

Central London Bus Consultation Meeting 23.10.18



Summary

A summary of discussions made during a special meeting to discuss TfL's proposed changes to buses in central London, held at 169 Union Street, London, SE10LL on 23 October 2018

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Tottenham Court Road – Bus 14 and 134
3. King's Road, Piccadilly and Shaftesbury Avenue – Bus 9 and N9
4. King's Road Piccadilly and Shaftesbury Avenue – Bus 11, 19, 22 and 311
5. Lambeth and Westminster Bridges via Whitehall – 3 and 53
6. Waterloo to Fleet Street – Bus 4, 172 and 341
7. Euston Road – Bus 59 and 476
8. Marylebone Road – Bus 205 and N205
9. Kingsway – Bus 171
10. Kingsland Road – Bus 67, 149 and 242
11. Blackfriars and London Bridge – Bus 40, 45, 76, 343 and RV1
12. London Bridge and Hackney Road – Bus 48 and 55
13. Holloway Road – Bus 271 (Night service)
14. Concluding remarks

Present

Members

Alan Benson, Glyn Kyle, Arthur Leathley (Chair), Abdi Osman, John Stewart

Guests

Rob Adamson	Campaign for Better Transport - London
Alexander Baldwin-Smith	London Borough of Bromley
Nick Biskinis	Clapham Transport User Group
Bob Blitz	TfL
Andrew Boag	Bus Users UK
Andrew Bosi	Campaign for Better Transport – London
John Darnell	Save Our Buses
Paul Dogan	Save Our Buses
Peter Eversden	London Forum
Claire Haigh	Greener Journeys
Victoria Herrera-Nurse	Transport for All
Naima Ishan	London Borough of Southwark
Ray King	Cambridge Heath & London Fields Rail Users
Joel Kosminsky	Individual
Claire Lindsey	Transport for All
Cllr Richard Livingstone	London Borough of Southwark
Jennie Martin	Bus Users UK
Owain Mortimer	London Councils

Peter Nichols	Bromley & District Consumers Group
Gwynneth Pedler	Transport for All
Rosalind Readhead	Campaign for Better Transport – London
Daniel Roche	TfL
Cllr Denise Scott-McDonald	Royal Borough of Greenwich
Dominic West	London Borough of Hackney

Secretariat	
Tim Bellenger	Director, Policy and Investigation
Gytha Chinweze	Governance Officer
Janet Cooke	Chief Executive
Richard Freeston-Clough	Operations and Communications Manager
Luke Muskett	Committee and Public Liaison Officer
Trevor Rosenberg	Policy Officer

1 Introduction

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting and made the standard safety announcements.

2 Tottenham Court Road – Bus 14 and 134

The Director, Policy and Investigation began by explaining that he would be going through all routes that were proposed to be altered by TfL. Both Bob Blitz and Daniel Roche were present from TfL and would be able to respond to questions that people had. The first route that was looked at would affect bus 14 and 134, which would no longer be serving passengers getting on from most of Tottenham Court Road or Gower Street. He asked the audience if they had any comments to make about the proposal.

Two participants questioned the general rationale for the reduction in bus services, especially given the effect it would have on the disabled, the elderly and people carrying heavy luggage. Another participant said that there were too many buses in central London and that walking and cycling were the most efficient ways of commuting around the capital.

One guest argued that the proposals overall would have a major negative impact for passengers interchanging between different modes of public transport. Another person agreed and said that many vulnerable people that were unable to use the Underground or cycles were dependent on the bus to get around.

A participant said that whilst buses were inclusive and available for all members of the public, cycling was not. Another guest disagreed and said that the range of cycles for people with a range of accessibility problems were ‘almost infinite’. She continued that there needed to be a balance between inconveniencing some passengers against people being ‘killed and disabled for life’.

A guest stated that buses made much more effective use of road space as one bus was able to carry around 80 passengers. He added that there had been a culture of attacking and undermining buses in recent years despite the fact that

they were the most accessible form of public transport. Another participant agreed with the point about accessibility, and that reducing buses would restrict opportunities to travel for the most vulnerable and elderly users.

A participant said that the bus network in London had been a success story that should be celebrated rather than have its services being reduced. She remarked that there had been added congestion in the capital and the pressures on road space were increasing each year due to a number of factors including online delivery and structural changes to the labour market. The person added that there was a correlation between bus service accessibility and social deprivation and that reducing services would have a negative impact on communities.

The same participant commented that a full loaded double-decker bus could take the equivalent of 75 cars off of the road and that more should be done to encourage bus use – not make it less appealing for commuters. The guest concluded that ‘picking away’ at the network would lead to unintended consequences and cause a major social impact in terms of employment and accessibility to vital services.

