpinned by a series of statutory powers and duties. In particular, it must:

- consider and make recommendations relating to matters brought to its notice by users, transport providers, the Assembly, the Government, or which it considers merit investigation
- respond to essential consultations on behalf of transport users
- undertake research and investigation into issues of concern to users, and
- act as an appeals body for users who have been unable to resolve their complaints with service providers.

It delivers these statutory responsibilities through its casework and policy teams and the close synergy between these teams is an important feature of its work. It is crucially important for caseworkers to have easy access to expert knowledge to help resolve complex appeals and for policy staff to have regular access to the valuable insights we gain from the thousands of transport users who contact us each year, because they have experienced problems.

Over the past year, we have faced a fast changing environment with widespread calls for our involvement. We have had to prioritise rigorously to ensure that we maximise our impact on behalf of transport users.

- Our close monitoring of National Rail services enabled us to identify at a very early stage the deteriorating performance of the whole GTR franchise, including Southern Rail, and provided evidence to lobby operators and the DfT, calling for improvements. We made a comprehensive contribution to the Government-commissioned Gibb review of Southern's performance.
- We played a major part in securing delay repay compensation for delays over 15 minutes after more than two years of highlighting that many London commuters were suffering persistent delays of 15-20 minutes on journeys scheduled to take 20-25 minutes, but were not entitled to compensation.
- Our detailed review of how TfL closing ticket offices at all its Underground stations had impacted on passengers identified significant issues that TfL still

needed to address. Our findings were accepted and TfL is in the process of making improvements to action them although we will continue to monitor progress closely.

- Our consultation on GTR's plans to alter ticket office opening hours at many of its railway stations generated over 9,000 responses. We raised significant concerns and persuaded GTR to pilot a scheme rather than rolling out the plans all in one go. It also committed that passengers would still be able to buy the same range of tickets.

2018-19 will bring significant changes for transport users in and around London and we will continue to use our influence with decision makers and the transport industry to achieve positive change for users of London's transport network.

London TravelWatch will continue to support the work of the London Assembly's Transport Committee. We will continue to align work plans where practicable and to prioritise requests to provide evidence to the Committee's scrutinies and investigations. Where appropriate, we will play our part in following up some of the key recommendations arising from the Committee's scrutiny work, for example by ensuring that subsequent detailed policy decisions, such as on rail franchises, ticketing changes and information for passengers, take full account of the concerns raised by the Committee. We will also monitor the progress made by operators, particularly TfL, in implementation of recommendations.

This business plan sets out the key areas of work the organisation will plan to undertake in 2018-19. These are included within the framework of our strategic priorities to reflect new transport challenges facing London, especially the major issue of capacity constraints at a time of tight public spending control. There will be many competing calls on our time and our prioritisation criteria will help focus our resources on areas where we can have the most impact. We will work in accordance with our mission and values – putting the consumer view, challenging the industry where appropriate and championing the interests of the travelling public – but always ensuring that our work remains evidence-based and our decision making is independent.

A series of appendices sets out: our mission and values; our strategic priorities and corporate strategy; our prioritisation criteria; our budget bid for 2018-19; our budget growth and savings summary; and our staffing structure.

## **Context for our 2018-19 business plan**

The transport landscape in London is expected to change dramatically in the next few years. There are many challenges to be faced during the period, for example, many services will begin to run on new infrastructure. There will also be population changes, new property developments, line renewals, and bus route reconfigurations. We need to ensure that the needs of passengers stay front and centre in planning for these changes.

London TravelWatch pressed for rail devolution and Crossrail, including making the case for passengers which recognises the need for continued investment in rail capacity and support for Crossrail 2; priority for the most space efficient modes of

walking, cycling and buses; that pedestrians need pavements clear of obstructions and an improved walking environment; the benefit of rail devolution and an investigation of the possible role of roads pricing.

### *Completion of major projects*

The Elizabeth line (presently known as Crossrail) and the Thameslink upgrade come into full operation during 2018-19. Passenger journeys are likely to change as a result and other services, especially buses, are likely to be reorganised in response. In addition, changes to the way Oxford Street operates, potentially including pedestrianisation, will have a substantial impact on travel in this area and bus routes will be altered significantly.

Two lengthy major rebuilding projects will be completed during this period with London Bridge National Rail station and the new ticket hall at Victoria Underground station both being completed.

