
Secretariat memorandum

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Agenda item: 9

LTW501

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The needs of passengers at small stations

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1. For members to consider the issues that passengers face at small stations and to recommend future actions.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1. The board consider the value of conducting bespoke research and recommend any further actions. For example, this could include producing a good practice guide, based on previous research, showing what passengers want and expect from small stations in London.
- 2.2. The board consider the best approach to conduct the research, if deemed necessary.
- 2.3. Monitor TfL Rail's new concessions in regards to small station upgrades up to 2017
- 2.4. Monitor effectiveness of 'last year'/ staggered DfT funding recently introduced within franchises

3 Context

- 3.1. For the purposes of this report, a small station is defined as one which has a usage of less than one million passengers per annum (entry and exit figures), as recorded by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR).
- 3.2. According to ORR statistics for 2013/2014, there are 200 small stations in the London TravelWatch Area. We have previously stated where that many of these stations suffer from poorer conditions than larger stations, such as lack of staff, graffiti and accumulations of litter, as a result of greater funding going to upgrade large and medium-sized stations. There is also a disparity of standards between small stations in the capital, as some are upgraded and others not. Transport for London (TfL) and the Department for Transport (DfT), through its franchise agreements with train operating companies, have different standards in investing in small stations.

Passengers using such 'neglected' stations can experience a sub-standard station environment and relatively limited facilities such as ticket offices, waiting rooms, toilets, step-free accessibility and passenger information.

- 3.3. London TravelWatch research relevant to small stations shows that passengers expect a minimum standard of accessibility (both for getting to and from the station, as well as for ease of movement in and around the station), ticketing facilities, travel information, staff presence and/or help points, toilets, and station cleanliness. A list of these research reports is attached as Appendix A..
- 3.4. In many cases, station improvements primarily require minor interventions, particularly for improving station accessibility and the provision of passenger information. Station operators could gain many quick wins and raise satisfaction levels by undertaking relatively simple station improvements. For example, this could include:
 - ensuring dropped kerbs or access ramps to improve accessibility for mobility impaired passengers and those travelling with luggage or children;
 - providing clear and consistent travel information pertaining to London's wider transport network;
 - maps, signage and wayfinding for onward journeys from the station;
 - ticket machines, Oyster / Contactless card validators or permit to travel machines;
 - regular and frequent cleaning of the station environment for litter and graffiti.
- 3.5. There is limited evidence revealing the amount and type of investment being accorded to London's small stations. There is no publicly available assessment of small stations to understand where improvements are needed to reduce the disparity in standards between stations in the capital.
- 3.6. An initial overview of London's small stations and their characteristics is available at www.londontravelwatch.org.uk

4 What is being done

- 4.1. London TravelWatch has recently been informed by the DfT that, for all new franchises, a portion of franchise funding for station improvements is reserved for the last year of the franchise, to mitigate against under-investment by outgoing franchisees. This 'last year' funding is made available for station improvements and is generally put towards smaller station improvements and ongoing maintenance.

London TravelWatch has limited evidence of this 'last year' funding made available by the DfT. As this is a new initiative (since the franchising process was restarted), the franchises to which this system currently applies will only be in their last year in the early 2020s. However, we have now been made aware that this system exists and it may provide an avenue for future success.

- 4.2. When compared to the DfT, TfL has a higher level of standards in place for all stations, including for cleanliness (graffiti, litter, etc.). Alongside the maintenance of cleanliness and station environment standards, the presence of staff from first to last service also helps to promote good behaviour amongst passengers who, in turn, may be more likely to respect the station environment.
- 4.3. The National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS), conducted bi-annually by Transport Focus, is a resource for gauging passenger satisfaction levels for all aspects of travel, including for the station environment. However, around 25% of all London stations, mainly small- and medium-sized ones, have never been surveyed in the history of the NRPS. This then leads to the possibility of 'gaming' by operators who know that certain stations are less likely to be surveyed and, thus, have less incentive to carry out station improvements.

To reduce the possibility of this, we have previously advocated that the NRPS should aim to cover all stations and increase the frequency of surveys.

