

Board meeting 02.04.19



Minutes

Agenda item: 4
Drafted 27.03.19

Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 26 February 2019 at Europoint, 5-11 Lavington Street, London, SE1 0NZ

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Present

Members

Jackie Ballard, Safia Iman, Arthur Leathley (Chair), Laura Osborne, Abdi Osman

Guests

Charles Buckingham	Strategic Analysis Manager, TfL (Item 8)
Mike Cooper	Chief Executive, Eurostar (Item 9)
Cllr Daniel Francis	London Borough of Bexley (Item 9)
Mary Walsh	Director of Communications, Eurostar (Item 9)

Secretariat

Keletha Barrett	Policy Officer
Tim Bellenger	Director, Policy and Investigation
Gytha Chinweze	Governance Officer
Janet Cooke	Chief Executive
Richard Freeston-Clough	Operations and Communications Manager
Susan James	Casework Manager
Luke Muskett	Committee and Public Liaison Officer
Trevor Rosenberg	Policy Officer
Vincent Stops	Senior 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 Alan Benson and Karen McArthur.

3 Declarations of interest

Laura Osborne declared that Eurostar was a member of London First, who she was employed by.

4 Chair's activities and Transport Focus update

The Chair stated that Transport Focus was mainly focused on their work plan for the coming year. Areas of relevance for London TravelWatch involved their work on delay repay and the fact that only a small proportion of those entitled to the compensation were submitting claims. He commented that the organisation would be doing a lot of work into bus use and reducing the barriers that prevent people from using it as a means of transport. The Chair remarked that Transport Focus would also be contributing to the Williams' Review into the railways and the DfT's proposals to extend Pay As You Go.

The Chair stated that London TravelWatch had held a successful Interchange Matters seminar looking at surface access to London's airports. Shashi Verma had given a broad overview of what TfL was doing with regards to Oyster/contactless payments, and was selling the concept to other cities around the world. During the meeting, London TravelWatch had launched its airports survey to try to understand what people wanted when travelling to the airport on public transport.

A member asked if there had been a significant theme with regards to people travelling to the airport. The Director, Policy and Investigation replied that the main point was that the proportion of people using public transport to get to the airport was falling while the use of private hire and taxis had increased. He suggested the reason for that came down to three things: 'frequency, fares and friendliness'. Another member said that she was surprised by the three reasons that had been given as she believed the biggest barrier to using public transport was having to interchange with heavy luggage. The Director replied that the point was linked to the friendliness aspect he had mentioned, as it was easier for people to take a cab directly to the airport.

The Chair remarked that London TravelWatch, in partnership with the Rail Delivery Group (RDG), had held a successful event in the Houses of Parliament looking at making rail fares easier for passengers. It had been chaired by Sir Michael Fallon MP and had had MPs and MP representatives in attendance. There had been a good discussion amongst the panellists and audience, and a lot of encouraging messages explaining how the system could be changed for the better.

5 Minutes of the Board meeting held on 20 November 2018

There was an amendment to the minutes of the Board meeting held on 20 November. The words 'particularly in London and the south east' were added to the end of the first sentence of paragraph 5 on page 3. The Chair agreed and signed the amended minutes as a correct record.

6 Matters arising (LTW596)

There were no comments on the matters arising.

7 Key activities (LTW597)

The Chair asked for an update on the Croxley Link to Watford. The Director, Policy and Investigation replied that London TravelWatch had broached the possibility of having a bus only road at the site while passengers waited for the available funding to become available at TfL. He remarked that when speaking with the Mayor of Watford he appeared to be receptive to the idea. The Chief Executive said that they planned to host the July meeting in Hertfordshire, which would be a good opportunity to raise it further.

The Chair stated that the Board had not seen what London TravelWatch's input into the 100 day review initiated by Andrew Haines at the start of his tenure as the Chief Executive of Network Rail. The Chief Executive said a meeting had been held with Daryl McIntosh at Network Rail, which had taken the form of an informal discussion. Notes from it had been circulated to the Chair after the meeting.

The Chair asked for an update on Porterbrook's research into new rolling stock. The Director, Policy and Investigation replied that London TravelWatch was still engaged with the process though at present there was nothing new to report. He remarked that there would be further discussions taking place with Porterbrook in March.

The Chair asked what had been discussed in the bus spider map meeting. The Director, Policy and Investigation said that they had discussed proposed changes to the design of the maps so that they were more legible for the people that used them. He added that if the central London bus review by TfL went ahead this would provide an even greater opportunity to alter how the routes were displayed.

A member asked how the key activity meetings linked up with the priorities contained within the business plan. Another member agreed that it would be helpful in understanding how critical each meeting was to obtaining the organisation's goals.

ACTION: Committee and Public Liaison Officer

8 Travel in London report, presented by Charles Buckingham

Mr Buckingham stated that he would be giving an overview of trends that TfL had witnessed in public transport across London over the previous year. The report

that TfL produced was evidence based and was updated yearly so the organisation had current data on overall trends of public transport across the capital.

Mr Buckingham stated that 'not everything is going in an ideal way at the moment'. The population growth of London was slowing, which corresponded with a slowing down in the growth of demand for public transport. Although this was a simplification of the trend, it was the main factor that was having most impact on the figures.