With these changes, it will be crucial to reflect the needs of all passengers, particularly those who rely on buses to get around and those with reduced mobility.

### *New initiatives*

While some long-term projects will be drawing to a close in this period, others will be starting in earnest, with particular focus on HS2. The first stages of construction for this project will begin, including works at Euston station, and other arrangements will be finalised, such as the interchange design at Old Oak Common. Work on other elements of transport planning for HS2 will continue, such as the rail routes serving Old Oak Common station.

Work will begin on the upgrade of Bank Underground station and, although this will bring welcome improvements in the long run, passengers using the station on a daily basis will need access to good quality information about how they will be affected. In addition, further work will be carried out in planning for Crossrail 2, and again it will be important that passenger needs remain at the forefront.

The Mayor's transport strategy will be finalised during this period and planning for its implementation will begin. Elements of the strategy will have major implications for transport users in London and we will continue to work closely with TfL to ensure that needs of passengers are met as details are finalised.

### *Changes in the transport industry*

We expect to see significant changes to transport organisation and accountability over the next few years. At Network Rail, there will be devolution of responsibility for performance and expenditure to Route Managing Directors. Because these are organised on the basis of radial routes, there will be six of them with responsibility for services within the London railway area. We will engage closely to ensure the needs of London passengers are not neglected.

The Department for Transport (DfT) will be tendering three new franchises during 2018-19, East Midlands, South Eastern and Great Western. We will ensure that the London passenger voice is heard when long-lasting decisions are made about these important services. For each of these we provide detailed comments on the draft invitation to tender; meet with tenderers (or offer to do so) and comment in confidence on tenders received.

There are several events and reviews that could change transport operation over the period. The industry will be working to address the recommendations of the Gibb Review and the various inquiries into the fatal Croydon tram derailment. Work will continue on the safety and accessibility implications of the gap between trains and platforms. These projects will affect how passengers use transport in London and how transport services are monitored in future and we will work with the industry to keep passengers' needs at the forefront.

### *Rail passenger complaints*

There will be major changes in the way that complaints about National Rail services are handled, with the rail passenger ombudsman scheme expected to be bedding in and the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) taking a more robust stance on any shortcomings in how the Rail Delivery Group's new train operating companies deal with complaints. We will continue to provide independent challenge as the ombudsman scheme comes into operation to ensure it is developed in the best interests of passengers by remaining independent of the rail industry and being transparent both in its operations and in the way it signposts complainants to the scheme. The Rail Minister has made it clear that he expects the statutory watchdogs to receive regular feedback so that we can incorporate any lessons for the industry in our advocacy work and we will certainly do so. It is important that the needs of passengers in the London Railway Area are fully taken into account and that we cooperate closely to ensure this. However we continue to stress that we do not have the resources to take on this additional work. We have therefore negotiated an arrangement whereby the RDG will meet the costs we need to incur to take this additional work, which cannot be done at the expense of the core work funded by the London Assembly.

These changes will have a knock-on effect on our own complaint handling as we adopt new procedures to integrate the ombudsman scheme into our casework. We will continue to handle appeals from passengers whose complaint is ineligible for the new scheme, alongside our TfL casework.

### *Working effectively*

Over the past five years we have progressively slimmed down our back office and reduced our overall costs but we continue to seek further efficiencies and ways of making our resources go further. We have no space in our budget to fund new research but will continue to be alert to opportunities to increase our evidence base through partnership with others as we have successfully done in recent years. Alongside this we place great importance on growing our organisational capacity, especially through developing our staff so that they have the skills to adapt to changing passenger and user concerns and requirements.

Our bid this year is for a grant the same in cash terms as for 2017-18. We are able to balance this budget through continued flexibility in staffing, a reduction in member costs and a focus on efficiencies in our overheads. As this business plan is being prepared we are reviewing our premises arrangements and are preparing to move if necessary to reduce our costs.

## Objectives for 2018-19

The five strategic objectives below set out London TravelWatch's plans to address these issues, as well as other key work areas.

