
Minutes

Agenda item 8
Drafted 29.07.13

Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 23 July 2013 at Dexter House.

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Present

Members

Josephine Channer, Richard Dilkes, Glyn Kyle, Stephen Locke (Chair), Abdikafi Rage, John Stewart, Ruth Thompson

Guests

Stephen Pauling Principal Transport Planner, Transport for London (Item 9)

Members of the public

Secretariat

Keletha Barrett	Policy Assistant (Item 12)
Tim Bellenger	Director, Policy and Investigation
Janet Cooke	Chief Executive
Richard Freeston-Clough	Communications Officer
Susan James	Casework Manager (Items 8-9)
Sharon Malley	Executive Assistant (minutes)
Vincent Stops	Policy Officer (Items 11-12)

1 Chair's introduction and pre-meeting announcements

The Chair welcomed members and visitors to the meeting and made the standard safety announcements.

2 Apologies for absence

No apologies were received.

3 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest other than those published on the London TravelWatch website.

4 Chair's activities and Passenger Focus update

The Chair said that he had attended 28 introductory meetings with stakeholders and now had only meetings with the British Transport Police and the lead London Councils member on transport to complete.

The staff/member informal meetings had been well received by members and he hoped they would continue beyond the introductory period.

He had attended meetings with various bodies including Transport for London (TfL) on the comprehensive spending review, as well as writing to the Secretary of State, the Treasury and every member of Parliament in London, to seek the best settlement for London transport users. This work may have had some effect as the final outcome was not as severe as had been feared. Although there would be a tight squeeze on current spending, with particular risks for bus services, TfL was able to sustain its long-term investment programme. It was noted savings in future might be focused on buses, and this was an area to keep attention on.

The Chair said he had attended a Passenger Focus board meeting in May, which included discussion about transport devolution to the Manchester conurbation. There had been a considerable level of support in Manchester for devolution.

The Chair had joined two Passenger Focus working groups. One of these, the Statistics Governance Group, was looking at the National Passenger Survey and whether it would be possible to amend or augment the survey to collect general views rather than views just about the most recent journey. The second group, the Passenger Contact Group, was responsible for overseeing complaints and appeals activity, and was due to meet on 12 September.

The Chair had written to the Secretary of State to argue for the electrification of the Barking and Gospel Oak line and had received a letter from the Chief Secretary to the Treasury saying that his case had been successful. As well as for passengers, this was an important outcome for local residents and for the freight trade, as it would help to keep some freight off the roads..

5 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 7 May 2013 were agreed and signed as a correct record, subject to two amendments: the second paragraph of Item 5 on page 2 should read that the Chief Executive was encouraged to see Network Rail, the train operating companies and Transport for London liaising more closely; and the word 'were' in the seventh paragraph on page 4 should be amended to 'where'.

The minutes of the Governance committee of 12 March 2013 were noted.

6 Matters arising (LTW4436)

It was noted that members had not received the analysis by TfL of the impact of its proposed change to its customer charter whereby refunds would be issued automatically after a 30 minute delay rather than requiring claims to be submitted after a 15 minute delay. It was agreed that this information would be circulated again.

Action: Executive Assistant

It was agreed that members would be notified of the dates of the next transport users engagement events as soon as they were fixed.

Action: Communications Officer

It was noted that members would welcome a visit to the Network Rail control centre at East Croydon as part of their induction programme.

Action: Executive Assistant

It was noted that TfL had now responded to the report of the Roads Task Force. The TfL response did not raise any major issues of controversy, but there was a risk that some of the more far-reaching recommendations of the Task Force, particularly on demand management, might be mothballed. Although the measures such as road pricing and access restrictions were difficult, London TravelWatch had consistently supported open analysis and discussion of options to reduce demand by road users. It would be important to keep track of any outcomes for transport users and keep some of the more radical options in the frame.

