
Minutes

Agenda item 3(a)
Drafted : 10 Nov 2009

Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 10 November 2009 at 6 Middle Street, London EC1

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Present

David Barry; Terry Bennett; Onjali Bodrul; Kevin Davis; Daniel Francis (min. 1 to 9 and min. 11); Sharon Grant (Chair); David Leibling (min.1 to 9 and min. 11) ; Sarah Pond; Lorna Reith (Deputy Chair)

Guests

Beverley Hall	Head of Surface Transport Communications and Engagement, Transport for London (TfL)
Matt Winfield	Stakeholder Engagement Manager, TfL
Vernon Everitt	Managing Director, Marketing and Communications, TfL
Mike Keegan	Transport Strategy and Cross Modal Policies Manager, TfL
Stephen Critchley	Chief Finance Officer, TfL
Bob Crowther	Head of Customer Research, TfL

8 Members of the public including Valerie Shawcross (London Assembly Transport Committee), and Simon Mouncey (TfL Partnership Liaison and Development)

Secretariat

Tim Bellenger	Director, Research and Development
Carmel Cannon	Senior Committee Administrator
Janet Cooke	Chief Executive
Bryan Davey	Director, Public Liaison (minute 6)
Jo deBank	Communications Officer
Mark Donoghue	Committee Administrator
Rufus Impey	Senior Policy Officer (minutes 6 and 7)
Vincent Stops	Streets and Surface Policy Officer (minutes 6 - 9)

Minutes

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Gail Engert.

2 Chair's introduction and members' declarations of interest

Chair welcomed members, officers and guests to the meeting. There were no additional declarations of interest; the full list of members' interests may be found on the London TravelWatch website

3 Chair's activities and Passenger Focus update

3.1. Chair's activities

In this busy period the Chair had overseen work on the draft Mayor's Transport Strategy, the introduction of a new Casework team database system, and London TravelWatch's contributions to consultations from the Department for Transport on priorities for rail investment, public-private partnerships, and penalty fares. She attended the TfL Board meeting and met with the Public Carriage Office.

The Chair had also presented London TravelWatch's three-year strategy and business plan to the London Assembly with the Chief Executive, and given evidence to the Transport Committee's reportage on congestion in Oxford Street with the streets and Surface Transport Officer. Over the same period she met with the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) and TfL Rail, regarding both the roll out of Oyster on the rail network and the fares increases announced by the Mayor. At the beginning of November she and the Chief Executive attended the Service of Remembrance at City Hall.

3.2. Passenger Focus

The Passenger Focus board meeting at the beginning of October had covered the updated specification of National Express East Coast and the government consultation paper on the extension of Passenger Focus' remit to cover bus issues. Members discussed the twenty planned pilot surveys on bus services around the country, and the implications of this new stream of work on the infrastructure of the organisation.

4 Minutes

Minutes of the Board meeting held on 29 September 2009 at City Hall were approved and signed for the record. Minutes of the Executive group meeting held on 17 September 2009 were noted.

5 Matters arising (LTW 328)

Members asked for updates on minutes 417 and 19.5.09/8, regarding the incorporation of railway TOCs' Christmas services information into TfL's Christmas seasonal information booklet. Secretariat reported that there had been several discussions with TfL regarding this throughout

the year, pending seasonal information from TOCs. However, the leaflet had gone to press without London TravelWatch being alerted to the print copy deadline. Members also queried why the status column on the matters arising grid was sometimes left blank. Secretariat explained that until a response was provided for a matter, the status column was left blank to indicate that it was still pending.

6 Actions taken (LTW 329)

The report was noted. Regarding the annex of highway consultations, it was agreed to report only the total number of those where no response had been deemed necessary. Consultations to which a response had been sent would continue to be reported as at present.

7 TfL communications (LTW 330)

The Chair welcomed Vernon Everitt and Beverley Hall to the meeting for this item on how London TravelWatch and TfL may work more closely together. Mr Everitt gave a brief presentation which detailed the joint communications work to date, which may be viewed in full on the London TravelWatch website at <http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/document/3945/get>.

