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## Minutes

Agenda item: 5  
Drafted 17.02.15

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**Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 27 January 2015 at 169 Union Street, London SE1 0LL**

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### Present

#### Members

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

#### Guests

Mke Weston                      Director of Buses, Transport for London (Item 7)

Joan Hunt                         Transport for All member (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 meeting. 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**

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

## **4 Chair's activities and Passenger Focus update**

The Chair said there had been no formal meetings of the Passenger Focus board since the last London TravelWatch board meeting but there had been two informal meetings that focused on the new Passenger Focus remit covering Highways Agency roads and research for highways users. The meetings had also discussed London Bridge and Thameslink issues and proposals for new alternative dispute resolution procedures.

He said that the next wave of surveying for the National Rail Passenger Survey was due to take place that week.

He had attended a reception in January with the Chief Executive and Director, Policy and Investigation, to mark the retirement of the Passenger Focus chair Colin Foxall. Mr Foxall's successor, Mr Jeff Halliwell, had now been announced and had attended a Passenger Focus board meeting as an observer. He and the Chief Executive were due to give him a presentation on the role of London TravelWatch and how London TravelWatch and Passenger Focus worked together.

The Chair said he and the Director, Policy and Investigation, had attended a meeting with representatives of commuters using Redhill station which highlighted the issues facing stations outside the Greater London Authority but within the London railway area. The Redhill meeting took place following commuters' requests to express their concerns to London TravelWatch and their desire to ensure London TravelWatch understood their issues. The Chief Executive said that London TravelWatch officers used to attend transport user groups more regularly but the reduction in resources over recent years meant that was no longer possible.

## **5 Minutes**

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 9 December 2014 were agreed and signed as a correct record, subject to amending the reference to David Leibling on page 2 from Acting Chair to Interim Chair.

## **6 Matters arising (LTW488)**

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that London TravelWatch was due to meet the Davies Commission secretariat on the day following the meeting to discuss London TravelWatch's report on surface transport access to London's airports.

In relation to London Underground's proposals to close ticket offices, members noted that the Mayor of London and some London Assembly members were expressing similar concerns to those set out in London TravelWatch's research report on the subject, for example about the categorisation of stations such as London Bridge and Waterloo. The Chair said he was keen that London TravelWatch should capitalise on its consultation and research work and not miss opportunities to influence London Underground's actions. It seemed that London Underground was likely to begin work on closing ticket offices in some of the larger zone 1 stations as early as April and London TravelWatch should ensure it continued to press for some of these stations to be re-graded if appropriate, especially where there was a case for re-categorisation as "gateway".

It was agreed that London TravelWatch would write to London Underground to set out its concerns in relation to the most critical zone 1 stations that should be re-categorised.

**Action: Director, Policy and Investigation**

It was noted that more detailed reports on the closure of ticket offices would be considered at forthcoming Policy Committee and Board meetings.

In relation to the Bank station upgrade, it was noted that TfL had previously put the cost of providing step-free access to the Central line platforms in the tens of millions but that because of other changes it may now be possible to include it at a much lower cost. This would still require further negotiations, principally with the fire service in relation to safety and escape options, and TfL would need to identify savings elsewhere in the scheme to offset the cost, but it was a considerable improvement on the previous position. Members congratulated the Policy Officers for continuing to pursue this issue despite the difficulties. It was noted that London TravelWatch would withdraw its objection to the scheme at the Public Inquiry if TfL agreed to provide step-free access.

Members noted that the scheme of delegation was close to completion.

It was agreed that members would like to visit City Airport in addition to Bank and Kings Cross St Pancras stations.

**Action: Executive Assistant**

**7 Key activities (LTW489)**

It was noted that the Chief Executive had also attended the meeting with Dave Ward at Network Rail.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that the meeting with Luton Airport had been productive and that they had been positive in their response to the London TravelWatch report on surface transport access to airports. There had been a further meeting with the airport subsequently and they had given London TravelWatch feedback on what they would like to see in future rail access to airports.

The Chair said that the meeting with Shashi Verma had focused on how TfL's proposals to rebalance the fares tariffs had been communicated to London TravelWatch and the speed of TfL's decisions. London TravelWatch felt that it had

been wrong-footed and TfL acknowledged the need for better communications in future. The Chair said he had also referred to TfL's current consultation on transparency and compared the aspirations in the consultation with actual experience of the fares review.

The Policy Officer said that he had met First Great Western to ask whether they would be able to provide a new connection through Redhill following the loss of the connection on Southern services.

