



The voice of transport users

Improving public transport access to London's airports

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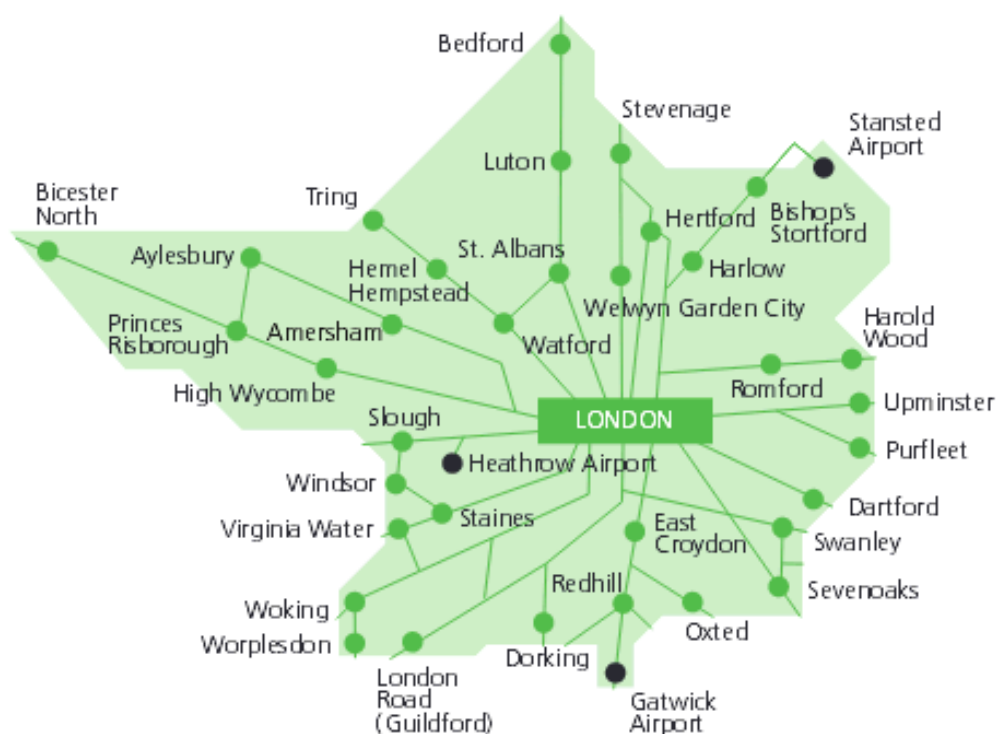
London TravelWatch is the official body set up by Parliament to provide a voice for London's travelling public, including the users of all forms of public transport. We are supported by and accountable to the London Assembly.

Our approach

- We commission and carry out research, and evaluate and interpret the research carried out by others, to ensure that decisions on transport policy and operations are based on the best possible evidence
- We investigate complaints users have been unable to resolve with service providers – we get more than 6,000 enquiries a year from transport users and in 2013-14 we took 1,100 cases up with the transport operator because we agreed that the response the complainant had received to their original complaint was not satisfactory
- We monitor trends in service quality as part of our intelligence-led approach
- We regularly meet and seek to influence the relevant parts of the transport industry on all issues which affect the travelling public and work closely with a wide range of public interest organisations, user groups and research bodies to ensure we remain aware of their experiences and concerns
- We speak for passengers and the travelling public in discussions with opinion formers and decision makers at all levels, including the Mayor of London, the London Assembly, the Government, Parliament and local councils.

Our experience of using London's extensive public transport network, paying for our own travel, and seeing for ourselves what transport users go through, helps ensure we remain connected and up to date.

Our aim is to press in all that we do for a better travel experience for all those living, working or visiting London and its surrounding region.



Foreword

Travel by air is a stressful experience for many people and a difficult journey to or from the airport will only exacerbate this. 104 million passenger journeys into or out of London's five major airports were made in 2012. About 43% of people used public transport to get them to or from the airport¹ but not all of them found it a pleasant experience. Yet, as our research demonstrates, so much could be done to make their journey easier.

London TravelWatch is the statutory consumer watchdog representing users of most land based transport modes in and around London. With London's five major airports falling within our area, and a multi-modal remit, we are uniquely qualified to speak on behalf of passengers accessing these airports by public transport. We have taken an active interest in the subject for many years because of the feedback people give us about the problems they have on their journeys to or from the airport.



The work of the Airports Commission, chaired by Sir Howard Davies, has made the issue highly topical, especially since the interim report made recommendations about improving surface access to airports to make better use of existing capacity. Hence we considered it timely to prepare a systematic assessment of the problems passengers face with surface access to London's airports, and what needs to be done to improve it.

Many of our recommendations require relatively little expenditure to implement, although they do require a collective agreement by decision makers and service operators to make changes, and a willingness to accept responsibility that straddles transport and airport operators. Others are relatively cheap in transport infrastructure terms, but may be complicated because of the many different parties involved as many passengers will use services provided by more than one operator to complete their journey.

Whatever the final recommendations Sir Howard Davies makes regarding provision of future aviation capacity, it is essential for today's airport passengers and London's economy that steps are taken now to improve surface access to London's airports. This would also improve the impression visitors to London get of our capital city as well as improving journeys for all other passengers.

Stephen Locke
Chair

¹ Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) Passenger Survey Report, 2012

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1. Executive summary and key recommendations

The purpose of this report is to give a consumer perspective on surface access to London's existing airports at a time when the work of the Airports Commission review of airport capacity in London and the South East is putting airports into the spotlight. It draws on our broad evidence base which includes findings from research and the regular feedback from passengers that we receive through our appeals casework.

The report concludes that the benefit consumers derive from competition between airlines and airports can be undermined by poor surface accessibility, an opaque system of fares and ticketing, poorly designed interchanges and indifferent customer service.

In particular:

- Because the accessibility of London's airports by public transport is uneven across the region, as well as limiting the ability of air passengers to benefit from competition, this also means that the full economic and environmental benefits of this are not being realised. Passengers are forced to make longer, more expensive, more congested and less convenient journeys than they should have to
- There is an acute need for a common ticketing system and greater transparency of fares on public transport services linking the major airports with central London (and linking the airports with one another). Choice, cost and value for money are important considerations for all passengers, and they need easier access to the range of fares and options available, not just the heavily marketed premium products. Passengers are far too often pushed towards more expensive services by ticket machines, journey planners and advertising without being aware that there are cheaper alternatives. They also need to be able to buy tickets for onward travel from airports far more easily
- Public transport operators and airlines need to consider what they could do to help reduce the financial impact passengers suffer when, despite leaving plenty of time for their journey, unforeseen delays beyond their control mean they miss their flight or pre-booked onward rail or coach connection
- Improvements in the information provided at key public transport interchanges would help passengers travelling to an airport make better decisions. Providing basic flight departures information at important connecting points on the route to the airport would provide reassurance for air passengers using public transport.

The action needed to improve the experience of travelling to London's airports by public transport can be grouped into four main categories.

Immediate steps should be taken to rectify major areas of passenger disbenefit within the fares and ticketing system:

- London's Oystercard/contactless payments ticketing system should be extended to Gatwick Airport without further delay
- London's Oystercard/contactless payments ticketing system should be extended to cover journeys on Heathrow Express and Heathrow Connect to and from Heathrow Airport, and on journeys to and from Luton Airport Parkway and Stansted Airport stations
- Passengers should be easily able to buy the full range of National Rail tickets from the three stations at Heathrow Airport operated by Heathrow Express (ie Terminals 1,2,3; Terminal 4 and Terminal 5)
- More, easy to find, ticket vending machines for train travel from Luton Airport Parkway Station should be provided in the arrivals hall at Luton Airport
- Oystercard retailing outlets should be available round the clock at Heathrow Airport bus stations
- Clear, transparent and easy to find information on the costs of travel for different modes to central London (including coaches and taxi or private hire vehicles) and to other significant destinations should be provided at all London's airports. This should be available in the main languages that reflect the countries of origin of passengers using the airport.

Improvements are needed in the level of customer service and how passengers are treated by airports and transport operators:

- Existing transport interchanges giving direct access by public transport to London's airports should be better tailored to the needs of airport passengers. In particular they should be step free to make it possible to move around more easily when travelling with luggage
- Additional staff at airport rail and bus stations should be available to assist passengers with luggage, including by giving advice on the location of lifts or where best to stow large items on the train or bus
- All airports should have easy to find maps which clearly show how to reach key destinations by public transport services
- When services are disrupted for any reason clear information and advice should be provided on coping with contingency planning and this should be co-ordinated across the different transport modes on key routes to airports. This advice should be tailored to the needs of airport passengers as appropriate.

