



Our role

What we do

[London TravelWatch](#) was set up by Parliament as the official voice of London's travelling public. We speak up for all those who use buses, the Underground, the National Rail network, Docklands Light Railway, dial-a-ride, trams, taxis and river transport, as well as cyclists, motorcyclists, pedestrians and other users of London's principal road network.

Our aims

We aim to be an independent and effective champion for everyone travelling [in and around London](#): Londoners, commuters, visitors and tourists:

We:

- press for a better journey experience for London's travellers
- ensure that the particular needs of London and Londoners are taken account of in transport policy and planning decisions
- help the travelling public understand their rights and find good deals by providing information and advice
- speak for all transport users in London however they travel - we are the only consumer body to be completely multi-modal
- seek to ensure that transport operators deal with complaints appropriately and efficiently.

Our responsibilities

Representing Passengers

We speak for passengers and the travelling public in discussions with opinion formers and decision makers at all levels: local councils, [the Mayor of London](#), the [London Assembly](#), the Government, Parliament and the European Union.

Discussion

We regularly meet and liaise with all parts of the transport industry to discuss services and plans which affect the travelling public including timetables, routes, frequencies, fares, ticketing, station standards, access, vehicles, safety, personal security and the information provided to passengers and users of London's principle roads.

Investigation

We examine all complaints brought to us by people unhappy with the responses (or lack of them) that they have received from transport providers, and try to rectify problems or seek compensation where appropriate.

Analysis

We monitor the quality of services, including punctuality, reliability, crowding, congestion, cleanliness, accessibility, staff attitudes and behaviour, and station and waiting facilities. We try to ensure that they meet the standards travellers expect and deserve. Our casework - complaints and comments brought to us by the public - helps us understand the day-to-day concerns facing transport users in London.



What we want for passengers

We think that:

- services should run frequently and reliably at all reasonable times of the day and week
- networks should provide good access, adequate capacity and offer easy and convenient interchange between different types of transport
- staff should be helpful, informed, alert and committed to offering high-quality services
- information should be available, understandable, relevant, up-to-date and accurate
- tickets should be easy to use and understand, flexible, and integrated between appropriate providers and modes of transport
- stations or stops should be well-designed, properly maintained, fully accessible and offer a good quality waiting environment
- journeys should be safe and free from crime and the fear of crime
- streets and pavements should be clean, properly signed, uncongested and well maintained so that they can be used confidently by motorists, pedestrians and cyclists
- buses, trams, trains and boats should be accessible, comfortable, clean, safe, quiet, easy to identify, and suitable for passengers with mobility difficulties or travelling with luggage, shopping or children
- transport providers should communicate clearly and promptly with their users, be approachable and open to suggestions, take complaints seriously and have proper mechanisms for redress when things go wrong.



Chair's foreword

Sharon Grant, Chair



Londoners are more dependent on public transport than travellers anywhere else in the UK – and with London being the engine of the economy, 3.5 billion journeys are made in and around the capital every year, including 70% of all national rail journeys. At the same time its transport system is unique – multi-modal, complex and facing unprecedented levels of demand.

In this mix, a strong and independent voice for travellers using the system in London is absolutely vital, and this year we have successfully made the case for the continued existence of London TravelWatch against suggestions that it should be closed down or merged. In hard times it is more important than ever that passengers' convenience and value for money are prioritised and that service standards are maintained. It is just as important too that they have proper redress when they have cause to complain, and that complaints and comments are seen by operators as a driver of improvements in service.

Like every organisation, we have been obliged to do more with less in the past year, but we have risen to the challenge set by our funders at the London

Assembly and emerged leaner, fitter and more effective than ever before.

The coming year will again require a committed passenger advocate, not least as new franchises are let on the railways, and as greater strategic powers for the Mayor of London are negotiated.

The passenger priorities which we established this year will serve as the basis for our representations, and we look forward yet again to working with the London Assembly, Transport for London (TfL) train operating companies and other partners to make London's transport the best it can be for the millions of travellers each year who rely on the system.



