

Board Meeting 25.5.10

Secretariat Memorandum

Author: Tim Bellenger

Agenda item : 11

LTW 351

Date : 17.5.10

Research programme 2010/11

1 Purpose of report

1.1 To report on the policy support and research activities of London TravelWatch.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are invited to consider the report and comment particularly on the possibilities for future research suggested within it.

2.2 Members are invited to agree that :

- work commenced in 2009/10 be completed and published (First class travel, station standards, bus passenger priorities).
- London TravelWatch continues to work collaboratively with Transport for London, Passenger Focus and other organisations on research of mutual interest.

2.3 Members are invited to note that the following areas of potential new research will be explored :

- Passengers attitudes and requirements of a 'Virtual booking office';
- Passenger impact of service reductions on the bus and rail networks;
- Passenger impact of the cancellation/delay of all or parts of the Thameslink and Crossrail projects;
- Transport user impact of changes to the Mayoral Transport Strategy and/or London Plan;
- Passenger impact of any transfer of powers, in relation to rail services to the Mayor;
- The transport needs of minority faith communities;
- The role of walking in improving interchanges.

3 Information

3.1 The Research and Development team is responsible for a number of areas of work within London TravelWatch. Firstly, to provide support to the Board in all areas of policy and in relation to statutory closure hearings on the rail network. Secondly the team responds on

behalf of the board to consultations by other bodies on their proposals (in 2009/10 we responded to 466 such consultations : 77 Bus, 5 all mode, 3 London Underground, 152 national rail, 2 others and 227 Streets), and also provides policy support to the Casework team. In supporting the above the team also carries out and commissions research into policy areas of interest to the Board.

- 3.2 In terms of priority of work, there will always be a requirement to fulfil London TravelWatch's statutory obligations first, including the provision of responses to consultations and supporting colleagues in the casework team. There is a considerable variation in the quantity and timing of this work, and so there is a difficult balancing act with the Board's pro-active research.

4 Activities in 2009/10

- 4.1 There were no statutory closure hearings in 2009/10, but there was an amount of on-going liaison work required in relation to previous years hearings for the Thameslink project, and other recent closure hearings. There was also a considerable amount of work related to ensuring that closure procedures and processes were followed in relation to train services over various sections of track between Wandsworth Road and Ealing Broadway. In the event the Department for Transport (DfT) put in place first a service between Wandsworth Road and Kensington Olympia, and then agreed to procure a replacement train service to Ealing Broadway. However, having agreed a service with Southern, Network Rail refused track access rights. Discussions are currently on going to resolve this issue.
- 4.2 Other work required by statute included a number of responses to changes to Penalty Fares and Passenger Charter schemes from Train Operators and also the requirements of the House of Commons Select Committee on Transport to produce two responses for hearings of that Committee during the year.
- 4.3 We also submitted four responses to the London Assembly Transport Committee for their scrutinies of various topics.
- 4.4 During the year several Route Utilisation Strategies (East Midlands, Great Western, Sussex, Kent and network wide electrification) produced by Network Rail were responded to as these had important implications for local services within London. We responded as well to the franchise consultations issued by the DfT (Greater Anglia, Essex Thameside and Inter City East Coast) and those on bus service changes by TfL. In addition we made submissions to the Mayor's Transport Strategy, the London Plan, the Mayor's guidance on local implementation plans and to various consultations on Disabled Persons Protection Policies by train operators.
- 4.4.1 We have also continued with our regular publication of National Rail performance reports and from this year have added similar reports for Transport for London services. This enables us to monitor the likely impact on passengers of poor performance.
- 4.5 We work in close co-operation with Passenger Focus and in 2009-10 we completed two joint projects with them. Firstly, study of usage of the South London Line and recently a study of bus passenger priorities for improvement. Passenger Focus published the results for England and Wales outside of London, and we have received a separate

report on bus passenger priorities in London. However, the co-operation between the two organisations has resulted in compatible results which show the common areas of concern between London and the rest of the country as well as the major differences between the two.

- 4.5.1 We have also worked collaboratively on a piece of work to establish passenger priorities for the improvement of stations, which linked with work which we already had in hand to update our previous research published in 2004 under the title 'Whose Station are You?'. This included survey work at Clapham Junction, Barking and Luton which were recently described as being in the top 10 worst stations in the UK. We have also put into published form our previously completed research into whether out of service journeys made by buses could be usefully made available to the public.
- 4.6 We have also completed through a contract with Ipsos–MORI some long planned research into the use and effectiveness of First Class on National Rail services serving London. The results from this on line survey will be available shortly.
- 4.7 In 2009 discussions took place with Transport for London on the possibilities for collaboration of research activities. We have agreed a number of protocols for working with TfL, both sharing and influencing TfL's research programme.
- 4.8 Members are also reminded that we looked at the possibility of research on the usability and development of Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs), but concluded after a meeting with one of the manufacturers (Shere) that researching passenger attitudes to current TVMs is likely to be of limited value given the potential for imminent technological change. Instead we should be consider undertaking research on how passengers feel or might react to a 'Virtual Booking Office'.