Legal and contractual barriers should be addressed to:

- Allow Crossrail to serve Terminal 5 at Heathrow Airport from its opening in 2018
- Reduce the numbers of 'empty' taxi and private hire journeys to and from airports, freeing operators to pick up passengers outside their home operating area. This would increase consumer choice, reduce operating costs, congestion and pollution and potentially allow lower fares to be charged.

Investment should be prioritised to encourage:

- Public transport operators to improve the design of their rolling stock to cater for the needs of airport and local passengers simultaneously
- Improvements in accessibility of local stations and bus stops to ensure that the entire journey to the airport can be step free
- The provision of new interchanges that reduce journey times to and from airports and increase consumer choice of airports and airlines by providing better connections to services to airports. West Hampstead on the Chiltern line is a prime example
- The provision of direct rail links from South London, North West Surrey and the Thames Valley to Heathrow Airport, regardless of the decision about aviation capacity at Heathrow.

2. Introduction

London TravelWatch represents the interests of passengers travelling to all of London's airports by National Rail and, in the case of Heathrow and London City airports, all those using TfL's services including the principal road network. Our remit also includes the needs of cyclists and pedestrians. This multi modal responsibility means that we are uniquely able to speak on behalf of both transport users and passengers. Our casework gives us a direct insight into the current concerns of people using London's transport services.

Changes to the structure of the airline industry and the ownership of airports in recent years has had a significant effect on the choice available to air passengers with the development of new airlines and routes and real terms reductions in the cost of air fares. These changes have been of major benefit to passengers and as the figures overleaf show, there was a growth of more than 5% in the numbers of people using London's airports between 2010 and 2012, which in turn benefits London's economy.

London is served by five major airports located in different parts of the greater South East region. Each has its own characteristics in terms of the airlines that use them, levels of congestion on surrounding roads, rail crowding, the types of public transport serving them, and accessibility to central London, other parts of the London area and the wider South East. There are also variations in the types of passengers using each airport and their reasons for doing so as the figures on page 9 demonstrate.

The result is that the accessibility of airports varies considerably, even for areas that are relatively close to an airport and directly affected by its operations in terms of aircraft noise or air pollution. Poor accessibility also means that whilst passengers may be able to obtain a relatively cheap fare for the flight part of their journey, the cost of travel to and from the airport may be relatively expensive depending on which airport is used. It is not unknown for the cost of getting to the airport to exceed the cost of the flight.

Passengers who factor these costs into their decision making may decide not to pursue options that would otherwise be attractive. Those who don't, run the risk of unwelcome surprises in the form of unexpectedly high costs.

This inconsistency in surface access has a bearing on the efficiency of airlines and airports in reducing consumer choice and competition between airlines.

The different modes of surface transport that were used to access each of London's major airports in 2010 are shown in the chart overleaf. Although we did not have access to the modal breakdown for 2012, it is nevertheless interesting to note that, other than at London City Airport, there was a small rise in the percentage of people using public transport to get to the airport between 2010 and 2012.

London Southend Airport is not covered in the research because, despite rapid growth in recent years, passenger numbers are still significantly less than for the other five London airports. It should be noted that the new rail station, which opened in 2011 at the airport with direct services to Stratford and Liverpool Street, has undoubtedly facilitated the growth of this airport.

Table 1: Mode of Access to the London Airports 2010 (%)²

Transport mode	Heathrow	Gatwick	Stansted	Luton	London City
Public transport					
Tube	16	-	-	-	-
Rail	10	34	25	17	-
Bus	3	0	1	1	1
Coach	9	6	21	15	0
Courtesy bus	2	3	1	0	0
DLR	-	-	-	-	52
Total taxi/private hire	26	13	9	16	34
Car based					
Hire car	3	2	3	3	1
Private car parked	13	23	20	22	3
Car dropped off	18	19	20	26	10
Total	34	44	43	51	14

Table 2: Numbers of passengers arriving at London Airports (000s)

	Heathrow	Gatwick	Stansted	Luton	London City
2010	42,138	22,390	17,298	8,440	2,724
2012	43,950	31,466	16,649	9,365	2,950

Table 3: Passengers using public transport to access London's Airports (%)

	Heathrow	Gatwick	Stansted	Luton	London City
2010	40	43	48	33	53
2012	41	44	51	33	50

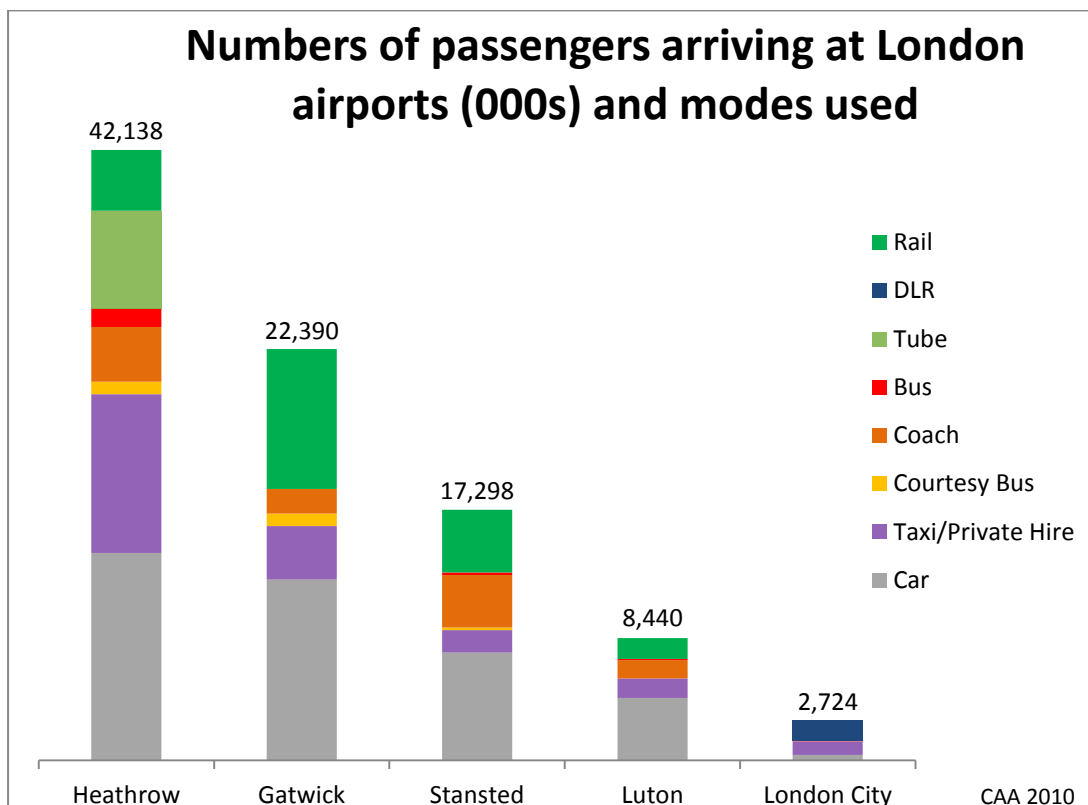
Table 4: Number of separate modes of transport used by passengers to get to their airport in 2012 (%)

Modes used	Heathrow	Gatwick	Stansted	Luton	London City
1	81.1	74.1	68.1	75.7	63.5
2	15.4	24.3	28	16	29.2
3+	3.6	1.6	3.9	8.2	7.3

Table 5: Split of business and leisure travellers in 2012 by airport (%)

	Heathrow	Gatwick	Stansted	Luton	London City
Business	29.8	15.3	14.6	15.4	53
Leisure	70.2	84.7	85.4	84.6	47

² All figures in these tables are taken from CAA Passenger Survey Reports 2010 and 2012. The 2010 figures were cited in the 2013 London Assembly report: Airport Capacity in London.



The availability of direct links to the airport is an important factor in determining whether passengers choose to make their journey by public transport or not.

Where a direct service is not available, it is the ease of connecting, and knowing that this is possible, that will determine whether a passenger, especially one travelling with luggage or young children, chooses to use public transport or a car based mode or indeed whether to use an entirely different airport.

In the case of London City Airport, the DLR provides direct services to only a very limited part of the London area. Nevertheless half of its passengers arrive by public transport which demonstrates the effect that just one infrastructure project³, can have on the accessibility of an airport, and the effectiveness of the transport interchanges that the DLR serves. This gives London City Airport a much greater catchment area because it can be reached from most parts of London by a single change. This benefit is enhanced by the fact that all of its interchanges with other modes of transport are fully step free, which is not the case for journeys to other airports. This accessibility will be further extended into the Thames Valley and North West London with the advent of Crossrail in 2018.