Chief Executive's report

Janet Cooke, Chief Executive



As this review is being finalised we are preparing for our move to Dexter House to share accommodation with the London Pension Fund Authority.

This completes two years of major change for the organisation during which we have also reduced our staffing establishment by a third and cut other costs. These changes will enable us to substantially reduce our overall operating costs.

It has been another very busy year with increasing volumes of incoming work. Penalty fares and problems with Oyster cards remain two of the most common concerns of passengers.

Our report into unfinished Oyster journeys set the tone for our campaign to raise awareness of Oyster overcharging, encouraging passengers to claim back money due to them and operators to improve their systems to cut down overcharging in the first place.

Looking forward, 2012/13 will be an important year for London TravelWatch and we will continue to use our transport users' priorities document, which aimed to influence the Mayoral candidates, to push for improvements for passengers. We will continue to closely monitor the plans put in place for Crossrail and the next phase of tube upgrades. We will also be responding to consultations on several rail franchises which will shortly be due for renewal. It is important that we put the case to ensure that the particular needs of commuters and passengers travelling in and around London are taken into account because these franchises will last for up to 15 years.

I remain immensely proud of our staff who have coped so well with the challenges of recent years. Their shared commitment to getting the best deal for the travelling public despite the uncertainties surrounding their employment has meant that we have not only met our business plan objectives but often exceeded them.

As London's transport providers continue to face major and diverse challenges, the need for our services remains as strong as ever.

London TravelWatch will continue to act as a champion for travellers in and around the capital who depend on public transport, drawing on its extensive knowledge base and unrivalled experience to ensure that their needs are at the forefront when decisions are made about the city's transport systems.



Our achievements

Paying for travel

The level of fares and the ability to buy tickets easily are fundamental issues for passengers. We hear constantly from people who are concerned about how and where to buy tickets, how to obtain refunds when necessary and how to appeal against penalty fares as well as from those unhappy at the cost of travel. In addition to campaigning for fares to be held at a reasonable level, we give advice on best fares and encourage transport providers to simplify and clarify their systems.

We commissioned research into 'incomplete journeys' being made on Oyster Pay As You Go (PAYG) cards following concerns raised by passengers who had been overpaying by up to 40% after inadvertently failing to 'touch in' or out at the card readers at stations.

There was a danger that they could start to lose trust in the system. Publicity surrounding our report, led to a 10% increase in people claiming the compensation which they were due, an additional 15,000 claims a month. We also called for a programme of public education to remind people how best to use their Oyster cards. We secured changes to station infrastructure to make the system clearer for passengers as well as significant progress with the Oyster 'auto complete' facility. These initiatives will help to reduce the number of 'incomplete journeys' made.

We highlighted the fact that many job seekers were losing out on transport discounts to which they are entitled, amounting to a "postcode lottery". Levels of take-up varied widely, from well over 90% in some boroughs to as little as 24% in Barking and Dagenham. We raised awareness amongst people in

areas with low take-up and asked all job centres to ensure that they promote the discount properly.

The closure of ticket offices or reduction in their opening hours remains a central concern for passengers. Our London Underground ticket office mystery shopping survey showed that the promised presence of visible and helpful gateline staff failed to materialise in many cases after opening hours at some ticket offices were reduced.

When London Midland proposed changing ticket office hours at its stations and for 29 of its ticket machines to accept only cards and not cash, we wrote to the Government to object. We were disappointed that London Midland chose not to take our concerns on board but our objections forced the Department for Transport (DfT) to rule on the issue and delayed the cutbacks by more than a year.



Making a difference for passengers

Every year we investigate a wide range of consumer concerns. Our work ranges from high-level scrutiny of policy to assisting individuals with specific transport problems. Our close contact with transport users gives us the insights which underpin the independent, expert advice we give to policy-makers and guides our research and campaigns. Often, having resolved an issue for an individual user, we will use their experience to lobby for improvements which will make a real difference for everyone.

