

Submission to the Transport Select Committee inquiry into the transport plans for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games,

1 Introduction:

London TravelWatch is the official body set up by Parliament to provide a voice for London's travelling public, including the users of all forms of public transport. Our role is to:

- Speak up for transport users in discussions with policy-makers and the media;
- Consult with the transport industry, its regulators and funders on matters affecting users;
- Investigate complaints users have been unable to resolve with service providers, and;
- Monitor trends in service quality.

Our aim is to press in all that we do for a better travel experience all those living, working or visiting London and its surrounding region.

2 The Inquiry

London TravelWatch welcomes the House of Commons Transport Committee's further inquiry, which will build on its previous work, and will consider:

- The impact on the road network resulting from Games Lanes and the Olympic Route Network (ORN)
- Measures taken to manage travel demand during the Games
- The impact on public transport, including aviation, of increased demand during the Games
- The effects of travel disruption for businesses and services
- Delivery of a transport legacy following the Games

3 Principal concerns

Our concerns are summarised as follows :-

- The fact that rail tickets and Travelcards bought through the special games arrangements will not be subject to the normal compensation arrangements in the event of delay or disruption.
- That the resilience of rail infrastructure may be an issue

- The 'unknown unknowns' of events outside the control of the Olympic authorities.
- The poor image of UK plc that could be generated by poor management of disruption on the transport network during the games, interchanges such as Paddington which are not of the best standard and of the visual impact large amounts of uncollected litter and untreated graffiti especially on Network Rail managed infrastructure.

4 General consideration of preparations for the Olympic and Paralympic games

London TravelWatch has taken a close interest in the plans and preparations for the games over the entire length of the preparation period. We believe that in most cases the arrangements and investments that have been made are sufficient to cope with the demands that are likely to be placed on the transport network or could be foreseen.

We do have some concerns about the resilience of some parts of the infrastructure to be used in connection with the games especially the Network Rail Liverpool Street to Shenfield via Stratford route, when ground level temperatures reach 30°C or above. We attach a copy of our correspondence with Network Rail for your information. Network Rail have told us that since our intervention the programme for renewal and maintenance of the electrification equipment has been radically changed to ensure robust operation during the games. You may wish to ask Network Rail for more information on this subject to give you an assurance that the previous overhead line failures on this route when temperatures have reached above 30°C will not reoccur.

We are concerned about the potential impact of 'unknown unknowns' to disrupt or put pressure on the network, and also for some 'non-games' transport users to be significantly be disadvantaged by alterations to the transport network that will be put in place for the duration of the games, although discussions with operators, Transport for London (TfL), LOCOG (London organising committee of the Olympic Games) and the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) has resulted in the scaling back of some of the original proposals.

The 'unknown unknowns' largely centre on the organisation, distribution and timing of events out with the direct control of the Olympic Authorities that will generate spontaneous travel demand during the Games period, or disrupt the operation of both road, rail and underground networks. Under normal conditions London's transport can cope with such events if they are not simultaneous or contiguous. However, an event such as the games, even though it is only for a three week period and outside of school terms, will have a major effect on this normal level of resilience. This is likely to require enhanced patience and flexibility on the part of both operators and users when disruption does occur.

For users this may mean using different routes or modes or travel times to 'normal', for operators it may mean changing or extending schedules at short notice, and for highway authorities it may mean suspending parking or greater enforcement to ensure that traffic flow is maintained. We are however pleased with the flow and quality of

information that has been produced to date advising and encouraging users to plan for making different arrangements during the games time.

5 The impact on the road network resulting from Games Lanes and the Olympic Route Network (ORN)

The ORN is of concern to us, in that we are not sure that the public has fully grasped that there will be sanctions imposed on vehicles and persons transgressing the restrictions on usage of 'Games Lanes'. We believe that an adverse public reaction is likely where transactions are viewed to be trivial, of little consequence and where normally the public would not expect to see a sanction imposed.

We also remain concerned about the potential impact on bus service reliability if buses are unable to use their normal bus priority measures such as bus lanes.

6 Measures taken to manage travel demand during the games

London TravelWatch believes that the current measures in place are likely to be sufficient to manage demand that could or has been foreseen for the games themselves, but that as noted above 'unknown unknowns' are likely to be the most significant causes of disruption to services or additional demand. The flexibility of the network is the key to its' resilience.

Much of the effectiveness of measures to manage travel demand during the games is dependent on businesses and organisations reducing or relocating their existing activity. However, we believe that the current economic environment is not necessarily conducive to this requirement; businesses will be keen to retain existing customers and contacts; employees uncertain about the future of their jobs; may be less inclined to accept this advice if it encourages business to be switched to competitors outside the games areas, or where it might show that a job could be done in a different way or be dispensed with altogether. For this reason, and for the fact of the scale of reduction in background demand that is required we believe that the reduction in background activity may not happen on the scale that TfL, ODA and LOCOG expect.

7 The impact on public transport, including aviation, of increased demand during the games.

We have noted above various potential impacts on different aspects of public transport of the games, however we would draw your attention to the situation facing passengers using London Bridge and Paddington stations.

These stations do not directly serve Olympic venues, but will be used by significant numbers of people interchanging to get to venues and in the case of Paddington many people will arrive from Heathrow Airport at the beginning of the games, and depart again at the end using Heathrow Express. International perceptions of UK plc are likely to be heavily influenced by the first and final experience of these passengers in the UK and so it is important to get these right in terms of ease of access, information, value for money fares, staff training and helpfulness and cleanliness (litter/graffiti).