Mr Everitt agreed that TfL Communications had made a mistake when it had revised the Tube map, in not consulting London TravelWatch on the removal of the river from the map. He said that the map was updated every three months or so to reflect localised operational changes on the network, and undertook to ensure that London TravelWatch would be consulted on substantive communications changes in future.

He described TfL's communications structure, of teams working on specific modal issues for rail, surface and London Underground. This work informed the central press office which in turn managed relationships with the Greater London Assembly (GLA) and press, taking a thematic approach whatever the topic.

In terms of passenger communications, digital services were growing, and the complaints handling system was being reviewed in line with the local government ombudsman's guidance. The Chair thanked Mr Everitt and invited comments and questions from members. Mr Davis stated that some train operating companies (TOCs) had been open about the fact that because of the current financial constraints it was likely that the quality of their customer services would drop. Naturally this was likely to invite more complaints, but communications in any business are often an easy budget-cutting target – was this the case at TfL?

Mr Everitt conceded that some funding had already been reallocated. However, TfL intended to deliver a better information service more cheaply in future, with the intelligent use of technology and, although the current economic situation was tight, investments over recent years would enable this. Mr Davis said that this appeared to contradict the presentation (which indicated a decline in coming years for use of the online journey planner), but Mr Everitt explained that a shift in emphasis was occurring, from directing people to TfL's websites for information, to a more tailored and flexible information provision through mobile phones and online networks. This would result in an overall increase in the number of people accessing information from TfL, in line with the predicted 1.3million rise in London's population by 2031.

There was concern that London TravelWatch was not given sight of press releases and embargoed material in enough time for comment, nor sooner than any other stakeholder, despite often being pleased to support TfL. The Chair commented that, as the statutory body representing London's passengers London TravelWatch should be included at a much earlier point in planned communications work. Mr Everitt suggested a quarterly communications meeting on the forward

agenda of communications issues for TfL, thereby involving London TravelWatch at the beginning of the process. He also invited the Communications Officer to visit TfL's press office. Both invitations were accepted.

There were some questions about the technicalities of information provision: in answer to a query about text alerts, Mr Everitt confirmed that, once set up, these were permanent until the user unsubscribed. Alerts were accurate to within about five minutes as they were linked to the same database as the website and the network information boards.

Mr Bennett suggested that, whilst the working relationship between the two bodies was clearly good, it might be worth drawing up a protocol of communication for clarity. TfL agreed and suggested that this be picked up in the planned quarterly meetings.

8 TfL complaints (LTW 331)

The Director, Public Liaison, introduced the briefing paper, noting one correction: that the Customer service Improvement Programme (CSIP) should read Customer Service Integration Programme.

Ms Hall remarked that TfL's intention was for customers to have a TfL account to manage their tickets, information and complaints. As part of this, TfL was investing in new technologies such as voice recognition capabilities on automated phone lines. She added that TfL was also debating the use of 0845- numbers, and welcomed London TravelWatch's input on this.

For some time London TravelWatch had been requesting permission to carry out an audit of TfL's bus complaints system, and it was agreed at this meeting that TfL would provide London TravelWatch with copies of the various recent audits of bus operators, and London TravelWatch's comments on this would inform TfL's future auditing process. The Chair thanked Ms Hall and invited comments and questions from members.

Members immediately expressed alarm at the idea of voice recognition technology as it would be irritating to complainants. Ms Hall assured her that the technology would be implemented in stages, starting with word recognition such as 'oyster' and 'refund' or 'complaint' and 'buses' to direct callers to the appropriate operator. The Chair requested that London TravelWatch be invited to have some input on this.

Mr Leibling asked whether TfL was working towards common complaints reference numbers which would tally with, say, local borough complaints handling. Ms Hall believed that this was already the case and undertook to investigate further if it was not so.