## **8 Review of the Year of the Bus**

Mike Weston, Director of Buses at Transport for London, gave a presentation on the impact of the Year of the Bus and took questions from members. The Chair asked Mr Weston how the investment in buses was being funded. Mr Weston said that some extra funding would come through efficiency savings. He said that the buses operated with a £420 million subsidy, around half of which was the cost of subsidies such as free travel for children and the other half was the cost of capital investment in the fleet. He said that the investment shown in his presentation was embedded in the TfL business plan.

Members noted that work to increase bus stop accessibility was funded by TfL but was mainly delivered by the boroughs.

Mr Weston said that there had been a small decrease in bus performance that was caused by a small increase in the volume of traffic. Work was underway to speed up buses, for example by allowing some new bus-only right turns on the North Circular road. The Chair asked whether any bus lanes were due for removal, and Mr Weston said that some may be lost to accommodate the new cycle superhighway routes but that it may be possible to regain the lost time by re-engineering junctions on other sections of the routes concerned.

Mr Weston said that there would be significant investment in driver training as TfL was aware of concern from passengers about driver behaviour. The Policy Officer said disability groups were keen to improve their relationships with bus operators so that they could input into driver training programmes. Mr Weston said that bus companies had found the input of disability groups to be valuable and he was keen to push this further.

Members welcomed TfL's work on borough liaison. Mr Weston said that each borough operated differently but that generally there were small meetings between TfL and each borough, sometimes also including the public, where boroughs' views were discussed.

Mr Weston said that TfL had recently launched a new disposable payment card as a mitigation for the loss of the ability to pay cash on buses. The card cost £5 and gave unlimited bus travel for one day. The ticket was not yet being promoted as it was still in the trial stage but around 1,000 a day were currently being sold. It was noted that single journeys remained problematic for those without contactless payment cards.

Members asked whether TfL kept information on the number of passengers being classified by drivers as vulnerable and therefore given access to unpaid journeys. Mr Weston said that there had been no material change in the number of unpaid

journeys. He said that in the next 18-24 months he hoped to have bus ticket machines in some of the key London bus stations.

Mr Weston said that bus drivers were very proud of the work they did and their contribution to London. The Year of the Bus improved the profile of the bus network and reminded people that buses carried more passengers than the Underground. The costs of the Year of the Bus were all met by sponsors.

Mr Weston said that he was looking at future initiatives such as providing WiFi on buses and that it was important that it was of high enough quality and able to be commercialised.

Mr Weston said that a new initiative was being introduced on a small number of buses that would show passengers downstairs which seats were available on the upper deck to see whether this encouraged passengers to go upstairs. It may also help with measuring overcrowding.

A member asked about the implications for the night bus network following the introduction of weekend overnight running on some tube lines. Mr Weston said there would be consultation before any changes were made to the night bus network but that night buses had originally been introduced to address the fact that the Underground did not run overnight. This meant it would be sensible to review the network of night buses once overnight tubes were in operation. There may be a need to introduce new weekend-only routes for suburban connecting services while reducing some routes along tube corridors. Members noted that the bus network was flexible and could respond to actual patterns of passenger behaviour once the night tube was running.

A member said that i-Bus data had the potential to be valuable source of information but it did not seem to be used fully. Mr Weston said this was previously the case but in the last couple of years it had begun to be used more, for example in encouraging the renewal of freedom passes.

The Chief Executive asked how the Year of the Bus had raised standards for passengers. Mr Weston said that community engagement had been very high and the increased profile of buses had enabled funding for buses and encouraged boroughs to support bus priority measures. There had been an improvement in driver behaviour and the Year of the Bus had benefitted the network overall.

The Chair asked Mr Weston when a performance measure for overcrowding on buses might be introduced. Mr Weston said measuring overcrowding in real time was prohibitively expensive. Instead, TfL was using Oyster data to work out where people were likely to have alighted and this would show how many people were on a bus at any given time. He hoped the model would be ready by the end of 2015 and would show the busy corridors and points on each route.

The Chair thanked Mr Weston for his presentation and for answering questions from members.

## **9 Social needs transport (LTW490)**

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said London TravelWatch had considered the issue of door to door transport on many occasions in the past. He said that

there was a plethora of alternative services for people who were unable to use mainstream public transport and TfL was consulting on ways to rationalise them. He had given London TravelWatch's views to the TfL consultants carrying out the review but the findings had not yet been published. London TravelWatch had invited a user of the services to set out her views on the way they operated in order to inform London TravelWatch's position.

