
Minutes

Agenda item: 3
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Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 31 January 2017 at 169 Union Street, London SE1 0LL

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Present

Members

Jackie Ballard, Richard Dilks, Stephen Locke (Chair), Abdi Osman, John Stewart

Guests

Mark Evers Transport for London

Members of the public

Secretariat

Tim Bellenger	Director, Policy and Investigation
Gytha Chinweze	Executive Assistant (p/t)
Richard Freeston-Clough	Communications Officer
Sharon Malley	Executive Assistant (p/t)
Robert Nichols	Policy Officer

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

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

2 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Alan Benson, Janet Cooke and Glyn Kyle. Advance apologies for lateness were received from Richard Dilks.

3 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest in addition to those standing declarations recorded on London TravelWatch's website. The Chair reminded new members to declare any relevant interests and raise them in the meeting, if necessary.

4 Chair's activities and Transport Focus update

The Chair said that since the last Board meeting he had attended the Transport Focus Statistics Governance Group in December, which he chaired, and two Transport Focus informal board meetings in December and January.

He had also attended the London TravelWatch Governance Committee meeting in December which provided an opportunity to thank and say goodbye to Abdi Rage and Chris Brown, the departing Board members.

The Chair said he had attended a meeting with Lord Ahmad, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport, in December at which they discussed devolution, interchanges, airport access, infrastructure, fares simplification and ticket office changes.

The Chair said he had also attended a meeting with Lord Roy Kennedy of Southwark in January which was an introduction to the work of London TravelWatch. Lord Kennedy was extremely supportive of the organisation's work and happy to help in any way he could. The Chair said he was due to see Caroline Pidgeon MBE, Chair of the Transport Committee in February.

5 Minutes of the Board meeting held on 29 November 2016

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 29 November 2016 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

6 Matters arising (LTW542)

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that in relation to Bank station and step-free access to the Central line, the position was on hold until Transport for London (TfL) produced its feasibility report. He had not had any indications yet as to when the report would be available and was awaiting further developments.

Members said that step-free access was integral to the scheme and TfL should be in a position to guarantee it. They asked for assurances that step-free access had been accommodated in the wider plans.

Mr Evers, Director of Customer Strategy, London Underground, said that he would arrange a meeting between Mr Wild (Managing Director, London Underground) and London TravelWatch to discuss this.

The Director, Policy and Investigation said that the Mayor and Deputy Mayor had prioritised accessibility and were looking for ways to extend the step-free access programme. He said that Mr Wild saw this as one of the Mayor's priorities and was keen to start addressing this.

Members asked for feedback on the Paddington station closures over the Christmas holiday and the use of Ealing Broadway as an alternative terminus. The Director, Policy and Investigation said that Great Western felt that this had generally gone well. Feedback had already been provided by London TravelWatch in light of 'mystery shopping' that had been undertaken by London TravelWatch staff.

The Director, Policy and Investigation said that regrettably, London TravelWatch had not been given the opportunity to input into the review process for the South West Trains franchise. However, London TravelWatch had fed its commentary in for the bid and negotiation stage. He said that this omission had been raised with Lord Ahmad and he had been very apologetic. The Department for Transport (DfT) had now committed that London TravelWatch would be included in all further reviews. Since this, London TravelWatch had reviewed the West Midland's franchise. The situation up to now was not satisfactory. The Chair had agreed to remind Transport Focus, who had been involved in the South West Trains franchise, that London TravelWatch needed to be included in all bid assessments affecting the London Railway Area. If there was any risk of London TravelWatch being excluded in future, it would be helpful if Transport Focus could press for London TravelWatch's involvement.

The Director, Policy and Investigation added that TfL was analysing results from the Central London bus review consultation regarding changes to bus routes along the Finchley Road corridor, which would be gradually implemented over the next year or so.

7 Key activities (LTW543)

The Director, Policy and Investigation said that he had met franchise officers from the DfT and had set out London TravelWatch's priorities for passengers in the specification of new franchises.