### 1. **Support and advocate initiatives which make best use of scarce capacity on all London's transport networks and promote infrastructure changes that will help to do this**

- Review options for the management of road capacity that emerge as TfL develops plans to deliver the Mayor's Transport Strategy, paying particular regard to bus priority measures and the needs of cyclists and pedestrians.
- Promote the recommendations made in our 2017 report into the needs of passengers using smaller stations in and around London to better meet them.
- Continue to promote suggestions for increasing overall capacity on the existing transport network by relatively small improvements which make best use of current assets.
- Monitor, influence and evaluate the impact on passengers of train and bus timetable changes, especially those associated with the Thameslink upgrade and Elizabeth line, and use our influence to ensure all passengers are considered when making these changes.
- Continue to lobby for improvements to surface transport access to London's airports alongside any proposed changes to aviation capacity and update our report on this issue. Use our influence to try and accelerate the extension of the Oyster Pay As You Go and contactless smartcards to Luton and Stansted Airports and other stations within the London Railway Area.
- Take all opportunities to use our influence to promote further devolution of local National Rail services to TfL for the benefit of passengers.

### 2. **London has a transport system that is well-integrated and accessible to all, with convenient interchanges, easy-to-use ticketing and good customer service**

- Continue to use our *Interchange Matters* report to achieve improvements at key interchanges, particularly in relation to accessibility and potentially working with partner organisations, such as Transport for All, to enable best use of resources. This will include working to encourage operators and TfL to jointly agree on which organisations should take the lead role in co-ordinating activity over all modes for at least five key interchanges.
- Monitor TfL's action plan regarding our review of the passenger impact of closing LUL ticket offices and keep a watch on developments at ticket offices run by train operating companies. This will include promoting the findings of

our research into the needs of annual season ticket holders with senior individuals at TfL, National Rail, the DfT and ORR.

- Ensure that bus route changes reflect the needs of passengers, and encourage the reversal of the recent trend of reduced usage by responding to consultations on behalf of passengers and supporting bus priority measures on roads.
- Work to improve physical accessibility by encouraging the transport industry to take further action, including by doing more to mitigate the impact of gaps between trains and platforms, pushing local authorities to make more bus stops accessible, seeking change to Hail and Ride bus routes and highlighting the problems posed to visually impaired pedestrians by pavement obstructions. Increase scrutiny of projects in relation to invisible disabilities.
- Work with the industry to learn lessons from the completion of major building works at London Bridge and Victoria stations and ensure that full advantage is taken of the new infrastructure. Seek to ensure these lessons are applied to future programmes including HS2 and the Bank underground station upgrade to ensure that the changes best meet the needs of passengers and help minimise the effect of disruption during construction.
- Take all opportunities to encourage transport operators to continually improve the service they give to passengers.

### **3. All decisions about transport in London take account of transport users' needs and priorities**

- Give bus passengers a voice by further developing our online bus community and by supporting groups in locations particularly affected by major service changes for example, in Thamesmead and Belvedere when the Crossrail Elizabeth line comes to Abbeywood station.
- Ensure that the Bakerloo line extension is planned in a way that maximises passenger benefits in terms of interchanges and congestion relief.
- Maintain awareness of major station and town centre rebuild projects such as those at Barking and Lewisham so that the needs of passengers at these important interchanges are met.
- Ensure TfL's new approach to healthy streets takes account of the needs of all transport users as there will be conflicting demands on finite space. London's streets are used by different modes: walking, cycling, buses and private cars along with legitimate business use. Also, some of the user groups are disabled and others vulnerable.
- Contribute to improvements in passenger safety by monitoring how recommendations from the inquiries into the Croydon tram derailment are

taken forward, promoting the findings of our research into safety issues for passengers on buses and participating in work on gaps between trains and platforms.

- Provide input from the London passenger perspective to the South Eastern, Great Western and East Midlands franchises before they are tendered and monitor ongoing franchises to ensure the services they provide meet the needs of passengers as promised in the franchise bid.
- Track the legislative and decision-making process for HS2, ensuring London passengers' interests are properly taken into account in relation to Euston and Old Oak Common stations.
- Use our influence to ensure that Crossrail 2 remains on the agenda and that passenger needs are considered as a key element of the planning process.
- Monitor any implications of plans to leave the European Union on passengers for example, safety, consumer rights, inter-operability and redress.

