
Minutes

Agenda item: 4
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Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 11 July 2017 at 169 Union Street, London SE1 0LL

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Present

Members

Jackie Ballard, Alan Benson, Richard Dilks, Glyn Kyle, Stephen Locke (Chair), John Stewart

Guests

Simon French	Chief Inspector of Rail Accidents, Rail Accident Investigation Branch (Item 8)
Victoria Hills	Chief Executive, Old Oak Common and Park Royal Development Corporation (Item 9)
Claire Woodcock	Old Oak Common and Park Royal Development Corporation (Item 9)
Mark Evers	Transport for London (Item 10)

Secretariat

Tim Bellenger	Director, Policy and Investigation
John Cartledge	Safety Adviser
Janet Cooke	Chief Executive
Richard Freeston-Clough	Communications Manager
Sharon Malley	Executive Assistant

1 Chair's introduction and pre-meeting announcements

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting and made the standard safety announcements.

2 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Abdi Osman.

3 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest in addition to those standing declarations recorded on the London TravelWatch website.

4 Chair's activities and Transport Focus update

The Chair reported that he had attended an informal meeting of the Transport Focus board in June focusing on highways, rail passenger redress arrangements and the proposed rail ombudsman scheme. In July he had chaired an extraordinary meeting of the Transport Focus board to discuss the surge in complaints at Virgin West Coast with the company's Managing Director. This had arisen following Virgin West Coast's decision 18 months ago to take a much more restrictive approach to passenger complaints. Senior staff at Virgin West Coast had agreed to take away various issues raised by the Transport Focus board but the Chair had not been wholly reassured and a watching brief should be kept on this issue.

In his role as Chair of London TravelWatch, the Chair had attended a meeting with Vernon Everitt, Managing Director of Customer Experience at Transport for London which had been a productive review of current issues. He had also attended the consumer expert panel of the Office of Rail and Road. He said the Panel thought that the ORR should use its power on behalf of consumer to greater effect and be prepared to take regulatory action when necessary, for example over poor complaint handling standards.

The Chair said he had met Keith Prince AM, the Chair of the London Assembly Transport Committee. In addition, he had taken part in London TravelWatch's seminar on interchanges, which had looked in detail at the interchanges at Lewisham, Brixton and West Hampstead, and at the lessons that could be learned more widely.

Members noted that the interchange seminar had been successful with key individuals in attendance and high quality debates. Interchanges were an important part of London TravelWatch's remit because of their multi-modal nature.

5 Minutes of the Board meeting held on 23 May 2017 and Governance committee

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 23 May 2017 were agreed and signed as a correct record. The minutes of the Governance Committees of 10 May 2016, 13 September 2016, 13 December 2016 and 21 February 2017 were noted.

6 Matters arising (LTW555)

In relation to the inclusion of step-free access to the Central line as part of the works at Bank underground station, the Director, Policy and Investigation, said that he was still awaiting the results of Transport for London's feasibility study. He would maintain the pressure on this and seek a commitment from TfL on the date of publication of the feasibility study.

Action: Director, Policy and Investigation

The publication date for the Cycling in London report was pencilled in for September. The Policy Officer (VS) would circulate the draft for comment before publication.

Action: Policy Officer (VS)

Following the previous Board meeting in Luton, the Director, Policy and Investigation, said he had emailed the Department for Transport to raise concerns about the complexity of fares in the Luton area. This provided a useful illustration of the complexity of rail fares as a whole and the difficulties faced by passengers in understanding which fares are right for them. The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that the DfT was currently more focussed on inter-city fares than commuter or metro fares but he would continue to seek simplification.

The Chief Executive said she was awaiting an update from the Rail Delivery Group on their meeting with the Rail Minister the previous week to discuss the rail ombudsman scheme. She noted that she had received legal advice that if passengers approached London TravelWatch for casework support it was not possible to delegate this to a separate body such as an ombudsman.

The Chief Executive said that Chris Gibb's report into problems with performance by Southern Rail (GTR) had now been published. It was agreed that members would consider progress with implementation of the findings of the review at a future meeting.

