
Minutes

Agenda item: 5
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Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 9 December 2014 at 169 Union Street, London SE1 0LL

Contents

1. **Chair's introduction and pre-meeting announcements**
2. **Apologies for absence and declarations of interest**
3. **Chair's activities and Passenger Focus update**
4. **Minutes of the Board meeting held on 7 October 2014**
5. **Matters arising (LTW482)**
6. **Actions taken (LTW483)**
7. **Franchising in London (LTW484)**
8. **Southeastern**
9. **Bank station update (LTW486)**
10. **Scheme of delegation (LTW47)**
11. **Any other business**
12. **Resolution to move into confidential session**

Present

Members

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

Guests

David Statham Managing Director, Southeastern (Item 8)

Matt Winfield Transport for London

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)

Vincent Stops Policy Officer

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

The Chair welcomed members and visitors to the first meeting at London TravelWatch's new offices at 169 Union Street. The Director, Policy and Investigation, made announcements about safety and evacuation procedures.

2 Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

3 Declarations of interest

The Chair declared that he had been appointed chair of the Payment Systems Regulator's Participants Panel, a new group set up to advise the recently established statutory Payment Systems Regulator. Glyn Kyle declared that he had been appointed chair of the Greater London Authority's Strategic Access Panel. There were no other additional declarations of interest.

4 Chair's activities and Passenger Focus update

The Chair said that in his role as Passenger Focus board member he had chaired a meeting of Passenger Focus's Statistics Governance Group to consider detailed reviews and retendering arrangements for the National Rail Passenger and Tram Passenger surveys. He said there any significant changes to the methodology of the National Rail Passenger survey would probably need public consultation before the new invitation to tender could be issued. If so, there would clearly be an opportunity for London TravelWatch to input on this.

The Chair said that he had attended a Passenger Focus conference and board meeting in Birmingham in November. The conference had focused on interchanges, which was appropriate for Birmingham as New Street station was a very important rail interchange undergoing major redevelopment. There had been useful contributions from organisations including Centro and National Express.

The Passenger Focus board meeting considered rail devolution, the implications of HS2 for Birmingham and Passenger Focus's role in road user representation. This was followed by a visit to the Highways Agency headquarters in Quinton.

The Chair said he understood that a new Chair of Passenger Focus had been appointed but an announcement had not yet been made. He noted that former London TravelWatch Acting Chair David Leibling had been appointed to the Passenger Focus board as an adviser on roads issues.

5 Minutes

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 7 October 2014 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

6 Matters arising (LTW482)

It was agreed that officers would try to organise visits for members to City Airport to view its surface access issues and the Kings Cross St Pancras station control room to see how crowds are managed on the network. Other visits such as to Bank station may also be useful.

Action: Executive Assistant

It was noted that although meetings with London Assembly members would continue to take place, the series of meetings relating to the 2015-16 London TravelWatch business plan had now come to an end.

Members welcomed the positive reception given to London TravelWatch's report on surface access to London's airports. There would be an opportunity to follow up the recommendations at a meeting with the aviation minister later in the month. Officers would also seek a meeting with the Davies Commission secretariat to discuss the report.

Action: Director, Policy and Investigation

Members noted that there had been press reports that TfL planned to close some Underground ticket offices as early as spring 2015. The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that those ticket offices identified for early closure appeared to be those with very low usage levels. However, members expressed concern that the outcome of our detailed research might be too late to influence some of the bigger decisions due to be implemented later in the year. It was agreed that officers would prepare a list of stations which our research indicated should be considered for an upgrade as soon as possible.

Action: Director, Policy and Investigation

It was noted that work on the design of the 2015 annual review would be picked up in the new year.

7 Key activities (LTW483)

A member asked how often bilateral meetings with transport operators were scheduled. The Chief Executive said that meetings with TfL managing directors and major London train operators were generally quarterly while meetings with other train operators were less frequent.

The Chief Executive agreed to circulate details of the recent Westminster Policy Forum on transport in London, at which she had been invited to speak.

Action: Chief Executive

8 Franchising in London (LTW484)

The Director, Policy and Investigation, presented London TravelWatch's report on franchising in London. He noted that the report touched on issues relating to the Southeastern franchise that might raise questions for the next item with David Statham.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that London TravelWatch's previous research report on passengers' value for money priorities had been very useful in setting out the areas that should be prioritised in new franchises and concessions. He said that he had held a productive meeting with Transport for London about content of the forthcoming London Overground 2 concession that had in part been based on the priorities identified in the value for money report.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that London TravelWatch had contributed to two recent franchise competitions by analysing the passenger-facing aspects of bids and reporting the findings via Passenger Focus to the Department for Transport. He thought some parts of the DfT still did not fully understand London TravelWatch's role and the value it could add to the bid assessment process.