Joan Hunt, a member of Transport for All in Lambeth and a wheelchair user, told members that all users of Dial a Ride were grateful for the opportunities it gave for them to live more independently. She said it could be difficult for Dial a Ride users who had to pay for their phone calls as they could often be waiting on the phone for up to eight minutes before the booking was completed. Capital Call, which she also used, managed its phone booking lines much more efficiently. If the call was not answered within three minutes callers could leave a message and Capital Call would ring back within half an hour.

Ms Hunt said that she did not find late arrivals to be a significant problem. However, she understood that Dial a Ride booking staff estimated journey times based on straight-line distances rather than along roads and that there sometimes was not enough time allowed in the schedule to get wheelchairs in and out of the vehicles.

Ms Hunt said that Dial a Ride sometimes sent private minicabs instead of minibuses, which could be a problem if drivers were unfamiliar with the area. There was a feeling that cab drivers were not as reliable as Dial a Ride drivers.

Ms Hunt said that users of Dial a Ride were asked to be ready to leave 15 minutes before the time of booking and to wait until 15 minutes after the booking time before phoning with a query. On one occasion she waited until the 15 minutes had elapsed and phoned Dial a Ride to ask where the driver was. She was told she had called two minutes too early so she had to hang up and call back. When she did call back she was told that the taxi company that had taken the booking could not find a driver so she had to make her own arrangements and claim back the cost. She did not find this arrangement to be satisfactory.

Ms Hunt said that the Dial a Ride service insisted on building in a large amount of waiting time, even for journeys that would be very short. For example, a visit to the doctors required a 10 minute journey but the booking had to be made 40 to 45 minutes early and there would typically be a similar wait for the journey home afterwards.

Ms Hunt said she understood Capital Call would be withdrawn from April and this was disappointing. The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that Capital Call was a service provided in those boroughs where it was thought there were not enough accessible taxis available for people with mobility impairments. TfL was proposing to withdraw funding as more accessible taxis were now available. The Chair noted that the booking mechanism of Capital Call seemed more flexible than that of Dial a Ride, and that there may be lessons to be learned here.

Ms Hunt said she also used Taxicard but this was not as reliable as other services and she preferred Capital Call. The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that Capital Call had a smaller number of users which perhaps made its booking arrangements and reliability more straightforward. Ms Hunt said that Dial a Ride

was limited to a five-mile radius and that its drivers could work shifts anywhere in London.

Paul Blackwell, Dial a Ride manager at TfL, said that no final decision had yet been taken on Capital Call and its future was being considered as part of the overall review of social needs transport. It was unlikely that it would be closing by April as the timescales were too tight.

Members noted that the service users seemed to spend a lot of time waiting for transport as a lot of unnecessary time was built into the system. The position was similar for patient transport to hospitals, where several hours could be spent waiting for each journey.

Ms Hunt said that Dial a Ride users were permitted to book two ad hoc journeys per fortnight for ticketed events or appointments. For non-timed appointments, such as visiting a friend, the booking had to be made the day before. Members noted that there did not seem to be much co-ordination between the various services.

The Chair said that it was very informative to hear from users of the service rather than relying on operators for information. There did not appear to be enough attention paid to the experience of users when designing services.

A member of the public who was also a Dial a Ride user said that she had access to door to door services but also wanted to be able to use buses. She said it was important for bus and underground services to be accessible and for transport to be available for everyone rather than segregated.

The Chair thanked Ms Hunt and the other members of the public who had shared their experiences in this area. This was an issue that London TravelWatch would be keeping under review. The Board looked forward to an opportunity to discuss its findings.

## **10 Performance of Thameslink and Southern**

The Director, Policy and Investigation, spoke about the current performance of the Thameslink and Southern franchises in the period since Christmas. He said that the performance of Southeastern was now also causing concern.

He said that during period 10 of 2013-14 there had been major adverse weather conditions that significantly affected the performance of rail services across the London. This year had not seen any problematic weather conditions and that therefore performance measures should be much better. For some operators, such as South West Trains, this was the case. However, performance measures for Thameslink, Southern and Southeastern were very poor.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that many of the reasons for the poor performance were within the control of the railway. He said that the right time arrival figures for Southern were 57% in period 6 to a low of 40% in period 9, 44% in period 10 and were likely to go lower again.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, set out the events leading up to the poor performance. He said that there had been a 10-day blockade at London Bridge

station in August 2014 which had caused some operational problems which persisted to the present. He had taken these up with the operators and Network Rail at various meetings. Dyan Crowther, Chief Operating Officer of the Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern franchise, had conceded that some of the problems were caused by the operator while some were outside its control, for example when GTR took over the franchise from First Capital Connect it found there was a much lower driver complement than it had been expecting. Other problems were also within the control of the franchises.