Action: Director, Policy and Investigation

7 Actions taken (LTW437)

It was agreed that the format of the report should be amended slightly so that members could more easily identify which meetings were more significant. The report would also be renamed to distinguish it from the report of matters arising, which also reported on actions.

Action: Executive Assistant

8 Research on passenger experiences of purchasing tickets

The Chair said that with the Director, Policy and Investigation, he had attended a useful meeting with Vernon Everitt and Shashi Verma of Transport for London to discuss the findings of London TravelWatch's research into passengers' experiences of using Oyster Pay As You Go (PAYG) and purchasing tickets. He said the meeting had been useful and TfL had accepted that some passengers find some aspects of the existing systems hard to understand and use.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that the research had been well received in the media, with particular attention paid to the problem passengers experienced with pink Oyster validators. Other messages from the research would be highlighted in future work.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that the findings were being discussed with transport operators during regular bilateral meetings. They were also forming part of discussions in relation to the proposals for the Southeastern franchise.

The government's review of rail fares and ticketing across the UK was now unlikely to be published before the Parliamentary recess and the Director, Policy and Investigation, had discussed the findings of the research with the DfT.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, suggested that TfL should be focussing on explaining more about how Oyster PAYG worked. In particular, there was more scope for targeted communication, for example by identifying people who made particular journeys and emailing or texting information about how to get a better deal for fares on these journeys.

TfL had largely implemented London TravelWatch's recommendations in relation to ticket offices on their part of the network. However, staff at National Rail stations had not yet embraced the flexibility of having staff redeployed in different parts of the station for the benefit of passengers.

It was noted that bank cards from 38 different countries had now been used to pay for bus fares using the contactless system but many of the cards had also been used to buy Oyster products.

One important longer term issue was the availability of National Rail Enquiries Service (NRES) data. This was not openly available, even though it was in a sense public information. This is a long-standing concern of Passenger Focus and TfL as well as London TravelWatch, because it held back the development of innovative, user-friendly information systems. The Board confirmed the London TravelWatch view that this data should be made available as open data for app developers.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that the problems raised during the research stemmed from the complications inherent in the fares and ticketing regime and that where simplifications were attempted some users would lose out and then seek exceptions. It was noted that although TfL should be explaining some issues more clearly, some elements of the fares and ticketing landscape were so complicated that communications alone could not address them.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that national rail operators had not embraced Oyster to the same extent that their customers had. For example, National Rail ticket vending machines did not have full Oyster functionality and National Rail

staff were not able to respond to queries relating to Oyster. In addition, although London TravelWatch had previously requested better signage for Oyster readers in National Rail stations, train operating companies (TOCs) had resisted on the basis that this would make no difference as passengers who did not wish or intend to pay would continue to avoid paying.

It was noted that when Oyster was implemented on the National Rail network within the Greater London area it resulted in significant revenue generation for train operators, with far more extensions to travelcards being purchased than prior to Oyster implementation. It was agreed that London TravelWatch should urge TOCs to take a more proactive stance on Oyster integration in future as this also had implications for other 'smart' ticketing technologies.

The research found that the time when passengers most needed staff to be available at stations was when they were making unfamiliar journeys, which was generally on weekend mornings.

It was noted that TfL was concerned about devaluing the Oyster brand as a result of problems caused by ticketing complications encountered on the National Rail network. However, TOCs were constrained from tackling some of the problems by the Department for Transport (DfT), whose current priority was the alternative ticketing system SEFT.

Feedback from passengers following publication of the report was that the findings were in line with their own experiences, particularly in relation to pink Oyster validators.

It was agreed that the Chair would write to Peter Hendy highlighting concerns that TfL should use all means available to tackle the issues that have been raised, including targeted communication about key concerns such as price capping and ending confusion over the use of pink validators.

Action: Chair/Director, Policy and Investigation

The issues relating to national rail and the DfT were more substantive and included such matters as staff availability in stations, functionality of ticket vending machines and access to journey histories. TOCs were beneficiaries of the Oyster system and it needed to be made clear to them individually that they should do more to assist their passengers to use it. It should also form part of London TravelWatch's input to the DfT in respect of new franchises.