There was some concern about the recently announced East Coast franchise, in which services between Stevenage and London could be cut by up to 50%. The operator had offered journey time savings and new routes north of Stevenage but these appeared to be dependent on reductions at Stevenage. It was noted that this echoed the Chiltern situation where suburban services had been reduced at the expense of longer-distance commuting, and also reductions at stations on other franchises such as Slough and Watford Junction.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said London TravelWatch had not been consulted in respect of the reductions for Stevenage and would have objected if it had been. Once the franchise had been announced he met the bidders and called for the retention of Stevenage services but he did not yet know what they would decide to do.

Members discussed whether improvements could be made to the franchising process. The Director, Policy and Investigation, noted that the DfT had said it would include a greater emphasis on passenger benefit when assessing bids in future and that London TravelWatch was well placed to contribute to that.

Members were disappointed that London TravelWatch had not been included in the assessment of bids for the East Coast franchise, despite the importance of Kings Cross station as a hub for London transport services, as well as the terminus of trains from Stevenage.

Members agreed it was regrettable that so far London TravelWatch's contribution to franchises had been funnelled through Passenger Focus rather than being directly made to the DfT. However, the input London TravelWatch was able to make was very useful for both the DfT and Passenger Focus as it enabled Passenger Focus to concentrate on its own remit.

It was agreed that London TravelWatch should produce a wishlist for consideration by a future Minister for Transport that looked at issues such as the importance of outer London commuting stations, the process for deciding franchises and London TravelWatch's role, and the importance of devolution.

Action: Director, Policy and Investigation

9 Southeastern

The Chair welcomed David Statham, Managing Director of Southeastern, to the meeting. Mr Statham gave a presentation about Southeastern's new direct award and the implications for London passengers of changes to the network in the future.

Mr Statham explained the scale of Southeastern's operations, which included carrying half a million passengers per day across 12 main lines into five London terminals. He said that the high speed lines had seen substantial growth and the

network had coped successfully with the challenges presented by the London Olympics in 2012.

Mr Statham noted that there had been a considerable drop in passenger satisfaction in the last year and this might have been caused in part by problems experienced during last year's very wet winter, which caused landslides in the Sussex area, and the previous year's delays caused by snow. He intended to focus his presentation on planned improvements for passengers.

Mr Statham said that value for money was a very important issue for passengers and Southeastern was going to start offering a range of off-peak fares and seasonal discounts. He intended to extend Oyster to Dartford and Swanley and wanted to introduce Oyster as a stored payment method for high speed journeys between Stratford and St Pancras.

Mr Statham said that the Southeastern direct award was based on full revenue risk, which meant that they kept 100% of profits made but were 100% liable for any losses. It was important to look after the 70% of passengers who held season tickets. In addition, Southeastern was working on maximising its off-peak capacity with increased marketing, new customer relationship managers and work with groups such as Visit Kent to encourage leisure travel.

The January fare increases saw regulated fares rise by 2.5% but the non-regulated fares were not increased, meaning the overall average fare increase was at 2.2%.

There would be a substantial change to the Southeastern timetable from January. Following passenger feedback capacity would be moved around the network with increased high speed services and extended metro off-peak services at Victoria.

Mr Statham said that around 70% of delays were caused by problems with infrastructure so it was important to work constructively with Network Rail. For example, by allowing access to Network Rail for maintenance work, the number of speed restrictions caused by the previous winter's flooding reduced from 35 to five. In addition, Southeastern was working closely with Network Rail on the London Bridge works.

Southeastern was looking at ways to improve reliability, including enabling remote monitoring and maintenance of rolling stock, providing information to Network Rail on areas of poor wheel grip and monitoring the condition of track for Network Rail. In addition, the reduction in the amount of splitting and joining of stock in the timetable should increase overall reliability.

Mr Statham highlighted the need for good information for passengers, which began with ensuring that station staff were available and were themselves informed about problems. He said that 170 temporary staff had been recruited and were currently in training to assist passengers during the first weeks of the timetable change at London Bridge station.

In order to increase transparency, Southeastern was now publishing its performance data by line instead of by route and was putting this information into its on-board magazine. There was also work to improve the travelling environment including the introduction of ticket machines in place of permit to travel machines,

a mid-life refresh of metro trains, refurbishment of older Networker trains to make them more accessible and a series of station deep cleans.

Mr Statham said that the works at London Bridge represented a huge challenge for Southeastern as the whole station, tracks and approaches were rebuilt. This would see the station working better on one level with step-free access, more trains through central London, more connectivity, simplified approaches and less time wasted as trains waited for platforms. There would be a huge communications programme on the changes as passengers needed to have access to information so they could make the best choices for their particular circumstances.