- 4.4. Coordination between small station operators and local authorities is important since improving small stations can increase usage of public transport, thus contributing to and enabling local authorities to deliver their transport objectives. An example of this would be the use of Station Travel Plans to improve the ways in which passengers are able to get to and from the station. This could include car and cycle parking provision and improved links to other public transport modes (e.g. buses), and would likely depend on the unique characteristics, constraints and opportunities for each station.
- 4.5. Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) between the station operator, local council and community organisation (rail user groups, friends groups, etc.) have been promoted by the DfT over the past ten years to involve local organisations in supporting and maintaining small stations. CRPs are most often established for small stations in rural areas, however may also be applicable to some small stations in London. Through some CRPs, under-used station buildings have been transformed into commercial, office or training spaces for local businesses and initiatives, or into waiting rooms for passengers. CRPs may also be effective in pushing for more investment to improve the travelling environment of small stations.
- 4.6. The Access for All programme, operated by the DfT, funds station improvements to make them more accessible to passengers with reduced mobility and those travelling with children and/or luggage. However the funds are only available to four out of the six station categories (i.e. the four larger stations categories in the DfT's categorisation scheme established in 1996: A – National hub, B – Regional interchange, C – Important feeder, and D – Medium staffed). DfT guidance does not require accessibility standards for station categories E – Small staffed and F – Small unstaffed.

Although it may be argued that stations with higher entry / exit numbers should receive a proportionally greater amount of funding for accessibility improvements, it would not be unreasonable for small stations to also be eligible for Access for All funding. As the transport network has progressively been made more accessible, particularly at larger stations, it becomes more desirable to invest in small- and medium-sized stations so that even more passenger journeys can become fully step-free.

As shown in the overview of London's small stations and their characteristics (available for download as indicated above), many small stations are fully or partially inaccessible to disabled passengers. Of the small stations assessed, 88 are fully inaccessible, 40 are partially step-free, and 7 have ramps that may be too steep for disabled passengers to use.

5 Existing research

5.1. A limited amount of evidence is available relating to small stations in London. Some of the main literature informing the project to date is briefly reviewed below (N.B. These are presented in more detail in Appendix B)

a) *Better Rail Stations: An Independent Review*, Department for Transport 2009

This report provides guidance on ways to improve stations in England and Wales, with an aim to make stations fit for future in light of growth in demand for rail travel. The report is useful in suggesting that minimum station standards appropriate to each of the 6 station categories are made mandatory for all future franchise agreements. Categories D (Medium Staffed), E (Small Staffed) and F (Small Unstaffed) are most relevant to this project.

b) *National Station Improvement Programme - Phase Two: Report on a research study conducted for Passenger Focus*, Passenger Focus 2013

This report reviews and measures the impact of the National Station Improvement Programme (NSIP) - set up to improve standards at 150 medium-sized railway stations across England and Wales – on passenger satisfaction. Although it is not necessarily focussed on smaller stations, the report is useful in comparing the impact that different types of station improvement have on passenger perception and overall satisfaction levels.

c) *Review of Community Rail Development Strategy*, Department for Transport 2007

This report reviews the progress of the Community Rail Development Strategy launched in 2004. This review is important in highlighting the potential benefits of the CRPs for local and rural stations. From the review, one may envisage CRPs as a tool that could be used to improve small stations in London with comparable characteristics as rural stations outside London.

6 Recent developments / future opportunities

6.1. The recent transfer of responsibility for rail services between Liverpool Street and Enfield Town, Cheshunt and Chingford, as well as the shuttle between Romford and Upminster, from Abellio Greater Anglia to London Overground provides a good opportunity to monitor the effects of improvements to stations along these lines. It will be interesting to see how station improvements will affect passenger usage at the small stations along these lines, however the other changes to these services, including increased train frequency and the reduction in many fares, will also need to be taken into account when analysing any difference in usage of small stations along these lines.

- 6.2. The recent inclusion in franchising models of reserving funding for station improvements for the last year of franchises, as mentioned in 4.1, also provides an opportunity to monitor the effects of station improvements throughout the entire span of a franchise, including in the last year when some franchisees have, historically, not invested in station improvements. If this new model is effective, under-investment in stations at the end of franchises may be mitigated and, ideally, a consistent and continual investment in station improvements will take place throughout and across different franchises. Furthermore, new franchisees will need to spend less time and financial resources at the beginning of their franchise on station improvement, since they will have inherited small stations that are in relatively better condition.

