
Minutes

Agenda item: 9
Drafted 17.06.14

Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 3 June at 55 Broadway, London SW1H 0BD

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Present

Members

Chris Brown, Richard Dilks, Glyn Kyle, Stephen Locke (Chair), Abdikafi Rage, John Stewart, Ruth Thompson

Guests

Gareth Powell Transport for London (Item 7)
Ian Birch Transport for London (Item 8)

Members of the public

Secretariat

Tim Bellenger Director, Policy and Investigation
Janet Cooke Chief Executive
Richard Freeston-Clough Communications Officer
Sharon Malley Executive Assistant (minutes)

1 **Chair's introduction and pre-meeting announcements**

The Chair welcomed members and visitors to the meeting and made the safety announcements relevant to the venue at 55 Broadway.

2 **Apologies for absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

3 Declarations of interest

Glyn Kyle notified members of a new standing interest as he had been recently appointed to Liverymens' Committee of the Paviers Company. There were no other declarations of interest.

4 Chair's activities and Passenger Focus update

The Chair said that Passenger Focus had recently published its latest bus passenger survey and he taken part in the well-attended launch. The survey highlighted many ideas and innovations that might have relevant applications in London, such as Nottingham and Birmingham's branding of routes.

The Chair had attended a Passenger Focus Board meeting in Manchester and had taken the opportunity to visit the Manchester Metrolink tram headquarters.

The Chair said that Passenger Focus was taking on new areas of responsibility for highways, becoming the consumer watchdog for those stretches of the highway administered by the Highways Agency. This was a very significant development and would require additions to the Passenger Focus board and staff. It would see Passenger Focus moving towards being more multi-modal. Areas that might be focused on included freight, the rights of drivers and issues such as information provision, service stations and signage.

The Chair said that Passenger Focus had completed research on information given to train passengers when services were disrupted. This looked at operators' websites during periods of unplanned service disruption and found fairly uneven provision of information. The Chair recommended the research as providing useful and relevant findings for London TravelWatch.

The Chair said that Passenger Focus had carried out a review of corporate complaint handling with First Capital Connect to try to improve the operator's performance in this area.

5 Minutes

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 18 March 2014 were agreed subject to a correction on page 2 that Anna Walker was chair of the Office of Rail Regulation, not Network Rail and changing Londoner to Londoners on the penultimate paragraph of page 6.

6 Matters arising (LTW467)

The Executive Assistant said she would circulate to members possible dates for a visit to the Network Rail control centre at Three Bridges.

Action: Executive Assistant

It was noted that members hoped to build on the good work achieved through the transport user engagement events without necessarily replicating them precisely.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that the Policy Officer had been in discussion with Transport for London (TfL) on adding performance statistics about the Cycle Hire scheme to London TravelWatch's report on TfL's performance. TfL had explained that data was available through the London Data Store but it was not in an easily useable format as it was aimed primarily at app developers. TfL was working with the Policy Officer to try to progress this matter.

The Chair said he had attended several meeting with London Assembly members to discuss London TravelWatch's next business plan. It was noted that the combined feedback from these meetings should be made available as part of the public record.

It was agreed that the Policy Officer and members would discuss outside the meeting their aspirations for TfL performance targets and monitoring.

Action: Policy Officer

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that he was in the process of producing a response to the Airports Commission on surface access to airports. It was noted that this was a very high profile issue and it was important for London TravelWatch's voice to be heard. The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that he would be attending Heathrow Airport's surface access forum to put forward London TravelWatch's views.

It was noted that London TravelWatch's petition against the HS2 proposals had been submitted.

7 Key activities (LTW468)

The Chair said that London TravelWatch had invited Heidi Alexander MP to a meeting after she had written an article about Southeastern Trains. The meeting had been very useful and London TravelWatch was finding ways to progress her areas of concern.

The Chair said that Premium Credit Ltd had approached London TravelWatch to discuss their business model. They offered finance to help consumers smooth their bills across a year and thought there may be scope for extending this to include payments for annual season tickets and travelcards. The Chair confirmed that London TravelWatch would not favour one company over another but was able to give Premium Credit information about the consumer perspective and general lack of awareness of the benefits of annual tickets.

