

## Passenger issues in Hertfordshire and adjacent London Boroughs

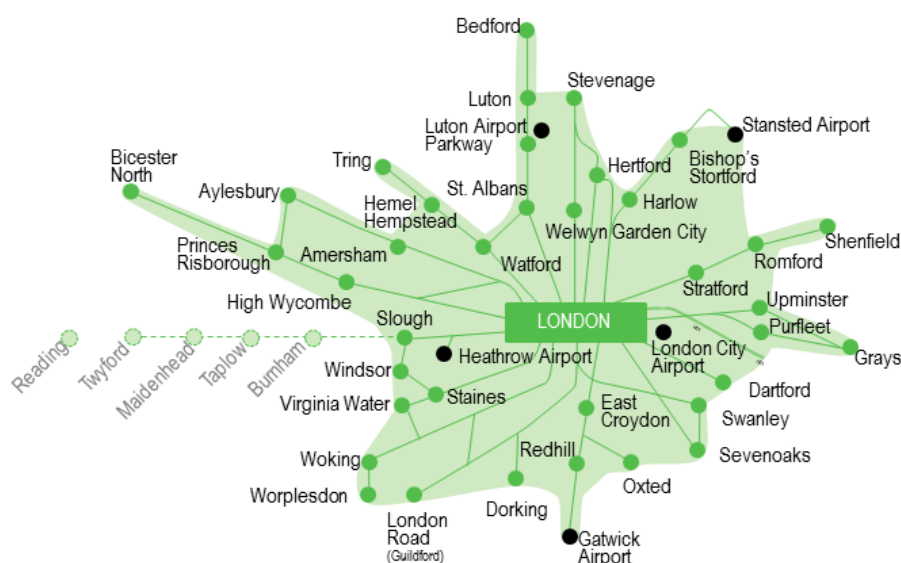
### What is London TravelWatch?

London TravelWatch is the official watchdog for London’s travelling public. The current organisation, formally known as the London Transport Users’ Committee, was established alongside the London Assembly by the 1999 GLA Act.

We aim to secure a better journey experience for everyone travelling in and around London and are the only statutory transport user body to be completely multi-modal. We are an appeals body for passengers unhappy with how the industry has dealt with their complaint. We are also a statutory consultee and carry out research and investigation on behalf of passengers.

We press for a better deal for travellers in and around London, covering a wide range of issues, responding to formal and informal consultations, using primary and secondary data to support our evidence based case, acting as a critical friend to operators and working in partnership with other public interest bodies where appropriate. We regularly meet and seek to influence the relevant parts of the transport industry on all issues which affect the travelling public including timetables, routes, frequencies, fares, ticketing, station standards, access, vehicles, safety, personal security and the information provided both to passengers and to users of London’s principal roads. We also work with a wide range of public interest organisations, user groups and research bodies to ensure that we remain aware of the experiences and concerns of the travelling public.

We represent 13 million people who make 3.5 billion journeys a year in and around London on all TfL (Transport for London) modes and in the London Railway Area, which is shown in the map below.



(- - - Crossrail / Elizabeth Line – Reading to Shenfield) These stations will come under London TravelWatch’s remit when the line becomes operational.

## Rail services

**Six major rail routes serve Hertfordshire as well as branch lines from Watford Junction to St. Albans Abbey and Broxbourne to Hertford East. The Metropolitan line serves Rickmansworth, Chorleywood and Watford. These have experienced growth in usage, and crowding at peak times in recent years: what is being done to deal with these issues?**

These six major routes traverse the county from North to South, and include the West, Midland, East Coast and West Anglia main lines. In addition it has the Chiltern route to Aylesbury serving Rickmansworth and Chorleywood (alongside the Metropolitan line that also serves Watford), and there is the 'Abbey flyer' branch line from Watford Junction to St. Albans Abbey.

This confluence of rail routes means that uniquely the County is served by a large number of train operating companies : Chiltern, London Overground, West Midlands Railway (branded London North Western), Virgin Trains, East Midlands Trains (EMT) (pass through) , GTR (Southern, Great Northern and Thameslink), London North Eastern Railway (LNER), Grand Central (pass through), Hull Trains and Abellio Greater Anglia.

In May 2018 a major timetable change affecting all the operators on the Midland and East Coast Main Lines (GTR, East Midlands Trains, LNER, Hull Trains and Grand Central) had a major impact on passengers. The poor implementation of the timetable and changes to its structure as a result of upgrades to the Midland Main Line led to significant problems and disruption for passengers using stations such as Harpenden, St. Albans City, Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City.

