
Minutes

Agenda item : 4
Drafted : 5.10.10

Minutes of a meeting of the Transport Service Committee held on 21 July 2010 at 6 Middle Street, London EC1

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Present

Members : Gail Engert (item 5 to 13); Teena Lashmore; David Leibling; Lorna Reith (Chair); Sharon Grant (Chair, London TravelWatch) (item 5 to 13)

David Barry (Observer)

Guests

Nicola Moss	Head of Franchise Management, London Midland
George McNulty	Service Director, Jubilee, Northern and Piccadilly lines, Transport for London (TfL)
Pat Hansberry	Northern Line General Manager, TfL
Matt Blanks	Access Manager, TfL
Paula Jenkins	Stakeholder Communications, TfL

Stakeholder representatives

Matt Winfield Stakeholder Engagement Manager, TfL

Staff

Chief Executive; Committee Administrator; Director, Research and Development (item 9 to 11); Senior Policy Officer; Streets and Surface Transport Policy Officer (item 7)

Minutes

1 Chair's introduction, pre-meeting announcements

The Chair welcomed visitors, members and staff to the meeting of the committee, and made standard housekeeping announcements.

2 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Terry Bennett.

3 Declarations of interest

No additional declarations of interest were made. A public record of members' interests may be found on the London TravelWatch website (<http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/document/3861/get>).

4 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 May 2010 were approved and signed for the record.

5 Matters arising (TS032)

On item 3.5 (To send a letter to Assembly members and a copy of TfL performance report), the Senior Policy Officer reported that an MP had contacted London TravelWatch and asked what transport issues they should be aware of.

On minute 28.5.10/7 (To determine whether the volume of trains operated by each TOC is included in the overall result for the PPM), the Senior Policy Officer confirmed that it was.

It was agreed that motorcycles in bus lanes would go to a future board meeting.

Action : Committee Services

The Chair of London TravelWatch asked about ticket vending machines (TVMs) on the Docklands Light Railway (DLR) and whether problems with them had continued. The Senior Policy Officer noted that calls had tailed off and he would be arranging a meeting with them shortly. The Chair noted that ticket vending machines (TVMs) were complex and often did not use predictive text.

6 Actions taken (TS033)

The paper was noted for the record.

7 Performance Monitoring reports

The Senior Policy Officer gave a presentation on this item. If you would like a copy of this document please e-mail committeeservices@londontravelwatch.org.uk.

The Senior Policy Officer noted that the Public Performance Measure (PPM) for National Rail had been affected by the snow. Southeastern and First Capital Connect (FCC) had suffered the most. FCC had also experienced problems with staff.

He went on to note that there had been discussions between Transport for London (TfL) and London TravelWatch regarding the performance report. It now captures what members want to see and addresses TfL's concerns, particularly regarding the performance of bus routes. In future, the committee meeting dates would align with the production of the TfL performance report. The report can then be used to its best effect. The Streets and Surface Transport Policy Officer had focused on bus stop accessibility and ranked Boroughs. He was asking them to act upon it. The Communications Officer reported that local newspapers had picked up on this story.

On the Availability measure for London Underground, it was agreed to explain this better (this measure records the level of disruption against trains in operation).

Action : Senior Policy Officer

The Senior Policy Officer went through the remaining modes of travel in the TfL performance report. The Docklands Light Railway (DLR) had improved, but there was concern about the customer satisfaction levels. Tramlink was down slightly. London Overground's (LOROL) performance on the Northern core had affected its overall score. Dial-a-Ride had been affected by the snow. River services continued to perform well.

Members were concerned about the 30 bus service. The Senior Policy Officer noted that bus priority schemes had been raised in relation to this route. The Streets and Surface Transport Policy Officer explained that the report now focuses on buses with long term problems. On the route 30 he noted that TfL are planning to put more resources into this route. The reinstatement of a bus lane in Upper Street on Sundays would also be beneficial. London TravelWatch would write to TfL, Highway Authorities and the operator on changes that can be made.

Action : Secretariat

The Streets and Surface Transport Policy Officer noted that with iBus, TfL could note where the delays to the route took place.