Total trips in London in 2017 had grown by 0.5% – the same level as had been the case in 2016. There had been a steady increase in the numbers of people walking and cycling and a 1% shift away from cars. Mr Buckingham stated that the trend reflected the investment in public transport and the increased impact of car delays and the congestion charge. He stated that TfL was proud of the trend away from private vehicles, which was in contrast to most other UK cities.

Mr Buckingham said that there was widespread evidence of population growth slowing in most major cities in North America and Europe. This was reflective in the cost of living in cities, which had been on the rise. He remarked, therefore, that the trend could not be apportioned as simply a 'Brexit effect'. A member asked whether TfL had plans to track the percentage of private transport trips using electric vehicles. Mr Buckingham replied that TfL was already doing so though the overall proportion was a small percentage of the number of vehicles on the road.

Mr Buckingham stated that over a 17 year period car use had fallen by over 10%. He remarked that this was 'quite significant' and in contrast with the national trend which had risen over that time. Over the last few years the growth in London Underground's use had 'flattened off' and bus use had been on the decline. Mr Buckingham remarked that overall traffic volumes had been on decline since 2000, though had risen in 2013 and had since levelled out. A member asked if anything had occurred in 2013 to cause traffic to increase. Mr Buckingham replied that there had been no specific policy from TfL, and was likely due to the economy recovering from recession.

In contrast to overall figures on traffic and car use, Mr Buckingham commented that the numbers of vans on London's roads had increased sharply. A member asked whether this was likely due to the greater prevalence of internet shopping and deliveries. Mr Buckingham commented that this was a factor along with a switch from using HGVs to vans.

Mr Buckingham stated that in all the methods they had to measure cycle trips, the numbers showed an increase – though not as fast as was wanted. He explained that cycle trips usually peaked at two points of the day: during the morning and evening commutes to and from work. People were mainly not cycling during the day to run errands and taking short trips. He stated that it was a market that could be targeted and had the greatest potential to grow.

Mr Buckingham remarked that in order to increase the number of cyclists on London's roads TfL needed to reach out to people that typically did not use it as a mode of transport. Predominately, people using bikes to travel tended to be white males with a comfortable standard of living. He remarked that TfL had to

understand the motivations and barriers of people not accessing cycling as this was a key market to 'penetrate'. An outcome of the Mayor's Transport Strategy was that Londoners achieved at least 20 minutes of active travel per day. The proportion of the population that was hitting this target had increased in the latter part of the last decade, though had reduced slightly since 2014/15.

Mr Buckingham showed the various proportions of residents of London Boroughs who used sustainable modes of transport to complete their journeys. The numbers of people doing this tended to be higher in inner London boroughs where access to the Underground was easy compared with outer London boroughs that predominately used cars and other private vehicles. He remarked that across London 6.8 million private vehicle trips were made in London each day, with 4.8 million of those having at least one public transport alternative open to users.

As stated previously, Mr Buckingham commented that London's population growth was slowing down. In particular, in recent years, the growth of young, working age people living in London had hardly grown at all. He commented that the reasons for this were the increasing cost in housing and the squeeze in wages. In addition, 2017 was the first year 'in a long time' that net migration to the capital had fallen.

Mr Buckingham showed a graph demonstrating the relationship between population, jobs and trips in London. It showed that despite an increase in jobs the proportion of trips was falling: a trend that was happening at an even faster rate nationally. He suggested that the reason for this was the increasing pressure on peoples' disposable income, causing the numbers of leisure activities and coinciding travel trips to fall.

In relation to the point about an increase in private vans on London's roads, Mr Buckingham stated that the numbers of people shopping online had risen significantly over the year. Surprisingly however, it was discovered that the same people were actually likely to do more shopping on the high street than the average person. Therefore, the suggestion that online shopping was reducing retail shopping seemed to be inaccurate.

9. Presentation by Mike Cooper, Chief Executive of Eurostar

Mike Cooper explained that he had been involved in the rail sector for 11 months and had previously served on the board of EasyJet and Arriva. He stated that Eurostar had been operating since 1994 and had transported over 190 million passengers over that time. In 2019 there was over 7% year-on-year growth with a 12% growth in business passengers and 9% of all passengers coming from North America. He remarked that due to this growth the organisation appeared to be doing something right in terms of creating some value for people. With regard to proportions, UK travellers were their largest market followed by passengers from France, the US and Belgium.

Mr Cooper stated that the company's direct competition was with the airlines, so it was vital that they provided a competitive alternative with rail. This was demonstrated though the price ranges they offered and providing good customer service. Eurostar offered three type of ticket: Standard, Standard Premier and Business Premier. He commented, however, that he did not want the organisation

to be seen as an elite service provider and wanted to see 'student backpackers' as part of the mix of passengers on their trains.