After receiving representations from passengers, we persuaded London Overground to provide additional late evening trains between Stratford and Camden Road, extending the 10-15 minute interval service until 23.15 on the busiest section of the route.

Some problems are easy to resolve but sometimes it can take years or even decades to achieve our desired outcome. Recommendations we made in 2010 on [Passengers' Attitudes to First Class Travel](#) have been adopted this year by London's commuter train operators.

Southern started to allow standard class ticket holders to use first class carriages during busy periods while First Capital Connect agreed to halve the number of first class seats on its new trains, making extra space available for passengers on busy trains.

In July, we successfully persuaded Southeastern to introduce the 'Delay Repay' principle to compensate passengers who had experienced severe delays. This was not included in its original franchise agreement with the Government and we played a key part in securing this additional benefit.

Passengers using black cabs and minicabs place great trust in drivers when, often alone, they hail a cab or call a licensed mini-cab. Maintaining trust requires the highest vigilance from the licensing authority in vetting drivers so we continued to press for [enhanced criminal record checks for taxi and private hire vehicle drivers](#).

We discussed the issue with the Home Office, London Councils, the Suzy Lamplugh Trust and the Licensed Taxi Drivers Association.

We welcomed the [Government's new proposals](#) to ensure the safety of vulnerable people by allowing taxi licensing authorities to apply for enhanced vetting checks of all taxi and private hire vehicle drivers.

On behalf of passengers we monitor performance data relating to all forms of transport in London. Our performance monitoring report provides independent scrutiny of transport operators' performance from the passengers' perspective and the popularity of this item on our website shows how useful the public and stakeholders find it. It highlights areas of concern which we then take forward. This is in line with the Government's drive to make more data available so that public scrutiny of service providers is increased.



Planning for the Olympic and Paralympic Games

We have taken a close interest in the plans for the Olympic and Paralympic Games throughout the preparation period and spoken up when we judged that transport users would be adversely affected by the proposals. We also presented [evidence to the House of Commons Transport Select Committee](#) inquiry into the transport plans for the Games. In our regular meetings with operators we have discussed arrangements for ticketing, queue management, providing information and dealing with the disruption that will inevitably occur during the Games.

We [raised concerns over the impact on Greenwich transport users of proposed changes to train stopping patterns](#) which we did not consider would benefit either visitors to the Olympics or those going about their normal business. We [successfully persuaded Southeastern, the DfT and the Olympic Delivery Authority \(ODA\) to reinstate stops at Charlton](#).

We expressed specific concerns about the reliability of some parts of infrastructure, especially the Liverpool Street to Shenfield route via Stratford in very hot weather. We are pleased that Network Rail has now taken remedial action since our intervention, to ensure robust operation during the Games.

We recently carried out a mystery shopping exercise to inspect the accessibility for passengers with disabilities at the stations closest to the venues and raised concerns with different operators so that any issues we found could be rectified in advance of the Games.

Standing up for passengers

London TravelWatch responds to consultations by the Mayor, London Assembly, the Government, regulators and transport providers to ensure that the London travellers' perspective, which is often very different from passengers elsewhere in the country, is at the heart of policy-making. Decisions are being taken now which will set the framework for years to come and it is important for London's transport users that service specifications are right.

We responded to a number of important rail related consultations including the rail funding and output plan (the Initial Industry Plan), the Office of Rail Regulation's periodic review 2013 (of Network Rail's outputs and costs) and the [McNulty review's](#) conclusions on fares, staffing of trains and stations, ticket offices and delivery systems. We also contributed to the Department for Transport (DfT) review of the National Rail Conditions of Carriage, helping to make them more user friendly for passengers, and commented on TfL's Coach Strategy.