³ Prior to January 2009, and the opening of the DLR route between Canning Town and Woolwich Arsenal, most passengers going to or from this airport travelled by private car or taxi, with only a very small proportion using public transport. However the opening of the DLR made the airport much more accessible, not only from the immediate area served by direct train services, but also to a large part of London via interchanges at Bank, Poplar, Canning Town and Woolwich Arsenal.

The lower proportions of people using public transport to access London's other airports reflects the poorer 'one change' nature of potential journeys to these airports from within the London area.

Research for the CAA in 2011 confirmed that a major factor in passengers' choice of airport and flight is surface access⁴. Therefore improving this, whether by providing more direct services or by enabling better 'one change journeys,' could have a major impact on consumer choice. It would help to improve efficiency and competitiveness within the aviation industry and bring wider economic and societal benefits.

⁴UK Aviation Forecasts, Department for Transport, January 2013

3. Research evidence

This report draws on a variety of research conducted by London TravelWatch amongst London's transport users in recent years, from the experiences of passengers who have contacted us and the collective experience of the organisation as the transport consumer body for London. We have also drawn on material from the London Assembly Transport Committee scrutiny report on aviation capacity, the Campaign for Better Transport, and material published by the CAA and the airport operators themselves.

Before considering each of London's major airports in detail we summarise below some of our key feedback from passengers travelling to airports.

3.1 Fares and ticketing

An increasing number of our appeals relate to passengers attempting to travel to London's airports using an Oyster card. At present only Heathrow Airport is covered by Oyster (and this is only for TfL buses and London Underground). However, many passengers, especially those from outside London or abroad, believe mistakenly that because the airport name is prefixed by the word London, London's well known Oyster ticketing system will be valid for all journeys to and from the airport. In the 12 month period to July 2013 we understand that more than half of the penalty fares issued on trains from London to Gatwick related to Oyster, in other words more than 6,000 passengers faced this problem.

In general terms passengers tell us that they want a transparent and easy to understand system of fares and ticketing. The need for this is even greater for incoming air passengers who may be unfamiliar with London and tired after a long journey. An example of good practice in this respect are the clear information posters outlining options for ticket purchase that London Underground put up at each of its stations in response to our recent research.

Airports themselves could help passengers better by giving information on the relative costs of travel by different modes of transport to popular destinations. The best international airports usually have a published fixed rate taxi fare to the central area of the main city that the airport serves. This is not the case with London's airports because of the varying local licensing regimes for each individual airport and the way the airport as a private landowner manages the taxi and private hire operators serving it.



3.2 Consequential loss

Consequential loss is a major feature of both our casework and that of Bus Users UK⁵ relating to airport travel. This arises when delays on a rail, bus or coach journey to the airport result in a passenger missing a flight, meaning that the airline then requires the passenger to buy another ticket, pay an additional fee or travel on a different day, as the passenger has not presented themselves at the required time.

Under the railways' compensation arrangements (whether the National Conditions of Carriage or a Delay Repay compensation scheme) passengers are only entitled to compensation for delays on the rail part of their journey and there is no liability for effects beyond that. This often results in recompense that only covers a small proportion of the extra costs that passengers may incur as a result of any delay or disruption on the rail part of their journey. A similar situation also occurs where delayed flights mean that an advance purchase rail ticket cannot be used.

Bus and coach users can often lose out in similar ways. However, because of the lower fares charged by these modes and the different conditions of carriage under which they operate, passengers who miss their flight as a result of a delay on their bus and coach journey to the airport can often face proportionately greater losses and detriment than rail passengers.

The CAA advises air passengers to allow sufficient time in their journey to the airport to take account of potential disruptions to journeys. However, there may be limits to the reasonableness of having to take account of such a requirement in respect of scheduled public transport services, particularly for shorter air journeys or ones taken on routes which have a frequent service.

It is worth noting that air passengers arriving by private car, taxi or private hire vehicle would not qualify for any type of compensation if there was disruption to the road network. Department for Transport (DfT) statistics for journey time reliability⁶ on major roads show that on account of traffic congestion on roads serving them, London's airports have in many cases no more than 60% reliability, and that reliability is getting worse rather than better.

This means that air passengers accessing the airports by road (at many airports the majority of users) are also likely to be missing flights and suffering consequential losses. Or they feel compelled to arrive at the airport excessively early, or to use airport services, such as hotels or car parking spaces, more than strictly necessary at additional cost and using more resources than would be necessary if a timely arrival at the airport could be guaranteed. It is particularly hard to predict how long passengers need to allow for a road journey to Heathrow Airport. This also affects rail passengers using rail-air coach links to reach the airport.

The best way to reduce the likelihood of missed flights because of delays in getting to the airport is to invest in the modes of transport most likely to deliver reliable

⁵ The appeals body for bus and coach passengers outside London

⁶ Reliability of journeys on Highways Agency Roads: England, January to March 2014, Department for Transport, May 2014

journey times to and from airports. This would include both rail improvements and investment in bus priority on the road network.

However in the shorter term public transport operators and airlines might wish to consider how they could work together to give passengers greater reassurance that the financial consequences of missing a flight or train because of delays elsewhere on the journey might be mitigated if they can demonstrate that they had allowed reasonable time for their journey. This would be an essential element of any 'city hub' concept that the Airports Commission might recommend, because of the distance and therefore potential disruption and delay on any journey from the city centre to the place where passengers get on their plane.⁷

3.3 Onward journey information

Signage and information within airports to onward surface transport is something that in our view needs improvement, particularly where competing modes of transport are available. This will inevitably lead to dissatisfaction amongst passengers particularly those not familiar with the UK transport system, and who, after using services as directed from the airport, find that they could have made the journey either cheaper, quicker or more conveniently by other means.

In our experience, this problem is common in several of London's airports with instances of train operators using paid for advertising space within the airport for their services, which can be indistinguishable from normal impartial signage.



⁷ Before 1961 most air passengers would have travelled via a city centre terminal e.g. BEA at Victoria and been taken directly by coach to their aircraft. However, the growth in air travel largely rendered this difficult to maintain.

Key information about onward travel from airports should be available in the other languages that reflect the main countries of origin of arriving passengers. Poor signage at airport stations can result in passengers getting on the wrong train, often leading to extra costs as well as wasted time.

4. London's airports in detail

4.1 Heathrow Airport

Current owner: LHR Airports Ltd

Existing surface transport links:

- Rail - London Underground Piccadilly Line; Heathrow Express (a subsidiary company of LHR Airports Ltd) rail service Heathrow – Paddington; Heathrow Connect rail service (joint venture between Heathrow Express and First Great Western)⁸ local service Heathrow – Paddington
- Bus and coach - National Express and Oxford Espress coach service hub location; local bus services provided by TfL (within London) and a variety of commercial operators to places outside London (some under contract to local authorities)
- Roads - extensive road access via M4, M25 and local road network; Taxis are licensed by TfL.



⁸ Heathrow Express is a wholly owned subsidiary of LHR Airport Plc. It owns the rail infrastructure between Stockley Junction and Heathrow. It is not a franchised or open access rail operator – instead operating under its own legislative and commercial framework, with limited interaction and common ticketing with other National Rail operators.

Problems for passengers using public transport

Heathrow presents arriving passengers with difficult ticketing choices for onward travel.

TfL's Oyster/contactless system is not valid to or from Heathrow on either the Heathrow Connect service or Heathrow Express, and there are no plans that we are aware of to include 'contactless payment' as an option for these services either. As the airport is also served by London Underground's Piccadilly line, this makes the airport 'half in/half out' of the well-known ticketing system that most visitors to London would expect to use.

A further complication is that, because Heathrow Express is not formally part of the National Rail network as a franchised or open access operator, passengers are unable to buy the full range of tickets or destinations of National Rail at the airport. Ticket machines at the Heathrow stations only sell a limited range of tickets to Heathrow Express/Heathrow Connect destinations. There is also limited ticket office capability through information desks. The London Underground stations at Heathrow are similarly not able to issue a comprehensive range of National Rail tickets.



Similarly for passengers travelling to Heathrow Airport from National Rail stations within London, many ticket vending machines are configured such that passengers typing in 'Heathrow Airport' are only offered tickets routed via Heathrow Express rather than the cheaper route via the Piccadilly line. Only the few passengers 'in the know' will be aware that they need to request a ticket for Zone U1256 in order to purchase the cheaper option.

