
Minutes

Agenda item: 4
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Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 2 April 2019 at Barking Learning Centre, 2 Town Square, Barking, IG11 7NB

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Present

Members

Jackie Ballard, Alan Benson, Arthur Leathley (Chair), Karen McArthur, Laura Osborne, Abdi Osman

Guests

Chris Atkinson	Head of Communications, c2c (Item 8)
Jerry Gold	Member, Barking-Gospel Oak Rail User Group (Item 8)
Cllr Syed Ghani	Cabinet Member for the Public Realm, London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (Item 8)
Graham Larkbey	Chair, Barking-Gospel Oak Rail User Group (Item 8)
Ben Martin	Head of Asset Management, c2c (Item 8)
Rory O'Neill	General Manager of London Overground, TfL (Item 8)
Glenn Wallis	Member, Barking-Gospel Oak Rail User Group (Item 8)

Secretariat

Tim Bellenger	Director, Policy and Investigation
Janet Cooke	Chief Executive
Richard Freeston-Clough	Operations and Communications Manager
Luke Muskett	Committee and Public Liaison Officer
Trevor Rosenberg	Policy Officer

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

The Chair stated that he had received apologies for absence from Safia Iman.

3 Declarations of interest

There were no additional declarations of interest to announce.

4 Chair's activities and Transport Focus update

The Chair said that Transport Focus was busy preparing its work plan for the coming year. Keith Williams had attended their public meeting and had given a general overview of his review into the railways. Transport Focus had done some research for the Williams' Review to understand what passengers cared about the most.

The Chair remarked that one area that Transport Focus' work plan would be focused on would be delay repay. Two new operators had recently adopted the compensation scheme, and he commented that he wanted London TravelWatch to also maintain its pressure in this area. Transport Focus had set itself a target of getting at least 50% of passengers entitled to delay repay using the scheme.

The Chair stated that he had given a talk to Network Rail around their new mantra of putting the passenger first. He said Andrew Haines, their Chief Executive, was keen to prioritise the passenger as part of their new strategy. The Chief Executive commented that it appeared, after many years of advocacy, that Network Rail was taking the London area seriously. She added that London TravelWatch had held a number of meetings with senior personnel at Network Rail recently which they were optimistic were shaping their thinking positively around the passenger.

A member said that she was concerned about Network Rail's policies on tree cutting in terms of its effects in causing a loss of wildlife corridors and also exposing rubbish on banks beside the tracks. The Director, Policy and Investigation replied that the previous Rail Minister, Jo Johnson, had commissioned a review into Network Rail's vegetation clearance policies. It had concluded that the policies were appropriate though did admit that it exposed the levels of rubbish close to the track. He stated that London TravelWatch officers had raised the issue with a number of representatives from Network Rail as not only was the rubbish unsightly, it also caused reliability problems when it got onto the track.

5 Minutes of the Board meeting held on 26 February 2019

There was an amendment to the minutes of the Board meeting held on 26 February. The word 'Board' was replaced with 'Chair' in the final sentence of paragraph 2 of section 7. The word 'Rotterdam' was replaced with 'Amsterdam' in the first sentence of paragraph 3 of section 9. The Chair agreed and signed the amended minutes as a correct record.

6 Matters arising (LTW600)

There were no comments on the matters arising.

7 Key activities (LTW601)

A member asked about the engineering works that would be taking place at King's Cross. The Director, Policy and Investigation replied that this involved a series of closures along the east coast mainline just short of Doncaster and had major implications for the mainline into St Pancras. He stated that the variety of works that would be carried out would include overhead line equipment, new track and new flyovers. There would also be a rebuild of the platforms at King's Cross so that they could accommodate the new Azuma trains that would be running on the line. A member asked how long the rebuild of the platforms would take. The Director replied that it would be approximately two years.

A member stated that the works at King's Cross would coincide with the rebuild of Euston station, which would add to the disruption for passengers. The Director, Policy and Investigation remarked that following the Policy Committee in December London TravelWatch officers had met with the three major stakeholders involved with the planning the works at Euston. As a result of the meeting they were actively considering keeping open a part of the infrastructure 'line x' to give operators some resilience at particular times of disruption.

A member asked how long the works at Euston would take. The Director, Policy and Investigation said that it was scheduled to last until 2033, in which time the whole of the station would be rebuilt. The Chief Executive remarked that a briefing paper about the works at the station had been included in the papers for the Policy Committee in December. She suggested that this could be sent out to members to provide them with additional detail about the proposed works. The Board agreed.