The meeting with Mary Creagh MP had been useful to highlight the issues of devolution and passenger inputs to franchising decisions. It was noted that London TravelWatch should continue to seek to meet senior politicians of all parties.

Baroness Susan Kramer had attended a meeting with the Chair and Chief Executive and had expressed particular concern about transport accessibility. London TravelWatch had now provided her with examples of good practice and set out the problems in this area even with additional funding.

8 London Underground vision for the tube, including ticket offices

Gareth Powell of Transport for London gave a presentation on proposed changes to the operation of London Underground (LUL). He said there were several strands to the programme, the first relating to hours of operation. He explained that LUL was planning to run some tube services for 24 hours at weekends to satisfy growing demand for later trains in the evening and earlier trains in the morning. There was still some work to do on this including with the British Transport Police, Network Rail and other partners, as well as looking at integration with night buses and identifying changes that would need to be made to the bus network. Engagement was underway with neighbours and issues such as ticketing and safety were still under consideration.

Mr Powell said that LUL was continuing to seek improved reliability by modernising rolling stock, signalling systems and infrastructure. LUL had a target of 30% improvement in reliability by 2015, with an anticipated 20% increase in capacity on the Northern line by December as a result of the upgrade works. There were also many less high profile projects underway such as re-tiling and re-flooring stations.

Mr Powell said there would be a change in how passengers could purchase tickets. Ticket offices would be closed and staff would be moved into more visible, customer-facing positions. This would result in a net reduction of 750 posts. All stations would be staffed at all times of operation, with different categories of station being subject to different levels of staffing. Some stations would see the introduction of Visitor Information Centres to cater for passengers who were unfamiliar with using the Underground.

Mr Powell said that various customer improvements would be implemented, including WiFi at stations, upgrading the website and providing more and better ticket vending machines (TVMs), to support customers following the planned ticket office closures. The new TVMs would vend Oyster cards, give Oyster refunds and have a PIN function to allow staff to perform a wider range of operations. This was alongside the introduction of ticketing by contactless payment cards. In addition, LUL hoped to improve value for money on the Underground by gaining savings through securing its supply chain.

Mr Powell said that LUL was trying to improve accessibility on the Underground by improving signage, basing new signs on the principle of Legible London and giving passengers more useful information about destinations.

Mr Powell said that alongside these proposals for passengers LUL had made commitments to staff in respect of the proposed alterations in working. Negotiations with the transport unions were still underway in this area.

In response to questions, Mr Powell said that the 3% of journeys that involved ticket offices equated to around 33 million transactions per year, compared to TVM sales of 123 million and journeys of 1.3 billion. Research found that passengers preferred ticket offices when they were unfamiliar with their journey or were visiting from overseas. But some people using ticket offices knew which ticket they intended to purchase and the tickets was the correct one for their journey. The research also found that people used ticket offices when they wanted to ask questions of members of staff. The new Visitor Information Centres, in the stations where these were provided would assist these passengers and would also sell tickets.

Members noted that 33 million was a large number of tickets to transfer from ticket offices to TVMs. Mr Powell said that not all Underground stations currently had ticket offices and that it was not in LUL's interests to act in a way that increased congestion at stations or caused difficulties for passengers. He said that TfL had a good history of implementing technical changes, such as Oyster and contactless payments.

Members asked whether the planned changes to ticket offices could be reversed if necessary. There were concerns that leasing the office space to retailers would mean that the changes were in essence irreversible. Mr Powell said that stations would be kept under review and changes made if required. LUL was aware that passengers would need cues about where to find information and assistance once ticket offices were gone.

Members asked why some stations that appeared very different from each other, such as Blackfriars, Brixton and Bounds Green, were all in the same category and whether this meant they would be subject to the same staffing arrangements. Mr Powell said that the categories were very broad and were in effect starting points for considering each individual station.

