
Minutes

Agenda item: 5
Drafted 23.03.15

Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 17 March 2015 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 27 January 2015**
5. **Matters arising (LTW492)**
6. **Actions taken (LTW493)**
7. **Out of London issues (LTW494)**
8. **London Underground issues (LTW495)**
9. **National Rail performance report (LTW496)**
10. **Any other business**
11. **Resolution to move into confidential session**

Present

Members

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

Guests

Neil Middleton Association of Public Transport Users (Item 7)
Andrew Stott Sevenoaks Rail Travellers Association (Item 7)

Matt Winfield Transport for London

Members of the public

Secretariat

Keletha Barrett Policy Officer (Item 9)
Tim Bellenger Director, Policy and Investigation
Janet Cooke Chief Executive
Richard Freeston-Clough Communications Officer
Sharon Malley Executive Assistant (minutes)
Robert Nichols Policy Officer

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

The Chair welcomed members and visitors to the meeting and made standard safety and evacuation announcements.

2 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Policy Officer Vincent Stops, who was unwell. The board wished him a speedy recovery.

3 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest in addition to the standing declarations.

4 Chair's activities and Passenger Focus update

The Chair said that he, the Chief Executive and the Director, Policy and Investigation, had attended a meeting with the secretariat of the Airports Commission (the Davies Commission) on airport capacity in the South East. There had been a useful discussion on the need to keep transport developments in step with the plans for airport expansion and a recognition that following the announcement of which airport will grow there would be a key opportunity for a step-change improvement in public transport access to relevant areas.

The Chair said he had attended several meetings with senior TfL officers that would be picked up in the Key Activities item.

In relation to his role on the board of Passenger Focus, the Chair said he had attended a site visit to London Bridge station to view the construction works, which were incredibly extensive and complicated and constrained by several protected historical and archaeological sites.

The Passenger Focus board on 12 February had considered the 2015-16 Passenger Focus workplan, the presentation of the results of the Autumn 2014 National Rail Passenger Survey, the extension of the contract for the survey and the panel Passenger Focus was hosting in relation to the consumer aspects of HS2. In addition, the Passenger Focus board had considered research currently being conducted among users of the strategic road network, which was now part of Passenger Focus's remit, and the internal changes that would be made to accommodate this increased remit. There had also been a separate awayday for staff and board members.

The Chair had had two meetings with Jeff Halliwell, the new Chair of Passenger Focus, to brief him on the role of London TravelWatch and how the organisations work together. The second meeting had been held at London TravelWatch's offices and had been attended also by Janet Cooke and Anthony Smith, CEO of Passenger Focus. The two Chairs had agreed on the need for similar update meetings including the two CEOs in future, probably on a six-monthly basis.

5 Minutes

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 27 January 2015 were agreed and signed as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:

- Deletion of Richard Dilks' name from the list of attendees

- In the final line of Item 9 (on page 7), replace “discuss its findings” with “discuss TfL’s review findings”
- In the fourth line of the fourth paragraph of page 9, replace “as if affected” with “as it affected”

6 Matters arising (LTW492)

It was agreed that members would prioritise a visit to Victoria station over other site visits at present. Members emphasised that they wanted to view the station as a whole, both London Underground and Network Rail, from the passenger perspective during the period of construction works.

Action: Executive Assistant

It was agreed that the Director, Policy and Investigation, would draft an agenda and lines to take for a briefing meeting with whoever takes on the position of Transport Minister following the forthcoming general election. He would circulate it to members for comment by email before the Easter break. The Chief Executive said that DfT officials had confirmed that once the minister was in post London TravelWatch would be offered the opportunity to present the briefing.

Action: Director, Policy and Investigation

The Chief Executive said that she had received a copy of a letter written by Phil Hufton of Network Rail to the current Transport Minister, Claire Perry, about problems being experienced by users of London Bridge station. Mr Hufton said that Network Rail, Southern, Southeastern and Thameslink staff at the station would be working as part of “One Team Transport” with identical tabards so that passengers would be able to identify sources of assistance. The same team would also meet before each peak to discuss issues relating to the day’s operating plan. This was something London TravelWatch had previously called for and now welcomed.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that Southern had implemented a new timetable to try to maximise the capacity in and out of London Bridge. This would see some additional services at Redhill station from the beginning of March 2015 but the lost services on the Forest Hill line were unlikely to be reinstated in the very short term. Some trains from Tulse Hill via Peckham Rye would be non-stop between Peckham Rye and London Bridge in the evening peak. The new summer timetable would be introduced in May and this might see reductions in service at Tulse Hill but the reinstatement of the lost Forest Hill line services.