ACTION: Committee and Public Liaison Officer

The Director, Policy and Investigation said there had been another thing they had achieved following the December Policy Committee with the stakeholders at Euston. He remarked that the suggestion around reinstating a point at Watford Junction where trains could be reversed on the mainline as well as the inclusion of an additional footbridge was now actively being considered by Network Rail.

The Chair asked about the contents of the customer experience presentation given by South Western Railway. The Director, Policy and Investigation replied that South Western had explained that they had taken the research produced by

London TravelWatch during the London Underground ticket office closures and were applying the customer experience principles throughout their operation. He added that they would not be closing any ticket offices as part of that work, only trying to improve their customer service practices. A member stated that he had visited one of their stations that day and had noticed staff wearing a new uniform which, unlike London TravelWatch's recommendations, did not stand out so that they were clearly visible to passengers.

8 Transport issues in Barking (LTW602)

The Chair welcomed the various parties that were in attendance for the meeting and thanked them for giving up their time to speak to the London TravelWatch Board. He introduced Cllr Syed Ghani, Cabinet Member for the Public Realm at the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. Cllr Ghani thanked the Chair for the opportunity to address the Board and for coming to Barking to hold the meeting.

Cllr Ghani explained that there were a number of developments taking place throughout the borough which would regenerate the area. Over 10,000 properties were being built at Barking Riverside, which would create an entire town for the community. He explained that Barking station required urgent work in order to make it properly accessible for passengers, and asked that London TravelWatch in partnership with c2c put pressure on the Mayor's office to secure funding for the project. Cllr Ghani also stated that local residents required a more reliable bus service, particularly for the EN1, EN2, EN3 and EN4. The Chair thanked Cllr Ghani for his statement and invited Jerry Gold from the Barking-Gospel Oak Rail User Group to address the Board.

Mr Gold stated that as a consequence of the extension of the London Overground to Barking Riverside, Barking station would become a very busy station with a large number of passengers using it to interchange. As mentioned by Cllr Ghani, the station would need redevelopment to make it more accessible and reduce the potential for overcrowding. He asked that London TravelWatch express its support in order to obtain the necessary funding for that work to be carried out.

Mr Gold stated that as a result of London Overground taking over the rail franchise from Silverlink there had been a vast improvement in performance, customer service and funding into the line. However, in recent years it had experienced a number of problems that were affecting passengers. These issues included the 'botched' electrification programme by Network Rail. Originally new electric trains had been promised by the middle of 2018 but they had still not been delivered. As a result, passengers that had grown accustomed to having a four train an hour service have had this reduced to two trains per hour, resulting in overcrowding and inconvenience for people. Mr Gold commented that the electric trains for the line had still not been given their safety certification and the software iteration was currently on its 30th version.

Mr Gold remarked that TfL was 'little less culpable' than Network Rail for the problems faced by passengers on the Barking-Gospel Oak line. He said that for months TfL had sat back and refused to take action in the hope that the problems would resolve themselves. Mr Gold stated that the reduction to a two train per hour

service was 'totally unacceptable' and that at times of disruption shuttle services had run up to 10 hours of the day. He suggested that TfL investigate ways of making spare older trains operate on the line so that it could return to a four trains per hour service.

Mr Gold commented that at present there was no timetable for when the current issues would be resolved, and that adding those extra services would at least mitigate the impact on passengers. He added that TfL had received £15 million in compensation for the delays to the electrification process, and could use the funds to pay for the extra trains. Mr Gold added that TfL had also said that funding was not an issue in dealing with the matter.

Mr Gold said there were two other areas he wished to cover related to the Barking-Gospel Oak line. He said that in times of disruption it should be the eastern section of the route that remained open as it carried 50% more passengers rather than the western section of the track. Mr Gold asked that London TravelWatch endorsed this view and requested it of TfL.

The second point that Mr Gold wished to raise concerned trains not dwelling long enough to allow passengers to interchange between platforms. He remarked that he regularly experienced passengers at Gospel Oak running to catch their train and the doors closing in their face just as they were about to board. Mr Gold commented that despite regular complaints about this from passengers TfL continued with the practice. He asked London TravelWatch to speak to TfL about the policy.

A member asked if money was not the issue why TfL had not invested in putting older trains on the line to restore the service to four trains per hour. Mr Gold replied that he did not know. He remarked that at present the driver could see down the platform from cameras mounted onto the train. Therefore, if alternative trains did not have the functionality then drivers would be unable to see down the train. He commented, however, that instead an additional member of staff could be located further down the platform so that they had full visibility of people getting on and off the train.

