
Secretariat memorandum

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LTW475

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Update on business plan objective that travel by public transport represents good value for money

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1. To report to members on progress on this business plan objective.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1. Members are asked to note this report.
- 2.2. Members are recommended that London TravelWatch continue its current policy of encouraging and supporting 'turn up and go' frequencies on rail routes in and around London and to raise issues of facilities at individual stations with train operators through bi-lateral meetings, franchise submissions and discussions with local authorities.

3 Background

- 3.1. London TravelWatch has been concerned that passenger satisfaction amongst London rail users with the value for money for the ticket price paid has been very poor when compared to Transport for London (TfL) services or for other consumer goods of a similar monetary value. Therefore in 2013 we commissioned focus group research to identify factors why this might be the case and what operators would need to do to address this.
- 3.2. The research was published in August 2013, and since then officers have drawn it to the attention of operators and authorities in bi-lateral discussions.
- 3.3. As a result TfL commissioned London TravelWatch to carry out further focus group research, specifically to identify issues relating to London Overground. This report is still awaiting feedback from TfL and will be circulated to members for comment before the final publication.
- 3.4. In parallel to this work officers have also analysed whether there are any local variations in passenger satisfaction with value for money within London area train companies. This has found that within the National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) results for the value for money of the price of your ticket by route, there is strong

correlation between this and the frequency of train services provided, and the facilities, such as seats, bins, sheltered waiting areas and toilets provided at stations.

- 3.5. Routes with scores at or above the average London & South East satisfaction ratings (38% in the Spring 2013 survey) operated services with a frequency of 4 or more trains per hour toward central London, and/or to all other stations on the same line of route. The operators who achieved this were c2c, Chiltern Railways, First Great Western (London Thames Valley), Heathrow Connect, Heathrow Express, London Midland, London Overground (all routes) and South West Trains (SWT), (Reading and Windsor Lines). On these operators there are small numbers of stations that have lower frequencies of trains, however these stations have never been surveyed for the NRPS or have not been surveyed frequently. Examples of these are Dagenham Dock (c2c), Sudbury Hill Harrow and Sudbury & Harrow Road (Chiltern), Acton Main Line and Greenford Branch stations (First Great Western), most stations on the Hounslow loop and Windsor & Eton Branches (SWT). If these stations had been surveyed a lower satisfaction level with value for money might have resulted.
- 3.6. The above relationship would appear to be related to the average waiting time between trains to other stations on the route. A station with a train every 15 minutes would have a median waiting time of seven to eight minutes. Longer waits than an average result in less satisfaction with value for money, where the basic passenger expectation in terms of facilities is not met. These would include items such as shelter, real time information, seating, toilets and retail facilities. This illustrated by comparing London Overground between stations in North London and South London. In North London satisfaction levels are between 51 and 55% where all stations have a turn up and go service to every other station. In South London satisfaction is 42% however, London Overground services here are also served by large numbers of Southern and Southeastern services of half hourly or worse in frequency to other destinations.
- 3.7. The importance of facilities is illustrated by the difference between the scores for two South West Trains routes. The Reading/Windsor lines have a higher satisfaction than for local suburban services on the route from Waterloo via Wimbledon to Woking/Epsom/Kingston etc. A simple count of the numbers of seats available at stations on both routes showed that the Reading/Windsor route had a consistent spread of seating across all stations, whereas the suburban lines had all their seats concentrated at a small number of stations (Vauxhall, Clapham Junction, Wimbledon). These suburban stations have a more complex service pattern, with most services running beyond the core Waterloo – Kingston/Surbiton/Motspur Park route every 30 minutes off peak and peak. Satisfaction also slips where the frequency of a service reduces at certain times of day or at weekends, beyond this median waiting time. So a route might have a 15 minute interval service until 2000 on Monday to Saturday and then reduce to every 30 minutes thereafter and on a Sunday. Routes with this pattern receive lower satisfaction with value for money than ones that operate a consistent 15 minute interval service all day every day. There are also examples of stations with peak services more infrequent than the off-peak - this could be considered very frustrating by regular users.
- 3.8. This would suggest that improving service frequencies at off-peak times with consistent routings and stopping patterns between trains, and also ensuring that peak services are at least as frequent as off-peak ones, would result in increased satisfaction amongst passengers with value for money.

- 3.9. The South West Trains franchise will shortly be subject to a Direct Award franchise extension. This gives the opportunity for London TravelWatch to lobby for an improved frequency of service on these routes or if increasing frequency is not feasible or viable, investment in station facilities such as shelter, real time information, seating, toilets and retail facilities at stations where this would benefit passengers travelling on train services with a frequency of less than 3 trains per hour. A worked example of Earlsfield station (South West Trains) would suggest investment in platform seating on the southbound platform, as this has the highest number of median waiting times as trains serve a variety of destinations, whereas on the northbound platform the median waiting time is less than 3 minutes with a single set of destinations. There are also no toilets on the station and no rubbish bins or bags. Thought also should be given to improving shelter on this platform. Officers have taken up these issues with South West Trains (SWT) and also mentioned them in initial discussion with SWT and the Department for Transport.

4 Results of the latest National Rail Passenger Survey – Spring 2014 wave

- 4.1. June 2014 saw the publication of the 2014 Spring wave of the NRPS. Pleasingly there was a three percentage point improvement in overall satisfaction with London and South East rail operators for 'value for money for the price of your ticket' to 41%. This included some significant improvements by individual operators; Chiltern by four percentage points; First Capital Connect by six percentage points; Heathrow Express by four percentage points; London Overground by eight percentage points; SWT and Southern by three percentage points. Regrettably there were reductions in satisfaction at c2c (minus two percentage points) and Southeastern (minus one percentage point).
- 4.2. At individual route level there were some substantial improvements : London Overground East and South London Lines from 42 to 60 per cent satisfaction ; First Capital Connect services between Farringdon and Bedford from 29 to 38 per cent satisfaction; Southern Metro services from 24 to 33 per cent satisfaction; First Capital Connect London Bridge to Brighton and Catford loop services from 28 to 35 per cent satisfaction; First Capital Connect Great Northern services from 34 to 40 per cent satisfaction; London Overground Barking – Gospel Oak from 55 to 61 per cent satisfaction and SWT Clapham Junction to Waterloo from 33 to 39 per cent satisfaction.
- 4.3. These improvements are welcome and it will be interesting to see whether they are sustained. It is worth noting that even with this small improvement absolute levels of satisfaction with value for money are still relatively low with most operators having considerable room for improvement. The improvement in satisfaction on London Overground East and South London Lines, and Southern Metro services between 2013 and 2014 coincides with the completion or starting of a number of station enhancement schemes, and the introduction of new and longer trains by Southern that have reduced crowding issues.

5 London TravelWatch priority

- 5.1. The items and issues raised in this report fall within the remit of London TravelWatch and they meet the criteria for relevance and impact on transport users in the London TravelWatch area. In particular, the South West Trains franchise is the largest

franchise in terms of passenger numbers, with a large proportion of these travelling to, from or through stations in the London area.

6 Equalities and inclusion implications

- 6.1. The provision of seats and toilets at stations is a particular issue for people with reduced mobility, those with children or people who are frail and / or elderly.

7 Financial implications

- 7.1. None – report is for information only.

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 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.