It was noted that the Tulse Hill timetable to London Bridge was now very irregular as a result of the London Bridge works. This was not ideal for a metro service and would make any further timetable changes even more confusing for passengers. The Chief Executive said that she had expressed concern at the Travel Demand Management board that passengers at individual stations did not understand what the changes meant for them. London TravelWatch had called for passengers to be given greater access to relevant information. Members asked whether Network Rail made enough use of data available through the Oyster system and it was noted that Network Rail could probably do more in this area.

7 Key activities (LTW493)

The meeting with South West Trains about overcrowding issues at Clapham Junction station was discussed. The Director, Policy and Investigation, said the problems were directly attributable to the works at London Bridge station. People who previously travelled to Waterloo East via London Bridge were now travelling to Waterloo via Clapham Junction instead, which was making it increasingly difficult to board a Waterloo train at Clapham Junction. This was leading to overcrowding on the platforms at Clapham Junction and lengthening journey times for passengers.

South West Trains had been keen for London TravelWatch's assistance in securing additional bus services but TfL said the passenger modelling did not justify this. Some new trains that had been introduced to relieve overcrowding were now non-stopping at Clapham Junction and Vauxhall stations in order to meet timetables. This was not considered to be satisfactory.

In addition, South West Trains' programme for upgrading to 10-car rolling stock was delayed with a lot of the stock still in refurbishment, and plans to lengthen platforms were also delayed in some areas. It was likely that the overcrowding would continue until August 2016, when the link between London Bridge and Waterloo East was scheduled to be restored.

The Chief Executive said that this issue had relevance to the remit of the Travel Demand Management board. It was not enough to provide information on alternative routes to London Bridge station as people would make their own plans and travel patterns might prove to be different in the reality to the modelling. The Chair said there was a need for an urgent study into how passengers' journeys across South London had changed as a result of the engineering works, which would be relevant to the future Travel Demand Management initiatives. The Director, Policy and Investigation, said he thought some of the operational decisions about the engineering works had relied too heavily on passenger modelling when the reality was that passengers sometimes behaved unpredictably. The Chief Executive said she hoped the Travel Demand Management board would take the passenger study forward.

8 Out of London issues (LTW494)

The Chair welcomed Neil Middleton and Andrew Stott to the meeting in their capacities as representatives of transport users on the Bedford arm of the Thameslink franchise and of Sevenoaks respectively.

Neil Middleton said that the needs of travellers outside the London boundary were often similar to those of passengers within London, such as the need for good information, operators' over-reliance on modelling and problems with compensation arrangements. He said that in the three journeys he had made that week he had experienced 26 minutes of delay. He hoped in the future to see ticketing improvements, such as the introduction of smartcards that would benefit part-time workers.

Mr Middleton said he agreed with the recommendations in the London TravelWatch report. He would welcome a 'best price guarantee' for users of ticket machines, to assure them that they would always be offered the best price available for their

journey. At a more strategic level he was very concerned about rising fare levels and was keen to see that tackled.

Andrew Stott said the London TravelWatch report set out the issues well. He said that Sevenoaks prided itself on being part of Kent but in transport terms it was very much closer to London, with a lot of commuting into central London, Bromley and Orpington for work, healthcare, leisure and shopping. He said there were currently plans to build 500 new homes at Dunton Green and 1,000 new houses near Knockholt (Fort Halstead) but there were no plans to increase public transport capacity.

Mr Stott said that he felt Sevenoaks to be in a 'no man's land' as it was not served by TfL metro services but did not benefit from longer distance fast services or HS1 trains. Fare levels into London were higher from Sevenoaks than from other comparable stations around London as they had risen for several years by RPI+3%, in order to pay for HS1, which Sevenoaks residents derived no real benefit from.

Commuters travelling from Sevenoaks into London often had to stand for the whole journey as the seats were often full by the time trains left Tonbridge and there was a very poor service at many smaller stations in the area.

Mr Stott said that Southeastern was train-centric in its planning and viewed London Bridge station as a destination when in reality for many passengers it was simply an interchange.

Mr Stott said that bus services into London from Sevenoaks were limited with only one timetabled per hour. In addition, co-ordination with TfL on issues such as engineering works was poor.

Trains were often non-stop through Sevenoaks in order to give priority to passengers travelling longer distances into London, which was unfair to Sevenoaks residents. His group continued to support devolution of services from Sevenoaks into London to the Mayor of London and he thought the objection raised by Kent County Council to this was opaque. He knew that there had been some concern from user groups in other areas of Kent but his group felt its views had not been properly represented.