Action: Executive Assistant

7 Key activities (LTW556)

Members discussed the meetings and activities that had occurred over the period. The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that he had attended a stakeholder conference with Govia Thameslink Railway and that GTR had set out how they hoped to improve performance in future. However, he was not sure how well this would translate into delivery. Members expressed serious concern that GTR was removing trains from its timetable only the day before they were due to run, which meant they were not counted as cancellations in the performance results but nonetheless caused considerable inconvenience for passengers.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that the meeting about Oyster cards related to TfL's forthcoming Oyster app, which would not work with first generation Oyster cards.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that the meeting with Chiltern Rail had been positive and had helped Chiltern develop its thinking on the issue of Old Oak Common. It was agreed that Chiltern Rail would be invited to a future meeting to discuss options for the franchise.

Action: Executive Assistant

8 Simon French, Rail Accident Investigation Branch

The Chair welcomed Simon French, the Chief Inspector of the Department for Transport's Rail Accident Investigation Branch, to the meeting. Mr French said that the RAIB had originated from the Cullen report which inquired into the rail collision at Ladbroke Grove in 1999. Its remit covered all rail, metro, light rail and heritage railways in the UK and it had extensive legal powers to take evidence and require participation by the industry. RAIB's objective was to improve railway safety and its reporting of accidents was done on a no-fault basis. Its scope did not include the implementation of the industry's response to its reports but it did monitor overall safety issues.

Mr French said that the safety performance of the railway in relation to gaps between platforms and trains was remarkably good given the nature of some gaps, the volume of use, the narrowness of platforms and other challenges. This good performance had been achieved by partnership between passengers and the industry. Passengers boarded and alighted trains 3 billion times each year and there were 1,300 injuries a year arising from this. Most of these injuries were minor and few occurred while the train was moving; most involved passengers falling into the gap while the train was stationary or being hit by a closing train door.

However, gaps were acquiring greater importance in relation to fatalities: 48% of the total passenger fatality risk related to the gap between trains and platforms. This was largely as a result of other fatality risks, such as collision or derailment, reducing. The RAIB investigations of accidents occurring at the gap between train and platform generally related to those which involved a moving train.

These investigations resulted in key findings for both passengers and industry. For passengers, it was important that they understood that care needed to be taken at the platform edge. Train doors were not like lift doors and would not stop closing even if obstructions were in the way. The sensors may not be able to detect some items caught in doors, such as clothing or hands, and the doors were not easy to force open once closed. Passenger engagement on the risks and dangers at the platform edge was the most important element in improving safety and also possibly the most difficult.

For train dispatchers, it was important to understand that the doors could be shown on their systems as being closed but that obstructions could still be caught. Dispatchers should recognise the importance of a final visual check before clearing the train for departure.

Engineers and rolling stock owners should ensure they understand how train door systems work and whether doors could be opened once a driver has started the closure procedure. Operators needed to understand how each of their stations

worked in respect of safe dispatch of trains. More could be done to engineer smaller gaps at platforms. The amount of force needed to remove trapped objects once the train was moving should be properly understood.

The Safety Adviser said that the issue of the gap between train and platform had accessibility implications as well as safety concerns. There could sometimes be tension in resolving these different problems. Doors of new trains on the sub-surface lines of the Underground were level with the platform but had a wider horizontal gap, which led to an increase in the number of safety incidents.

Mr French said that the Rail Safety and Standards Board ran a national safety group looking at platform gap issues. It reviewed data about accidents and extracted learning points from the many low-level incidents that occurred on the network. It was important that station managers understood the risks associated with platform gaps and reported all incidents, even those that did not seem serious.

Members noted that the RAIB was investigating two incidents of trains dispatched by conductors and questioned the differences in safety between driver and conductor dispatched trains. Mr French said that there was no evidence from the RAIB's investigations that trains could not be operated safely by drivers working alone. Recommendations arising from RAIB investigations applied to all trains, regardless of the method of dispatch.

In response to questions, Mr French said that the rail industry was under a legal obligation to notify the RAIB when an accident occurred and that if the RAIB decided to investigate it would talk to all parties, including the Office of Rail and Road. The recommendations arising from investigations were usually directed to the safety authority, which was usually the ORR. The safety authority would then forward the recommendations to the bodies who should implement them and must satisfy itself that appropriate action was being taken. The safety authority would then report back to the RAIB.