Buses at Heathrow also have divergent policies on ticketing. There is a 'free fare zone' supported by Heathrow Airport Ltd that covers all buses within the confines of the airport and its immediate vicinity. TfL buses offer the ability to use Oyster or contactless cards bank payment cards as tickets and indeed no longer accept cash. However, non-TfL buses from Heathrow are almost all exclusively cash only services with no facilities for payment by contactless bank cards or smartcards. The airports' airline association⁹ has expressed concern that the withdrawal of cash on TfL's services could lead to serious inconvenience to passengers arriving at Heathrow and not travelling to central London who have no access to Oyster or contactless cards, particularly those with limited English and travelling to visit friends and relatives, and travelling overnight. There will also be confusion as the other (commercial) bus services continue to accept cash.

The Crossrail and Thameslink projects will do much to improve the accessibility of Heathrow, Gatwick and Luton airports through the interchange at Farringdon between the two lines. This will provide more opportunities for 'one change' travel by public transport to and from the airport, both from within London and from other regions such as the East of England that account for smaller but significant proportions of traffic to these airports.

However, at present there are no plans to run Crossrail trains to Terminal 5 at Heathrow. As this terminal is the largest in terms of passenger volumes, this omission is likely to reduce the utility of Crossrail for passengers travelling via this terminal because it will add a 'second change' into the journey.¹⁰ The rail industry needs to urgently consider how to rectify this.

In addition, even with the development of Crossrail and Thameslink, there are areas of London that are poorly served in terms of rail access to airports. The most significant of these are South West London and North West Surrey to Heathrow. Currently rail links from these areas are poor with passengers expected to travel to the airport by car, taxi/private hire vehicles, bus or a combination of train and bus. The lack of such a link substantially contributes to traffic congestion and poor air quality in the vicinity of the airport and surrounding areas. Yet, as noted in the London Assembly report on airport capacity in London, these areas generate a large number of passengers to London's airports.

Over many years local authorities, BAA plc and its successors promoted a scheme known as 'Airtrack' that would have provided direct rail access from South West London, North West Surrey and Berkshire to Heathrow Airport through Terminal 5. This scheme was at an advanced stage before it was dropped by BAA in 2010 in the light of the decision not to pursue a third runway at Heathrow Airport and opposition to certain aspects of the proposed scheme.

The London Borough of Wandsworth, in particular, remains keen to progress such a scheme because of the benefits to its residents and those of adjacent boroughs in terms of reduced road traffic congestion and improved air quality. The DfT national transport model shows that on the strategic road network around Heathrow there is

⁹ Heathrow AOC website

¹⁰ Heathrow Airport estimate that on the current proposed Crossrail service this would only result in a modal switch toward public transport of 1%, and this was cited by them as a reason to decline investing in Crossrail.

already severe congestion, and that this is only likely to increase and spread without further intervention¹¹, and, as noted above, journey time reliability for road users accessing Heathrow is already extremely poor. The Campaign for Better Transport has also highlighted the severe stresses on surface transport to Heathrow that already exist in terms of congestion, crowding and poor reliability of journey times.

Wandsworth Council, disappointed that the benefits of such a scheme to their area would not be realised, subsequently developed a scheme similar to 'Airtrack' but which was more affordable, better integrated with existing rail services and took account of some of the opposition to detailed parts of the previous scheme. This proposal is known as 'Airtrack Lite'.

We have supported both of these schemes because of the benefits that flow to passengers in terms of shorter journey times, reduced need to transfer between buses and trains, and improved connectivity of Heathrow Airport from Waterloo, Clapham Junction, Richmond, Twickenham, Staines, Woking, Guildford, Bracknell and Wokingham. All of these stations also offer good onward connections to other areas served by rail.

Table 5: Stations that would be served by 'Airtrack' and potential onward connections

Station	Direct onward connections to
Waterloo	Kent, South East London, Tunbridge Wells and stations to Hastings, Bakerloo, Northern, Jubilee and Waterloo & City lines
Vauxhall	Brixton where other links are poor (via the Victoria Line)
Clapham Junction	Victoria, Croydon, South and South West London, Milton Keynes, Watford Junction, Surrey, Gatwick Airport, West and East Sussex and London Overground's West and East London Lines
Richmond	Richmond – Stratford service of London Overground and the District Line
Twickenham	Teddington, Kingston and Wimbledon
Staines	Windsor and Weybridge
Woking	Stations toward Wimbledon, Aldershot, Alton, Basingstoke, Hampshire, Dorset, Salisbury, East Devon
Guildford	Stations toward Wokingham, Portsmouth, Gatwick Airport and Leatherhead
Ascot	Stations toward Aldershot
Bracknell	Major local town with onward bus connections into the local hinterland that has close ties with Heathrow
Wokingham	Stations toward Guildford

The importance of the link to North West Surrey and the onward connections to Hampshire, Dorset, Wiltshire, West Sussex and Devon cannot be overstated, as this would bring so many of these areas into the 45, 60 and 120 minute catchments that the commission considers crucial to the sustainability of any option for additional airport capacity.

¹¹ As quoted in: Heathrow and surface transport stress, Campaign for Better Transport, 2013

As we understand it, the current proposal for a southern rail route to Heathrow Airport only envisages a service to Clapham Junction and Waterloo because of capacity issues at Woking, where there is a conflict in demand because of the growth of rail usage into London. However, this would route passengers from Woking and beyond via a longer, time consuming, more congested and crowded route into London via Clapham Junction which would not be as attractive to airport passengers. It would also mean that coach services would need to be retained from Woking when these could be replaced by the link. If capacity at Woking is the constraint, then any plans for the southern rail link must include a scheme to provide additional capacity at Woking to accommodate both an airport service and an enhanced London service.

Similarly the other proposed rail link to Heathrow Airport from the Great Western Main Line near Langley would reduce journey times from the Thames Valley (Slough, Maidenhead, Reading and Oxford) to the airport and should therefore reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality. Again these areas are significant generators of London airport traffic, and improving public transport connectivity from them should be seen as a priority.

Combined, the 'Airtrack' and 'Western Rail Access to Heathrow' schemes could serve over 25% of demand for surface access to Heathrow from outside of London¹².

Without the implementation of both the 'Airtrack' and 'Western Rail Access to Heathrow' schemes it is difficult to envisage how Heathrow Airport could achieve any significant improvement in public transport share. We therefore recommend that both of these schemes are pursued irrespective of the decision on whether or not to expand aviation capacity at this airport.

¹² CAA Passenger Survey Report, 2012

4.2 Gatwick Airport

Current owner: Global Infrastructure Partners

Existing surface transport links:

- Rail - Served by National Rail station operated by Southern, train services to most parts of London and the South East operated by Southern, Gatwick Express and Thameslink as part of the Thameslink Southern Great Northern franchise; also First Great Western service to Reading via Guildford
- Bus and coach - National Express and Oxford Express coach hub, Easybus minibus service to Central London, local bus network provided mainly by Metrobus (with some services under contract to local authorities) – all buses accept cash only to buy tickets
- Road - Extensive road access via the M23, M25 and local road network. Taxis are not permitted to pick up at the airport, but the private hire vehicle concession managed by the airport effectively regulates this activity.



Major problems for passengers using public transport

The interim findings of the Airports Commission highlighted the need to extend London's Oyster smart ticketing system to Gatwick Airport and recommended that this happen. This recommendation is welcome, because it will resolve a major issue for passengers and should be implemented without further delay. The fact that Oyster is not valid for travel between London and Gatwick Airport Station is the cause of much passenger confusion and frustration as so many passengers wrongly assume it must be so as the airport is described as London Gatwick.

Poor signage and information has led to many passengers boarding the wrong train to London and finding themselves issued with a penalty fare when it transpires that their ticket is not valid for the service on which they are travelling. This happens when passengers mistakenly board the non stop Gatwick Express rather than the Southern train and will not realise their mistake until they try to exit the platform at Victoria Station. It also happens to passengers travelling from Gatwick Airport Station to East Croydon or London Bridge where they have a choice between using a Thameslink (formerly First Capital Connect) or Southern service. Passengers purchasing a ticket for the former will pay slightly less but will only be able to use it on Thameslink trains whereas passengers paying more for a Southern ticket will be able to use it on either service.

We have also heard of passengers finding themselves at Victoria on the Gatwick Express who had been trying to reach Farringdon Station on a Thameslink train. The fact that some former Gatwick Express rolling stock (still branded as such) is also used on some Southern services to London Bridge does nothing to lessen the confusion.

The new platforms for the Gatwick Express will help to reduce some, but not all, of this confusion.