Mr Leibling also spoke on behalf of the Board in complimenting Docklands Light Railway (DLR) on its reporting, and suggested that their reports be used as a template for good practice across TfL. He also cited Passenger Focus' success in arranging for caseworkers to meet with TOCs complaints handlers in person and asked whether this could be done at TfL. Ms Hall said this could be arranged.

Ms Pond raised the ongoing issue of TfL's use of 0845- numbers for their helpline resulting in a high level of initial complainants calling London TravelWatch's local number instead. Ms Hall said that she had some ideas on this and would feed back to the Consumer Affairs committee.

Action : Committee Services

Ms Lambert noted that there were still some issues about the identification of drivers. Ms Hall conceded that this was an issue, even though the driver may be identified through the bus

registration number on the complaints poster displayed in the bus. She added that TfL was looking at a number of ways to improve this and offered to present on it to the Board in early 2010.

Action : Committee Services

The Chair thanked speakers and welcomed TfL's suggestions for further dialogue and meetings, adding that we look forward to improved response times, temporary improvements on tracking of complaints and information on the audit progress.

9 Mayor's Transport Strategy (LTW 332)

The Chair welcomed Mike Keegan, Transport Strategy and Cross Modal Policies Manager, TfL to the meeting, to speak on the Mayor's Transport Strategy (MTS) (<http://mts.tfl.gov.uk/>).

Mr Keegan's presentation may be viewed in full on the London TravelWatch website at <http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/document/3943/get>. Note on the slide 'Proposals to manage and enhance the transport system' : 'SCOOT' is an automated way of managing signalling at road junctions, with sensors gauging the flow of traffic and to maximise traffic flow at junctions.

At the close of the presentation, comments and questions were invited from members. Mr Leibling asked what the scale of the cost was for the period of 2020 to 2030 for the unfunded schemes listed in the appendix, compared to the investment in transport between 2000 to 2010 and 2010 to 2020. Mr Keegan responded that, by the same averaging process, the additional cost for 2018-2031 would be about half – as we can afford at the current rate then the strategy would envisage almost that level of investment continuing, including the underground investment. The Mayor's strategy is also concerned with value for money. As projects progressed, they would need to demonstrate how they represent that in line with the mayor's strategic goals.

The Chair asked whether it was entirely wise to assume the future level of investment at the same rate there had been over recent years and, as the population of London grew, whether there would be the resources to respond to increased demand. Mr Keegan replied that all London Underground upgrades would be finished by 2020 (except Bakerloo, 2017), after which there would be some room for growth. The Chair asked whether any modelling had been done to look at how the system would cope with reduced funding and increased population. Mr Keegan said that without continued investment the network would grind to a halt so that scenario was not feasible.

Questions were also raised about the likely increase in demand for buses during the Crossrail construction, when the MTS indicated that bus services were likely to be reduced in the same period. Mr Keegan replied that the DLR extensions would be completed and new rolling stock on the District Line would be delivered giving greater capacity, and that there was an ongoing process of developing the bus services to match demand. He also pointed out that the Mayor's Transport Strategy did not promise more buses, but equally did not rule out the provision of further services.

Ms Lambert asked about the minimal planning for new road infrastructure up to 2031. Mr Keegan and Ms Hall replied that the strategic approach was about making better use of the roads already available. Members were directed to point 34 of the document where the criteria for increasing road capacity are outlined. Members suggested that this point should have been made more explicit within the strategy document, with a specific list of potential schemes. Mr Barry asked how the Mayor proposed to ensure that the benefits of interventions to smooth traffic and smarter travel initiatives were not eroded over time by an increase in road traffic encouraged by the reduction in congestion. Mr Keegan responded that the strategy in the long term would be to reduce overall demand through better land use planning and road user charging.

Ms Reith questioned whether there was enough emphasis on bus priority schemes in the strategy, given the importance of bus services to London, their efficient use of road space and the financial efficiency gains to be made from reducing journey times. Mr Keegan acknowledged this but pointed out that bus priority schemes were for the most part the responsibility of individual boroughs. The Chair questioned whether this was wise, given that most routes passed through more than one borough. Ms Hall pointed out that TfL was looking to find a more flexible way of influencing local decisions to achieve greater prioritisation along key routes and around hubs. She noted that this work was linked to the Boroughs' work within the Local Implementation Programme scheme (LIPs).