Major performance issues persist on the Great Northern route(s) via Welwyn Garden City and Hertford North, as these are in the midst of a changeover from older trains (1976 built class 313's) to new ones (class 717). Changes to the timetable require the construction of a new turn back platform at Stevenage, and so for the present Hertford North services are terminating at Watton-at-Stone with a replacement bus service in place to Stevenage. Construction is now under way with restoration of rail services in 2020.

The St. Albans Abbey branch has suffered from significant reliability problems in the past few years due primarily to its use of older trains that are based some distance from the route.

Each of the rail routes has experienced significant growth in usage in recent years, particularly where there are large flows of commuters into London for employment, to Luton Airport, Cambridge and Milton Keynes. The Harry Potter experience at Leavesden Studios has stimulated off-peak demand by a bus link to Watford Junction station.

### **How will services be affected by future franchises?**

The EMT franchise will be replaced shortly by a new one operated by Abellio. None of these services stop at any Hertfordshire station but its timetable has a significant impact on the ability of trains operated by Thameslink to serve local stations in

Hertfordshire. Work to enable electric trains to run between Corby and London St. Pancras necessitated the withdrawal of stops at Bedford and Luton at peak times. In order to replace these and give a fast journey time between these places and London Thameslink it was required to withdraw stops at Harpenden and other intermediate stations. Completing this electrification work will enable EMT (by then Abellio) to reinstate their stops at Bedford and Luton, in turn allowing GTR to reinstate theirs at Harpenden.

The Virgin Trains franchise serves Watford Junction, and these services will continue with any new franchisee announced for the West Coast Partnership.

Future franchises may in the near term cover Chiltern, the component parts of GTR and LNER.

### **The Croxley Link**

For decades it has been an ambition of Hertfordshire Council to divert the Metropolitan line away from the relatively isolated Watford station to connect with Watford Junction station. Whilst there would be the loss of a very convenient service for passengers living locally to Watford station, it is considered the benefits to a much higher number of passengers at Watford Junction outweigh this loss.

The scheme acquired necessary statutory powers including consideration by London TravelWatch of the affect of closure on passengers.

However, the scheme business case has been marginal and there is a risk of cost overruns that are not certain. Also a combination of dual responsibility for the project between the national Government (it is clearly outside the GLA boundary) and London Government (it is an LUL line) has meant the scheme has floundered. Everyone sees its benefits, but this has not enabled its funding, particularly the funding of possible unbudgeted costs.

The land is still undeveloped, but its planning status is unclear. This is worrying. There are suggestions of a bus link to connect the Metropolitan line to Watford Junction. This is all very disappointing and a lost opportunity for a really useful transport link.

## **Rail fares and tickets**

**Oyster/Contactless validity has been extended to Hertford North and Hertford East and is expected to be extended further.**

After much campaigning by London TravelWatch, Oyster and Contactless payment cards are now accepted to Hertford North and Hertford East, covering the A10 Lea Valley corridor. This has considerably reduced the number of Penalty Fares previously issued at these stations as passengers previously wrongly assumed that because they were served by 'metro' suburban services that these were valid at these stations.

London TravelWatch has previously expressed the view that Oyster and Contactless payment card acceptance should be extended further into Hertfordshire in line with the

operation of 'metro' services over these routes and the widespread availability of these technologies amongst the population of these areas.

## **Bus services**

TfL has a legal duty (GLA Act 1999) to meet the needs of passengers travelling to and from the capital as well as within it. As such, there are various cross-boundary bus services operated by TfL beyond the Greater London Authority boundary. TfL and non-TfL bus services in the area can be seen on the maps included in the appendices along with a link to London TravelWatch's previous research on cross-boundary bus services.

### **1) Which of these services comes within the remit of London TravelWatch?**

All TfL contracted services are within the remit of London TravelWatch, plus we have a duty to consider cross-boundary movements and the connectivity by bus to railway stations within the London Railway Area.

### **2) Why is there is a disparity between TfL contracted services and others?**

TfL bus services are operated according to a TfL contract following a tender process. TfL specify the service frequencies, fares, type of bus, route etc. TfL takes the revenue risk on the services that it provides. Typically, the county council where the bus operates will make a financial contribution towards the operational costs.