Mr Stott said his group continued to strongly support Oyster extensions to Sevenoaks, and this was backed by local residents and the Member of Parliament. He did not know why it had not been included in the direct award granted in 2014.

The Chair thanked Mr Middleton and Mr Stott for their observations, which members found very interesting. Members noted that the commuter towns just beyond the London boundary were getting neither a frequent metro-style service nor the less frequent but faster services into London. Members were concerned that stations such as Sevenoaks could potentially receive a 10-minute peak service into London but were overlooked for this with priority given to stations further out. Mr Middleton agreed and noted that Bedford enjoyed a service of four fast trains per hour whereas Radlett had no fast trains. He was concerned that adding a second operator for the Thameslink core would be problematic for users in the short term.

The Chair said democratically elected local authorities were fully entitled to make their own representations on behalf of their residents but London TravelWatch's role

was to speak up for passengers in the London rail area in the context of the journeys they actually made.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that the paper covered 10 years of activity by London TravelWatch and that although there were some individual local issues many common themes emerged. These included consistency of fares, timetabling, the balance between fast and stopping services, and availability of bus services.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that the competing demands for rail capacity meant there was pressure to remove stops at some stations just beyond the London boundary, as had happened at Watford Junction and might happen at Stevenage now that the Department for Transport's invitation to tender for the East Coast franchise allowed bidders to reduce the number of calls to this station by up to 50%.

There was also a significant problem with bus services from London to centres just beyond the London boundary as operators sometimes found them unviable and local authorities would not subsidise them, meaning that unless TfL supported them they would be lost.

Members discussed the recommendations in the report. Members wondered whether it would be possible to specify in more detail London TravelWatch's aspirations for increased rail devolution to the Mayor of London and how National Rail should be encouraged to serve the out-of-London hinterland more consistently. It was noted that London TravelWatch would need to work with stakeholders to achieve success in this area.

Members noted that London TravelWatch sought to address problems through responses to consultations and franchise specifications and wondered whether a more holistic or proactive approach would yield improved results. It was noted that this would be an important issue to raise with the new Transport Minister following the election.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that the current review of fares by the Association of Train Operating Companies was a good opportunity for London TravelWatch to raise the problem of differential fares beyond the London boundary and to call for Oyster extensions to these areas.

He said that London TravelWatch worked well with stakeholders including users and local authorities and maintained a watching brief on issues that affected them. However, it was not possible within current resources to attend regular user group meetings.

A member asked about the future of bus route 505, which crossed the London boundary from Waltham Abbey to Chingford. The Director, Policy and Investigation, said the service was commercial and not operated by TfL. It did not accept Oyster payments and would be withdrawn as it was not deemed profitable by the operator. If TfL established that there was a need for London-based residents to reach the destination outside London it may decide to tender a replacement service.

The Policy Officer raised problems of some lines bearing the impact of problems elsewhere on the network when they could have been allowed to continue operation.

For example, the line between Orpington and Sevenoaks had two trains per hour but services were often cut if there were problems elsewhere, even when the problems did not affect the stretch of line between Orpington and Sevenoaks.

Members discussed the problem of illogical fare levels, such as the tickets to London from Gatwick Airport station that were more expensive than tickets from Three Bridges station, even though Three Bridges was further away. It was noted that many passengers may be unaware of these anomalies and that London TravelWatch was calling for a more consistent and simpler approach to fares overall.

The Chief Executive said that officers were working hard on the extension of Oyster to Dartford and were pressing for a decision before the pre-election period. In relation to proactive work, seeking to influence franchise specifications was one of the most useful ways London TravelWatch could work to protect the interests of passengers in the London rail area.

She said that London TravelWatch continued to work with the DfT to highlight the importance of considering the passenger perspective when assessing franchise bids. In relation to stakeholders, officers had previously had good relationships with transport officers in the counties around London and this could possibly be revived through social media.

The recommendations in the report were agreed. In addition, it was agreed that London TravelWatch supported the increased devolution of metro-style rail services, including those crossing the London boundary, to the Mayor of London to ensure passengers on these services were not overlooked when planning timetables. This was also important for services in the areas beyond the London boundary that remained under National Rail control. It was agreed that this should form part of the briefing for the new Transport Minister following the election. It was agreed that officers would seek to re-establish links with transport officers in the authorities bordering London within resource constraints. It was agreed that London TravelWatch would continue to review out of London issues regularly, on an annual basis if resources permit.

Action: Director, Policy and Investigation; Executive Assistant

9 London Underground issues (LTW495)

The Policy Officer presented a report on the proposals to upgrade Bank underground station and close ticket offices in all London Underground stations. He said that London TravelWatch had been pressing for the inclusion of step-free access to the Central line platforms at Bank station and that London Underground had now written with their commitment to achieve this, subject to the approval of London Fire Brigade/LFEPA and the agreement on location of humps on the platform. This resulted in London TravelWatch withdrawing its objection to the Transport and Works Act consultation and the organisation is now listed as a supporter.