Another major problem for air passengers arriving at Gatwick Airport who want to continue their journey by train are the lengthy queues to buy tickets at both the ticket office and the ticket machines in the station. Once again, extending smart ticketing to the station (both TfL's Oystercard and Go Ahead's key) will help to reduce but by no means eliminate this problem. Further problems can face passengers on reaching Victoria with more queues to buy tickets from the ticket offices and ticket machines at the Underground station. TfL have told us that approximately 40% of the passengers queuing to buy tickets at Victoria Underground Station have come from Gatwick – despite the fact that Southern now sells preloaded Oystercards at Gatwick Airport Station as well as both selling and topping up Oystercards at their ticket office on Victoria National Rail Station.



TfL now put their own staff on the concourse at Gatwick Airport Station to assist passengers using the ticket machines and advise about onward travel into London even though it is outside their area of operation, a good example of customer service.

Major investments are already taking place at Gatwick Airport Station with new platforms, and enhanced station environments at Redhill and Reading that will allow more through trains from Reading and a potential extension of services to Oxford. The North Downs route to Reading is, however, hampered by low frequencies and longer journey times because of the diesel multiple unit stock that has to be employed on this route on account of gaps in the electrification provided¹³. Currently around 16% of all demand at Gatwick Airport comes from the districts served by this line, and so there is a considerable opportunity to increase usage of this route¹⁴.

Electrification of this route would get over the impediments of the gaps in electrification, and open up the possibility, if combined with a southern rail access link to Heathrow Airport (via Woking and Staines), to efficiently serve areas that are in the catchment areas for Heathrow and Gatwick, and a low cost way of providing a Heathrow to Gatwick rail link. It would reduce journey times to Gatwick by bringing major centres such as Guildford, Aldershot, Reading, and other parts of Surrey, Hampshire, Berkshire and Oxfordshire within the 45, 60 and 120 minute catchment areas for surface access advocated by the Airports Commission.

The Thameslink improvement programme will see new through services to the Great Northern route to Peterborough and Cambridge, and improve connectivity to North and North East London through interchange at Finsbury Park. As noted already under Heathrow, access to regions such as the East of England will be substantially improved under this programme. Crossrail will substantially improve access to Gatwick via the interchange at Farringdon to West and East London with its 'one change' functionality. This would be significantly enhanced by the addition of services from the West Coast Main Line as recently announced by the Department for Transport.

However, access to North West London, Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire from Gatwick and Luton airports could be substantially further improved with a major reduction in journey times (of around 20 minutes on journeys currently over an hour or two hours in length) from these areas by the construction of a station on the Chiltern line at West Hampstead. This would allow interchange with the Thameslink route. West Hampstead is also served by other routes such as the London Overground Richmond/Clapham Junction to Stratford service and the Jubilee line. Creating such an interchange at West Hampstead is something we have advocated for many years because it would bring significant local and regional benefits of which improved connectivity to airports would be a relatively small part.

¹³ Between Gatwick Airport and Reading the route is electrified at the beginning, end and middle with only the sections between Wokingham and Ash, Shalford Junction and Reigate with no electrification. About 30 route miles would need to be electrified.

¹⁴ CAA Passenger Survey Report, 2012

To improve the connectivity of Gatwick Airport, both with or without airport expansion, filling the gaps in the electrification of the North Downs route should be regarded as a priority for investment.

To take further advantage of the Thameslink improvement programme, investment should be made to improve Finsbury Park station as an interchange and a station should also be constructed at West Hampstead on the Chiltern line to provide an interchange with Thameslink trains to and from Gatwick and Luton airports.

On both road and rail links into London there are major capacity and resilience constraints in the area around the village of Hooley, where the M23 and A23 join together at junction seven of the M23, and where the main railway routes via Redhill (slow line) and the Quarry (fast direct line) pass through.

The rail route suffers from defects in the original Victorian design as a result of the excessively steep sided cuttings at this location leading to and from tunnels. These often require lengthy and disruptive closures to maintain them properly or to conduct emergency repairs after landslips and rock falls.

The road route suffers from congestion through the village due to the stretches of single carriageway road. This affects coach services running to and from Gatwick Airport and local TfL bus services that run via the existing road. A possible solution to both issues might be to deck the railway cutting to form a tunnel and use the space above for a replacement road route that would by-pass the village and remove the existing bottlenecks.

4.3 Stansted Airport

Current owner: Manchester Airports Group

Existing surface access links:

- Rail - Stansted Airport station is operated by Abellio Greater Anglia, their services include the Stansted Express to central London and local services to the Lea Valley and Cambridge. Arriva Cross Country operates between Stansted Airport, Cambridge, Peterborough, Leicester and Birmingham
- Bus and coach - National Express and Terravision operate a coach hub at the airport. Local bus services are provided by a number of operators, some under contract to local authorities
- Road - Extensive road access via the M11, A120, M25 and local roads. Taxis and private hire vehicles are managed by a concession operated by Stansted Airport.

Major problems for passengers using public transport

Consequential loss is a common complaint from passengers on the Stansted Express. Many passengers believe that if they miss their flight due to delays on the train service, then the train operator will refund them the cost of their flight. The lack of Oyster/contactless availability has also been a problem for passengers using this airport.



Stansted Airport has the longest journey times of all the London airports to central London by both rail and coach. It also acts as a regional airport for Cambridge and East Anglia. The airport and other stakeholders have an aspiration to substantially reduce the rail journey time to central London. This would require substantial investment in additional track capacity, network resilience and reliability along the route to London to meet demand and reduce instances of disruption and overcrowding. We would support investment in such a scheme provided that there is no adverse impact on the ability to provide local services in an area which is also expected to absorb a large increase in housing and population.

The route is also proposed as a potential outlet for any Crossrail 2 line from North East to South West London. Crossrail 2 would substantially increase the accessibility of Stansted Airport if an option is chosen that includes it in this project.

Crossrail will improve accessibility of some parts of London to Stansted Airport through 'one change' interchange at Liverpool Street with the Stansted Express or at Stratford for slower but cheaper trains or coach services.

However, access to South London will remain more difficult, with most passengers needing to change at least twice, and journey times longer in the absence of a second Crossrail route with links to this area.

Stansted has a less than ideal connectivity to Farringdon (which has the potential to be a location for an airport hub for central London, on account of its Thameslink and Crossrail connectivity to Heathrow, Gatwick and Luton airports) because it requires passengers to change at Liverpool Street. However this is not insurmountable, as Thameslink services could be extended in some form to Stansted via an enhanced Lea Valley route. To do this would require the reinstatement of existing short curve lines from Tottenham Hale to South Tottenham, and between Upper Holloway and Kentish Town.

4.4 Luton Airport

Current owner: Luton Borough Council – operations managed by London Luton Airport Operations Ltd

Existing surface access links:

- Rail - Luton Airport Parkway rail station (located 1.5 miles from the airport) is served by Thameslink and East Midlands Trains to and from St. Pancras International, and to the East Midlands (EMT) and Gatwick Airport/Brighton (Thameslink). A shuttle bus links the Parkway station to the airport
- Bus and coach - National Express use Luton Airport as a coach hub Easybus/Green Line operate services to central London in competition with National Express. An extensive local bus network is operated by a variety of operators on a commercial basis – some using the Luton – Dunstable busway that extends to the airport. All buses only accept cash to buy tickets
- Road - Extensive road access via the M1, A505, M25 and local roads. Taxis and private hire vehicles are licensed by Luton Borough Council.

Major problems for passengers using public transport

Currently, the proportion of air passengers using public transport to get to Luton Airport is the lowest of London's airports. Passengers arriving at Luton Airport Parkway Station have to make onward connection to the airport building by using a shuttle bus.

The key issues that passengers complain to us about in respect of Luton Airport all relate to fares and ticketing. Passengers complain that Oyster is not valid for their journey to or from London. The inconsistency of ticket conditions for parties of two or more passengers between East Midlands Trains and First Capital Connect (now Thameslink) also causes problems. This has resulted in passengers inadvertently travelling on East Midlands Trains and being issued with a Penalty Fare as a result.

It is difficult to buy train tickets at Luton Airport for travel into London (or elsewhere). There is one machine in the baggage area of arrivals, one desk staffed by one individual near the entrance to the airport and one machine where the shuttle bus that takes passengers to the railway station stops, which normally has a long queue to use it. The shuttle bus is provided free to passengers who already have a National Rail ticket but costs £1.60 if the passenger does not have a train ticket. The drivers do not sell train tickets.