Members thanked Mr French for his interesting presentation on an important aspect of London TravelWatch's work.

9 Old Oak Common

The Chair welcomed Victoria Hills, Chief Executive of the Old Oak Common and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC), and her colleague Claire Woodcock, to the meeting. Ms Hills said that OPDC was a functional body of the Greater London Authority whose role was to take forward the largest development opportunity in London. Development potential was driven by transport links as the area would be served by the Elizabeth line, High Speed 2, London Underground and National Rail services.

The current public transport offer in the area was poor and large parts were only accessible by car. However, this would be much improved following the opening of new stations and transport links.

Ms Hills said that she was concerned about aspects of the proposals in the HS2 hybrid bill as there was not enough interface with local areas. She hoped she was making progress in improving this. She said that she would like to see a strategic rail study that would identify how to make the most of the rail opportunities in the area, including, for example, the Chiltern routes.

Ms Hills said that major civil works would be announced imminently that would fundamentally alter the transport arrangements in West London. The implications of this were only just being understood and she hoped to encourage excitement about the area's potential.

The Chief Executive said she would be disappointed if Old Oak Common did not work properly as an interchange and asked about the possibility of linking the Overground network to the site. Ms Hills said Transport for London and HS2 were looking closely at this but the engineering was complicated. It would be important that all transport aspects worked together, to include for example rail connections via the currently freight-only Dudding Hill Line and the design and layout of Euston station. Members said they were sympathetic to this aspiration and would support integrated interchange where possible.

A representative of users of the West London Line said that questions remained about Crossrail's ability to cope with likely traffic volumes. He said it was important for all Londoners that capacity at Old Oak Common was maximised by making best use of all transport modes and interchange opportunities.

The Chair thanked Ms Hills and Ms Woodcock and said London TravelWatch would maintain pressure on the interchange aspects of the project.

10 London Underground ticket offices update (LTW557)

The Director, Policy and Investigation, gave a report on progress with London TravelWatch's recommendations relating to the closure of ticket offices at London Underground stations. He said that some of the recommendations would take a long time to deliver and that culture change was also difficult to achieve.

Mark Evers, director of customer strategy at Transport for London, said that TfL had made good progress on London TravelWatch's recommendations but there were still aspects not completed. He said work on the delivery of focal points at stations was underway but had been challenging.

Members noted that Visitor Centres closed relatively early and this may be problematic for visitors arriving, for example, by Eurostar. Mr Evers said that TfL had reviewed the operation of the Visitor Centres and increased the opening times by one hour from Thursdays to Saturdays in response to these concerns.

The Chief Executive said that London TravelWatch's research showed that London-based passengers did not view Visitor Centres as somewhere they could go for information. Mr Evers said that the centres were positioned specifically for visitors and were not trying to operate as 'super ticket offices'. They would not have adequate capacity for this.

Mr Evers said that TfL was trialling various options to create 'focal points' in Underground stations so that passengers would be able to locate sources of assistance and information. He said that TfL would take the elements of the trial that worked well and take them forward for the next phase. It was not only about physical intervention but also about the culture of the location.

Members asked when the issue of focal points would be resolved given that passengers had been suffering detriment since ticket offices had been closed. Mr Evers said the second phase of the focal point trials would take place over summer and he hoped this would be successful for different types of stations. He would then look at costs and prioritisation and this work would extend into 2018. TfL was using an external research organisation to evaluate which elements of the focal points worked best in the trials.

Members noted that there was still some ambiguity about the purpose of focal points and whether they were intended as a place to find information or whether people could go there for assistance with buying tickets or other actions. More thought should be given to this as it would assist with understanding how to develop them at stations.

Members discussed some of the proposed designs for focal points and stressed the need for designs to work clearly for passengers. This issue would be considered again in 2018.

11 Annual accounts (LTW558)

The audited annual accounts for the year 2016-17 were received.

12 Meeting dates 2018

The calendar of dates for meetings in 2018 was received. It was agreed to move the Governance committee meeting in February to 13 February 2018.

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 confidential minutes and reviewed the meeting.