It was noted that both the Central and Northern line platforms at Bank station would be accessible following London Underground's change of position but the link to the District line platforms and Monument station were not part of the scheme and it would not be practical for these to be made accessible.

In relation to ticket office closures, the Policy Officer said that London TravelWatch remained concerned that the closures were being pushed through and that none of its recommendations around the process for the closures had been taken on board. All London Underground's consultation had been focused on the unions, with none on passengers or passenger representatives such as London TravelWatch.

The Policy Officer said that TfL had committed to working with London TravelWatch in future on the closures but it had not committed to adopting any of London TravelWatch's recommendations. It had also decided not to undertake the type of statutory consultation when taking ticket office space out of passenger use that would be required had the operator been National Rail rather than TfL.

Officers had held a meeting with Mike Brown, the Managing Director of London Underground, where he had promised to keep the introduction of Visitor Information Centres at stations such as Stratford and Waterloo under review but there was no funding available for this at present.

The Policy Officer said London TravelWatch had sought confirmation of the details of the consultation programme for closures of the National Rail-run ticket offices on the Silverlink route but London Underground had not yet provided this information. These ticket offices were due for conversion in early 2016 so the process would need to be defined fairly quickly to meet this timetable.

The Policy Officer said that Mike Brown had agreed to share the research findings of its 'mystery shopper' and customer surveys on the implementation of the ticket office proposals with London TravelWatch and this was welcomed.

Members noted that it was unlikely that TfL would alter its position on ticket offices to any significant extent in future and it was therefore important to work to ensure that the changes were as beneficial for passengers as possible. It was agreed that London TravelWatch would write to London Underground setting out the comments in the report and made during the discussion. The letter should capitalise on the positive aspects of London Underground's response, such as its commitment to share its research findings and to keep the issue of Visitor Information Centres under review. London TravelWatch should ask for details of the criteria for review and analysis and should offer to contribute to the process. Officers should also seek regular meetings with the implementation team and should express members' disappointment that London Underground did not take on board more of their views.

Action: Director, Policy and Investigation

The Chief Executive said she had recently learned that the Visitor Information Centres would be at ground level rather than at the level of the Underground concourses and that this represented an opportunity to integrate Underground and National Rail services. She said it would be important for passengers arriving at Underground stations to be made aware of how to reach the Visitor Information Centres.

10 National Rail performance report (LTW496)

The Chief Executive referred members to the letter received from Claire Perry MP, the transport minister, about ongoing disruption at London Bridge station. She said it was positive that the minister had picked up London TravelWatch's call for a 'one team transport' approach and this was now being implemented at the station.

The Policy Officer presented a report on the performance of National Rail train operators for the period October to December 2014. She said that Southern had been the worst performer for some time with problems stemming from the development works at London Bridge station, a lack of available drivers and management of the fleet.

The Policy Officer said that the National Rail Passenger Satisfaction Survey had been conducted between September and November, which coincided with a period of service disruption and there was an overall dip in passenger satisfaction. Southeastern had the lowest satisfaction levels as well as the largest decline, which may reflect problems occurring at London Bridge station. She said that the satisfaction survey compared satisfaction in different regions of the country and London was somewhere in the middle. The only area in which Londoners were significantly different from the rest of the country was in satisfaction with value for money, which was very low.

It was noted that the recent decline in satisfaction for Southern and Southeastern reflected an overall decline in satisfaction in London and the south east since 2010 and it was worthwhile highlighting this longer-term trend.

Members noted that the use of "Quarter 3" as a title for the report made it more difficult for readers to understand which months were under discussion. It would be clearer to label the report with the actual timeframe covered.

Members noted that although some of the problems facing Southern and Southeastern could be traced to the rebuilding at London Bridge station, others were under the operators' control, such as the failure to plan for enough drivers and the management of rolling stock. London TravelWatch should be more trenchant in its criticisms here, to ensure that the reasons for the problems were clear. It was also important to be clear that the report did not cover the period of greatest disruption, which began in January 2015.

It was noted that the table showing London Overground performance did not distinguish between peak and off-peak services, because most Overground services were orbital and were not deemed to have a 'peak'.

11 Any other business

It was agreed that officers would consider whether the introduction of 20 mile per hour speed limits across London should be brought to a future meeting.

Action: Executive Assistant

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 discussed compensation for rail passengers and unified fares for London and reviewed the meeting.