The Chair noted concerns about over-running engineering works on the Underground. The Senior Policy Officer noted that he would be monitoring late notice closures. The number of over runs was down.

On LOROL the Senior Policy Officer noted that there had been problems with the work done during the engineering work this year. There would be further closures to improve the signalling design.

The committee would continue to closely monitor the performance of Dial-a-Ride.

On National Rail, C2C had performed the best in all measures. Southeastern's performance had fallen, but improved subsequently. FCC had engaged with London TravelWatch on their problems. It was agreed to include the National Passenger Survey (NPS) in the National Rail Performance Report.

Action : Secretariat

Members discussed the increasing use of Oyster Pay As You Go (PAYG) on National Rail. It was agreed that this item would be discussed at the Fares and Ticketing committee.

Action : Committee Services

8 London Midland performance

The Chair welcomed Ms Moss to the meeting. Ms Moss highlighted consistent improvements in London Midland's performance over the past five months, five periods of PPM at 90 per cent or more. In period 11, performance was affected by lines being brought down outside of Euston station and the severe weather. However, yearly performance had risen by 0.5%. There are still further improvements to be made in the London and South East areas.

Reliability of infrastructure on the West Coast Main Line (WCML) had caused problems (London Midland has the highest number of Network Rail delays). Ms Moss noted that Virgin also suffered from infrastructure problems. However the Train Operating Companies (TOCs) were working closely with Network Rail and reliability of infrastructure is improving.

Ms Moss highlighted a number of steps taken after the problems experienced by London Midland in September 2009 (drivers had refused to work on a Sunday). There is a new management team in place; steps have been taken to improve customer service (especially when disruption occurs); meeting with stakeholders, and new rolling stock.

There had been incidents of TVM theft. As a consequence, London Midland had made them card only and looked at the location of others.

The Senior Policy Officer asked about performance up to September 2009. Ms Moss noted that performance had been okay up until that date. Drivers and crew had refused to work on 6 September 2009 (there was a 4 day working week for drivers). A lot of work had gone into getting things right since.

The Chair of London TravelWatch expressed astonishment that this could happen. The Senior Policy Officer noted that London TravelWatch had urged in franchise consultation responses that labour issues be resolved. Ms Moss noted that there are a mix of terms and conditions across the industry post-privatisation. The 4 day week for drivers is not uncommon across the industry. More drivers had been recruited and more knowledge management (sharing placement of signals, etc) with new drivers.

Members were concerned that the service was still vulnerable and asked London Midland to seek an agreement for the benefit of passengers.

Members asked about the floor walkers who helped customers at TVMs. Ms Moss noted that this was not a case of removing employees from ticket offices, but as part of general customer service. She had seen the Passenger Focus report on TVMs. There was still a role for ticket offices, but there had been an increase in internet sales.

Members asked about the removal of TVMs due to theft. Ms Moss replied that London Midland had taken the decision that any vulnerable TVM should only take card payment. The cost of replacing a TVM is immense. There had been no substantive increase in complaints as a result.

9 Infrastructure Monitoring (TS034)

The Senior Policy Officer noted that the report was an update of what stage the projects were at.

Thameslink planned completion date had moved back to 2016. This has consequences for the project, for example, new rolling stock (will this go ahead); London Bridge (scope reduced); and trains per hour (planned 24 per hour). He went on to note that Blackfriars station would have to close to passengers from 20 November 2010 to 16 January 2011. This is the least disruptive option for passengers. He had been consulted on the communication strategy.

He highlighted the threat of cuts to Thameslink. Work on the timetable and refranchising of FCC's routes would be carried out soon. He also highlighted the level of benefits for Wimbledon loop, which were lower than other sections of the FCC franchise.

A member asked what might be cut at London Bridge. The Senior Policy Officer felt that it might be the scope of the project, layout, etc. He would follow up with Network Rail on the current plans.

Action : Senior Policy Officer

Members felt that the new bus station was vitally important. The Chief Executive noted that one way Network Rail would make efficiencies to shift to a cheaper design. The Senior Policy Officer reported that the most dangerous cut would be to the trains per hour, new rolling stock, etc.

