



The voice of London's transport users



London TravelWatch investigates:
**What is the future of London's
transport network?**

Briefing paper – London TravelWatch Investigation

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Who are we?

London TravelWatch is the independent transport watchdog set up by Parliament to provide a voice for London's travelling public. We are funded by and accountable to the London Assembly.

We represent everyone who uses London's transport network. This includes users of rail services in and around the capital, all Transport for London (TfL) services (bus, Tube, DLR, trams, taxis) and motorists, cyclists and pedestrians using London's strategic road network (the roads that TfL manage).

We work with the train companies, TfL and others who provide transport services in the capital to press for a better travel experience for all those living, working, or visiting London, and the Greater London region.



(— — Crossrail / Elizabeth Line – Reading to Shenfield from December 2019)

This is the area London TravelWatch represent – all rail services in the areas covered above, and all other modes of transport in TfL's network.

Introduction

The pandemic has seen a lot change in the world around us. As we have had to adapt the way we live our day to day lives to allow for social distancing, many of the things we took for granted as normal have changed fundamentally. This includes transport and travel.

For some people travelling in and around London their lives have changed significantly. They may now be working from home and hardly ever travelling into central London, where they used to commute to every day. But others are still making their usual journeys to work or to care for friends and family.

For those who have changed how they travel around London, how permanent are these changes?

And for those where less has changed, what would make their journeys easier and safer?

Many of the reasons people travel will still exist in future. Many jobs simply cannot be done from home. School, college and university students will still need to travel to complete their education. Some people have to travel to help and care for family or friends. Then there are all the other reasons people might travel: to meet up with friends and family, to go out for a meal or the cinema, to watch or play sport and numerous other fun activities that aren't essential but which are very much a part of life in London. At some point in the future, life will go on back to some sort of 'normal', and our transport system needs to be ready for this.

How your organisation or business can help

We want to hear from you to find out what the people you represent, customers you serve or sectors you work in need from transport in London, so that we can continue to work and push for better transport services that reflect the needs of the people that use it.

We have a few questions for you to help us better understand what people will need from transport in London in the future. We have provided a bit of background information below to help you understand the issues we hope to explore, but you can skip to the questions [here](#).

Background

Before you take a look at the questions, you might find it useful to think about the different issues that can affect why people travel, when people travel and how people travel, and some of the main issues that are being considered in transport as a result of the pandemic.

Normally, there are some key things which affect people's travel decisions. These include:

Cost of travel

Example: the bus is cheaper than the Tube so some people might prefer the bus

Travel time

Example: the bus may be cheaper but the Tube may get you there quicker

Comfort and personal preference

Example: some people might prefer to take their car rather than public transport because it's more comfortable

How accessible the journey will be

Example: if you need step-free access like lifts and ramps, you may have more limited options

Other choices available

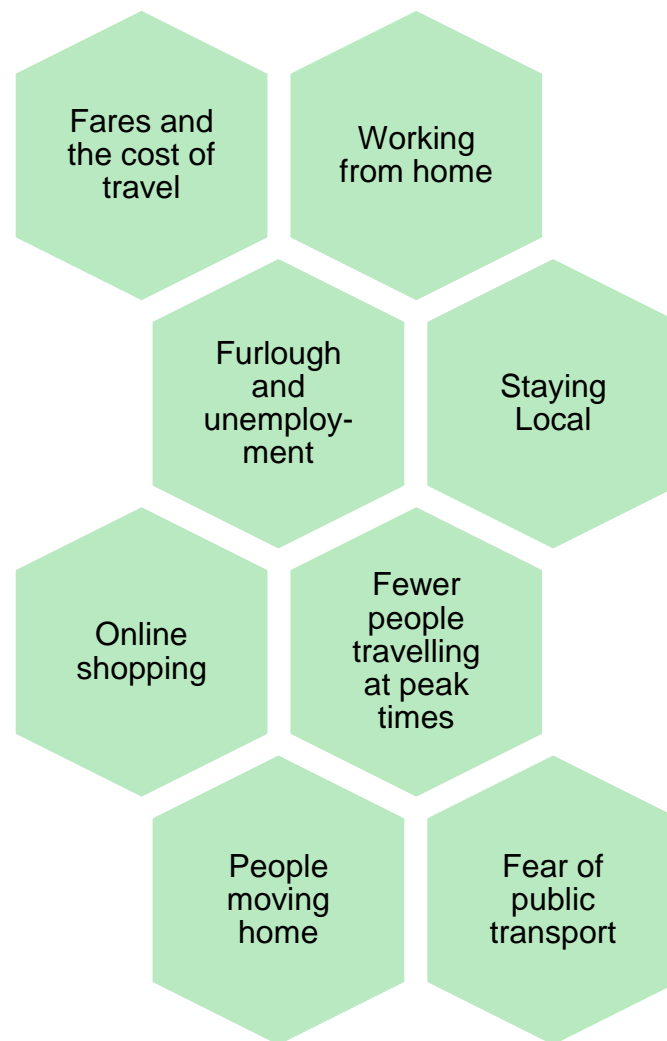
Example: If you don't live in a part of London with good public transport options, you may have no choice but to drive

Purpose of travel

Example: if you're going out shopping for the day, you may be less likely to walk and more likely to take the bus to avoid carrying heavy bags home

The pandemic will likely have long term consequences for society and might affect some or all of the above issues and what is most important when people are deciding how to travel.