We recommend that, in light of train access improvements in prospect and the airport's substantial ambitions for growth, the train operators should urgently increase the number of ticket machines in the airport building, some of which should accept cash payments, and the airport should advertise their locations prominently. Alternatively, the shuttle bus to the railway station should be provided free or the fare paid deducted from the cost of any rail ticket purchased on arrival at Luton Airport Parkway Station.

Luton Airport has, and will benefit from, the Thameslink improvement programme and the Luton – Dunstable busway. As noted previously, accessibility by a 'one change' station will improve with the opening of Crossrail and the interchange at

Farringdon, and could be improved further with the opening of an interchange at West Hampstead on the Chiltern route.

In addition, there is potential to improve rail access to the airport from the East Midlands area with the electrification of the Midland Main Line, the re-opening of the East – West rail route from Oxford, Bicester and Milton Keynes and potentially more locally by a diversion of the Watford Junction to St Albans Abbey branch line to St Albans City station.

We support the already agreed and funded electrification of the Midland Main Line and the reopening of the East – West rail route. This latter would produce greater benefit if a projected extension from Bedford to Cambridge were included.

4.5 London City Airport

Current owner: Global Infrastructure Partners

Existing surface transport links:

- Rail - Docklands Light Railway (DLR) Bank to Woolwich Arsenal and, peak hour only, Stratford International – Woolwich Arsenal
- Bus and coach - Local bus network provided by TfL. No express coaches serve this airport
- Road - Road access is via the A13, A406, local roads and the Woolwich Free Ferry. Taxis are licensed by TfL.

Major problems for passengers using public transport

Public transport is very simple here as it is only served by the DLR and TfL (Oyster/contactless only) buses. Nevertheless we have had appeals casework relating to the poor reliability of ticket vending machines at this location, and the fact that it is only possible to purchase tickets to a limited range of National Rail destinations at this station. For example a passenger wanting to travel to Guildford would have to use an Oystercard or contactless payment card to get them to Waterloo and then purchase another ticket to continue their journey.



Accessibility of the airport to Essex and East London would be substantially improved if the service to Stratford International could be enhanced to an all day every day service, because of the better connections that this would bring at West Ham (with the District and Hammersmith & City Lines and the c2c network to Southend), Stratford (with the Central Line, London Overground services to Richmond and Clapham Junction as well as Crossrail (from 2018) and Greater Anglia services and Stratford International (with Southeastern High Speed services to North and East Kent).

We therefore recommend this as means of building on this airport's good record of increasing the public transport share of its modes of access.

Accessibility could, however, be even more substantially improved if a new station was provided at the airport on the Abbey Wood branch of Crossrail. The line passes directly underneath the airport in tunnel and emerges near to the main terminal briefly, which could provide a potential site for a station. This would give a direct link to Canary Wharf, the City, Farringdon, the West End, Heathrow and the Thames Valley.

If the business case to provide a new station was not sufficiently strong we recommend as an alternative that a dedicated link should be built from Custom House Station to City Airport.

Table 6: Improving surface access to London's airports - summary of recommendations

Fares and ticketing	Legal and contractual	Infrastructure
Heathrow		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend Oyster/contactless system to Heathrow Express and Heathrow Connect • Introduce ability to buy full range of National Rail tickets • Add 24/7 Oyster agency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiate Crossrail service to Terminal 5 • Publish and agree fixed rate taxi fare to central London 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Western rail access to Heathrow (WRATH) • Provide southern rail access link to North West Surrey and South West London
Gatwick		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend Oyster/contactless system at earliest opportunity 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electrify North Downs rail route • New interchange station at West Hampstead on Chiltern line
Stansted		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend Oyster/contactless system at earliest opportunity 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional track capacity between London and Stansted
Luton		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend Oyster/contactless system at earliest opportunity 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New interchange station at West Hampstead on Chiltern line
London City		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide full range of National Rail destinations and ticketing from DLR ticket vending machines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish and agree fixed rate taxi fare to central London 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce all day Woolwich Arsenal – Stratford International DLR service

5. Other key issues

5.1 A seamless journey to the airport

For many people the journey to or from the airport is part of a significant life event - such as a holiday or reunion with family and friends - consequently any problems experienced on that journey will not be quickly forgotten.

The interim report of the Airports Commission noted that *'Passengers do not think of their journey only in terms of its airborne component. The length of time it takes them to reach the airport, the cost, quality, comfort and convenience of that journey and the likelihood that it will be subject to delay are all important considerations.'*

Using public transport to get to the airport poses a number of risks (such as missing a plane or being unable to cope with luggage) particularly if the journey requires a change en route. For this reason many people will choose instead to drive or take a taxi as they believe this will reduce the likelihood of problems arising. However, if increased numbers of passengers were to travel by car or taxi to and from airports, this would add to existing congestion on the road network and the journey would not necessarily be any smoother.



The most effective way to reduce the risks associated with using public transport to airports is to provide direct links to airports from as many locations as possible, and, where no direct service is feasible, to extend the options to make the journey with only one change to ensure that the journey to the airport is as seamless as possible.

We think that a lot more people would make their journey to the airport by public transport if they could do so by either a direct connection or only one change, however if more than one change is involved this option becomes much less attractive. The statistics shown in table 4 (p9) confirm that the vast majority of passengers choose to travel to the airport via a mode of transport that means they can do so without having to change on the way.

Passengers have told us that improvements to accessibility, layout and information provision at rail stations and at key interchanges have the greatest potential to make their journeys easier¹⁵. Hence this is where investment should be prioritised to improve public transport access to London's airports.

Stations where accessibility has been improved, for example by installing a lift or ramp, are easier for people with impaired mobility to use, either for the first time or more often than previously. These stations then tend to out perform stations which have not been improved in terms of revenue and passenger usage growth. The benefit of such improvements grows exponentially as the accessibility of the rest of the rail and bus network improves. There is limited benefit to improving the accessibility of public transport at important interchanges unless all passengers are able to reach it easily from their own local station or stop.



All airport rail stations are fully accessible, but the presence of steps and excessive stepping distances between the edge of the platform and the train at stations from which passengers can make a direct connection to the airport are a major deterrent

¹⁵ Draft report on interchanges prepared for London TravelWatch 2014

to airport users using public transport as their means of surface access to the airport especially if they are travelling with heavy luggage or young children.

The layout of interchanges en route to airports can have a significant impact on the propensity of air passengers to use public transport to access airports. The best interchange is one that is intuitive and allows passengers to navigate it in an obvious and easy fashion. Interchanges without good signage, or where this is obscured by commercial advertising, and where staff are either not available or cannot be found, do not work well for passengers

Clear and consistent information is particularly important for passengers travelling to and from airports as they are more likely to be unfamiliar with the journey than other passengers and will seek regular reassurance that they are in the right place at the right time. Providing information on the status of flights from those airports with direct services to airports at key stations would give further reassurance. The need for information is even more important when there is disruption to transport services.

The availability of staff to provide assistance and information is especially important at interchanges. As noted above, airport passengers, and other less frequent users, need a higher level of reassurance than regular travellers. The presence of staff helps with this, and also, where necessary, staff can assist with luggage and boarding and alighting from trains or buses.

The visible presence of staff also gives passengers reassurance in respect of their personal safety. Our research into what consumers think of the London travelling environment highlighted personal security concerns at certain London Underground and National Rail stations to a greater degree than at bus or tram stops. This is especially true for women and for those making journeys at night, particularly airport passengers, for whom many journeys involve late night and early morning travel during the hours of darkness, and because these passengers are more likely to be carrying luggage, making them more vulnerable to crimes such as robbery.

Passengers consider that toilets are the most important facility that operators should provide and that these should be free of charge. They strongly object to being charged for the use of toilets. They also resent being unable to access the toilets because they do not have the correct change or because they were unable to take their luggage through turnstiles. The arrangements at St. Pancras work much better for passengers because the 'international' status of this station means that charges do not normally occur and therefore they do not need turnstiles.

Passengers also expect interchanges to have reasonable levels of seating, shelter, waiting rooms, refreshments and shops. The longer the likely wait for an onward connection the more essential these facilities become.

5.2 Customer service

Airport operators and airlines recognise that good customer service is an important factor in encouraging people to travel via their airport or on their flights. But there is also a lot that good customer service could do to improve the experience of travelling to the airport by public transport, and this is a point that the interim report of the Airports' Commission makes well:

'Not all passengers have the same expectations regarding their journey to or from the airport. A passenger on a short-haul flight using a low-cost carrier probably has different expectations to a passenger emerging from a long-haul overnight flight. Meeting passengers' needs in terms of surface transport often means offering a range of options, with a range of prices. Airlines respond to the needs of their customers; if passengers do not want to travel to an airport because of the quality of its surface transport, airlines will be less likely to schedule flights to or from it. Poor surface transport can send the message that an airport is "second best" or "not the city's main airport". For long-haul passengers, particularly those with a choice of airlines, these are significant issues.'