On the Wimbledon loop, the Director, Research and Development noted that more benefits would accrue in the North, not the South of the franchise.

The Chair felt that London TravelWatch needed to be involved at an early stage on the layout for London Bridge. The communications strategy was good. The Senior Policy Officer felt that the strategy for Thameslink served as a good model for a large infrastructure project.

The Senior Policy Officer noted that Crossrail was now moving into the construction phase, for example, work at Paddington station had begun and tunnelling would begin in autumn 2011. It is more of a challenge as it will affect more modes and operators than Thameslink (just FCC). So far construction had been in one location, Tottenham Court Road, but substantial works would take place in the Abbey Wood area and section of the Great Eastern and Great Western franchises. London TravelWatch had responded to the London Assembly Transport Committee's scrutiny of Crossrail. He had met Network Rail and discussed possessions and its effects on franchise operation.

The Chair was concerned that the public did not know the route of Crossrail or about the project as a whole. The Senior Policy Officer felt that Crossrail needed to explain how they were going to communicate the disruption, route, etc to the passengers and the public.

The Chair of London TravelWatch reported that she would be meeting Crossrail soon on this. London TravelWatch had demonstrated its record of engagement with Thameslink. It is in Crossrail's interest to talk to us. There needed to be one interface with Crossrail.

The Chair felt that there should be a presentation on Crossrail to the board.

Action : Committee Services

A member noted that Thameslink had sent letters to local employers regarding works. London TravelWatch could help Crossrail solve its communications problems.

The Chair welcomed Mr McNulty, Mr Hansberry, Mr Blanks and Ms Jenkins to the meeting. If you would like a copy of this document please e-mail committeeservices@londontravelwatch.org.uk.

Mr McNulty began the presentation by noting the various improvements being made to the Underground network. The Northern line was the section of the network and a sixth of journeys took place on it. The new timetable (introduced in 2008) gave a better level of performance. The signalling now needed to be upgraded. The infrastructure that supports the running of the line dated back in some instances to the 1930s. It took more work to keep this reliable. The only way to increase capacity is to install new signalling. The Northern line can only be kept running at its current level for a finite period. New signalling would add 20% capacity.

Tubelines were due to carry out the upgrade. However, TfL had now purchased Tubelines and were reviewing options on how it would take place. London Underground (LUL) hoped to carry it out in a less disruptive way. There was a transitional period at present, but some work would take place between Kennington and Morden. LUL hoped to mitigate disruption.

Mr Blanks described the bus services in operation during the Kennington to Morden closures. LUL had looked at what had happened during the Jubilee line closures. They had incentivised passengers to use other modes, for example, national rail at Balham and South West Trains. Oyster PAYG passengers who used the route 155 would be refunded 70p (picked up at their regular station automatically). Since the closure programme, the frequency of the 155 had been doubled.

Mr McNulty noted that he was aware of the pain caused to passengers. He was trying to ensure that there was clear communication to passengers and engage stakeholders. The key message was that the Northern Line needed to be upgraded. LUL would come back in the later part of the summer and report on the future closure programme.

Action : TfL

A member asked if there would be a closure programme for the Northern section? Mr McNulty replied there was. Is the current closure to the Southern section dictated by the Public-Private Partnership (PPP)? Mr McNulty replied that it was. New rails were being installed to enable a higher frequency of trains. Closures would take place when the line was lightly used.

The Senior Policy Officer noted that SERCO's assessment of Tubelines upgrade work had gone to the TfL board. When would LUL know the closure dates? Mr McNulty promised to come back later in the summer when the decision had been made.

A member asked about the separation of lines. Mr Hansberry replied that this would improve capacity and reduce conflict at Kennington. Mr McNulty noted that on the Northern line they could now run 2 discreet train services (one via Charing Cross and one via Bank). If something happens on one branch, it will not affect the other. Mr Hansberry noted that the separation reduced conflict and also meant flexibility on the line.