Some of the things that might have an impact on how people travel in London in the future include:



All of these things might mean changes to where people travel, when they travel and the way that they travel. It is unlikely that transport and travel will just go back to exactly how it was before the pandemic.

What are decision-makers and politicians hoping to see in the future?

In the [Mayor's Transport Strategy](#), the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan outlines a plan to see 80% of all trips in London to be made on foot, by cycle or using public transport by 2041. It is clear that policy makers, both in City Hall and at a national level, want a green recovery which sees more walking, cycling and public transport – also known as 'Active Travel' across the UK. Unfortunately, there has been a return to cars as people remain cautious of public transport, which will increase congestion, emissions and air quality if not reduced in the future. We run a weekly omnibus poll with Transport Focus, and recent results show that worryingly, 33%+ of Londoners expect to drive more (when they would previously have used public transport) when Covid-19 no longer poses a significant risk. This is especially true of people who have children.

Until people feel safe on public transport, many will choose to travel in a way that avoids close contact with others. New policy ideas, or those not previously discussed as widely, are being considered as solutions to the climate emergency and the need to socially distance. Ideas which are gaining more popularity include:

The '15 minute city'

This is the idea that in the future, people will stay in their local areas more to do everyday activities such as work, school, and social activities. Transport and land-use planning would be done at a local, neighbourhood level and there would be less travel into the centre of London.

A new Road User Charging Scheme

This would be a [new way of charging cars and vehicles for using London's roads](#) which replaces the Congestion charge and ULEZ (Ultra Low Emission Zone) scheme with a London-wide 'pay per trip' charge. This could provide extra income to TfL and others to provide better public transport.

More use of Micro-mobility to get around

Micro-mobility solutions (electric bikes and electric scooters, for example) are also now rising up the agenda. Social distancing is with us for now, so it could be that micro-mobility is a sustainable alternative to the car.

What other issues might decision-makers be thinking about?

For London TravelWatch, our main concern is making sure passengers and transport users have a transport network that meets the needs of people when getting around the city. However there are other issues that affect transport which decision-makers will be thinking about, which might also have an impact on transport users.

For example, many of the trends we have seen take off in 2020 as a result of the pandemic might have long-term implications for London. Online shopping and an increase in home deliveries for food and other products has seen a rise in delivery vehicles on London's roads. The increase in delivery vehicles may increase congestion and cause other problems like traffic and higher emissions on London's roads: something the Government may want to control in future.

Another concern that will factor into the decisions made by politicians and transport providers is the environment. The need to reduce emissions and use of fossil fuels extends to transport in London, where the majority of journeys are still made by car. Since the pandemic started, TfL and the Government have already made some effort to [encourage people to take up sustainable modes of transport like walking and cycling instead of driving](#), but long-term will want to make this change further reaching and more permanent. There are good reasons to prioritise this, not least to improve air quality in London, and so it is important to bear this in mind too.

Four scenarios: what do you think the future of transport will look like?

To help get you thinking, we have created four possible ‘scenarios’ which describe what transport in London might look like depending on how permanent some of the changes to travel are, and how much politicians and transport providers like TfL change their services to reflect the ‘new normal’ – whatever that might be.

We would like you to read through the following scenarios and think about how much each scenario would match the needs of your organisation or the people you represent.

These scenarios are not set in stone, but instead are designed to prompt you to think about what could be possible, what sounds like the most likely, and what would be most beneficial for the people or sectors you represent. It may be that you think there will be a mix of the scenarios, or just some parts from one or two of them that seem most likely. There may be things we haven’t covered.

Why it is important to have your views heard

There are, of course, financial costs to consider in all the scenarios we have developed. The pandemic has had a large impact on the economy, which has impacted the finances of TfL and the rail companies running transport services in London. To reduce costs and help with social distancing, certain changes to transport policy are being suggested, including, for example, the proposal to end free travel for under 18’s (the Zip card).

These kinds of changes will have a big impact on people. There will likely be hard decisions to make about how to spend money on transport. This makes it even more important that the priorities of the people using London’s public transport, roads and streets are communicated to those making these decisions.

Whatever the future of transport in London is, London TravelWatch believe it should be shaped and designed to meet the needs of the millions of people who travel in the capital. Help us make sure decision-makers know what people need from London’s transport.

Scenario 1 – TfL’s prediction: travel in London has ‘mostly’ returned to normal by the end of 2021

TfL predict that by the end of 2021, things will mostly have returned to normal.