Members asked for clarification on how LUL would ensure safety and security for staff and passengers during periods of 24-hour operation for tubes. Mr Powell said that stations would be staffed at all times they were open and CCTV monitoring would continue.

Members questioned whether all the ticketing functions currently provided by ticket offices would be provided by the new TVMs. Mr Powell said that the vast majority of transactions could be completed on TVMs using either by the passenger alone or by a member of staff using the PIN login system. Some transactions would need to be carried out online or via a call centre, such as refunding an annual season ticket. Members asked whether those LUL stations that currently sold National Rail tickets would continue to do so. Mr Powell said that the majority of tickets LUL sold were interchangeable on the National Rail network but that LUL would no longer sell purely National Rail products.

Members asked whether LUL was considering passing ticket offices in stations such as West Brompton to National Rail for operation as these stations sold large volumes of National Rail tickets. Removing the ability to buy National Rail tickets at these stations would be significantly detrimental to passengers using them. Mr Powell said that LUL was looking at decisions station by station and was open to suggestions.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, noted that although LUL had undertaken extensive consultation with unions on behalf of staff, no consultation with passengers had been carried out. Mr Powell said LUL had received a great deal of informal feedback on its plans, from users, passenger groups, Members of Parliament and others. LUL intended to conclude its negotiations with staff then publish its individual station proposals and find the best way to represent that information accurately to passengers. He would welcome London TravelWatch's suggestions in this area and hoped to publish individual station proposals in late July.

Members were concerned that LUL did not appear to commit to a consultation exercise with transport users. This was unfortunate as feedback from users could result in improved proposals. Mr Powell said that LUL was currently focusing on discussions with staff but was also listening to stakeholders and customers, as well

as having carried out focus groups. He said LUL was genuinely open to change in light of feedback.

Members asked what passengers had been saying about the proposals. Mr Powell said that the key seemed to be helpful and available staff and that there was a misconception that stations were controlled from ticket offices when in fact safety and control of stations happened elsewhere. He acknowledged that it would be important to provide a robust queuing system for passengers seeking to gain access to a member of staff. LUL was working on how to create focal points to make it more obvious where assistance could be found. The intention was currently to focus staff near TVMs and possibly, in larger stations, to roster staff at another location also.

The Chair said that retail banks had some experience in this area as many had removed counters and replaced them with staff on the floor and had found managing the queuing to be difficult. Mr Powell said a number of sectors had taken this route, including banks, airports, retailers and others, and LUL would learn from their experiences.

A representative of the RMT union, observing the meeting and invited by the Chair to speak, said that the figure given by LUL for journeys involving ticket office transactions had been discredited and was actually 23%. He said there were concerns that stations would be staffed by single operators, even overnight during 24-hour opening, which might be detrimental to staff and passenger safety. Ticket offices were currently the designated location for staff to flee to in the event of assault and it would be problematic to remove them. He noted that the London Assembly had called for greater consultation and that if these proposals were being put forward on the rail network there would be greater obligations on the operator to consult. He said that the plan to lease ticket offices to retailers showed that the proposals were not about improving the customer experience but about adding retail opportunities.

Mr Powell said that the 3% figure was the proportion of journeys starting with a purchase at a ticket office. The 23% figure was the proportion of journeys made using a ticket that had initially been bought at a ticket office. This could include weekly or monthly travelcards, where a ticket was bought once at the ticket office but used many times subsequently.

Mr Powell said that stations were currently sometimes staffed by single operators and this would continue. LUL would continue to designate a place of safety for staff, as this was a top priority for the organisation. On consultation, he said that LUL intended to comply with all appropriate regulations and sought to be as open as possible. It would invite comments on the individual station proposals after they were published.

In relation to retail, Mr Powell said that TfL was non-profit making and that any money made was reinvested in the network. He said that in a lot of cases the ticket office space would be given over to new TVMs. LUL would only release space to commercial use if it was not needed by customers.

The Chief Executive asked whether LUL would consider replicating the consultation requirements that would be imposed on a franchised train operator before being permitted to close ticket offices. Mr Powell said he was open to this and asked for detailed suggestions.