7 Gap analysis

- 7.1. There is a gap in standards between TfL and DfT in relation to small stations. TfL have higher standards for the small stations it operates and should be used as a model of best practice for station standards at London's smaller stations. The DfT should enhance its standards for smaller stations in London by following TfL's performance standards more closely.

8 Prioritisation

- 8.1. Improving standards at small stations is important due to amount of passengers who, collectively, use London's small stations. According to ORR statistics for 2013/2014, just under 98 million entries and exits occurred at the 200 small stations in the London Railway Area. This significant number needs to be taken into account when considering the need to invest in London's small stations for the benefit of passengers.

9 Equalities and inclusion implications

- 9.1. Many small stations are not fully accessible. It is important that current and future investment in station accessibility is extended to benefit disabled passengers and those travelling with children and/or luggage at London's small stations.

10 Legal powers

- 10.1. 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).

11 Financial implications

- 11.1. No specific financial implications for London TravelWatch arise from this report.

Appendix A

London TravelWatch research relevant to small stations:

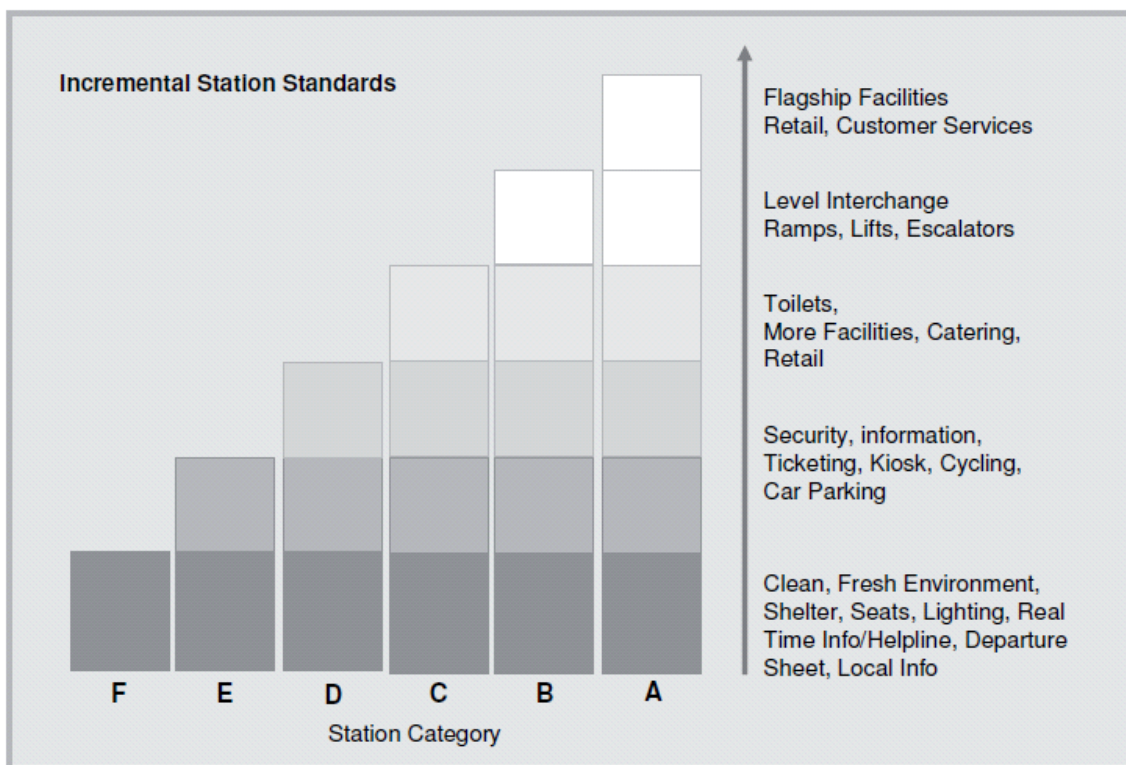
- Interchange matters: Passenger priorities for improvement (forthcoming)
- Value for Money on London Overground – what passengers think, October 2014
http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/documents/get_lob?id=3896&field=file
- The London travelling environment: what consumers think, January 2014
http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/documents/get_lob?id=3780&field=file
- Passengers' ticket purchasing and journey experiences, July 2013
http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/documents/get_lob?id=3710&field=file
- Standards at London's Rail Stations, September 2010
http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/documents/get_lob?id=3245&age=&field=file
- Passenger Priorities for Improvement at Stations, Sept 2010
- Whose station are you? – A survey of joint Underground/National Rail stations in London, February 2008
http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/documents/get_lob?id=829&age=&field=file