**4. The travelling public are well informed by service providers, they get high quality and timely information about services available, fares and ticketing and any disruption to their journeys**

- Continue to support the development and implementation of the rail ombudsman scheme, focussing on the need to ensure that the scheme is independent and serves the needs of passengers.
- Press TfL to design a system to allow visitors to pay for multiple passengers on one smart card on buses and trams.
- Continue to participate as a critical friend in the industry's multi-agency Travel Demand Management Board, encouraging greater focus on managing and learning from incidents of unplanned disruption.
- Following the Government's Penalty Fares Review, encourage transport operators to be more transparent with passengers about the circumstances in which penalty fares are levied. Raise awareness of the importance of having a valid ticket or touching in with Oyster Pay As You Go, contactless smartcards or other electronic payment means before travelling.
- Continue to use our quarterly service monitoring reports to provide early warning of deteriorating performance, paying particular attention to bus and cycle safety statistics as we develop our scrutiny of these.
- Promote the introduction of a single tariff for Oyster and Contactless fares for all National Rail, London Underground, London Overground and TfL rail services. Reduce the number of fare anomalies and over-complex rules for off-peak travel, to enable easy understanding and a fair deal for all passengers, including working with operators to ensure that new ticket

machines are designed to be user-friendly and consistent. Passengers should always be able to have confidence that they are buying the right ticket for their needs.

- Lobby hard to encourage the industry as a whole to adopt the 15 minute threshold for delay-repay compensation already promised by the Government and continue campaigning to secure improvements in the way that passenger compensation generally is paid.

## **5. An efficient and responsive organisation**

### *Communications*

Our communications work continues to focus on our ability to influence decision-makers through our regular dialogue with key individuals. Our reputation for independence and expertise means we can ensure the voice of transport users in London is heard when decisions are made. We will continue to highlight the impact that our work achieves.

We will continue to use our website and social media presence to help promote our work more widely but at minimal cost. Our *Interchange Matters* blog continues to grow as we share good practice and find out about people's experiences at interchanges. We will also give transport users the opportunity to engage with us during our 'Ask London TravelWatch' Twitter sessions.

### *Board*

We will maintain and underpin the strategic role of the Board through our streamlined committee structures and high quality briefing papers. There will be new appointments to our Board in January 2019 and we will plan a comprehensive induction programme for them at the beginning of their terms of appointment.

### *Staffing*

Staff remain our key resource and we aim to be an excellent employer. We recently retained our Investors in People Silver Status and continue to ensure that our investment in staff development is aligned with our business objectives. We will continue to pay the London Living Wage and participate in the Cycle to Work Scheme.

Our permanent staffing establishment is now 14.15 full time equivalent posts. The current staff structure is attached as Appendix 5.

### *Casework*

Dealing with complaints remains a key statutory duty. Our casework team will continue to provide a first class appeals service to users dissatisfied with the response they received from the transport operator to their original complaint. The firm but fair approach we take to this work, critically evaluating each request but only taking forward those where we think the appellant has a case, continues to win us plaudits from both consumers and the industry. Most crucially we continue to achieve results through effective negotiation and persuasion.

Dealing with an increasing workload at a time when staff resources are being squeezed presents an ongoing challenge but one that our team meet through continuous improvement, a flexible approach and a real desire to get things done for passengers.

As well as continuing to help individual passengers, we use lessons learned from our casework to shape our thinking and to improve services for all passengers. We look forward to the introduction of the proposed new ombudsman scheme for National Rail passengers and will ensure that it links to our own work in ways that will provide the best possible passenger benefit.

We will continue to take advantage of the provisions of the Consumer Rights Act 2015 when acting on behalf of rail passengers. In addition, we will introduce procedures to accommodate the new rail ombudsman scheme so that passengers have a seamless transition through the whole complaints process.

#### *Partnerships and additional resources*

We will continue to collaborate with partner organisations where appropriate and in the year ahead we will seek ways of making our overall resources go further by working together with other stakeholders.

#### *Risks*

London TravelWatch has a comprehensive risk policy and business continuity plan and regularly updates its procedures according to changing circumstances. Risks are reviewed regularly by the staff team and the Governance Committee. We will continue to refer to the organisation's published prioritisation criteria before committing time and resources to new projects to avoid the risk of spreading resources too thinly in response to the many and rising calls on time.

#### *Reserves*

For a small organisation entirely dependent on an annual grant, maintaining an adequate level of reserves is essential to ensure that core operating activities can continue during periods of activity involving exceptional levels of unplanned expenditure. Our policy is to try and maintain free reserves of approximately £50,000. London TravelWatch reviews its reserves policy annually.