Bus services outside London which are not contracted by TfL are operated either on a commercial basis by the bus company or are financially supported by the local authority. Subsidy, in various forms, to ensure services are provided where they are not commercially viable is often dependent on the resources available to local authorities. The social and economic geography of an area, including features such as car availability, car parking, traffic enforcement, and the dispersal of development may mean that sustaining a bus network can be very challenging.

All of these factors have led to frequent service changes and successive business failures of both large and small operators since bus deregulation in 1986 in this area. This in turn has led to a loss of passenger confidence and decline in usage.

Other bus services operating in Hertfordshire are run either on a commercial basis or are financially supported by Hertfordshire County Council. The County Council has a long standing partnership arrangement with bus operators in the form of the Intalink partnership that promotes the commercial and tendered bus networks and offers an all operator day ticket.

A unique development, since replicated elsewhere, was the establishment by the University of Hertfordshire of a wholly owned bus company (Uno). This was in response to the poor quality of services provided by existing operators and the need to provide dedicated transport links between the university's various campuses. Today the company provides well established high quality services available to students and the general public, linking most of the major towns of central Hertfordshire and outer London.

## Devolution of rail services to TfL

### 1) What are the key problems for passengers using suburban rail services in and around London which need to be addressed?

Many suburban services suffer from poor performance and customer service, poor value for money for passengers and sub-standard station facilities. The fares and ticketing structure is also extremely complex.

### 2) How do devolved rail services differ from the predominant system of franchising used for most UK rail services? If rail services were devolved, would it mean that TfL would be running services?

The model used for existing devolved rail services differs as services are run as a TfL concession rather a conventional franchise. This means that TfL awards the concession and deals with fares policy and forward planning, taking the commercial risks associated with ticketing and other revenue and incentivising the concessionaire to concentrate on the delivery and development of services.

### 3) How would this improve things for passengers?

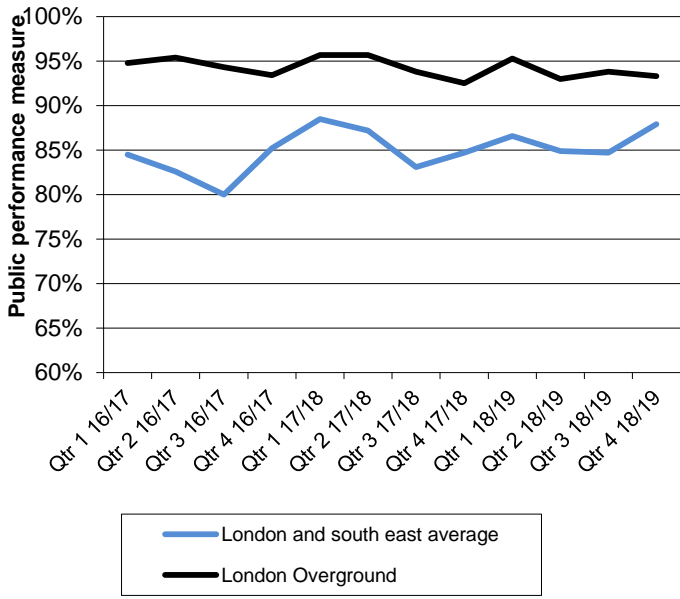
The performance of London Overground as a TfL-procured service, has vastly improved since the start of the concession in 2007. It has gone from being one of the worst performing franchises (under the previous Silverlink franchise) to one of the best with very high passenger satisfaction as a result.

More recently, some commuter services out of London Liverpool Street operated by Greater Anglia have been transferred to TfL (and also of some Great Western services out of Paddington) and service improvements have been made as a result. Passengers have benefited from more frequent services, improved customer service, decent standards for stations, enhanced ticketing facilities, additional staffing and improved information.