Action: Director, Policy and Investigation

It was noted that in future London TravelWatch should seek engagement at an early stage with transport operators considering significant technical innovations so that the passenger perspective, based on the issues identified by the research, could be properly incorporated.

9 Crossrail 2 consultation

Stephen Pauling, principal transport planner at Transport for London, gave a presentation on the proposals for Crossrail 2. He said that the route had been

safeguarded in 1991 and was now being reviewed to see whether the safeguarding was still required and whether the route was along the best alignment.

Having considered many possible routing options, two new proposals were being put forward for further consideration. The first (the metro option) ran from Alexandra Palace to Wimbledon, the second (the regional option) shared most of the core with the metro option but extended from Cheshunt to points in outer south west London. The business case for the routes was still at an early stage with many unknowns. However, when the wider economic benefits were factored in, the cases were expected to be strong.

The consultation on the two options was open for one more week. Already 13,000 responses had been received, almost all of which came from individual members of the public. Over 90% of responses so far were supportive of Crossrail 2, with 60% supporting the regional option and 42% supporting the metro option (respondents could support both options if they chose). Following the closure of the consultation and the analysis of the outcomes, TfL hoped to take forward its preferred option next year with the intention of updating the safeguarded route.

In response to questions, Mr Pauling said that the options had been chosen to address future problems such as overcrowding on Victoria line. The previous alignment of Crossrail 2 did not address these problems as well as the new options.

The stations that were proposed on each route had been chosen as representing the best balance between the need to gain passengers and the need to keep speeds as fast as possible. Adding additional stations, as well as being expensive, would have a detrimental impact on the overall speed of the journey.

It was noted that some of the benefits of Crossrail 2 might accrue to locations beyond the London boundary but that the scheme was being funded by TfL. In addition, if Crossrail 2 went ahead, it could negate the need for upgrades to the South West mainline between Wimbledon and Waterloo, which would be an indirect benefit to national rail operators. It would be important to consider who would benefit from the implementation of Crossrail 2 to ensure that the cost was shared properly.

It was noted that a station was proposed at Kings Road in Chelsea and it was the only one that would not interchange with any other lines. Mr Pauling said that it was in an area that was poorly served by public transport and was a commercial centre that people wanted to travel to.

It was noted that south east London did not benefit from either Crossrail or Crossrail 2. Mr Pauling said that potential improvements for south east London, such as a Bakerloo line extension or a Docklands Light Railway extension to Bromley were not the right alignment for Crossrail 2 but may be worth taking as separate schemes.

Members noted that the majority of respondents favoured the regional route and questioned what the benefits were of the metro option. Mr Pauling said that the metro option was cheaper and easier to build, focused on the areas of greatest need, and could be wholly completed by TfL with a less complicated interface with Network Rail.

The Chair thanked Mr Pauling for the very interesting presentation and said that London TravelWatch would be responding in detail to the consultation prior to the closing date.

Action: Director, Policy and Investigation

10 Annual report and accounts (LTW439)

The annual report and accounts were received.

11 Transport for London performance report (LTW440)

The Policy Officer presented London TravelWatch's report on TfL's performance during the final quarter of 2012-13 and the year as a whole. It was stressed that the report assessed performance against TfL's own targets rather than targets set externally.

The Policy Officer said that the performance of London Buses had been very good, with customer satisfaction levels also good. London Underground, the Docklands Light Railway and London Overground all scored well for both performance and customer satisfaction, although there had been a problem with the Bakerloo line that might justify some further exploration. It was noted that London Overground's performance compared favourably with all train operating companies in the south east.

