
Secretariat memorandum

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Agenda item: 4

LTW517

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Safety update

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1. To provide the board with an update on current rail safety trends and issues on both the National Rail and London Underground networks.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1. That members note the report.

3 Current situation

- 3.1. The risk to passengers from railway accidents continues to be extremely low, with no passenger fatalities arising from train accidents in over nine years. The UK & Ireland has the lowest rate of train accidents in Europe.
- 3.2. While the risk of a passenger fatality caused by a train accident remains very low, it remains true that the most likely cause would be a train hitting a vehicle on a level crossing. Network Rail has a policy to close level crossings wherever practicable, but over 6,000 remain. There are no level crossings where road vehicles cross London Underground lines.
- 3.3. In 2014/15, there was a total of 39 fatalities (not including suicides) on the national rail network comprising:
- 22 trespassers
 - 10 level crossing users
 - 3 passengers
 - 3 workforce
 - 1 other

The risk to passengers is greatest at the platform/train interface, with two of the three fatalities in 2014/15 coming at this point. Every year since 2006/07 inclusive has seen a majority of passenger fatalities coming at the platform/train interface.

- 3.4. The industry has put a lot of effort into making the platform/train interface safer, with the number of fatalities and major injuries holding steady despite rising passenger

numbers. The increase in the number of passengers on the rail network increases the risk at the platform/train interface as there is less room for passengers to stand clear of the edge, which is a particular concern on London Underground.

- 3.5. Overcrowding in general is not usually considered a safety risk, as passengers are unlikely to board a train that is so crowded it would cause them harm. There are inherent risks to extremely crowded platforms, but there are established procedures that would see the operator close access to a platform that was becoming overcrowded, as seen on London Underground at many stations in the peak hours. How to safely accommodate passengers on an ever more crowded network is likely to be the subject of significant focus in the near future as this will undoubtedly become an increasing problem.
- 3.6. The issue of passengers falling at the platform/train interface has been the subject of considerable focus by the industry, and the RSSB published the "Platform train interface strategy" in January 2015 to guide the industry into improving the interface. This focussed largely, but not solely, on the step-gap between the platform and train.
- 3.7. An emerging trend of platform/train interface risk is that where passengers are trapped by closing doors and then dragged along as the train starts to move. Incidents of this type have been investigated by the RAIB both on the national rail and London Underground networks. This issue is likely to become more of a risk as passenger numbers rise.
- 3.8. There was considerable media coverage recently of an issue where Southeastern trains were being delayed by "bright sunlight". This is a result of the trap and drag issues mentioned above, and specifically an issue that most Southeastern metro trains are able to move even if a person has a limb or bag trapped in the doors. As a result of this incident, Southeastern drivers have been briefed to not move their trains unless they are absolutely certain there is no-one trapped in the doors. When bright sunlight shines on the monitors that drivers use to check the train doors, they have to additionally leave the cab to check the train physically, causing delays.
- 3.9. Slips, trips and falls continues to be, by far, the largest risk of major injury to passengers. There have been many trials and innovations to try and limit this risk, and London Underground has trialled 12 different possible approaches around the network, some of which members may have seen. These include standing-only escalators at Holborn, and different messaging such as painted handrails and steps on the escalators themselves.

4 Equalities and inclusion implications

- 4.1. As well as having significant safety implications for all users of the rail network, there are additional accessibility benefits in improving the platform train interface. The barrier to travel created by a large gap between the train and the platform is most significant for those with accessibility difficulties.

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. No implications of this nature arise directly from this report.