In our [response to the Government's new rail franchising programme](#), we welcomed franchisees having more control over their businesses, but argued that there must be a clear commitment to involve passengers and their representatives in decision-making along with clearly specified outcomes for passengers in terms of services and fares. In this and several other responses, we made the point that longer-term franchises must not be seen as an opportunity to 'cherry-pick' lucrative long distance routes at the expense of essential suburban and local services.

The Government should use franchise specifications to encourage the rail industry to get smarter at capturing revenue by reducing fare evasion and improving marketing so that there is more to plough back into services for passengers.

As part of the Greater Anglia refranchising process, we advised shortlisted bidders on our concerns and suggested improvements to the passenger experience, helping them to justify investment in stations and ticketing facilities on the route. Our representations to the DfT were crucial in securing investment for work on overhead lines on the route which will mean passengers will benefit through fewer delays.

We took the opportunity to respond to the Government's consultation on the future of the InterCity West Coast franchise, recommending opening up new journey opportunities for places without direct links to London during the 'off-peak' period and enhancing commuter services between Milton Keynes and London.

We also commented on the Mayor's consultation on penalty fares, recommending that TfL delay implementing changes so that they would coincide with any changes on the National Rail network, and proposed a London-wide station gating strategy.



We continued to support the London Assembly Transport Committee's work and welcomed its report on 'TfL Customer Service' which we contributed to. Our response to the [Committee's scrutiny of the performance of London Underground](#) highlighted passengers' requests for improvements and easier refunds, fewer weekend and evening closures of the network and the need for a more concerted effort to increase overall customer satisfaction.

Although the renovation of the escalators to the Victoria line platforms at Victoria London Underground station was very welcome, it did cause inconvenience to many passengers. After we intervened, more staff were made available to advise passengers at Victoria London Underground and National Rail stations and signage was improved. Staff at Gatwick Airport Station were asked to encourage passengers purchasing a ticket to London to also buy an Underground ticket to save time.

London TravelWatch responds on behalf of passengers to local authority traffic management orders where they are likely to affect the performance of bus services.

Shaping services and improving access

We want Londoners and visitors to benefit from a wide range of transport options whether they want to walk, cycle or take the bus, train or tube. While great progress has been made, more needs to be done to make London's transport networks accessible in the widest sense of the word. We have sought to raise awareness of all transport users' needs and promoted improvements to transport infrastructure and the information available. In all our work, we consider the needs of disabled travellers and recognise that most improvements for vulnerable groups offer benefits to all.

London TravelWatch has been a consistent supporter of the Thameslink project and we have watched major milestones being reached on this scheme. However, in 2000 we warned that there needed to be a substantial increase in the planned capacity at Farringdon station to cater for the forecast passenger demand. We were particularly happy to see that Network Rail responded to our concerns at Farringdon station, introducing a y-shaped overbridge and an additional entrance onto Turnmill

Street. We have also been pleased to see that the pedestrian management plan for the construction period, which we sought through the then Secretary of State, has been developed and implemented to the benefit of passengers, whose journey through Blackfriars station was disrupted for an extended period during its reconstruction.

We lobbied borough councils to increase the percentage of accessible bus stops in their areas, writing to those councils where fewer than 40% of their bus stops complied with the Disability Discrimination Act. We were particularly pleased to see [an increase from 35% to 58% in the proportion of accessible bus stops in Redbridge](#).

Our work on [transport interchanges](#) and walking highlighted real differences in passenger experience between a selection of London stations; Shepherd's Bush Underground station had clear signs, level footways and good information for passengers and toilet facilities. This was in marked contrast to the poor information, bad access and inadequate signage at Paddington. This work will form the basis for further discussions with transport providers to secure improvements.



Engaging with transport users

To represent travellers in London effectively, we need to keep in close touch with them and encourage them to share the results of their journey experiences with us. We aim to make it as easy as possible for the travelling public to contact us, whether through casework, at our public meetings and events, or via our [website](#) and social media.