Recent advertising by Heathrow Airport has emphasised the reintroduction of free portage from its car parks to the terminals as a good example of customer service. Similarly, key interchange points en route to and from airports would warrant higher levels of staffing to help passengers to easily and effectively make their journeys to and from airports – perhaps through providing a multi-lingual airport ambassador able to help anticipate the needs and queries of airport passengers?

5.3 The city air hub

The Airports Commission has suggested that London as a city could be regarded as an air hub in future. In this case London's transport interchanges would need to become effective extensions to London's airports, and with facilities to match.

This would make it even more important that the rail and air industries work together to help passengers facing disruption when travelling to airports, for example by helping air passengers to complete their journey to the airport and by sharing service information.

The ideal location for such a hub would be a central location from which there would be easy access to all of London's airports.

For coaches, Victoria Coach Station already fulfils this function with direct services to all London's airports, although it would need some additional facilities to be compatible with the air hub concept below.

For rail there is no such location currently in operation, but the completion of the Crossrail and Thameslink rail projects would potentially allow the creation of such a hub at Farringdon with direct connections to Heathrow, Gatwick and Luton airports operational from 2018.

London City, Southend and Stansted airports will be also accessible through Crossrail (by changing at Custom House or Liverpool Street stations) from this date. However these airports could be directly connected to Farringdon through extending



Crossrail or reinstating rail lines. A link to London City Airport on the Abbey Wood branch of Crossrail could be made from Custom House Station and the route could be extended from Shenfield to Southend Airport. Direct access from Farringdon to Stansted Airport could be made by providing a link onto the Thameslink service by using reinstated short length rail lines at Kentish Town and South Tottenham to reach an enhanced Lea Valley rail route to Stansted.

Farringdon has the advantage of being both centrally located and having potential land and buildings available nearby on account of its proximity to the former extensive underground rail sidings for Smithfield meat market currently used as car parking. As well as by rail, a hub at Farringdon would be easily accessible by foot, cycle, bus, car, taxi and private hire vehicle from both the West End and City.

Information would be readily available for all flights from all of London's airports and airline booking and check in facilities would be available at the hub, with comfortable and appealing waiting and 'meet and greet' facilities for passengers, with appropriate catering facilities and 'no charge' toilet and baby change facilities. The ability to 'meet and greet' would reduce the number of journeys made to airports by people not travelling by air but meeting or seeing off their friends, relatives or colleagues.

Emergency and reasonable cost overnight accommodation would be available for passengers stranded by disruption or wishing to make use of early morning trains to airports.

The hub would be managed by one named manager who would take responsibility for resolving issues in and around the location which might have a negative impact on passengers, irrespective of the owner or operator.

5.4 Vehicle design

The design and functionality of trains and buses can play an important part in making the journey more comfortable for passengers travelling to and from airports. The needs of airport passengers can be significantly different to that of other users. They are regularly encumbered by larger amounts of luggage, travelling in small groups rather than individually, and often unfamiliar with the route they are travelling. These factors need to be taken into account when decisions are made on service specification and the design of vehicles that will be used for airport journeys.

In many cases the vehicles used on airport routes will be those that take account of the specific needs of air passengers. Examples of this include: Heathrow Express trains¹⁶, buses on route X26 (Croydon – Heathrow) with additional large luggage racks, and the coaches used by National Express and Oxford Express to and from Heathrow and Gatwick airports.

However it is not always feasible or economically viable for services to operate with vehicles that are exclusively geared towards the needs of airport passengers. For example, the current vehicles used on Gatwick Express trains¹⁷ are more suited to long distance rail travel rather than the relatively short duration journey between

¹⁶ Class 333

¹⁷ Class 442

Gatwick Airport and London Victoria. In this case, it is welcome that the new Thameslink Southern Great Northern franchisee has committed to replacing these vehicles during the course of their franchise.

The trains¹⁸ currently used on many Brighton – Gatwick Airport – Bedford services are an example of poor practice. In off-peak hours these services are not sufficiently busy to cause conflicts between airport and non-airport users. However, at peak times when the trains reach East Croydon, airport travellers are joined by a large number of regular commuters and there is a need for baggage to be reorganised and moved from gangways and seats to accommodate these passengers, often with a performance impact. This is a poor outcome for both airline travellers and regular commuters alike.



Our research has shown that, in general, passengers travelling to and from airports prefer trains and buses to have layouts that enable easy boarding and alighting with plenty of space to manoeuvre.

This coalescence of the needs of different types of passengers should, if adopted by the rail industry in rolling stock design, reduce the need for dedicated 'airport' rolling

¹⁸ Class 319

stock on services which serve both airport and non-airport markets. This in turn would reduce both procurement and operating costs, and enable closer integration and inter working with existing train fleets.

A prime candidate for the use of such stock would be services to Heathrow Airport via any 'Western Rail Access to Heathrow' or 'Airtrack' routes, where integration and interworking with other local rail services would be essential to ensure that the most efficient use of rail capacity was achieved.

6. Conclusions

Surface access arrangements must be integral to the planning of new airports and the operation and expansion of existing ones. A decision to increase aviation capacity at any airport must be accompanied by a surface access travel plan as the interim report of the Airports Commission recommended.

Passengers travelling to or from the capital by air have the choice of five major airports within a 40 mile radius, all of which can be reached by public transport in less than 50 minutes from central London. For many destinations air passengers will not only have a choice of airlines but also airports from which they can travel, and the growth of budget airlines means there are some very competitive prices on offer.

However, if the journey to or from the airport is unnecessarily difficult or costly, then the consumer benefits of competition within the aviation industry begin to be undermined. The door to door journey is only as strong as its weakest link and if a passenger experiences problems on the surface element of their trip this will inevitably colour their view even if the flight itself was a good one.

For the infrequent traveller, or one who has never visited London before, uncertainty about what the journey to or from the airport may be like can make the experience a stressful one. They may worry about how to reach their end destination from the airport, how they will manage heavy luggage, where they will be able to buy a ticket, which ticket they need, whether they will have the right currency or bank card with which to pay for their travel and what happens if something goes wrong. Passengers travelling to the airport have the added concern that they will be delayed and miss their flight.

Sir Howard Davies' interim report notes that improvements to surface transport will help to make airports with spare capacity more attractive to airlines and passengers. We think there is also a lot more that could and should be done to improve the experience of getting to or from London's airports by public transport for the benefit of all air passengers.

We support the interim recommendations of the Airports Commission that a package of improvements is needed, including:

- The enhancement of Gatwick Airport station
- Further work to develop a strategy for enhancing Gatwick's road and rail access
- Work on developing proposals to improve the rail link between London and Stansted
- Work to provide rail access into Heathrow from the South
- The provision of smart ticketing facilities at airport stations.

We agree that these measures are worthwhile in their own terms, but none of them, either in isolation or in combination, go far enough to realise the potential public transport offers to provide a convenient, comfortable and reliable way to get to the airport; helping to make better use of London's airport capacity.

In addition to the infrastructure improvements listed above, action is needed to:

- Ensure Crossrail stops at Heathrow Airport's Terminal 5 and has a dedicated link from Custom House station into London City Airport
- Provide a station on the Chiltern rail route at West Hampstead to enable passengers to connect onto Thameslink and London Overground rail services and London Underground's Jubilee line
- Develop new rolling stock that better caters for the needs of airport and local passengers simultaneously
- Continue to improve accessibility of local stations and bus stops to ensure that the entire journey to the airport can be step free
- Ensure that all train and bus stations have fully accessible toilets provided free of charge to passengers with a ticket to travel. They should also have an adequate level of under cover seating.

Excellent customer service with a real focus on the needs of passengers can go a long way to compensate for poor infrastructure. Conversely its absence is something that will be particularly noticed by air passengers. Customer service is seen as a key point of differentiation between airlines so many air passengers will receive an excellent service on their flight and at the airport and may well judge what is provided by London's public transport operators by the same standards.