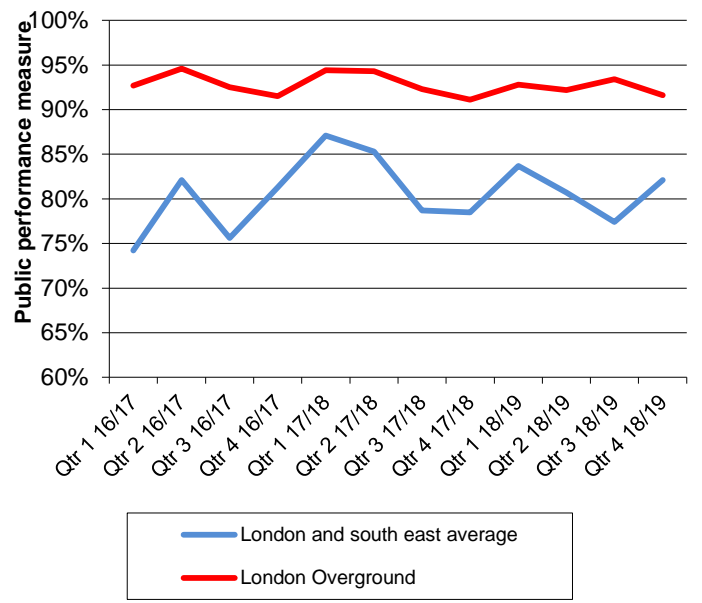
Those passengers needing assistance have also benefited from a turn up and go service. The graphs below show the performance of London Overground and TfL Rail services over the last two years, relative to other services in London and the south east.

Hertfordshire has many years positive experience of working in partnership with TfL both with London Underground and London Overground (services to Watford Junction and Cheshunt). At present it is envisaged that the local services of GTR operated as part of Great Northern between Moorgate and Stevenage via both Welwyn Garden City and Hertford North would be the next suitable services for transfer to TfL.

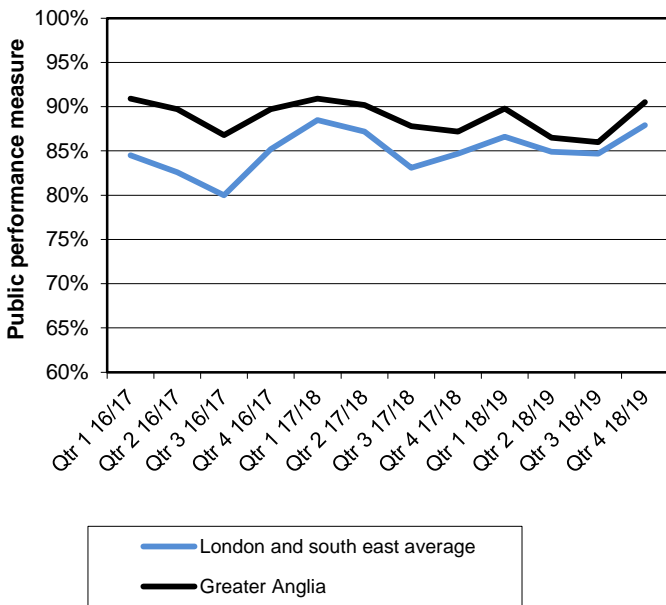
**London Overground - all day performance**



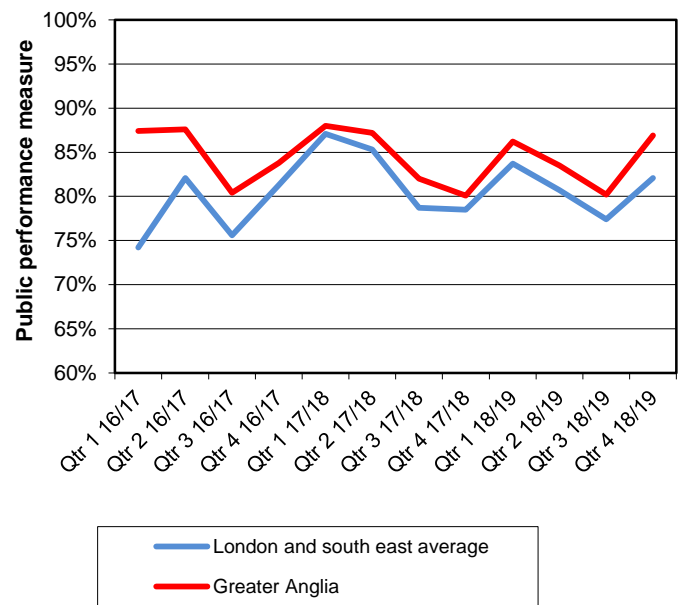
**London Overground - peak performance**