Mr Cooper remarked that in 2018 Eurostar had opened their new service from London to Amsterdam, which was proving very popular with customers. He added that the company offered the added benefit of transporting passengers to the heart of the city rather than having to travel in from an airport on the outskirts. The Chief Executive asked whether the numbers of people making the return trip from the Netherlands to the UK were fewer in number than those that had used Eurostar to travel to their destination. Ms Walsh replied that this was the case due to the fact that passengers had to get off the train at Brussels to go through immigration control before continuing on. This was not the case when making outbound trips from the UK.

Mr Cooper stated that there had been good dialogue in preparations for Brexit and a four way treaty between the UK, France, Belgium and the Netherlands was due to be agreed shortly. He remarked that although the European Commission would be given oversight of the treaty, it was not a requirement for them to give it sign-off in order for it to be finalised. Mr Cooper remarked that even in the case of a no-deal Brexit the company was in a strong position to serve its customers.

Mr Cooper asked that London TravelWatch continue to be a critical friend to Eurostar to help the company improve its services for passengers. Ms Walsh agreed with the sentiment expressed by Mr Cooper and stated that it was positive that the two organisations could pick up the phone and make each other aware of an issue they had noticed. The Chief Executive said they had found it helpful that they were able to get through to the senior team at Eurostar when they had noticed a decline in the standard of their complaints handling following the move of the company's call centre.

Mr Cooper concluded that Eurostar was very optimistic about its levels of good, sustainable growth in the coming years. He remarked that the company would be pushing its levels of good customer service, punctuality and positive station experience for their passengers. He asked members if they had any questions about their strategy or plans for the business going forward.

A member asked if the company had any plans to expand into any other countries. Mr Cooper replied that this was not planned at present, with the most likely expansion being an extension of the line down to Bordeaux, though this was not immediately imminent. At the moment the focus was on increasing their market share of journeys from London to Amsterdam, which at present accounted for only 12% of total journeys between the two cities.

The Chair asked if there was anything London TravelWatch should be aware of from their counterparts operating in France and Belgium. Ms Walsh remarked that customer advocacy was 'more advanced' in the UK than in either France or Belgium. She commented that she would be 'surprised if there was much to learn' from either organisations.

The Director, Policy and Investigation stated that over the next 20 years there would likely be a major development taking place at Euston station, resulting in disruption for passengers. He asked what could be done to ease that situation and

assist passengers moving between there and Kings Cross St Pancras. Mr Cooper replied that the company, along with other partners, had invested in a wellbeing walkway between the two stations to make commuting between the two stations as enjoyable as possible.

Ms Walsh commented that both Camden and Islington boroughs were involved in the Urban Partners scheme, and more similar walkways had been developed across the city based on the concept. The Director, Policy and Investigation replied that he was aware of the scheme as London TravelWatch had advocated the wellbeing walkways in an initiative they had put forward over 10 years ago. The Chair commented that the signage could be improved to clearly show that the walkway was available for people. Ms Walsh agreed, and remarked that she was having an ongoing dialogue with the local council who had repeatedly taken down their signage, despite it being paid for by Urban Partners.

A member of the public stated that Eurostar's current policy with regards to families travelling with disabled children needed to be looked into. He commented that if a child with a disability was travelling on the service both they and their travel companion would be upgraded to a Premier ticket, which had the necessary space to accommodate wheelchair access. He remarked, however, that when travelling as a family of four he would be forced to pay for two additional Premier tickets, travel on standard tickets, or split the family up during the journey. He asked Mr Cooper to look into the policy so families in such situations could travel together. Mr Cooper and Ms Walsh said they would look into the matter and respond to him.

10. Appointment of subsidiary bodies (LTW598)

The appointments were agreed by the Board.

11. London TravelWatch's draft response to the DfT and RDG consultations into rail fares (LTW599)

The Director, Policy and Investigation presented his paper which issued London TravelWatch's draft response to the DfT and RDG consultations on rail fares. He asked members if they had any questions. A member stated that the changes would affect a lot of people and that it should be the organisation's top priority to ensure that the reforms happened. The Chief Executive agreed and remarked that London TravelWatch had held an event recently in partnership with the RDG in Parliament to ensure that politicians were aware of the reforms and to gain their support.

The Chair suggested that London TravelWatch needed to keep making the point about the anomalies in the system – where some passengers were paying vastly more for fares though travelling to and from similar distances. He also suggested that London TravelWatch continued to remind the industry that it had been pressing for the changes for a significant period so that it was acknowledged for helping to bring about reforms. The Director, Policy and Investigation commented that it would be likely that others would try and take ownership for the changes.

The Chair asked that London TravelWatch accumulate all information it had produced on rail anomalies over the years and present them as part of detailed evidence showing the need for reform in the rail and ticketing system. He remarked that he understood that some of the previous reports may be a few years old, though doubted that the fare anomalies would be much different. The Chief Executive said that they would go through the data and come back to the Board with the information.

ACTION: Director, Policy and Investigation

The Chair asked if London TravelWatch was required to answer all the questions in the DfT's consultation into rail fares. The Director, Policy and Investigation replied that the response would be given in two parts. The first part would be to answer the questions contained in the DfT report. The second part would be to submit questions that London TravelWatch wanted an answer to. The Chair stated that he would welcome input from any Board members who wished to get involved in the process.

12. Any other business

There was no other business.

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.