On the issue of Southern Rail performance, London TravelWatch staff had had a number of discussions with Chris Gibb, the leader of the review into Southern's performance. London TravelWatch would respond to the Gibb review when it was published to ensure that the passenger voice was overriding in any conclusions and constructive lessons were learnt for the future.

Members recorded their serious concerns with the continuing poor level of Southern's performance. They said it was having a significant impact on people's lives and attention of all the interested parties – DfT and Network Rail as well as GTR and Southern Rail management - should be directed towards resolving the problem.

The Director, Policy and Investigation said that he had attended a fares summit where Paul Maynard MP, the Rail Minister, had committed to fare simplification. The Director, Policy and Investigation said that the Rail Minister had made a useful statement of the future direction for the industry and showed that he was giving high priority to passenger needs.

The Chair noted a large number of activities relating to the development of the Rail Passenger Redress Scheme. This scheme was being supported by the DfT and the Rail Delivery Group (RDG), who were very keen to introduce some system of dispute resolution which would build on the work already undertaken by Transport Focus and London TravelWatch. The scheme would allow dissatisfied rail users to have access to an independent adjudication service, whose decisions would be binding on the train companies.

8 Ticket offices (LTW544)

The Chair welcomed Mr Evers, Director of Customer Strategy of London Underground, and invited him to address the meeting.

Mr Evers explained that TfL had undergone a fundamental change on the way its stations operated over the past year, including the closure of ticket offices. He said that one of the Mayor's key manifesto pledges had been to review the closures to ensure that the quality of service to passengers had not been undermined. This had led the Mayor to commission London TravelWatch to carry out the review of the closure programme in October 2016.

Mr Evers said that TfL had been pleased with the report which the Mayor had published on 2 December 2016. London TravelWatch's report and action plan had been discussed at the TfL Board meeting on 15 December 2016. TfL had agreed London TravelWatch's recommendations and were working to execute the action plan. He said TfL had made good progress in all areas, but Christmas and industrial relations meant that some areas had progressed more than others.

Mr Evers noted that London TravelWatch's report had picked up on staff visibility and the need for more obvious focal points at stations. He said that additional roles would be recruited and this was progressing well. Also, a discussion with the trade unions was underway. Mr Evers said that focal points were places where customers could find help and needed to be tailored to the particular needs of each station. A series of trials was being undertaken at the different types of station. Mr Evers said that TfL would consider ways of making station staff more visible and would provide brighter tabards for them when they were working.

Mr Evers said that London TravelWatch had also highlighted issues with ticketing, for example with boundary zone extension tickets, and application of rail card discounts. He said these were being considered as part of a general upgrade. A trial of an upgraded ticket machine had commenced at Buckhurst Hill station with a view to rolling these out on the rest of the network later in the year.

The Chair asked whether the destinations used in the trial included ones to popular destinations outside London like Gatwick Airport. Mr Evers said that he would check this but the list of destinations would be different for different stations.

In response to a question, Mr Evers confirmed that London Underground kept the position of ticket machines under review and responded by installing additional machines if demand increased in particular stations.

The Director, Policy and Investigation said that the West London Line users' group was very concerned that West Brompton station, which served large numbers of National Rail passengers, had not had its ticket machines upgraded. Mr Evers said that he would look into this.

Mr Evers said that on accessibility, there was a review of the 'turn up and go' service on the Underground and that the key challenge was to make sure that it was consistent across the network all of the time.

Mr Evers said that TfL had conducted trials of portable hearing loops and support for travellers who were less familiar with their system, for example overseas visitors. TfL was also promoting Visitor Information Centres online and studying trials to extend the hours of some of the Visitor Information Centres, for example, at Euston and Heathrow. He said Visitor Information Centre hours currently reflected historic demand. He said trials were being carried out on current patronage and he would keep London TravelWatch updated on progress over the coming months.