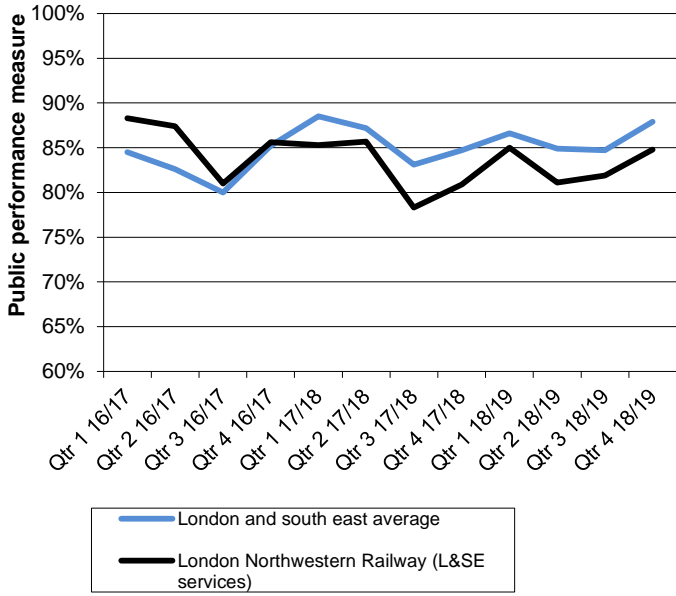
**Greater Anglia - all day performance**



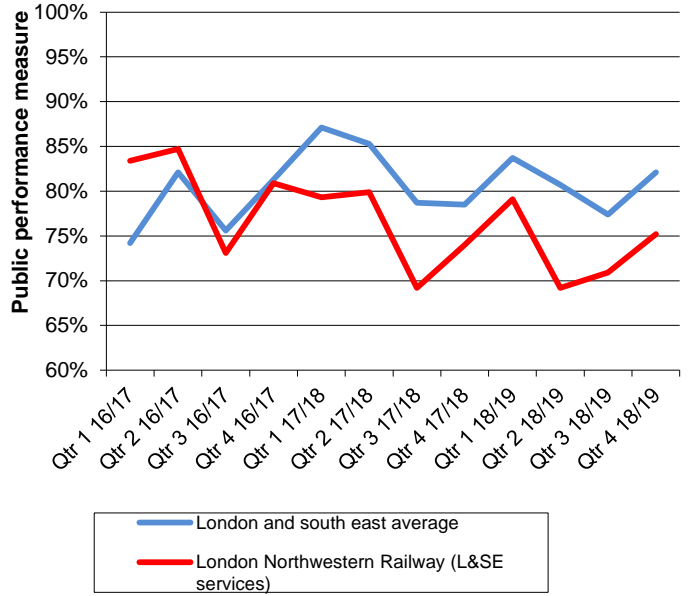
**Greater Anglia - peak performance**



**London Northwestern Railway - all day performance**



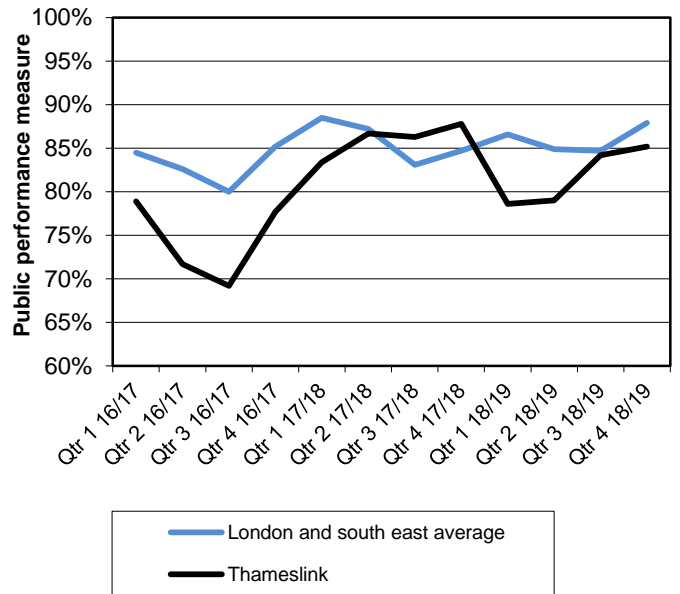
**London Northwestern Railway - all day performance**