3 King’s Road, Piccadilly and Shaftesbury Avenue – Bus 9 and N9

The Director, Policy and Investigation said that there was a minor change proposed for the 9 and N9 route, where it would no longer serve commuters getting on from Pall Mall and St James’ Street. A participant remarked that the proposal would restore the two buses to their original routes, which led to the question of why TfL had rerouted them in the first place.

One guest asked if the aim of the proposals was to save money, why TfL was proposing to make an existing route longer. Another guest agreed and asked what the logic was of rerouting the buses via Regent Street and Haymarket, which were already well served by other buses. A representative from TfL said that usage of the number 9 and N9 from Pall Mall was limited and that the service would be better optimised via the new route.

4 King’s Road, Piccadilly and Shaftesbury Avenue – Bus 11, 19, 22 and 311

The Director, Policy and Investigation commented that there were proposals to reduce three routes (buses 11, 19 and 22) and add an additional service: the 311. One guest said that there was no garage associated with route 11 and that TfL’s plans would lead to people having to take up to three buses to get to their desired destination, and consequently more accidents on the road. He added that the proposals overall would reduce the number of drivers across the capital by 2,000, which ‘just happened to match’ the number of driver vacancies TfL needed to fill. Another guest asked if there had been any consideration of where buses would terminate with regards to the depot, and that buses travelling to garages that were further away would add to pollution levels.

5 Lambeth and Westminster Bridges via Whitehall – Bus 3 and 53

The Director, Policy and Investigation moved on to the next proposed route change involving buses 3, that served Lambeth Bridge, and 53, that currently travelled across Westminster Bridge. Both services enabled passengers to get to Whitehall without the need to interchange. One participant said that the 53 was the second busiest bus route in the south east and there had been 'very little reduction' in its usage. He commented that 20,000 new homes were planned to be built along the Old Kent Road and residents would need to be able to commute into central London. He concluded that the plans seemed to be 'complete disjointed thinking from TfL'.

A participant agreed with the point made by the previous speaker and said that the 53 bus was heavily used and busy at all times of the day. She remarked that given her disability she was unable to use the train and Tube and that the bus service was the only accessible means of public transport open to her. She stated that the removal of the 53 bus would leave her unable to get into central London from where she lived.

A guest commented that the new residents that would be moving into the housing development alongside the Old Kent Road could cycle rather than use the buses. She added that there was more benefit in terms of road space for doing so as cycling was 'fluid' whilst a bus was a 'metal box' and a 'clumsy vehicle'.

A participant asked what the logic was of cutting the bus route short. She remarked that she regularly used such services to get into central London and that the ability to interchange between buses was not easy for people like herself who have accessibility problems. A TfL representative said that the 453 bus provided an alternative for people travelling across Westminster Bridge. The participant stated that the 453 bus was a Routemaster and thus had fewer seats than the 53. She reinforced the point that was made by another speaker that it was very difficult for people with certain disabilities to interchange between bus services.

A guest commented that she was concerned that if the 53 bus route was shortened there may not be enough time for people to transfer between buses on a single fare as the hopper ticket would only last for 60 minutes. Another guest remarked that the proposals had been driven by TfL for operational convenience rather than to serve the needs of passengers.

One participant said that the number 3 bus was the 'only bus that takes me anywhere that is of any use'. She added that stopping the bus further south would mean people would be struggling to get a seat and cause greater conflict between people in wheelchairs, people with buggies and disabled passengers. She concluded that the proposals sounded 'easy on paper but all this will impact the lives of disabled people'.

6 Waterloo to Fleet Street – Bus 4, 172 and 341

The Director, Policy and Investigation turned to the next set of changes affecting buses 4, 172 and 341 on the Waterloo to Fleet Street routes. One guest said that he was concerned that the 341 was proposed to be diverted via Ludgate Circus, which would take considerably longer due to the amount of traffic at the junction. He added that the increased lack of capacity would put pressure on wheelchair users and those with luggage, and that the proposals overall were ‘an attack on the poorest people in London’.

TfL replied that the journey times for the 341 would be the same when travelling via Ludgate Circus compared to its current route. However, people would be expected to interchange if they needed to travel the full length of the previous route. The guest remarked that interchanging between buses would extend journey times, which would only be available for people with ‘the luxury of the time’. The representative from TfL agreed.

A participant said that TfL had stated that it wished to facilitate further interchange by ensuring that there were tube and bus services within 400 metres of every home. However, the proposals went against that ethos as the connectivity to Chancery Lane was being taken away by the new 341 route. TfL commented that the 341 would serve Farringdon station instead and that other bus services could be taken to get to Chancery Lane.