The Policy Officer thanked Mr Evers and his team for providing a member of staff from TfL on secondment to carry out the mystery shopping. He said he was pleased with TfL's response and the number of London TravelWatch's points that were being taken forward by TfL. However, he said London TravelWatch was disappointed with the lack of provision of annual season tickets at stations. Mr Evers said that the cost of retailing annual travelcards from ticket machines was considerable. Mr Evers said that the issue was printing the Gold card record part of the Annual Travelcard season ticket when the transaction was made. The small numbers of passengers who wanted to buy their annual ticket from a machine meant that the business case for enabling this was poor. Mr Evers said that TfL had sent targeted emails to remind people how to purchase their tickets and that they had not received an influx of complaints. He said passengers could go to National Rail stations to purchase these tickets.

The Director, Policy and Investigation said he thought that only London Overground stations and the Visitor Information Centres offered the option of purchasing an Annual Travelcard season ticket on Oyster. He said that the removal of this facility was more about improving convenience for TfL instead of providing what passengers preferred. He said that the purchase of an Annual Travelcard was a large transaction and people were justifiably nervous to pay that amount of money over the internet.

Members asked what percentage of passengers held Annual Travelcards. Mr Evers said that he would need to come back with that information. He recognised that some people did not want to buy these tickets from ticket machines or at stations but TfL needed to weigh the cost of providing this against the overall benefit to passengers. Mr Evers said that there was also a trend away from season tickets, which was another reason why it was difficult to make the business case. Mr Evers said that the core function of the Visitor Information Centres was to provide a service for those who were unfamiliar with the London transport network and directing people to buy tickets there would affect this.

Members said that it would be useful to have more detailed information about how many passengers wanted to buy annual tickets at ticket machines and the cost involved so they could reach a more informed view.

A member who had done some mystery shopping on induction loops at London Underground stations had found that they were either not working at all or staff did not know where the switch was to turn them on. The member asked Mr Evers to commit to regular testing to ensure that they were working. The member said that this was important because one out of seven people in the population were hearing impaired and the majority of these were over 55 years old. London Underground staff needed to be aware of this and the importance of speaking clearly.

Mr Evers said that TfL would make sure that induction loops worked properly on the Underground. He said that the London Underground environment was not ideal for hearing loops and London Underground was trying different systems to see which worked best.

Mr Evers said that Mr Wild would be looking at accessibility on London Underground and part of this project would be to make sure that staff had a greater understanding of all passenger needs, including those with hidden disabilities. The newly designated focal points would be key to this. All station staff had 'ipads' which helped with communication. He said that there was no 'silver bullet' and that they needed a whole range of measures to make the network accessible.

Members noted the importance of the new focal points in the absence of ticket offices and that the focal points should be made easily visible to passengers as the location for help. This needed a change of mind-set of passengers away from the previous habit of going to the ticket office for help. The Chair noted that many passengers were not assertive in approaching staff, especially if they thought staff were busy with other priorities. Mr Evers said that TfL needed to make customers aware that London Underground staff were there to help. He said that focal point trials would help TfL learn more about passenger behaviour.

Mr Evers said TfL had looked at examples such as airports and hospitals regarding visibility of focal points and that the use of focal points was an emerging retail model. He remained confident that the changes would provide a better customer experience in future. He said TfL had undertaken the biggest change in the organisation in a decade yet had not seen a drop in customer satisfaction measures and this was a significant achievement.

The Board endorsed the Policy Officer's suggestion that London TravelWatch should give TfL more input about the location of focal points.

The Board further agreed that they should review TfL's implementation of London TravelWatch's action plan at an appropriate point later in the year.

Action: Executive Assistant

The Chair thanked Mr Evers for updating members and for his work. He said that the issue was not just of passenger satisfaction but also of passenger experience and confidence. He said that he hoped that visibility of the focal points would be

emphasised. The Chair said that there was a lot of interest in London Underground's experience on the part of the train operating companies and the innovation was being looked at quite widely. He said that London TravelWatch would continue to follow developments with great interest.

9 Appointment of subsidiary bodies (LTW545)

The report on the appointment of subsidiary bodies was agreed. The Chair said that the current system worked and London TravelWatch would continue to operate as it was currently.

10 Any other business

There was no other business.

11 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 an update on the GTR franchise including a discussion on driver-only operation of trains, and the confidential minutes, and reviewed the meeting.