Our board and committee meetings, at which we discuss current issues in transport, explore problems and look at future services, are open to the public. Topics we have considered this year have included customer service at TfL, the Northern line upgrade, our work on incomplete Oyster journeys and preparations for the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Members of the public also took the opportunity to put their questions to Transport Commissioner, Peter Hendy and to Mike Brown and Howard Collins of London Underground, via traditional and social media and our website. The Board made visits to Canning Town and Orpington to better understand local passenger experiences, and over the year we engaged with most of the transport user groups in our area.

We held a successful [transport users' 'surgery' at Tooting Broadway Underground Station](#), giving hundreds of passengers the opportunity to ask questions and give their views on any aspects of travelling in and around Tooting, including the upgrade of the Northern Line.

Our performance

During 2011-2012 our casework team dealt with over 7,000 written enquiries and complaints. Most of these could be dealt with quickly or passed on to the operator for an initial reply, as we only investigate cases where the complainant has not already received an adequate response. We investigated almost 2,000 appeals from members of the public travelling in London and the surrounding areas. The vast majority of our cases concerned Oyster Cards, penalty fares and buses, although those involving train cancellations and delays were also common.

Consistent focus and hard work ensured that our [casework turnaround targets](#) were achieved and exceeded throughout 2011/2012.

Our funding

London TravelWatch is funded by the London Assembly in accordance with Schedule 19 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999.

In 2011-12, our total income amounted to £1,456,181 and our total expenditure was £1,628,060.

We met the costs of our staff restructure through savings made throughout the year and the use of reserves.

Our full audited accounts are available on our website. www.londontravelwatch.org.uk



Other numbers



We cost the London council tax payer less than 1p a week



We represent the interests of passengers in and around London who, each year, make around 4m journeys a day by tube, 3m journeys by National Rail and 6m journeys by bus



Of the casework which required further investigation:
56% related to National Rail;
17% related to Oyster;
10% related to London Underground;
7% related to buses
and 10% related to other queries.

Making a difference for passengers

The following examples summarise some of the key achievements already mentioned in this annual review showing how we have followed through concerns from the public to improve the overall passenger experience.

You told us this

We did this

This was the outcome

Passengers found the National Rail conditions of carriage hard to understand

We lobbied the DfT and ATOC to make the conditions easier for passengers to understand

New, simplified conditions of carriage were published in May 2012

Passengers complained to us that London Underground ticket machines were difficult to use

We took up the issue with TfL on passengers' behalf

TfL commissioned a redesign of the layout of ticket vending machines to address the problems we had identified

Passengers complained to us about being overcharged for making Oyster incomplete journeys

We commissioned focus group research to understand why this was happening

Improved passenger awareness & 10% increase in refund claims. TfL also improved signage to remind people to touch 'in' and 'out'



About us

Our people

Members of London TravelWatch are appointed by the London Assembly.

Board

(as at 31 March 2012)

David Barry
Terry Bennett
Gail Engert
Sharon Grant (Chair)
Sophia Lambert
David Leibling (Deputy Chair)

Staff (as at 31 March 2012)

We employ 11 full-time and 8 part-time staff:

Sandra Ambo
Keletha Barrett
Tim Bellenger (Director, Policy & Investigation)
John Burgess*
John Cartledge
Gytha Chinweze
Janet Cooke (Chief Executive)
Margaret Croucher
Jaskiren Deol
Peter Ellis
Richard Freeston-Clough*
Susan James
Kate Lewis*
Sharon Malley
Robert Nichols*
Angela Okello
David Rose
Mike Spittles
Vincent Stops

*joined this year

Thank you to Margaret Amu, Simon Barnabas, Bryan Davey, Jo deBank, Greg Hargest, Poonam Hayer, Patti Tobin and Paula Williams who left us during the year after combined service of over 80 years, as well as Karl Grewar for the contribution he made during his six month secondment from Network Rail.



Dexter House, 2 Royal Mint Court,
London, EC3N 4QN
Phone: 020 3176 2999
Email: info@londontravelwatch.org.uk
www.londontravelwatch.org.uk

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