Ms Pond asked why the Strategy did not place more emphasis on improving access to health care facilities, given the number of trips generated by healthcare-related journeys. Mr Keegan conceded that this could have been made more of in the strategy.

Mr Davis asked how the differences in detail between the MTS and the London Plan would be resolved, particularly in terms of policy implementation. Mr Keegan answered that TfL had developed the strategy and the London Plan together and that there may be drafting errors; but that any perceived differences between them should be highlighted in London TravelWatch's response. The Chair pointed out that the differences London TravelWatch had noticed were substantial. London TravelWatch was planning a composite response to the Mayor's Transport Strategy, the London Plan and the LIPs guidance, and would highlight any inconsistencies between the documents.

Ms Bodrul asked whether the balance of the MTS was correct in its focus on Walking and Cycling and capital-intensive rail schemes. Mr Keegan agreed that more work needed to be done on how access to town centres would work but that overall the strategy was well balanced.

Due to time constraints, the Chair suggested that responses to any further questions would be requested in writing via Committee Services, particularly how the public was to be involved in the rolling out the LIPs, and suggested that keeping local communities involved should be stipulated in within them.

10 TfL Business Plan

The Chair welcomed Stephen Critchley, Chief Finance Officer, TfL, to speak about TfL's business plan <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/assets/downloads/corporate/tfl-business-plan-2009.pdf>. She thanked him for his patience as his presentation slot had been delayed. His presentation may be viewed in full on the London TravelWatch website, at <http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/document/3944/get>

In his opening remarks, Mr Critchley said that there was undoubtedly a threat to funding; borrowing cannot be re-phased and TfL was working on two schemes to reduce costs. The first of these had been the Operating Cost Review (OCR) which was a programme of making savings. It had identified £2.4bn in potential savings over three years. TfL was now moving on to the second, called the 'Continuous Savings Exercise' (CSE), which sought to reduce operating costs by 2.5% year on year by 2011 rather than capital expenditure reductions – i.e. to make savings with the least impact on customers. So, for instance, station refurbishments were a 'nice to have' - for customers too – but service provision and asset stabilisation (replacing only that which needs replacing) were the priorities.

The Chair thanked Mr Critchley for his useful and informative presentation and invited comments and queries from members.

Mr Davis began by querying the relationship between the business plan and the Mayor's Transport Strategy, particularly as the strategy was out to consultation whilst the budget was yet

to be approved. He gave the example that the strategy highlighted the 'stress corridors' for commuters in and out of London, of south west London was one, yet the business plan had not allocated any of the £16bn infrastructure funding to that particular area.

Mr Critchley conceded that there was a tension between the business plan and strategy process, and it was worth having a dialogue as part of this consultation as to how the strategic thinking can affect the business plan. There were various commitments already in place in the business plan e.g. Crossrail, upgrade tube, etc, and once these were done, with the Mayor's requirements on top, there was little room for further work. The strategy does however remove funding constraints and says it will give what ought to be given going forward for the longer term for London. Essentially there should be nothing in the business plan that is inconsistent with the strategy, but flexibility for spend is only suggested for the later years, at the margins. Mr Davis therefore asked whether it was the Mayor's Transport Strategy or the Business Plan which should be given credence. Mr Critchley responded that the business plan had priority but that it covered a shorter time span than the Mayor's strategy and so would not include all that it contained.

Mr Bennett asked about the cost of replacing bendy buses. Mr Critchley answered that he did not have these to hand but would research and provide them for the Board, along with details of how many vehicles would be needed to replace them, and their specification.

Action : Committee Services.

Mr Bennett also enquired about contingency plans if things did not go well with Tubelines. Mr Critchley confirmed that contingency plans were in place but that of course he could not reveal these in a public meeting. However the business plan assumption was that what was needed to be delivered will be done within the contracts. The restated terms and affordability constraints have been set and Tubelines has come back with its responses, which most have regarded as disappointing.