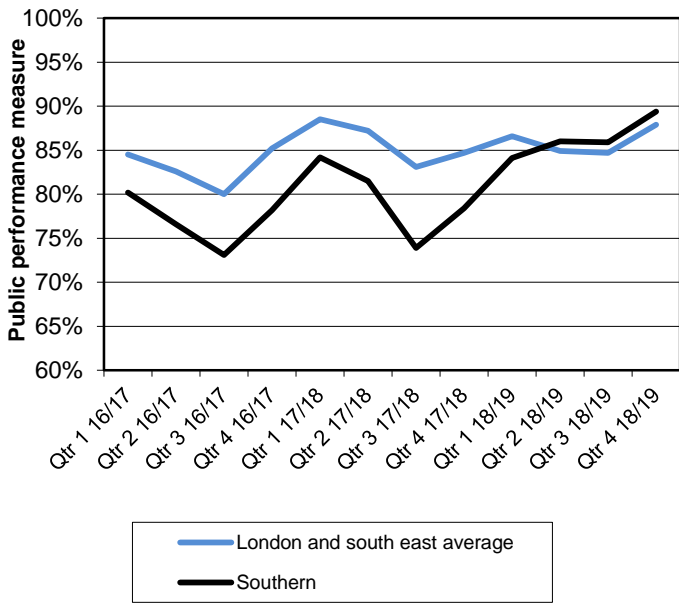
**Great Northern - all day performance**



**Thameslink - all day performance**



### Southern Metro - all day performance





#### **4) Why would TfL provide a better service?**

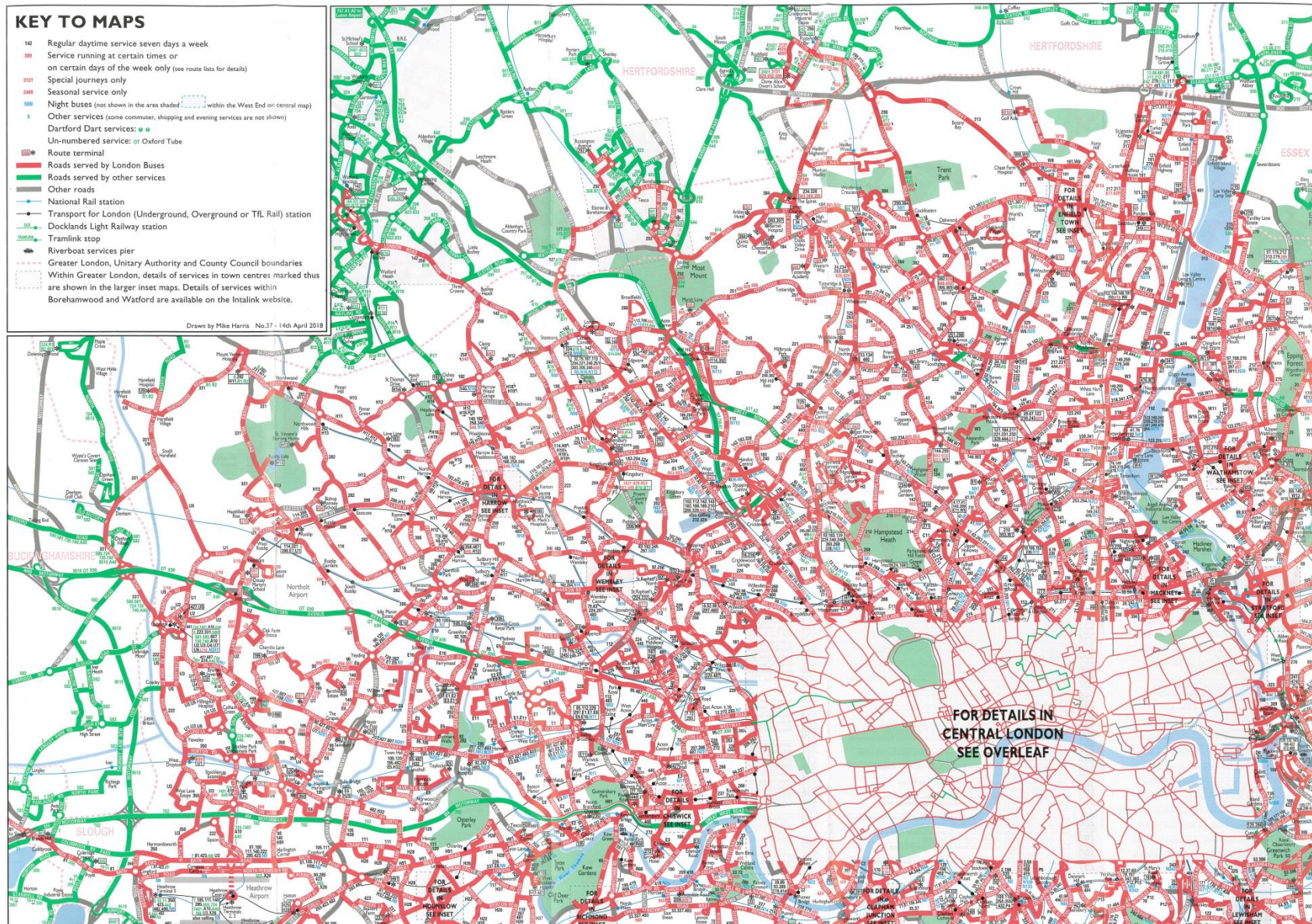
- TfL provides incentives for the operator based on performance and customer service - TfL take the revenue risk. This ensures that the operator focuses on performance as the main variable to their income, and also has a knock-on benefit to other operators' performance
- There is closer alignment with other modes – London (and the surrounding area) is a network so TfL have a vested interest in improving the network as a whole not just a narrow part
- Concessions have stronger incentives to work with Network Rail as they, for example, share some of the costs of delays to services
- TfL's concession model includes a commitment to staffing levels and minimum station standards for every station
- TfL aims for a commitment to four trains per hour – but only where Network Rail deem capacity as being available, not at the cost of other operators
- People can make Oyster/Contactless payments at all stations served
- TfL take a lead in station management where there are multiple operators, and have proven success with this at Liverpool Street and Stratford.