London Bridge station is in the midst of major rebuilding on account of the Thameslink upgrade programme and the Shard development. This work should stop for the duration of the games, but the site needs to be easily navigable by passengers who are not familiar with station.

Paddington is also subject to building works on account of the Crossrail project. However, our recent report on 'Walking and Interchange in London' found that there were major deficiencies at the station in terms of poor signage and interchange between modes. This report can be found at <http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/document/14002>.

We recently held a seminar attended by all the major industry and regulatory parties, and although there was an acknowledgement that 'something needs to be done', we have found a marked reluctance on the part of major players to take responsibility for solving the issues we highlighted, and a belief that 'Crossrail will sort the problems out'. However, Crossrail is not scheduled for completion until 2019.

We feel that the potential poor first and last experience of British public transport that using Paddington in its current state is likely to engender with foreign visitors to the games is unacceptable. You may wish to question Network Rail on its commitment to implementing our recommendations for improvements at this station in advance of the games.

Stratford station is going to be the most critical point to the success or otherwise of the public transport offering at the games. One unfortunate problem is that the numbering of the platforms here is not as logical as might be expected due to the complex nature of the station. We understand the technical reasons (signalling) as to why this is but feel that this may present difficulties to users unfamiliar with the station.

We also note that some of the alterations to existing services during the games time, such as that proposed by Southeastern to Greenwich line stations such as Deptford, Maze Hill and Westcombe Park, are contentious (as is the closure of Maryland station near Stratford), and likely to cause in convenience to existing users, especially where nearby bus, Docklands Light Railway and Underground routes are also similarly affected. We are grateful to Southeastern Railway for amending their proposals for Charlton station in the light of our representations at the consultation stage. However, we still believe that the measures proposed for the other stations on the Greenwich route may be unnecessary.

8 The effects of travel disruption for businesses and services

We support the efforts of TfL, ODA and LOCOG to encourage businesses and services to plan to avoid the disruption caused by the games. However, we recognise that not all businesses and services may be in a position to change their activities in order to suit the needs of the games. These organisations needs must be taken account of.

We note that many small businesses are likely to need to change the times of deliveries, but this will often require the suspension of normal restrictions by local authorities e.g. relaxing bans on night time activity for lorries and vans.

9 Delivery of a transport legacy following the games

There is a major legacy from the games in terms of improved transport services in London which has already delivered benefits to users of London's transport network and will continue to do so for generations to come. This comes in the form of new infrastructure but also in terms of customer service culture amongst operators.

If there is any criticism of the transport legacy, it is that a number of small improvements have not been pursued, which would have been ongoing local benefit.

The examples of this are :-

Maze Hill station: closest to the Olympic venues in Greenwich Park in terms of walking routes has step free access available on one platform, but not to the other. However, a ramp to a nearby road would have achieved this, and enabled disabled travellers to access the games events more easily than through the alternative of Greenwich station.

Hackney Wick station; closest to the Olympic Park and with full step free access by ramp, but without any access to the Olympic Park. We feel that this is major deficiency as wheelchair users especially for the Paralympics will be forced to use Stratford or West Ham stations some way a way, which although they have step free access, this is by the use of lifts. For both games we believe that these lifts may not have sufficient capacity for the demand from wheelchair users that are likely to use the station, leading to long waits to exit the station. However, if access could be provided into the Olympic park at Hackney Wick this would be avoided as the ramps would enable wheelchair users to exit the station freely without being reliant on lifts.

10 Other matters

London TravelWatch would also like to draw the committees attention to the following :-

Compensation arrangements for holders of travel tickets / Travelcards purchased in conjunction with games tickets. We have ascertained that that the holders of such tickets will not be entitled to any compensation from either train companies or Transport for London if their train is delayed for any reason. This is because train operators regard these tickets as 'special offer' tickets, which come outside of the terms of compensation arrangements under the conditions of carriage for national rail and TfL operations. This information has only recently come to light following discussions we have held with TfL, the DfT and the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC). We feel that this is likely to be regarded by users as very unfair, especially as a consequential loss resulting from a delay might include missing the Olympic event that the person was travelling to, and for which they could have paid a substantial ticket price. We have therefore told ATOC, TfL and DfT that they need to clearly communicate to passengers holding these tickets that normal compensation arrangements will not apply in the event of delays and disruptions.

The poor visual state of many parts of Network Rail infrastructure that will be used by passengers travelling to and from games events, by virtue of extensive graffiti and rubbish / litter on the trackside. This latter problem also has the potential, as it regularly

does at the moment, to disrupt services by causing fires, encouraging vermin (who also eat through cables) and being ingested into the moving and electrical parts of trains.

We have tried over many years to encourage Network Rail to tackle these problems – which in some parts of London, such as the lines serving the Olympic park is endemic: with a limited amount of success. Visually this sends a poor image to visitors to the games and it also is a concern that disruption could be caused by it, at a time when the network needs to be at its most resilient. We recommend that you ask Network Rail what their strategy is for tackling this prior to the commencement of the games.

11 Conclusions

London TravelWatch believes that much has been done to ensure that the Olympic and Paralympic games are successful in terms of their immediate transport requirements but also the long term legacy.

However, we do believe that some further work needs to be done to ensure that unnecessary disruption does not occur and that both games users and non-games users alike have a positive transport experience during the Olympic period.

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