Ms Pond asked that step free access should include step-free from platform to train as well as from street to platform. Mr Critchley took this on board. The Chair thanked Mr Critchley again for his excellent presentation, and for agreeing to stay with the meeting over the lunch period.

11 TfL Research – strengthening London TravelWatch's relationship (12.40)

The Chair welcomed Bob Crowther, Head of Customer Research, TfL to discuss strengthening the research relationship with London TravelWatch. He gave a brief presentation which may be viewed on London TravelWatch's website at <http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/document/3946>

Mr Crowther suggested that there were two key areas for discussion. Firstly it was important to acknowledge that the constituencies of the two organisations are slightly different. TfL takes a very business-orientated approach and the priority is to deliver against the Mayor's strategy, whilst London TravelWatch's priority is to act as the representative body for passengers. This is a mismatch which whilst not insurmountable, needed some further work as much of TfL's research work was of no close relevance to London TravelWatch's agenda.

Secondly there was a lack of clarity regarding the difference between research and policy – although work had already begun to unpack this. The Chair agreed that following recent discussions, things were much further ahead, and London TravelWatch had a greater understanding of how TfL plans its research and its methodologies.

Ms Lambert asked about the design of projects that might be of particular interest to London TravelWatch, suggesting that it would be most useful if we were included at that stage. Was this the next stage of developing the relationship? Mr Crowther responded that the first thing to look at was through the planning process, prior to the design stage, to identify which parts of the

programme were of immediate interest. The Chair added that clearly there would be issues of trust and confidence involved, but it had already been agreed that in the next period TfL and London TravelWatch would work together on a couple of exemplar projects to establish the working relationship.

Mr Crowther was also pleased to report that, further to representations from London TravelWatch and discussions with the Mayor's advisors, TfL has agreed to make customer research publicly available on the TfL website. This delighted members and the Chair once again thanked Mr Crowther for his presentation.

12 Memorandum of Understanding (LTW 333)

The Memorandum of Understanding between London TravelWatch and the London Assembly Transport Committee had recently been amended to give greater discretion to the organisation to manage its own workload and resources, and stood as a testament to the developing relationship with the GLA.

Mr Davis raised a point about the performance indicators it mentioned – that they seemed to be skewed towards the complaints aspect of London TravelWatch's work. The Chief Executive explained that these are centrally set targets which local authorities work; the amendments had been made specifically to bring London TravelWatch more in line with their modes of working. With this, members agreed the Memorandum of Understanding.

13 London TravelWatch 6 monthly performance report (LTW 334)

The Chief Executive introduced this report, which is to be presented to the Board every six months. She noted a correction for paragraph 3.4 : where it said there was one request for evidence, it should read two.

The report was really one of 'Performance against work plan' and members considered the items which were outstanding. Ms Reith requested that the ticket vending machine survey (target 11) should not be done online; the Director, Research and Development undertook to discuss this further with the consultants.

Action : Director, Research and Development

Mr Davis asked about the connection between the business plan and the subcommittees; the Chair stipulated that committees were to work more closely to the business plan in directing their work plans.

Ms Reith asked whether the revised dates in the plan had been realistically considered to ensure that there was not an impossible amount of work scheduled for the end of the period. The Chair agreed that this was a good observation and suggested it be pursued in greater detail at the Executive group. Taking up this point and citing target 10, Ms Pond said that full records of the work that is done for other committees and on consultations should be kept as these were often legal requirements for London TravelWatch to meet, but which were a contributing factor to interrupting work flow and slippage on internal projects.

14 Amendments to Risk Policy (LTW 335)

The amendments to the London TravelWatch risk policy were approved.

15 Any other business

There was no other business.

16 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 the remainder of the meeting.

In confidential session, members approved the minutes for the confidential session of the Board meeting held on 29 September and reviewed this meeting's discussions.

The next meeting of the full Board will be held on 26 January 2010.