In response to a question, Mr Statham said that the biggest challenge facing Southeastern was the need to increase the level of passenger satisfaction, which had dropped considerably from its previous high of 84%. In the short term, there was a strong need to ensure passengers had enough information about the changes taking place at London Bridge station.

Members said that navigating London Bridge station during the current works could be frustrating for passengers. Mr Statham said that work was being undertaken to ensure information was displayed prominently, that information on websites was regularly checked and staff were deployed where they would be of most benefit to passengers. In addition, staff did a walk-round at the station every Friday to ensure that information about upcoming weekend changes was visible and correct.

Mr Statham noted that Southeastern were sharing more information than was required under the terms of the direct award and was pleased with the development of the DARWIN system of passenger information. Previously passengers had been able to obtain information from a variety of sources but DARWIN worked across the whole industry to provide a single source of information, which should be of benefit to all who used it.

The Chief Executive said it was important for Southeastern to maintain metro services during periods of adverse weather even if services in rural locations were snow-bound. She also highlighted the need for additional staffing at metro stations and for Managing Directors such as Mr Statham to personally attend Travel Demand Management boards.

Mr Statham said that staffing levels were increasing and Southeastern were reviewing where new staff would best be deployed. He welcomed the work of the TDM board on issues such as ticketing acceptance across all networks for passengers affected by London Bridge works and would try to attend the board meetings.

In response to a question, Mr Statham said that station and train cleanliness was a priority and that in Hastings station staff routinely cleaned the bus station even though it was not a Southeastern responsibility.

A member asked how Southeastern would improve accessibility on the network. Mr Statham said that the biggest accessibility element of the direct award was the updating of Networker trains. In addition, he would work with Access for All and

others to seek to make infrastructure improvements. Southeastern had been granted over £100 million in the last eight years for accessibility projects.

In response to a question, Mr Statham said that only two currently un-gated stations had been identified as having a business case for gating due to the diminishing returns seen in gating once the major terminuses and exit stations had been gated.

Members asked Mr Statham about the case for increasing service levels on the Catford loop but Mr Statham said that this route would soon be moving to the GTR Thameslink franchise. He acknowledged, however, that any new service on this route to London Victoria would remain with Southeastern and would hope to introduce services here if it were commercially viable. The problem was that without additional rolling stock it was difficult to find extra trains in peak hours.

The Chair thanked Mr Statham for his interesting presentation and for discussing issues with members.

10 Bank station update (LTW486)

The Policy Officer presented a report on the current status of the proposed Bank underground station upgrade. She said that London TravelWatch had supported the Transport and Works Act Order but objected to the lack of step-free access to the Central line platforms.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said it was difficult to carry out accessibility improvements because of the constrained nature of the environment, archaeology and the presence of vaults beneath the Bank of England. It was agreed that, whilst improving accessibility at Bank station was very important, it would be useful to establish the exact nature of the cost and disruption that providing step-free access would entail. This would be the best opportunity for decades to improve accessibility at the station, but without information about the costs it would be difficult for London TravelWatch to make a priority of the need for Central line access.

Action: Director, Policy and Investigation

Subject to such cost information, it was noted that failure to provide step-free access to the Central line platforms may result in London TravelWatch objecting to the proposals at a future date.

Members expressed concern that the upgrade works at Bank would overlap with engineering work at London Bridge station. The Chief Executive said that the Travel Demand Management board was looking at the implications of the Bank works and their impact on London Bridge.

11 Scheme of delegation (LTW486)

The Director, Policy and Investigation, presented a report showing London TravelWatch's revised scheme of delegation. The report brought together various policy perspectives that had been discussed with members over the past year. The Chair welcomed the document as aiding transparency and good governance.

It was noted that the report referred only to delegations in the area of policy and not other areas such as financial delegations and for clarity this should be specified in the title. It was also noted that the document was more than a simple scheme of delegation as it included principles for officers in the exercise of their delegated responsibilities.

It was agreed that the final version of the document should include a reference to London TravelWatch's criteria for setting priorities. In addition, the list of principles that officers should consider when deciding whether to refer a matter to the board should include situations involving significant trade-off between different groups of users.

It was noted that the phrase 'cycle lane' was not precisely defined and it would benefit from further clarity. Various other drafting points were raised.

It was agreed that officers would update the document and circulate a final version to members before uploading it to the London TravelWatch website.

Action: Director, Policy and Investigation

12 Any other business

There was no other business.

13 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 the London TravelWatch report on interchanges and reviewed the meeting.