Appendix B

Review of existing literature resources

- a) *Better Rail Stations: An Independent Review*, Department for Transport 2009
<http://collections.europarchive.org/tna/20100409091328/http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/rail/passenger/stations/beterrailstations/pdf/report.pdf>

This report provides guidance on ways to improve stations in England and Wales, with an aim to make stations fit for future in light of growth in demand for rail travel. The report is useful in suggesting that minimum station standards appropriate to each of the 6 station categories are made mandatory for all future franchise agreements. Categories D (Medium Staffed), E (Small Staffed) and F (Small Unstaffed) are most relative to this project.



Department for Transport, 2009

The aim is to raise station satisfaction scores to 80% and that station standards become a Key Performance Indicator, with particular focus on access, information, facilities and environment at stations.

The report calls for improved access to stations through increased car and cycle parking provision at stations (although investment in car parking should be minimised in inner city areas with good public transport and cycling access). Station Travel Plans are a recommended tool to help improve access to stations, alongside greater cooperation between the rail industry, transport and planning authorities. Involving the local community is also promoted to help improve security concerns, establish community hubs and provide local services at smaller stations.

- b) *National Station Improvement Programme - Phase Two: Report on a research study conducted for Passenger Focus*, Passenger Focus 2013

<http://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research/publications/national-station-improvement-programme-phase-two-report>

This report reviews and measures the impact of the National Station Improvement Programme (NSIP) - set up to improve standards at 150 railway stations across England and Wales – on passenger satisfaction. It followed a Phase One benchmarking survey to gauge satisfaction levels to the station environment prior to NSIP improvements.

Although it is not necessarily focussed on smaller stations, the report is useful in comparing the impact that different types of station improvement have on passenger perception and overall satisfaction levels. It shows that relatively small improvements can have a big impact. Improvements to shelter and waiting rooms would drive up customer satisfaction more than improvements to other facilities relating to retail outlets, taxis, cars and bicycles.

For the seven stations included in the programme (of which Gypsy Hill, Streatham Hill, Finsbury Park, Smitham¹ and Balham lie within the London area), changes to the appearance of the booking office, the condition of platform shelters, the footbridges, ticket sales points, the main entrances/exits, and the waiting rooms appeared to be the most instrumental in driving up overall passenger satisfaction.

Station	Overall satisfaction (8-10 score)		
	Phase One	Phase Two	Increase
Uckfield	4 per cent	47 per cent	+43
Gypsy Hill	14 per cent	53 per cent	+39
Streatham Hill	4 per cent	36 per cent	+32
Halifax	5 per cent	34 per cent	+29
Smitham	21 per cent	48 per cent	+27
Balham	20 per cent	39 per cent	+19
Finsbury Park	16 per cent	34 per cent	+18
All stations	12 per cent	42 per cent	+30

Passenger Focus 2013

The substantial increase in overall satisfaction from improvements to these facilities indicates the success of the NSIP to change passenger perceptions at individual stations. However, there is still room for improvement; many passengers remained

- c) *Review of Community Rail Development Strategy*, Department for Transport 2007
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/2009100911237/http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/rail/strategyfinance/strategy/community/revcomrail>

This report reviews the progress of the Community Rail Development Strategy launched in 2004. Engaging the local community engagement, including through

¹ In 2011, Smitham station was renamed Coulsdon Town

stations friends groups and individual initiatives, has increased patronage and revenues on many lines, and stimulated social and economic regeneration.

“Although station developments can often be major projects involving substantial sums of money and the use of professional architects and contractors, community engagement can deliver more modest but still worthwhile station improvements. Many stations are now adopted by individuals or organisations and this type of community engagement can help to enhance the appearance and feel of station facilities.” [p.12]

This review is important in highlighting the potential benefits of the Community Rail Partnerships (CRP) for local and rural stations. From the review, one may envisage CRP as a tool that could be used to improve small stations in London with similar characteristics.