5 Future Research work

- 5.1 Continuing our collaborative work with TfL means that we will have a greater ability to influence their research agenda and have access to their evidence based research. Topics which are currently under discussion include user perceptions of pedestrian countdown signs, bus passenger information at bus stops (countdown), road safety schemes, future ticketing and travel information in alternative formats. We welcome the fact that following representations from London TravelWatch, TfL have agreed to put their research into the public domain unless there are specific reasons such as commercial confidentiality not to do so.
- 5.2 2010/11 is a year of challenge. Firstly, because of the reduction already agreed in the budget for research, and secondly because there are likely to be significant changes to the transport network as a result of the need for transport operators and authorities to reduce expenditure to meet their own reductions in budgets. Wherever possible to make our resources go further, we will seek to undertake collaborative projects with other bodies.
 - 5.2.1 The Mayor has already indicated in his business plan for 2010/11 and beyond that he intends to reduce the volume of bus services provided. This may mean that some areas might see a greater reduction in service than others, and possibly at different times of day. It may be the case that London TravelWatch might challenge some decisions on service levels, and in order to do so we would require some external research to give us

the evidence base to quantify and support any arguments we might wish to make in favour of a particular course of action.

- 5.2.2 The Thameslink and Crossrail schemes are both currently under construction but because of the state of public finances may be subject to review and possible reduction or even cancellation. As both schemes give significant passenger benefits, it would be of great concern if a number of scheme elements were lost or delayed or even a whole scheme cancelled. In the case of Thameslink members are reminded of the large amount of time, resources and effort that was put in by London TravelWatch and its predecessor bodies to the various planning and closing hearings and reports that preceded the decision to authorise this project. London TravelWatch may want to commission independent research to ascertain potential user impacts in the event of such proposals being put forward.
- 5.2.3 The Mayor has also recently published his final version of his Transport Strategy and there will also be an enquiry into the replacement London Plan. In both of these documents there may be areas where London TravelWatch may wish to challenge some of the policy assumptions on the grounds that they fail to address the concerns of transport users.
- 5.2.4. The new government has indicated that it may consider transferring more powers to the Mayor in respect of rail services. This may include greater control of fares on the national rail network. We are aware of a number of campaigns to move some stations from one zone to another. There may be passenger implications arising from the exercise of such powers (as witnessed by the issues raised in relation to the South and East London Lines).
- 5.2.5 Members will already be aware that the introduction of Oyster Pay As You Go on the National Rail network has had the effect of substantially reducing booking office transactions at stations in the London area. South West Trains has already proposed reductions in hours at some of its stations and other operators have indicated that they too will be reviewing their booking office staffing requirements. With a reduction in financial support from the Department for Transport (DfT) likely it may be a reasonable assumption that several applications will be submitted to change such hours over the coming year. This will require significant staff time resources to be set aside if this occurs.
- 5.2.6 Reduced financial support from the DfT may also result in changes to franchises which may be of concern. Examples could include :
- Reinstating the RPI+5% flexibility of train operators to change regulated fares;
 - Increasing fares by more than RPI+1%;
 - Reducing staffing levels at stations and on trains;
 - Reducing cleaning and other maintenance activities on trains and at stations;
 - Delaying or cancelling enhancement schemes proposed by train operators or Network Rail e.g. Access for All accessibility schemes, resignalling schemes to enhance track capacity and platform lengthening schemes for longer trains (and the new or extra rolling stock associated with this).

- 5.3 An area of ongoing interest to the board has been that of the transport needs of minority faith and ethnic communities. Members may wish to consider whether they wish to continue to pursue research into this area of concern. If the board wish to continue with this it is recommended that a small working group of members with interests in this area should meet with officers to consider the opportunities and value of such research.
- 5.4 A further area of potential new research would be to produce a report on walking in London similar to that produced last year for cycling. In doing this particular emphasis would be on the role of walking can play regarding interchange arrangements, and also where short walking routes may be used to reduce congestion and overcrowding. An example of this is the Euston – St.Pancras walking route, which we have initially championed. Other examples could be the walking routes from London Bridge towards the City of London or between the various stations around West Hampstead, Swiss Cottage, Camden and Kentish Town. This is an area in which it might be possible to work collaboratively with organisations representing pedestrians.

6 Equalities and inclusion implications

- 6.1 The research work previously undertaken by London TravelWatch as listed above has taken into account these matters.

7 Financial implications

- 7.1 All of the previous research activities have been achieved within the agreed Research budget for 2009/10 of £34,269. The budget for 2010/11 is £29,359 and no funds have yet been committed to new research projects this year. However, the major resource implication for research is staff time. It is recommended that decisions on expenditure on external research is delayed until later in the year, so as to allow clarity amongst government authorities to emerge.

8 Legal powers

- 8.1 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 it 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 Greater London Authority Act 1999 places a duty upon London TravelWatch (as the London Transport Users 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.