Mr Gold commented that another potential reason for TfL not wanting to use older trains and additional staff to look down the platforms was because they did not want to impact their industrial relations with the trade unions. He remarked, however, that if industrial relations were good at a local level the unions would typically be cooperative in helping to solve temporary problems.

A member stated that it was his understanding that the two trains that at present ran per hour carried the same capacity as the four previous trains that had been running on the line. Mr Gold replied that that was correct due to the trains having a much larger area for passengers to stand in. However, the issue was that passengers were getting a less frequent service leaving them inconvenienced. Mr Wallis commented that he had received comments from people on Twitter that drivers were leaving passengers behind due to overcrowded trains.

A member asked whether it would be worth lengthening the platforms so that they could accommodate longer trains. Mr Gold replied that for the future the priority would be in increasing the number of trains to 5 or 6 per hour. He commented that

lengthening the platforms was a possibility though doing so at Gospel Oak would be a major project and would cost a considerable amount of money. He added that it would be a debate to be had in the next 10 to 15 years.

The Chair asked whether an argument could be made that the current level of service was unsafe for passengers due to the overcrowding on the trains. Mr Gold replied that he would not make the point in those terms as although the experience was unpleasant in his opinion it was not unsafe. The Chair thanked Mr Gold for his contribution and invited Rory O'Neill from London Overground to speak to the Board.

Mr O'Neill began by issuing an apology to the users of the Barking-Gospel Oak line for the continued disruption and delay in the electrification process. He commented that TfL 'completely accept' that a two train per hour service was not what passengers should expect and said the organisation was working very hard to find a resolution as soon as possible.

Mr O'Neill commented that the driver training on the new trains had started and two pilot courses had already been run. He remarked that there were some software issues that still needed to be resolved and Bombardier were making progress in finding a solution in part due to the pressure that TfL had been putting on them. Mr O'Neill stated that there had been too many false promises made about when the new trains would be ready and was unwilling to make another prediction for when this might be.

Mr O'Neill said that given the problems with the line, TfL was running a reasonable service and the experience for passengers was no different to that of those travelling on the Northern or Victoria line. He added that if people did miss a train they would be directed by staff to use the replacement bus service which TfL had provided.

With regards to people being left behind on platforms, Mr O'Neill said on the peak hour trains that he had used nobody had been left behind. He remarked that it could be true as TfL had received complaints about it from time to time, though it had not been the case in his experience. The Chair commented that one major difference between the Barking-Gospel Oak line and Northern and Victoria lines is that on the latter if people were left behind, another train would be along within the next few minutes – not every half an hour.

A member asked whether TfL had considered using older trains to return the service to four trains per hour as suggested by Mr Gold. Mr O'Neill replied that TfL would rather not go back to having manned trains due to the potential for it to damage industrial relations. There was also a question that the trains would need to function with an overhead power supply. He added that spare Underground stock could not be used due to the short length of the platforms on the Barking-Gospel Oak line.

Mr O'Neill commented that another reason why using older trains would be problematic was because it would result in needing to train drivers to use the older trains while at the same time they were learning to drive the new electric fleet. He said that it would be a difficult judgement to make and could result in delaying the introduction of the new electric trains even further.

The Chair asked how long it would take for the drivers to be trained to use the new electric trains. Mr O'Neill replied that it would be eight weeks. The Chair commented that given the problems with getting the trains safety certified, the trains might still not be operational even after all drivers had completed their training on the new units. Mr O'Neill replied that TfL believed that they were through the worse of the software problems.

The Chair asked whether it was true that TfL had received £15 million in compensation because of the issues with Bombardier. Mr O'Neill replied that it was true that TfL would be levying against the full force of the contract. However, he replied that they had had to extend the lease for the trains on East Anglia lines which as a result put the organisation in a cost neutral position.

The Chair asked what compensation passengers would be receiving for the problems they had faced on the line. Mr O'Neill replied that on a day-to-day level passengers were entitled to claim on delay repay. With regards to compensation for the overall lack of service, the Mayor had instructed Bombardier to pay for a month's free travel for users of the Barking-Gospel Oak line. He remarked that they were looking at when would be the best time to allocate that as they did not wish to set a date when people would be off from work, such as in the summer holidays.

The Director, Policy and Investigation said that there had been a question raised by Mr Gold about instructing trains to wait for passengers at the Gospel Oak interchange. He asked that he address the point. Mr O'Neill stated that when TfL was running a normal four train per hour service they were keen to ensure that trains left on time. He remarked that drivers obviously had a level of discretion and should be flexible if someone was just about to board the train though a line had to be drawn at some point.