One guest stated that in the Mayor’s Transport Strategy there was an objective to get people to move away from using cars as a means of getting around and instead encourage them to use public transport. He asked TfL whether they thought the proposals that had set out for buses in central London were consistent with that aim. A representative from TfL commented that in recent years the use of buses had been falling in central London and that declining traffic speeds and increased competition for road space required the need to make alterations to bus routes. A participant said that if buses were being placed behind private hire vehicles and delivery vans then they would become less appealing to commuters. TfL replied that throughout London the organisation was looking at plans of having better priority for buses.

A participant said that cycle superhighway 9 proposals for Hammersmith to Brentford would remove the existing bus lane in order to accommodate it. He suggested that this would have a detrimental effect on speeds and force people off of buses. Another guest commented that the proposals were for services in central London where a lot of pedestrians congregated, and at present they were at risk of being killed by buses and coaches. Another person asked where the evidence was to make the assertion that buses were killing large numbers of pedestrians. The guest reiterated her remark that buses in central London were a danger to pedestrians.

7 Euston Road and King's Cross – Bus 59 and 476

The Director, Policy and Investigation directed the audience to the next set of changes that would affect buses 59 and 476 which served Euston Road and King's Cross. A participant said that the 59 should not be cut as it provided important links to Waterloo station as well as accessible transport for people who needed it. Another guest said that she would be concerned that there would be many people arriving from the north that would then have to carry their luggage between the two stations. She remarked that not all people would be able to manage to walk the distance, especially those with accessibility problems.

One guest commented that most people did not live near a bus stop and so would be required to carry their luggage at the beginning of their journey in any case. The Chair suggested that the issue that was being made by the previous speaker was that there could potentially be a lot of people with luggage and it would be difficult for the elderly and disabled to manage the final part of their journey if it was incredibly busy.

A participant stated that diverting the 476 from its current route would take up valuable road space and allowing it to run straight through to Euston would save tax payers money. He also asked the representatives from TfL whether an assessment had been made on the potential impact to step-free access due to the proposals. TfL said that an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) had been published on TfL's website. The person asked if that had been a 'tick box exercise'. TfL reiterated that the EIA was available online. The speaker said that there had been previous consultations done by TfL which had had clear objections from users. Despite this, however, the proposals were implemented anyway. He added, 'I just want that on the record'.

A guest asked if TfL was 'subsiding the redundancy costs (of drivers) among the operators' who ran the bus services affected. TfL replied that there would be a lot of cascading of vehicles and he did not believe there would be any redundancies of drivers as a result of the changes. The guest asked who paid the penalty charges for buses returned to the leasing company. The representative from TfL replied that it was the individual operators of the service.

8 Marylebone Road – Bus 205 and N205

The Director, Policy and Investigation moved on to the next proposed route changes for buses 205 and N205. Although the change affected only a small geographical area the resulting change would be quite big as it would mean passengers wishing to access Marylebone station would be required to cross Marylebone Road – a major crossing. One guest said that he thought the change was 'a crazy idea' and would force people to have to take a bus from a heavily polluted road. Another agreed and said that it was a further example of TfL making life more difficult for people traveling to and from stations. He added that the culmination of the added inconveniences for passengers would lead to more people using private hire vehicles to get around.

9 Kingsway – Bus 171

The Director, Policy and Investigation said that the proposal for the 171 bus going north of Elephant and Castle was that it would only travel south towards Bellingham, meaning it would no longer serve Waterloo station or Aldwych across the River Thames. One guest stated that the proposal would mean many people would be required to interchange at Elephant and Castle, which itself was already a very busy interchange. He said that the 171 was very important for residents in Peckham and Camberwell, and at the very least the bus should service Waterloo station. He asked that TfL look at the proposal for the 171 again. Another person agreed and said that there should be some 'lateral thinking' from TfL in order to send some bus routes beyond Elephant and Castle, such as the 155.

10 Kingsland Road – Bus 67, 149 and 242

The Director, Policy and Investigation turned to the next set of changes affecting routes 67 and 242. In the proposals the 242 would be diverted at Shoreditch High Street to terminate at Aldgate, whilst the 67 would terminate at Dalston. One guest said that the proposals to the two routes would have a major impact on the borough of Hackney. His biggest concern was the proposals for the 242, which serves the Clapton Park estate. The ward was not only one of the most deprived wards in London but across the entire country, and residents felt they were being 'picked on'. He said that the bus was 'vital for the people of Hackney' and asked TfL 'please don't cut the 242'.

A participant commented that the enhancements to the 149 would not resolve the issues of changing the routes of the 67 and 242 and that there would not be enough capacity for people to be able to interchange. He added that the 242 was a 24 hour service, and asked if there would be a night service that would go to Aldgate. TfL replied that no final decision had been made with regards to the night bus.