Members agreed to discuss London TravelWatch's position in more detail in the confidential session later. The Chair thanked Mr Powell for his interesting and informative contribution and stressed that the decision was not solely a matter between LUL and staff, as the passenger perspective also needed to be factored in.

9 Infrastructure to 2050

Ian Birch of TfL gave a presentation on the transport elements of the Infrastructure Advisory Group's review of infrastructure needs in London to 2050. He said that the group was being led by the Greater London Authority and covered all elements of infrastructure including energy, waste and transport. TfL was leading on the transport issues.

Mr Birch said that the group had carried out an initial round of consultation and was due to report on the findings by the end of July with a series of supporting documents on individual themes and areas looking at costings, governance, funding and other issues.

The group was considering high level questions about the shape of London in 2050, looking at where people would be living and working and how they would get from one place to the other. He said that currently 30% of London's jobs were in 2% of London's area and that there were lots of benefits in having high numbers of workers in one central employment area. However, this required a dense network of rail routes into the centre. This led the group to consider whether it would be beneficial to create other economic centres around London, either satellites from central London or separate centres in outer London. The group found that although infrastructure savings could be made, the loss of agglomeration benefit would be greater than any savings. This meant that enabling economic growth in central London remained very important.

Mr Birch said that central London was the driver of London's population growth. He said that the decline in London's population between the end of the second world war and the end of the 1970s was matched by London's economic decline. It was impossible to predict with certainty what London's population would look like in 2050 but the group was trying to identify trends and was currently projecting that London would surpass its previous post-war population peak in 2015.

The group had noticed that inner London was diverging from the rest of London and the rest of the country in terms of transport use. For example, inner London residents were seeing a decline in car use and an increase in cycling that was different to elsewhere. Mr Birch had investigated whether the travel patterns in inner London could be replicated in outer London but found that the populations in outer London were much less dense, which made them more difficult to serve by public transport. A solution would be to increase the density in outer London by re-designating some existing commercial space as residential and redeveloping some reserved strategic land. Current policies preserved employment land near transport hubs but it might be better to put housing there.

Members considered how London TravelWatch might play a role in these decisions and how the passenger voice might be heard in debate. Mr Birch said that some of the decisions would be controversial and that stakeholders representing consumers could play a useful role in steering discussions. The Chair

noted that the over-riding pressure on capacity that was expected would, at the very least, increase the case for proceeding with the many small-scale, low-cost projects that could be of considerable benefit to passengers. Mr Birch said that the infrastructure project was focused on growth but also needed to serve the existing population. London TravelWatch should give consideration to the sort of transport network it wanted to see in 2050.

Members asked which of the proposals were most likely to be considered contentious. Mr Birch said that the scale of growth and the need for new housing would be very controversial. He said that he hoped London TravelWatch would contribute to the consultation following the publication of the reports in the summer.

In response to questions, Mr Birch said that the infrastructure group had not specifically looked at road pricing but this issue may need to be kept under review.

Concluding the discussion, the Chair said that London TravelWatch did not generally seek to take a view on such long-term trends, but that these provided an important backdrop to many current issues. London TravelWatch should, therefore, be engaging with some of the issues raised in Mr Birch's presentation. In particular, Mr Birch's comments about 'squeezing' more out of existing capacity were seen as very important. In this context, London TravelWatch was keen to take advantage of the wide range of possible smaller, cheaper projects and would be responding to the consultation reports in due course. The Chair thanked Mr Birch for his interesting presentation.

10 Meeting dates 2015 (LTW469)

The calendar of meeting dates for 2015 was noted. Members were asked to keep the afternoons of Policy committees free for policy discussion and Board meetings for trips and site visits.

11 Any other business

Members recorded their thanks to Transport for London for allowing London TravelWatch to make use of their meeting room.

12 Resolution to move into confidential session

It was resolved, under section 15(2)(b) of schedule 18 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999, that by reason of the confidential nature of the item(s) to be discussed, it was desirable in the public interest that the public should be excluded for a section of the meeting.

During the confidential session, members considered their response to the London Underground vision for the tube and reviewed the meeting.