The Chair asked about the idea of keeping the east side of the route running at times of disruption rather than the west. Mr O'Neill stated that on the eastern side they relied on people getting on the Victoria line. However, he added that he was happy to take the feedback from the user group away in order to adjust the policy if necessary.

The Chair invited Chris Atkinson and Ben Martin from c2c to speak to the Board about their proposals to improve Barking station. Mr Atkinson stated that Barking station was a major interchange, which would only increase in popularity when the line was extended to Barking Riverside. During the evening peak the gate capacity could not handle the numbers of people trying to get through, resulting in queues going back and down the stairs. Although the station was classified as accessible there was only one lift that ran onto platform 1, which was the least helpful of the platforms for passenger to be able to access. He commented that often people with heavy luggage would ask staff for assistance as it was quicker and easier than using the lift and then walking to the other platforms.

Mr Martin said that c2c would be spending £4.3 million refurbishing the station. £200,000 was being granted from the Heritage Trust and Barking and Dagenham Council would also be making a contribution to install lifts at the station. He explained that the company had already spent £500,000 fixing the roof to prevent it from leaking.

Mr Martin explained that the proposals for the station were relatively straightforward. They planned to construct a second gate line on the left hand side of the station to support the overcrowding issues. He commented that there would also be new accessible toilets, a changing area and standard toilets installed. Mr Martin stated that new retail spaces would also be available for passengers to use. He remarked that Barking station was a grade 2 listed building so c2c was restricted in the number of changes it could make.

Mr Martin stated that the modifications made to the station in the 1980s had been wrong. The direction the company was taking was to reinstate the design as it was originally in 1954 to enable people to move about as freely as possible as an interchange station. He remarked that c2c would not try to change the look of Barking station, only to modernise the inside so that it was appropriate for its current and future usage.

On the longer term aspirations for the station, Mr Martin explained that the company wished to install three new lift shafts, as requested by the local authority, so that it was properly accessible. However, based on the Rail Safety Standards Board (RSSB) guidance, they were unable to do so.

Mr Martin remarked that in order to try and put in the three lift shafts to the station they had submitted an Access for All bid which would provide accessible access to platforms 3 and 4, 5 and 6, and 7 and 8. He added that as part of the bid they also proposed to add an additional staircase to support people interchanging. Mr Martin added that c2c was also working with the Greater London Authority regarding the land fund scheme as an additional means of financing the work.

Mr Atkinson remarked that if c2c was unsuccessful with the Access for All bid the problem with accessibility would not go away, and they would need support in order to facilitate putting in the new lift shafts. Mr Martin added that if the bid was successful it would take three to four years to complete the works, and there would need to be a lot of planning to be done.

Mr Larkbey said that he was pleased to hear about the improvements to Barking station. He remarked that he had two longstanding issues that the user group had raised which he hoped could be fixed very quickly. The first regarded the signage around the station which was very unclear, particularly for where the lift and toilets were situated.

The second issue regarded providing passengers waiting at platform 1 with correct information via the Customer Information System (CIS) feed when their train was diverted to platforms 7 and 8. He stated that the redirection system was very poor, with many people being caught out in the assumption that their next train would be leaving from platform 1.

Mr Martin replied that as part of the station redevelopment plans c2c would be replacing all signage with a new, clearer design. He said that they could replace the current signage though this would soon become redundant once the works at the station were started. Mr Martin commented that with regard to the CIS feed, the company was provided this from a central system. However, they would be happy to instruct staff to make it clear to passengers waiting at platform 1 that the next train would be departing from platforms 7 and 8.

A member suggested that the representatives from c2c speak with colleagues at Victoria station to learn the lessons they had learnt around signage whilst they had carried out station redevelopment works at Victoria. He also asked that they walked around the station with the Barking-Gospel Oak Rail User Group during the works to look at it from the passenger perspective and ask passengers for their feedback. Mr Gold replied that they would be happy to do so and suggested that the Southend user group also accompany them.

9. Proposed response to the Department for Transport (DfT) consultation on extending Pay As You Go (LTW603)

The Director, Policy and Investigation stated that following on from the last meeting he had been attempting to gather as much information as possible to support the need to reform rail fares. He remarked that he had laid out a structure of what he believed the organisation's response should be which was largely supportive of the DfT's position. The Chair asked that this work be prioritised. A member asked when the consultation closed. The Director replied that it was 1 May.

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.