Our checklist for good customer service for airport-related journeys recommends the following:

1. Accessibility

- All passengers using public transport in and around London should be able to 'turn up and go' without needing to book advance assistance. Arriving air passengers unsure about whether their entire onward journey will be step free should be able to get such information at the airport, along with assistance to plan a suitable alternative route if necessary

2. Staff

- Appropriate numbers of staff at stations are essential to provide reassurance, advice and assistance to air passengers who are more likely to be unfamiliar with the journey and be travelling with luggage
- Staff should be highly visible, well trained, proactive in engaging with the public and able to communicate easily with passengers with special needs. They should understand what are likely to be the key concerns of air passengers
- Staff should be easily able to give advice on coping with planned and unplanned disruptions to journeys to and from the airport, and to assist with contingency planning

- Additional staff should be provided at airport rail and bus stations to help passengers load and unload baggage onto luggage trolleys and also to advise them on the best way to stow their baggage on the vehicles
- Multi-lingual airport ambassadors should be provided at key interchange points on routes to London's major airports.

3. Information

- 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.

4. Fares and ticketing

- Fares charged for different journeys, and by different operators for the same journey, should be clearly set out wherever tickets are sold or journeys started
- London's Oystercard / contactless bank card payments system should be valid on all journeys to London's airports. Ticket purchase for onward travel should be possible round the clock at major airports to cater for passengers arriving for early flights or on late flights which have been delayed. Passengers should be able to purchase tickets at the airport for through travel to National Rail destinations outside London.

5. Coordination

- The one team transport approach that worked so well during the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games should be adopted at key interchange points en route to London's airports – particularly to coordinate advice to air passengers on how to get to the airport during times of unplanned disruption.

Improving the experience of travelling to or from London's airports would not only help to make best use of aviation capacity it would also further enhance the attractiveness of London as a destination.

Appendix A – Key insights from our recent research

Buying tickets and paying for travel

- Having empowered and knowledgeable staff available to answer passenger queries and resolve problems
- Providing help at ticket vending machines and having enough machines
- Having a clear and transparent ticketing system that is easy to understand, with information on how fares are structured and applied, including how and when Oyster or other smartcards can be used
- To reduce ticket and fares complexity, particularly for journeys starting at airports
- To dispel myths surrounding the availability of advance purchase tickets

Getting accurate and timely information

- Information needs to be reliable, transparent, accurate, in real time, and multi-modal between air and other transport modes
- Apps and social media information outlets need to be developed, but links to those without access to these means need to be maintained also
- Improvement works need to be better publicised, including the benefits they bring to passengers.

Addressing barriers to using public transport to airports

- Improved layout of carriages and vehicles to enable passengers to get on and off more easily
- Improved station accessibility for people with mobility impairments, but also by extension to air travellers with luggage
- Reducing step/gap issues at station platforms, which are more difficult for passengers with luggage to negotiate
- Dealing with crowding on trains, including dealing with conflict between air travellers and other passengers
- Tackling litter and graffiti on rail routes serving airports
- Improving the catering and toilet facilities at stations
- Removing additional charges for the use of toilets at main line stations
- Improving the reliability and punctuality of buses serving airports

Appendix B – Passenger case studies

The following case studies demonstrate the difficulties for passengers travelling to airports by public transport and show that better connectivity and journey time savings could be achieved through relatively small improvements.

Lack of step free access at stations

Alexandra Palace Station

Alexandra Palace Station was recently partially rebuilt as part of a capacity enhancement scheme, but regrettably only passive provision was made for step free access. In this part of North London there are very few step free stations as most of the lines are either in deep tunnels or cuttings, on viaducts and embankments, or are multiple track which makes it extremely expensive to provide step free access retrospectively.

Putting in lifts at this station in the places that have been reserved for them would make a major difference to this part of London in terms of accessibility. The trains that serve this station currently connect with the Piccadilly line for Heathrow at Finsbury Park, Gatwick and Luton airports via Thameslink at Kings Cross St.Pancras. From 2018 Thameslink services will serve Alexandra Palace giving direct access to Farringdon for Crossrail and services to Gatwick and Luton Airport (via St.Pancras International). The step free journey to all airports from Alexandra Palace would be reduced by *nearly an hour* if there was investment in lifts to the platforms at this station.

New Cross Gate Station

New Cross Gate Station has direct services to Gatwick every 30 minutes. However, the large numbers of steps and original staircases at New Cross Gate may mean that passengers would decide to either drive or be driven to Gatwick by car or taxi rather than face the difficulties of New Cross Gate Station.

The current installation of lifts and new stairs at New Cross Gate will solve this issue and make rail much more of an attractive proposition for this journey – in many cases also reducing costs to passengers because they will be able to substitute a rail fare for a taxi fare or car parking charges. Step free journey times between New Cross Gate and Gatwick will be reduced from over 1 hour 15 minutes to 45 minutes and under as a result, saving passengers *half an hour*.

Penge West Station

Penge West Station is only step free in the northbound direction. Access to the southbound platform is via a convoluted route with two sets of stairs. It has a half-hourly service southbound to East Croydon, which has step free access and very frequent services to Luton and Gatwick airports, and St. Pancras International. Travelling from Gatwick Airport to Penge West or from Penge West to Luton Airport is therefore relatively straightforward. However, travelling to Gatwick Airport or Luton

Airport from Penge West is much more complex, and involves the use of many sets of stairs, and would be very difficult for anyone travelling with luggage.

A scheme to provide ramp access to the southbound platform at Penge West is feasible, relatively straightforward and has been designed by London Borough of Bromley but has not been funded, yet for a relatively modest outlay would provide a significant improvement in accessibility and increase the choices for many more people in how they travel to or from the airport. Step free journey times to Gatwick Airport would be reduced from a minimum of over an hour to under 30 minutes. From Luton Airport step free journey times would be reduced by at least 20 minutes from a minimum of 1 hour 40 minutes. Passengers could save *up to half an hour* getting to the airport from this station.

South Woodford Station

South Woodford Station is only step free in the northbound direction. Access to the southbound platform, which is necessary for all journeys to airports from this station, involves the use of multiple sets of stairs. The Central line provides a high frequency service that enables access to Heathrow (via the Hammersmith & City and Heathrow Express/Heathrow Connect and/or Piccadilly lines); Gatwick via the Jubilee line and Thameslink; Luton via London Overground and Thameslink; and London City via the DLR. The advent of Crossrail at Stratford will substantially reduce journey times to Heathrow, Gatwick and Luton airports from South Woodford.

However the benefit of this improved connectivity will be reduced because of the lack of step free access to the southbound platform. This could be resolved however by the provision of a new ramped access to this platform. Passengers needing a step free journey to any of London's airports could save *around 50 minutes* from this station.

Sudbury Hill

Sudbury Hill (London Underground) and Sudbury Hill Harrow (Chiltern Railways) stations could both be made step free by providing additional entrances leading directly on to the local road network. The stations are very close together and such a scheme would also be an opportunity to create a significant interchange that would have wider benefits locally, as well as providing opportunities for travel to airports by public transport.

Improving local service frequency

An important part of passengers' decision making on how or whether to use public transport to access airports is the frequency of services provided. In most parts of London there are frequent services provided by rail and bus throughout the day and week. However, some routes in London whilst enjoying frequent services during the daytime Monday to Saturday, have very infrequent or no services at all in the late evenings, early mornings or Sundays – times that have a greater proportion of airport traffic demand than conventional peak demand.

Examples include South West Trains services to Chessington South, Hampton Court and the Hounslow loop (Barnes Bridge, Chiswick, Kew Bridge, Brentford, Syon Lane, Isleworth and Hounslow) and Southeastern services on most routes in South East

London. These connect with airport services at stations such as Clapham Junction, Waterloo, Victoria, Blackfriars and London Bridge. The disadvantage for airport passengers is that these low frequencies at times when travel to airports is most important can often result in extended journey times, the need for more interchanges and general diminution of the journey experience. Priority should therefore be given to improving the frequency of these services, which would be beneficial to passengers and also encourage modal shift away from car traffic.

The Chiltern line in Greater London, is probably the best example of how a dramatic improvement in local accessibility could be achieved. At present the six stations in the London area¹⁹ have at best only hourly daytime services. These services do not have a constant stopping pattern, and so do not allow connections with stations in the London area apart from London Marylebone. Providing all stations with at least an hourly stopping service throughout the day to London Marylebone would greatly enhance the usefulness of these stations and reduce journey times to the areas they serve, particularly if an additional interchange station were opened at West Hampstead to give connections to Gatwick and Luton airports. In addition Northolt Park station has a direct bus connection²⁰ to Heathrow Airport with step free access.

¹⁹ Wembley Stadium, Sudbury & Harrow Road, Sudbury Hill Harrow, Northolt Park, South Ruislip and West Ruislip

²⁰ Route 140

Appendix C – Research referenced in the report

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