
Secretariat memorandum

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LTW 391

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Winter resilience of the London and South East Transport System

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1. To update members on the progress of implementation of measures to improve the winter resilience of transport in London and the south east.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1. Members are recommended to note this report.

3 Background

- 3.1. This paper builds on the previous reports to the board (10 February 2009, 26 January 2010 and 1 February 2011), and on the scrutiny report of the London Assembly Transport Committee of March 2009. The Department for Transport commissioned an independent audit of the resilience of English transport systems from Sir David Quarmby to which London TravelWatch contributed.
- 3.2. London TravelWatch's previous concerns about winter resilience were focused on the communication of information to rail users and the speed of service recovery by specific train operators, and on the preparedness of operators and authorities to combat and cope with severe weather on a mode by mode basis the following additional changes and initiatives:

4 Buses

- 4.1. The launch of TfL's mobile and internet countdown information service in October 2011 should enable much greater detail about disrupted services to be obtained by passengers.

5 Streets

- 5.1. No additional comments.

6 London Underground

- 6.1. No additional comments

7 Network Rail

7.1. The performance of Network Rail in a number of key areas of operation gave serious cause for concern. These were:

- Failure of the Integrated Train Planning System (ITPS) to cope with the need to update and implement contingency timetables. This system feeds all other Customer and Passenger Information Systems (CIS and PIS) as well as websites operated by National Rail Enquiries (NRES) and individual train operators. There has been a major overhaul of procedures covering this issues and train operators now make decisions on whether to implement emergency timetables at a much earlier stage, which should allow for more time to correct errors in these systems. This will need to be monitored in the event of disruption to see how effective these changes have been.
- Failure to have in place sufficient resources to de-ice tracks and conductor rails and to clear snow and other line blockages. Network Rail have invested significantly in additional clearance trains and associated equipment.
- Failure of Uninterrupted Power Supply back up equipment to deploy at least one location. No comment has been received on this issue.

7.2. The performance of individual train operators is largely dependent on the ability of Network Rail to deliver a railway on which their trains could operate. However, there were a number of individual areas where performance can be substantially improved such as:

- The ability to switch easily to a contingency timetable – as detailed above under information, operators now have to make decisions on switching to emergency timetables at a much earlier stage. Most operators have also prepared a variety of emergency timetables that can be used according to different circumstances.
- To fit pre-heating devices to fuel lines on diesel trains. We believe that some operators serving London have adopted this practice.
- To clear snow and ice from stations, not just from platform edges and approach roads but also from the centre of platforms to allow easy passenger circulation. Southeastern, Southern and South West Trains have all purchased large numbers of equipment capable of doing this e.g. hand snow ploughs.
- To have in place emergency arrangements with local authorities in the entirety of the operation area of each train operator, including contact with smaller local authorities. No comment has been received on this issue.

7.3. Other issues which have now been addressed include:

- Insufficient de-icing units and clearance trains being available for deployment at the appropriate times and locations. Network Rail have

purchased at least six additional trains for this purpose which are specifically dedicated for use in the London and South East area. 24 other multi-purpose vehicles have also been upgraded.

- A new passenger train fleet that included a 'de-icing' capability, but was not able to be deployed for a number of days as the 'de-icer' fluid had not had regulatory approval to be used. This has now been resolved – it concerned London Overground electric trains.
- Incomplete installation of heated conductor rails and points. The former are a new innovation since 2009, and the ones that had been installed worked very well, but often led to displacement of disruption to other locations. This programme has now been completed.

7.4. Some operators have also instituted other activities such as pre-heating of couplers between trains, and also measures such as provision of glow sticks and blankets which can be used as a last resort when trains are stuck and all other opportunities to remove passengers from the service have been exhausted.

8 Eurostar services

8.1. Following previous problems in 2009 and 2010 Eurostar had implemented a major review of its preparedness and although they did have some major difficulties, particularly following on from another operator's train blocking a high speed route in France, the disruption was on a much smaller scale than previously. There are no further items to report

9 Compensation arrangements

9.1. In July 2011 Southeastern instituted a 'Delay Repay' compensation scheme. This brings them into line with other commuter operators in the London and South East area.

10 Conclusion

10.1. In 2009 and 2010 the transport system in London and the south east faced the most sustained period of cold weather and snow since the early 1980s.

10.2. Following this experience substantial changes in operating practices have been initiated. Most of the recommendations of the reviews of winter resilience appear to have been acted upon. However, as the experiences in 2010 showed, depending on the timing and nature of the weather, new problems might emerge or old ones reoccur at a different time than previously. Evaluating the effectiveness of mitigation measures becomes difficult if similar circumstances do not reoccur.