Dial-a-Ride had delivered the right number of journeys and complaints seemed to be dropping. Streets performance was judged at 'amber' as the figure for journey time reliability was a little below target and congestion was unlikely to decrease, with customer satisfaction low and likely to remain so as it was driven by congestion on the network. Cycling figures were also low, although the road maintenance condition was slightly improved.

It was noted that TfL had stopped reporting the performance of river transport to its board as usage was so small and the service was provided externally, which meant that London TravelWatch's report no longer included it either.

There was concern that TfL had said the condition of the highway network would not return to 2009 levels for some years, as poor carriageways caused delays and problems of safety.

The Board welcomed the report and the generally positive messages it contained. However, they expressed concern that London TravelWatch's generally positive assessment of TfL's performance, based on a limited set of measures (mostly averaged across all services), might give false reassurance about the quality of services across the capital as a whole. Pockets of poor performance remained, such as with individual routes or stations, and these were often of intense local concern. The Board also noted its previous concerns about Dial-a-Ride, as recorded in the May 2013 minutes, but this report gave Dial-a-Ride a good score based on the measures used. The published report should, of course, seek to be accurate and fair, but it should also take care to avoid any actual or implied 'false positives'. The way that, in general, these reports assessed and reported on performance should be reviewed in future.

Action: Policy Officer

It was agreed that the report would be amended in future and among other things would include details of bus stop accessibility by borough.

Action: Policy Officer

It was agreed that written comments on the report should be sent to the Policy Officer by the end of the week and a revised version would be issued thereafter.

Action: Policy Officer

12 National Rail performance report (LTW441)

The Policy Assistant presented London TravelWatch's report on the performance of National Rail for the final quarter of 2012-13. She said that the report included more information about longer trends, with a three-year period now being reported. It was noted that the complaints figures related to the entire operator, and were not disaggregated to show complaints relating just to London.

It was noted that the Policy Assistant reviewed several sources of information for the causes of delays, not simply relying on the comments of the train operators. This meant that when the cause of delay was attributed to, for example, infrastructure problems, this was because the Policy Assistant had verified this independently rather than simply repeating what train operators had said.

It was agreed that where there had been significant investment in a service, and this had resulted in improvements to performance, the investment should be noted as one of the causes of the improvement. London Overground's improved performance would be an example of this.

Action: Policy Assistant

It was noted that complaints data was obtained from the Office of Rail Regulation and that it was unlikely to include complaints received via Twitter.

The recommendation on page 4, that South West Trains, First Capital Connect and London Midland be subject to higher level scrutiny at bi-lateral meetings because of below average performance, was agreed.

Action: Chief Executive

13 Transport users' engagement event in Lewisham (LTW442)

The Communications Officer presented his report on the transport users' engagement event held in Lewisham in March 2013. He said that the event had presented the opportunity for officers to meet large numbers of transport users, with over 500 surveys being distributed and 28% being returned. The report contained the findings of the surveys.

It was noted that the event took place during the daytime and that commuters would not necessarily be reached. It might be worthwhile to hold future events at different times of the day.

Although the survey was more of a snapshot than statistically valid research, it did give an indication of the views of users in a particular area. For example, former stakeholder events had been used to inform decisions relating to accessibility. The general findings helped inform future work.

It was noted that visitors on the day were largely supportive of the design of the New Bus for London, although the presence of the bus might be seen as misleading as it was unlikely to be used on routes in Lewisham in the near future. However, the New Bus for London was a significant draw that encouraged passers-by to engage with officers, so may be a worthwhile element of the event in any case.

It was agreed that the points raised during the discussions would be considered when planning future events.

Action: Communications Officer

14 Meetings calendar 2014

The meetings calendar for 2014 was agreed.

15 Any other business

There was no other business.

16 Resolution to move into confidential session

It was resolved, under section 15(2)(b) of schedule 18 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999, that by reason of the confidential nature of the item(s) to be discussed, it was desirable in the public interest that the public should be excluded for a section of the meeting.

During the confidential session, members considered research on passenger perceptions of value for money and reviewed the meeting.