One guest remarked that Hackney did not have a tube network and was heavily reliant on buses as the main means of public transport. Despite this, Hackney had seen repeated reductions to bus services. Another guest agreed and added that of the borough's 41 bus routes, 31 had been affected by reductions in their service over the past year.

11 Blackfriars and London Bridge – Bus 40, 45, 76, 343, 388 and RV1

The Director, Policy and Investigation presented the next changes that would affect several routes (40, 45, 76, 343, 388 and the RV1) most of which crossed over the River Thames. He commented that the result of the changes would mean the majority of services would be heavily reduced. One guest said that he was particularly concerned that the proposal would mean that there would be no bus services directly available from Fenchurch Street. He suggested that if TfL went ahead with the changes 'the press will give you hell'.

A participant remarked that he had travelled down on the 388 as part of this journey into central London and had been surprised to discover that the section of the route which TfL planned to change also appeared to be the busiest. He added that he had also noticed a 45 bus and the RV1 travelling past with capacity loads. Another participant commented that he was aware that what he was presenting was anecdotal but it was a form of evidence in any case.

One guest said that it had been promised by the mayor that through the proposals buses would be taken out of central London and transferred to outer London. However, he asked where the additional services were in TfL's plans and also where the garages were that would service them. With regards to the 388, he said that the bus in particular required a destination that did not result in bunching of buses as a result of traffic congestion.

One participant stated that he was aware that the 388 was often heavily affected by congestion. Therefore, he proposed introducing 'the first bus superhighway for London' to replace the cycle lane. He remarked that TfL was 'going into panic mode' due to 'cuts to their funding'. Another person said that a London terminus should have a bus service and that it was 'almost non-negotiable'. She added that she 'used to love and use' the RV1 bus very regularly, but was no longer able to do so due to TfL having reduced the frequency of its service.

12 London Bridge and Hackney Road – Bus 48 and 55

The Director, Policy and Investigation came to the penultimate set of bus changes which would see the withdrawal of the 48 bus that services London Bridge from Walthamstow Central and extending the 55 out from Leyton across to Walthamstow Central. One guest said that his organisation had been observing the usage of the 48 on Lea Bridge Road, which often had capacity loads even on Saturdays, when people were often not at work. He added that TfL had repeatedly failed to resolve the problems that had affected the 48 bus route – causing it to take longer to arrive at London Bridge than need be the case.

A guest commented that the Mini-Holland scheme in particular, which had taken out bus lanes previously served by the 48, had caused buses to be slowed down so that they now take 'double if not treble the time'. He said that along Hackney Road both the 48 and 55 ran at capacity loads and that the withdrawal of the 48 would leave people struggling to get on the 55 after it had already picked up people coming from the West End.

A participant remarked that requests in the past for improvements in the train service at Cambridge Heath and London Fields had been declined because of the good bus service on the 48 and 55. He added that withdrawing the 48, which would prevent people from travelling directly to London Bridge, seemed 'crazy'. He summarised that he agreed with London TravelWatch's suggestion that buses be given the appropriate road space to operate and that more should be done to restrict the numbers of private hire vehicles. Another person said that withdrawal of the 48 bus would reduce capacity on Lea Bridge Road, which was at one time 'the best loved route in London' due to the frequency of its service.

One guest stated that in previous years the 48 had been a more attractive option for passengers as it was a fast link to Lea Bridge Road as well as providing links to London Bridge and Guys Hospital. One of the issues with the route at present was the way that it was operated. He said that buses were being held 'while the company maximises its profits', and he had witnessed people hop off of the 48 and onto the 55 as it would overtake the 48 on route.

13 Holloway Road – Bus 271 (Night service)

The Director, Policy and Investigation concluded with the final proposed change which would mean that the 271 night service operating between 1am and 4.30am would be withdrawn. TfL commented that the route was paralleled by other night services and would only affect around 100 people per night. Those that were affected would be within 400 to 600 metres of other night routes. One guest stated that there was no other night service that he could use to get home from where he lived. Another participant said that her concern would be travelling from the Emirates stadium after an event in the evening. Due to her disability and general overcrowding after such events, it could often take a long time to get out of the stadium at which the bus may have stopped running.

14 Concluding remarks

One guest thanked London TravelWatch for organising the meeting and said that it had been 'terrific'. He also thanked the representatives from TfL for making themselves available, and said that it had been good to be given a response to the concerns he had raised. Another person seconded the comments made by the previous speaker and thanked London TravelWatch for 'defending buses' despite it currently being 'not fashionable to do so'.

The Director, Policy and Investigation thanked everyone for attending and for their contributions. He said that if people wanted to have a further say they could fill out the consultation forms available on TfL's website. The Chair repeated the Director, Policy and Investigations thanks to all attendees and closed the meeting.