London TravelWatch

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Performance of the National Rail Enquiries Service website during the snow of January 2010

1   Purpose of report

1.1.   To brief members on the outcome of the meeting held between London TravelWatch and ATOC (Association of Train Operating Companies) about the National Rail Enquiries (NRES) Website and Live Departure Board information. The meeting was held on the 10 February 2010 with the ATOC Head of Passenger Information.

2   Recommendation

2.1.   That Members note the information contained in this report.

3   Information

3.1   NRES Website

3.1.1   The difficulties faced by the National Rail Enquiries Website (http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/) on the 6 January 2010 were the result in part of difficulties associated with the new format. The volume of users as a result of the snow caused problems with the website's new layout. After February 2009 the website was stress tested up to 22 times the normal volumes. However, this was on the old website. Modifications to the new format had been suspended over the Christmas/New Year period until early January 2010. The volume of users meant that these issues caused the website to crash. They user volume also made it risky to implement the solutions to the problems.

3.1.2   NRES are now having independent and not just supplier stress testing of their website. They have also now fixed all of the problems that have been identified.

3.2   Live Departure Boards

3.2.1   The structure of the systems which feed into the live departure information has certain fundamental issues. In the hierarchy of data the TOC (Train Operating Companies) individual CIS (Customer Information Systems) of which there are 66 separate types feed into NRES real time information. The CIS are a patch work of systems and this cause the data on both CIS screens and live departure boards problems during disruption. Network Rail are paying for a solution to this issue which will see the main feed of information come from a central NRES database called DARWIN. This will provide a top-down flow of information which TOCs can

then amend as appropriate. These amendments can then be feedback into the DARWIN data. This should mean that the quality of information will be markedly improved.

3.2.2   There are two groups looking at this issue :
- Passenger Information During Disruption
- Nation Task Force – having made improvements to rail performance, they are now moving on to focus on passenger information

4   Equalities and inclusion implications

4.1.   No equalities and inclusion implications for London TravelWatch arise from this report.

5   Legal powers

5.1.   Section 248 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 places upon London TravelWatch (as the London Transport Users Committee) a duty to consider - and where it appears to the Committee to be desirable, to make recommendations with respect to - any matter affecting the functions of the Greater London Authority or Transport for London which relate to transport (other than of freight). Section 252A of the same Act (as amended by Schedule 6 of the Railways Act 2005) places a similar duty upon the Committee to keep under review matters affecting the interests of the public in relation to railway passenger and station services provided wholly or partly within the London railway area, and to make representations about them to such persons as it thinks appropriate.

6   Financial implications

6.1.   This report raises no specific financial implications for London TravelWatch.