In this scenario, due to the effects of the pandemic and more people working from home, London transport has returned to around 80% of its normal use. This means rail services, the Tube and London’s buses are running with about 80% of the normal number of people travelling before the pandemic. There are still busy peak times and less busy off-peak times.

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, outlined that he wanted to see 80% of trips in London being made by active, efficient and sustainable forms of transport. This has come true, and there is slightly more active travel used to get around to work, leisure and social activities and shopping. There is a little more walking, cycling and public transport use and fewer car journeys.

People are still choosing to live and work in London, so the need for better and more reliable transport services is still very important.

Leisure travel has gone back to normal, with many people now travelling around London to socialise, visit theatres and entertainment venues, and other leisure activities.

Congestion on London’s roads is still a problem, so decision-makers are starting to think of possible solutions, such as a new roads pricing scheme, to help reduce car travel.

There is a little less commuting to the centre of London, and a little more travel in people’s local areas and near where they live, particularly in outer London. These local trips tend to be shorter and so some people are choosing walking or cycling or the bus rather than taking the car.

Scenario 2 – TfL + (Scenario 1 but travel times are more spread out)

This scenario is the same as scenario 1, but instead of the normal busy peak times we used to see in London (morning peak and rush hour in the evening) people make journeys at times which are spread out throughout the day and week. This is because workplaces and employers are more flexible about when their employees come into the office, with many choosing to continue to work from home.

More workers are only travelling in a few days a week or coming in to work at different times of the day, which means the peak hours are spread over a much longer time in the morning and evening, and are less busy than they used to be.

In this scenario, people have changed their lifestyles more than in scenario 1, and travel at times of the day or week when it is less busy.

Like in scenario 1, there are fewer people commuting to the centre of London, and there are more local journeys. This includes more walking, cycling, micro-mobility and public transport use – and fewer car journeys.

Like in scenario 1, leisure travel has gone back up with more people travelling around for social and leisure activities.

To meet the changing travel patterns of Londoners, TfL and National Rail companies have changed their timetables. Instead of having more frequent train, bus and Tube services at peak hours in the morning and evening, services are spread out evenly throughout the day, with a Saturday-style service running every day. Better interchanges (at places like Clapham Junction where you can change onto different services or modes) allow more orbital journeys (journeys around London rather than into central London) to be made.

Scenario 3 – London becomes a ‘15 minute city’

In this scenario Central London becomes much less of a focus. People are staying more in their local areas, boroughs or nearby towns to go about their day to day activities like work, shopping, going to school, college or university or seeing friends and family.

There is still travel into central London, but for most people this is usually when they are making trips for leisure activities or to meet up with people who don't live near them, or the occasional business trip.

The effect of this change in the way people live and move around means TfL are now focusing on making local areas and outer London areas easier to get around. This means better cycle infrastructure for more cycling and better streets and pavements for pedestrians in people's towns and local areas.

Road congestion in central London has decreased, and there is more bus use in local areas.

Scenario 4 – London becomes a more ‘polycentric city’

When we say ‘polycentric’ we mean that instead of having one big centre of the city (Central London) as the most important area for work and travel, we now have multiple urban centres across outer and inner London playing a bigger role in the economy.

London's urban centres, such as Enfield and Croydon, are now much more important for people's day to day lives, as businesses have relocated to them as there are lower rent costs. People now do their shopping and day to day activities in their nearest big town or urban centre rather than travelling into the centre of London.

Like in scenario 2, there is now more travel around London and in outer London areas, with people moving between different parts of the city without going first into central London.

To meet these changing travel patterns, TfL are focusing on providing better bus and rail services which connect different parts of outer London without people having to go into the centre to make connections. There may also be better cycle connections between outer London areas. There is also more travel from inner London to outer London areas. This means there is more efficient use of public transport networks with bus and rail services being used by commuters in both directions.

Call for Evidence Questions

Please provide as much (or little) information as you wish. We are keen to hear about the views and opinions of the people, sectors or interests you represent. Please attach or provide links to any evidence you think is useful or supports your comments.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss anything further, please feel free to get in touch info@londontravelwatch.org.uk

The deadline for responses is Wednesday 25th November.

1. Who are the people, sectors or interests that you represent?
2. What are the most important issues or concerns facing the people, sectors or interests you represent as a result of the pandemic?
3. Are there any specific transport or travel-related issues facing the people, sectors or interests you represent?
4. Please take a look at our four transport scenarios.
 - a) Which of the scenarios most closely resembles you/your organisation's expectation of future transport needs, and why?
 - b) Are the scenarios missing anything? If so, please outline what is missing and what your predictions are for how London transport will look like in the future.
5. What do you/your organisation want from the future transport network which will be different from now?
6. If you could make one request to transport authorities to help meet the future transport needs of the people, sectors or interests you represent, what would it be?

Please let us know if you have any further thoughts about future transport needs not covered in your responses to the above questions.