#### **5) How can the Mayor and TfL ensure that the interests of passengers outside London would not be adversely affected in any new rail devolution settlement?**

In 2013, London TravelWatch developed a protocol with Transport Focus (then Passenger Focus) to address this issue (see appendix 2). This recognises that London's railway network is used by people making a wide range of journeys, both locally and longer distance and TfL signed up to them. All passengers must be treated fairly, regardless of where they are travelling. Fair treatment needs to cover all the relevant areas, from how the timetable is planned and fares set, through to operational decisions about things like information dissemination during disruption.

Interestingly, the improvements London Rail achieved also had a positive effect on longer distance services using adjacent lines into Liverpool Street.

# Appendix 1: Hertfordshire County Council bus map <https://www.intalink.org.uk/timetables/>



## **Appendix 2: Essential passenger safeguards to ensure successful and fair devolution of rail services**

London TravelWatch is seeking these to make sure that the interests of all passengers, regardless of where they are travelling to or from, are taken account of in any agreement to devolve more responsibility for train services to the Mayor of London through TfL.

1. **Guaranteed even handedness in track access** between continuing Department for Transport franchises and any devolved concession operations so as to ensure that the needs of all passengers are catered for equitably.
2. **Guaranteed interavailability of ordinary tickets over common routes within the London travel area** irrespective of operator.
3. **A commitment to work together with other operators in providing seamless information to passengers**, especially during times of disruption and at interchanges between services provided by franchisees and the concessionaire.
4. **A commitment to an operational agreement to work together in the best interests of all passengers**, sharing resources at times of disruption, and where separate provision is not justified, to maximise efficiency.
5. **Separation of the formulae for setting fares** between franchises and concessions, to ensure that political or commercial decisions in either do not have unintended negative or anomalous consequences for the other.
6. **A commitment to regular and meaningful consultation** by all parties with London TravelWatch and Transport Focus on all issues affecting passengers. This should be inclusive from the tender design stage by TfL through to day to day operation by the concessionaire, and should at a minimum be comparable to that currently required of train operating companies under the existing franchise arrangements and licensing regime.
7. **A commitment to regular and meaningful dialogue with passengers and user groups on issues affecting them.**
8. **A commitment to work with local authorities**, both inside and outside London, to ensure a better whole journey experience, by means of improved interchanges and through ticketing schemes with local public transport operators.
9. **A commitment to transparency of data**, on items such as delay attribution and service performance.

### **Appendix 3: useful links**

TfL bus services in the area:

Please see <https://www.busmap.co.uk/>

Non-TfL bus services in the area:

Intalink partnership

<https://www.intalink.org.uk/timetables/>

London TravelWatch research on cross-boundary bus services:

[http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/documents/get\\_lob?id=1898&field=file](http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/documents/get_lob?id=1898&field=file)