Over Christmas there had been engineering possessions at Kings Cross, London Bridge and Paddington stations. Works at Kings Cross and Paddington overran, causing particular problems at Kings Cross with knock-on effects on the Underground.

Following the hand-back of London Bridge it was found that the new Southern timetable was not compatible with the new London Bridge layout, which led to severe delays and cancellations. The indicator boards had been moved, which made it difficult for passengers to see what was happening to trains. It became apparent that Southern would not be able to run the promised timetable so it needed to remove a significant number of additional services from operation. This meant that half of services on the Forest Hill corridor in the evening peak were removed. He had discussed this with the Department for Transport and there was a recognition of the problems but no immediate resolution in sight.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that London TravelWatch had been made aware of problems on Southeastern beginning around 12 January relating to the remaining London Bridge services. There were complaints of overcrowding and that this overcrowding was spreading to other services, including buses. He had attended summit meetings with each of the train operators and the Minister for Transport to discuss the problems.

In addition, London TravelWatch had called for additional compensation for passengers over and above the amounts specified in the passenger charters. He said that train operators should be able to make automatic refunds onto Oyster and contactless payment cards.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that sometimes delays could be caused by Network Rail's maintenance regime. He said that problems could also be caused by an over-reliance on modelling of passenger flows that turned out not to match the reality.

There had been problems with franchise management and the failure to plan for the need for extra drivers during the period of training on the new London Bridge layout. There had also been a failure to take account of stakeholder views, for example responses to the consultation on the Southern franchise extension had made several detailed suggestions for mitigation at London Bridge but these had not been taken up.

The Chief Executive said it was important to emphasise that London had very specific transport issues and that the poor performance was having a real impact on passengers. She noted that members had agreed to call for delay repay compensation arrangements to kick in after delays of 15 minutes, in line with Underground compensation, rather than 30 minutes as was currently the case.



Members noted that metro commuter journeys, such as from Herne Hill into central London, were becoming increasingly unreliable as trains were now too busy by the time they reached these stations for passengers to be able to board. Members said that the franchises appeared to have gone badly wrong for passengers.

A member of the public said that TfL had introduced bus services between Canada Water and Waterloo to relieve some of the congestion caused by rail disruption. However, these buses had not been well publicised and were not well used at all. This seemed a wasted opportunity to ease some of the pressures on passengers.

The Chair said that the problems faced by passengers were so severe that they raised fundamental flaws in the system that could not be fixed through simple palliative measures. The operators did not appear to have the correct incentives or adequate management resources to solve the problems. The Chief Executive noted that many of the operators were part of the same owning group but they did not appear to share the benefits of their experience. For example, London TravelWatch raised the problem of driver shortages with London Midland some 18 months ago and now GTR, which was part of the same group, was experiencing its own problems with driver numbers.

The Chair said that the current franchising arrangements did not seem to be working and that the disruption facing passengers was causing a huge erosion of trust that would be very difficult to reinstate. It was now necessary to reconsider the franchising model as if affected the London railway area. Members noted that with London's rising population, the problem was likely to increase in the future. They also noted that if a major project such as Thameslink could not be delivered as planned, this might have implications for decisions about other major infrastructure works in the future.

Members noted that London TravelWatch had sought to highlight the problems faced by passengers with key decision makers such as government and shadow transport ministers and senior DfT officials. These concerns would also be raised with the new transport minister following the general election in May.

Members also wanted the services that had been removed from timetables to be reinstated so that the current amended timetables did not become deemed to be the new established service levels. Members wondered whether it was possible to use some of the rolling stock from lost services to lengthen services that were running. It seemed that the management capacity of train operators was sometimes inadequate as it was often left to relatively junior staff to respond to major problems as they occurred. There was not enough real-time information for passengers, which compounded the problems they were experiencing.

It was agreed that the Director, Policy and Investigation, would revise his briefing note to provide more analysis and commentary on the position. Members would consider this issue again at a future meeting.

**Action: Director, Policy and Investigation**

**11 Appointment of subsidiary bodies (LTW491)**

The report on the appointment of subsidiary bodies was agreed.

**12 Any other business**

The Chief Executive said that the Rail Safety and Standards Board had published its report on safety at the platform edge and that it would be establishing a board working group to monitor the report's implementation. It was hoped that London TravelWatch's Safety Adviser could participate in this working group.

**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 reviewed the meeting.