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## Secretariat memorandum

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Agenda item 5  
AT002  
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### Actions taken

#### 1 Purpose of report

- 1.1. To record matters dealt with by the Chair, Deputy Chair, Chief Executive and/or the secretariat since the last meeting.

#### 2 Information

##### 2.1. Access to taxis

On 22 April 2009 the Streets and Surface Transport Policy Officer wrote to the Department for Transport in response to a nationwide consultation on improving access to taxis (<http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/open/consulttaxis/>), as follows :

London TravelWatch is the statutory watchdog representing transport users in and around London. We represent all transport users, including those using Taxis and mini-cabs within the Greater London Authority area and railway passengers in wider home counties. We welcome the Government's commitment to improve access to taxis.

London is well served by generally well regulated Taxis and more recently regulated mini-cabs. We offer five comments that I hope you may consider:

- i) We recognise that developing a single design standard for a vehicle that is accessible to all is problematic. Designs that may be appropriate for wheelchair users may not be accessible to others with mobility problems, but are not wheelchair users. It may therefore be worth considering access in terms of the fleet in general rather than a standard individual vehicle. The classic London cab works well for wheelchair users, but presents difficulties for some disabled non-wheelchair users who find difficulty stepping into London cabs.
- ii) The consultation report suggests that regulation may mean taxi drivers leaving the industry and becoming mini-cab drivers. However, we are not convinced that without regulation the industry will fund the additional cost of accessibility if there is no additional commercial return. We believe that regulation will be necessary to influence manufacturers and potential drivers and improve the accessibility of taxis. If there were to be a transferral of drivers to minicabs as the consultation suggests then considering regulation of minicabs may be necessary.

- iii) Often regulation that increases accessibility will also benefit the general travelling public. For example, we observe that the regulatory pressure for low floor buses has meant a better vehicle and that everyone has benefitted.
- iv) A particular difficulty for wheelchair users is with driver behaviour, i.e. Taxi drivers not stopping to pick up wheelchair users. Presumably this is because they believe it to be not worth their while or too problematical. We would support the Government's proposal to impose a duty on drivers to assist passengers in wheelchairs, but as long as there is no duty to accept any would-be fare, it is difficult to see how drivers can be prevented from acting in this way. Local licensing authorities should both train drivers in this duty and enforce against those who do not comply.
- v) The consultation suggests in paragraph 1.7 suggests that there is anecdotal evidence on the availability of accessible taxis, a need to improve boarding infrastructure and information. We would welcome substantive research on these issues.

## 2.2. Priority seating – note of action by Consumer Affairs Committee

The Consumer Affairs Committee meeting 22.4.09 undertook to write to the Association of Train Operating Companies with its recommendations for clarifying issues around first class tickets.

Of particular interest to this Committee was recommendation (ii) on priority seating – that these should be provided on all carriages and clearly marked (referring to good practice by TfL).

## 2.3. TfL leaflets at hospitals

On 20 February 2009 the Senior Committee Administrator wrote to TfL regarding placement of transport link leaflets in hospitals. On 24 February 2009, TfL responded :

“Some hospitals have taken down posters and leaflet racks that were initially intended to house TfL travel advice. To maintain a consistent policy across the board, TfL is reviewing the provision of travel advice literature to healthcare organisations. Our Group Marketing team is looking at the best way of taking this forward, ensuring that patients receive up-to-date travel information.

“In consultation with the hospitals, we want to arrive at a solution that works in terms of the resources available to all parties. We are suggesting that hospitals distribute leaflets with appointment cards and that the information is available in a PDF format on the hospital website. It is expected that a decision will be reached before the end of March.”

## 2.4. Oyster top-up provision at the Royal Free Hospital

On 20 February 2009 the Senior Committee Administrator wrote to TfL regarding the provision of an oyster top-up facility at the Royal Free Hospital. On 24 February 2009 TfL responded :

“The Oyster retail network is managed on TfL’s behalf by Transys. There are 4000 agents across London and around 20 within the NW3 postcode area which is where the Royal Free Hospital is situated. Belsize Park and Hampstead Heath stations in the vicinity of the hospital are also equipped with Oyster equipment. In order to provide an outlet within the hospital there will need to be a retailer in place and Transys will need to be satisfied that the proposition is economically viable. Shahsi Verma, TfL’s Director of Fares and Ticketing, is contacting Transys to investigate the feasibility of the Royal Free Hospital’s request. “

### **3 Equalities and inclusion implications**

- 3.1 In accordance with London TravelWatch’s duties under the Disability Discrimination Act and other legislation, account is taken when responding to consultations on proposals from external bodies of their particular impact (if any) on the needs of people whose access to transport may be restricted by reason of disability or social exclusion.

### **4 Legal powers**

- 4.1 Section 248 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 places upon London TravelWatch (as the London Transport Users Committee) a duty to consider - and where it appears to the Committee to be desirable, to make recommendations with respect to - any matter affecting the functions of the Greater London Authority or Transport for London which relate to transport (other than of freight). Section 252A of the same Act (as amended by Schedule 6 of the Railways Act 2005) places a similar duty upon the Committee to keep under review matters affecting the interests of the public in relation to railway passenger and station services provided wholly or partly within the London railway area, and to make representations about them to such persons as it thinks appropriate.

### **5 Financial implications**

- 5.1 No specific financial implications for London TravelWatch arise from this report.

### **6 Recommendation**

- 6.1 That the report is received for information.