Mr McNulty noted that the problems on destination boards were caused by the technology that feeds them. LUL had agreed the signalling contract.

A member asked about over runs from engineering works. Mr McNulty explained that problems that affected engineering works were sometimes out of LUL's control. If there is the possibility of an over-run, then they can descope works.

Mr McNulty noted that LUL were thinking about the separation of Camden Town station, but no funding was available.

A member asked how customers would be involved in the closures. Mr Blanks noted that Mike Brown, Managing Director of LUL, had set up a stakeholder board (with London TravelWatch, Boroughs and business represented). If there is any slippage in the completion date, LUL would notify London TravelWatch.

The Casework Manager asked why the 155 had been enhanced, but no rail replacement service introduced. Mr Blanks replied that the 155 had been increased from 10-15 buses per hour to 20-25 per hour. She went on to note that there had been problems with staff availability at Kennington station. Mr McNulty asked to be notified if staff were not available.

Mr McNulty invited the Casework Manager to the customer service centre to see how the refund system for passengers worked.

Action : TfL

Mr Blanks reported that TfL had worked with Network Rail to move round closures, so that no closures affected national rail alternatives to the Northern Line.

11 South London Line (TS035)

The Director, Research and Development reported that at a board meeting in 2008 they had discussed the South London Rail Utilisation Strategy (RUS) and endorsed the recommendations. The South London Line service would be withdrawn, but the most appropriate way to replace it would be to have a service between Victoria to Bellingham. This would serve a vast majority of people of the existing service. After the agreement to fund the East London Line extension, the Victoria to Bellingham service would not be funded. This was because the Mayor of London has powers to increase or decrease services under the Railways Act 2005. London TravelWatch was not happy that neither the Department for Transport (DfT) nor TfL had told anyone when this decision had been taken.

London TravelWatch commissioned a survey on who used the South London Line (SLL). This was presented to the board in September 2009. Representations were made to TfL and others. A joint study took place on how potential disbenefits could be mitigated and stakeholders put forward ideas. 30 different options were considered at the start. The joint study reported back in November 2009. The options were reduced from 30 to 5 which were potentially deliverable. Each of the 5 options was worked at in terms of viability and a further 2 options were drawn up.

Option 7 is the original Victoria to Bellingham extension to Bromley, but would not operate at peak hours. To mitigate, additional stops would be placed on faster services. This option is the most feasible. This was presented to stakeholders. It is the least worst option, but is not ideal. The majority of stakeholders wish to see progress. He was concerned that bad information had been circulated. He had set out a narrative in the report on how London TravelWatch had come up with the idea and frequently asked questions with alternatives.

The East London Line (ELL) had taken some passengers off the Northern line, but some would go onto the Northern line, due to the changes to the South London Line. He noted that the options would open up orbital interchange.

The Chair thanked the Director, Research and Development for the report and the clear implications and different options for passengers.

A member asked how many passengers would be affected. The Director, Research and Development replied that the average peak load train arrived at London Bridge with around 220 passengers.

The Chair of London TravelWatch noted that the numbers of passengers affected was very important. She paid tribute to the Director, Research and Development. Option 7 would benefit a number of people. London TravelWatch needed to get assembly members behind the option. She refuted those who distorted the role London TravelWatch had played. A brief communication sheet would be issued to develop stakeholder engagement.

12 Any other business

None.

13 Resolution to move into confidential session

The Committee resolved, under section 15(b) of schedule 18 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999, that by reason of the confidential nature of the next following item/s, it was desirable in the public interest that the public should be excluded from this part of the meeting.

In confidential session, the Committee reviewed the meeting.

The next Transport Services Committee meeting will be held on 20 October 2010.

14 Glossary

DfT	Department for Transport
DLR	Docklands Light Railway
ELL	East London Line
FCC	First Capital Connect
NPS	National Passenger Survey
PAYG	Oyster Pay As You Go
PPM	Public Performance Measure
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
RUS	Rail Utilisation Strategy
SLL	South London Line
TfL	Transport for London
TOCs	Train Operating Companies
TVMs	Ticket Vending Machines
WCML	West Coast Main Line